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ABSTRACT

Three levels of Practical Theology – experiential, reflective and orientational, must address the pursuit of practical Christian knowledge. Each level contributes to the formation of *operational* practical Christian knowledge as evaluating, ordering, localising and organising. Browning's correlational approach is criticised for leading to *religious* rather than *Christian* dynamic reflection. Barth's theology of theological knowledge offers a corrective because of its combination of *mood* and doctrine. Caputo's notion of repeating transformation is used to open a synthesis characterised as a lived hermeneutics of practising a repeated transformation which is lived in the *ad hoc* creativity of 'doing theology on safari'.

*A*NVIL *is* primarily a journal of *Practical* Theology arising as it does, out of the *mission* of *the practical* spirituality of Evangelicalism as this is found in the *practical* tradition of Anglicanism. Thus *Anvil* can be seen as an ongoing example of reflection on practice, i.e. a tradition of Practical Theology. I think that there are three levels to Practical Theology (the experiential, the reflective and the orientational) and that the goal of Practical Theology is a certain kind of knowledge: *practical Christian knowledge.*[1] I believe that it is this question of 'what kind of knowledge?' which is of major importance in the current development in Practical Theology. There have been a number of different strategies for developing an adequate Practical Theology and these have all been part of the development of theology within the modern period.[2] An adequate Practical Theology must not only address the levels of reflection but also provide a perspective and an orientation for the knowledge with which it is concerned.[3]

Emmanuel Lartey has recently written about three different approaches to Practical Theology: the branch approach, the process approach and the

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1   c.f. R. Osmer, *A Teachable Spirit*, Westminster, Louisville 1990, p 162 who argues that Practical Theology is made up of three aspects: 1. 'practical moral reasoning', 2. 'the interpretation of particular situations', and 3. 'the enactment of concrete responses'. Osmer discusses Practical Theology within the context of developing a renewed model of Christian education.

2   For an interesting survey of approaches to Practical Theology in relation to modernity see J. van der Ven, *Practical Theology*, Kok Pharos, Kampen 1993, parts I-III.

3   In this article I am dependent upon Ingolf Dalferth's analysis of fundamental theological issues in his book *Theology and Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford 1989. He identifies two issues, reflection and perspective, and also talks of orientational knowledge.

'way of being and doing' approach.[4] His survey is a useful way for us to begin to explore the issues. First, Practical Theology is seen as a branch of theology: 'The emphasis is upon *content* of a discipline and the method adopted is one of applicationism.' As Lartey suggests, the branch approach tends to turn Practical Theology into a second class discipline dependent on other theological or non-theological studies. Second, in the process approach, the emphasis is on *method*, particularly the reflective or pastoral cycle. 'The main idea is to generate viable and workable methods which will enable practical theologians to deliver their goods.' The third approach emphasises the form of theological engagement in a given social context or related to a given significant problematic. 'It seeks to be reflective and thoughtful. It is concerned that faith is made manifest in practice, taking seriously the potentially transformative nature of faith and/or experience.' Respective examples of these three types are Schleiermacher's division of the theological disciplines, Groome's theology of Christian education, and liberation/feminist theology.

In the three levels of Practical Theology which are described later, Lartey's approaches, which focus on content, method and form respectively, are included (under different names) at various points in the reflective process. However, here we can already begin to see that identifying the nature of Practical Theology is not straightforward and also that none of the above three approaches are adequate. Reflection on practice can be handled in different ways. However, no one approach is adequate as a way of integrating the other two. What is needed is a more fundamental analysis of the goal of Practical Theology. The question is, *how* do we establish the best approach? This can only be answered, I suggest, in relation to the perspective and the orientation of knowledge. I call this the *mood* dimension and it comes at the third level of reflection.

Practical Christian knowledge: the goal of Practical Theology

Thus in exploring the nature of Practical Theology it is necessary not only to consider the levels of reflection but also its character. If this is subsumed in the levels then it will produce one kind of Practical Theology, which primarily emphasises the structure and *method* of reflection. However, when the character of reflection is separated from the process of reflection, then the goal of Practical Theology can be explored and stipulated and this will bring another dimension, that of *truth*, in the attempt to define the nature of the discipline.

When reflection is considered in relation to perspective and orientation, I suggest that reflection on practice in Practical Theology must be founded upon the reality of Jesus Christ whose living presence is part of every situation and practice and influences all kinds of reflection. I therefore want to suggest that the goal of Practical Theology is *Christian* reflection on practice, i.e. practical Christian knowledge which emerges in the wider context of the reality of the risen Lord.

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4   E. Lartey, 'Practical Theology as a Theological Form' in *Contact* 119 (1996), 21-25.

Karl Barth puts it like this:

> As the history of salvation enacted in Jesus Christ imparts itself as such, and is thus the history of revelation, it reproduces itself. Invading the history of the world and men, it again creates salvation history in the form of Christian knowledge... the real presence of reconciliation, i.e. of the living Lord Jesus, is the theme and basis and content of Christian knowledge. This, then, is the supreme and distinctive way in which Jesus Christ is historical in his prophetic office and work. In his prophecy he creates history, namely, the history enacted in Christian knowledge.[5]

Here the goal of Practical Theology is *the exploration of practical Christian knowledge for and in given situations.* Later on I shall explore in more detail (with Barth) the character of this knowledge and the suggestion that enacted Christian knowledge comes under the prophetic office of Christ and is, as such, a repetition of Jesus by Jesus in a 'self-multiplying history'. I shall also suggest that Practical Theology is hermeneutical, both in relation to the Christian tradition and in relation to practice, i.e. a *practical hermeneutics.*[6]

The three levels of Practical Theology

Experiential / situational level

Practical Theology takes seriously the 'thisness' of life: the concrete 'when?' and 'where?' of human experience and reflection which requires a thick description. The resistance of experience and situations to being theologised, the 'why?' of *this* particular 'when?' and 'where?', is the leveller of all theology and proclamation, but Practical Theology takes this resistance as an opportunity to work with the given of practice in an attempt to offer an apologetic for Christian action. This kind of Practical Theology can be found in much *popular or lay theology* and I would call this the *mission* dimension. But in order for these various forms to function as full Practical Theology, there is need for a further level of understanding: the reflective level. Here the resources for how experience is to be reflected upon and the traditions for understanding the reflections are introduced.

The move to the reflective level reveals the foundations upon which Practical Theology is being done and indicates how reflection on experience is actually being theologised.[7] Practical theologies of this kind remain committed to a given experience or situation but now include reflection on

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5   K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* T. &T. Clark, Edinburgh 1936-1977, vol. IV/3.1, p 212.

6   A radical exploration of Practical Theology in connection with church ministry can be found in C. E. Winquist, *Practical Hermeneutics,* Scholars Press, Chicago 1980. See also Hans-Dieter Bastion's essay, 'From the Word to the Words' in F. Herzog, *Theology of the Liberating Word,* Abingdon, Nashville 1971, for an early attempt to relate communication theory to the theology of Karl Barth as a new form of Practical Theology.

7   The way in which theological reflection has been included in the process of understanding experience and responding with a practice informed by theology is illustrated by the Christian Pastoral Education movement (see E. E. Thornton, 'Clinical Pastoral Education' in R. J. Hunter, *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling,* Abingdon, Nashville 1990, and J. Patton, *From Ministry to Theology,* Abingdon, Nashville 1990).

the mediation and method of Practical Theology. This form of Practical Theology includes, for example, feminist and liberation theologies; it can also include other practical theologies which have a specific or more general focus using metaphors relating to human experience.[8] (I would put Lartey's 'way of being and doing' approach here.)

Reflective level

Practical Theology also includes the questions of 'who?' and 'how?' We might think of these as the dimensions of the reflective level of Practical Theology. The first dimension of the reflective level is *mediation*, i.e. the question of the human sphere and the agent of practice – the 'who?'[9] Thus Practical Theology, at its widest, is reflection on all human practice from a Christian perspective. Within this is included a particular emphasis on the sphere of the church and a special focus on ministry. The agency of practice is also significant in Practical Theology, including the motivational basis for action and the inter-subjective/cultural perspective on practice. This level can be found in all kinds of what may be called *pastoral theology, applied theology, empirical theology, and spirituality, e.g.* pastoral counselling, homiletics, catechetics, leadership, outreach, etc.[10] Such an approach can also be developed to include the first level and the dimension of method. (I would put Lartey's branch approach to Practical Theology in this category.)

The second dimension in this level is *method*: the 'how?' of reflection and of the relationship and structure of this reflection in connection with the Christian tradition of theology. This itself includes a conscious recognition of different levels: the method of theological rationality in relation to faith, experience and mediation (e.g. the pastoral cycle), the reworking and systematisation of this in connection with Christian tradition and theology, and the organisation of Christian reflection into disciplines and sub-disciplines. The question of 'how?' has become a theological issue within recent times as the theology of theological education has once again come to the fore with the

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8 Thus emerges a practical theology with an emphasis on the experience/situation where the context then characterises the dimensions of method and mediation. This leads to writings like that of John Reader's *Local Theology*, SPCK, London 1994, or of a more general type, 'a theology of....', e.g. a 'theology of hope' (e.g. Moltmann), a 'theology of play' (e.g. Johnson and Berryman) or a 'romantic theology' (e.g. Houghton and Williams).

9 E. Farley argues in *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* that Schleiermacher's teleological focus on the clerical profession provided a way of defining Practical Theology. cf. 'Theology and Practice outside the Clerical Paradigm' in D. Browning, ed., *Practical Theology* Harper & Row, New York 1983.

10 The traditional disciplines of pastoral theology (e.g. as proposed in Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline* and pastoral theology text books) I would therefore include under the name Practical Theology. Van der Ven reviews the idea of Practical Theology as applied theology (*Practical Theology*, pp 89f). However, he rejects this term as it implies the notion that Practical Theology is the application of theological analysis done by another discipline or the coordination of theological reflection from a range of disciplines and applied in relation to given situations. Van der Ven's own preferred approach is an *empirical* approach to Practical Theology using a method of reflection called the empirical-theological cycle. This method puts his work in the next approach.

work of people like Farley who are searching for a *theologia* which will be adequate for the modern world and the demands which the different levels of reflection make upon theology's understanding of itself.[11] An example of this kind of Practical Theology would be the various educationally conscious approaches, particularly those which attempt to rework Christian education in relation to the needs of the church and world.[12] (I would put Lartey's method approach in this dimension.)

None of the above three approaches within the two levels of reflection can function as a complete or adequate Practical Theology. There is still need for something more – a 'fundamental theology' dimension, which in Practical Theology might be called apologetics.

Orientational level

At this stage I suggest that there is a need for another level and dimension which would help to sort out what is needed for a Practical Theology to be properly oriented and fixed within the modern context and in relation to the Christian tradition. We need a third level and another dimension, that of *mood:* the question of the relationship between reflection and practice and the wider cultural context – the 'what?'. Reflection on this dimension would provide a place and a position from which the whole process of reflection could happen.

The engagement of theology with culture means that Practical Theology is always apologetic and evangelistic or missiological, i.e. it includes the perspectives of reason and faith respectively. However, there can be different kinds and traditions of apologetic: confessional, traditional, liberal and academic – and also different missiological perspectives.[13] Whatever mission perspective is negotiated in a given context a range of moods are

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11 Farley, *Theologia.*
12 See, for example, the essay by Richard Osmer, 'Teaching as Practical Theology' in J. Seymour & D. Miller, *Theological Approaches to Christian Education,* Abingdon, Nashville 1990. One may also understand Westerhoff's work on Practical Theology as being done from this perspective, e.g., *Building God's People,* Seabury Press, New York, 1983 which shows how catechesis touches on all aspects of Christian life and the church's ministry. And see also T. Groome's most recent major work, *Sharing Faith,* Harper Collins, New York 1991, which is a massive reworking of his model of theological reflection as the cycle of shared-praxis. Groome grounds his approach in the history of philosophy and theology and in the dimensions of the practice of the church's mission.
13 S. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology,* Orbis, New York 1992, where five models are explored in considering how theology relates to culture: the translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic and transcendental models. In R. Shrieter, *Constructing Local Theologies,* SCM, London 1985, ch 4, there is a review of theology as text, wisdom, sure knowledge and praxis, as possible ways for understanding the relationship between theology and culture. See also the responses of theology to the apologetic challenge as explored by W. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology,* Westminster/John Knox, Louisville 1989, where the issues of modernity (foundations, science and pluralism) are reviewed in relation to modern thinkers and two types of theology: revisionism and postliberalism.

possible depending on the dominant culture, the apologetic strategy adopted, and the theological-missiological perspective which is used.[14]

The first levels of Practical Theology require a framework in which to operate and a rationale by which to proceed in the modern context. This is the orientational nature of third level reflection. Dalferth defines orientational knowledge as follows:

> We not only exist in the world but live in it, and we cannot live in it without interpreting it in order to orient ourselves and thus become capable of acting in it. For acting presupposes knowledge of what is the case as well as what might be the case, and in particular the knowledge of how under identical circumstances we could have acted otherwise. We therefore cognitively reconstruct our manifold natural and cultural environments on the basis of our unceasing organic interrelation with them as a common field of action or world in which the actual is placed against a permanent background of the possible. The complexity of our world is thus reduced by selecting some of the available information and ignoring others, and the resulting *orientational knowledge* helps to guide our actions by allowing us to *locate* ourselves in our world and to *order* the world with respect to us. Only knowledge with these kind of *localizing* and *organizing* functions is orientational knowledge.[15]

There can be different kinds of orientational knowledge. In Practical Theology the question is 'which is the most adequate kind of orientational knowledge to meet the needs of the experiential level and the reflective level?' The need for this is something that directs us towards theological traditions that can meet these fundamental requirements where there is an acknowledgement and development of the relationship between theology and interpretation in the construction of positive thought, i.e. a hermeneutical theology that is culturally placed. In its simplest form this is the relationship between theology and philosophy, where theology and philosophy stand for Christianity and Culture. The kind of knowledge and the complexity of what needs to be synthesised might be compared with the concept of a 'discourse context' in biblical interpretation.

Apart from the need to provide meaning and understanding in a complex situation, this level also includes not just interpretation but also an interpretation for *action*: a direction and commitment. Orientation is therefore a kind of prophetic knowledge, or we may say there is a missiological character to the orientational knowledge of Practical Theology. There are different kinds of orientational knowledge and we shall be considering two approaches later – one apologetic and the other more prophetic.

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14 Dalferth, *Theology*, p 57, suggests that there have been five main focii for the relationship between theology and the 'philosophy' of a culture: faith and nature, faith and reason, faith and history, faith and experience, faith and communication. The latter is the present modern stage in which theology works out its mood. For example, a recent book with an interest in Practical Theology which takes seriously the work of Jürgen Habermas is D. S. Browning & F. S. Fiorenza, eds., *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology*, Crossroad, New York 1992.

15 Dalferth, *Theology*, p 204.

If we include the orientational level we can offer a definition of Practical Theology as *that discipline which includes different levels of reflection on praxis as these relate to the Christian tradition and are interpreted according to the orientation of practical Christian knowledge.*

What is missing from this definition is the goal of practical Christian knowledge, but in order to integrate this aspect first we need to consider the work of a Practical Theologian and then review how this dimension can provide a perspective to create a mood for Practical Theology.

Browning and the Revival of Practical Theology

Browning has made an enormous contribution to the revival of Practical Theology. His various books have not only broadened and deepened the discipline but have also provided an eirenic conversation partner for the many theological perspectives concerned with developing Practical Theology. He has increasingly focused on the *congregational practice* of Christian mission. One of his abilities is to synthesise a wide range of developments and bring them to bear on a constructive programme which not only moves the discipline of Practical Theology forward in terms of its own fundamental basis, but also provides examples of what such a Practical Theology looks like. Browning's book A *Fundamental Practical Theology* illustrates both these aspects.[16]

Fundamental Practical Theology

Here, Browning's concern is to put together a whole approach to Practical Theology which includes the experiential/situational level, the reflective level and the orientational level. He places his way of doing Practical Theology within a tradition of practical philosophy which he traces back to Aristotle's practical wisdom, *phronesis.*

Browning wants to show how Practical Theology is closely linked with the fundamentals of what it means to do any kind of theology. He thus develops, following Tracy, what he calls a revised correlation approach in which there is a mutually critical relationship between the interpretation of the theory and practice of the Christian faith and of the interpretation of the theory and practice of the contemporary situation. As such, 'Fundamental practical theology would be the most inclusive understanding of theology, and the disciplines of descriptive, historical, systematic, and strategic practical theology would be sub movements within this larger framework.'[17] Unlike Tracy, Browning does not try to ground his hermeneutics in a transcendental

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16 *A Fundamental Practical Theology,* Fortress, Minneapolis 1991. Apart from the books already cited, Browning has also written the following which are significant for the development of Practical Theology: *Atonement and Psychotherapy,* Westminster, Philadelphia 1966; *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care,* Westminster, Philadelphia 1976; *Pluralism and Personality,* Associated University Press, Toronto 1980; *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care,* Fortress, Philadelphia 1983; *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies,* Fortress, Philadelphia 1987.

17 *A Fundamental,* p 47.

reality but in human action. Thus the criteria for truth are 'the normative and critical grounds of our religious praxis'.[18] Thus reflection on praxis is the basis for determining the criteria for truth.

The heart of Browning's proposal is thus the dynamic reflection of Practical Theology: a movement from situation through reflection and back to practice. In fact, we may say that a key insight is his development and deployment of experiential learning (as used in adult education, including adult Christian education[19]). Browning develops these methods in a highly sophisticated way. In using the reflective cycle of experiential learning he includes in each stage a recognition of different kinds of reflection levels or dimensions and also the different viewpoints of action and virtue in relation to experience and context. The result is a very flexible approach to doing Practical Theology in which the theologian begins with the description of a given situation using human sciences, moves on to the resources of historical theology to explore the religious perspective already uncovered, develops these insights in relation to systematic theology and ethics, and then explores the action implications for a strategic Practical Theology of the situation. *Fundamental Practical Theology* includes the three levels of reflection, and generates a mood for Practical Theology. The revised correlation approach lifts the method of his theology onto the third level in that it offers a kind of orientation. This is what concerns us here.

Kevin Vanhoozer has reviewed Tracy's opinion that theologians express the significance of Christ through two ways, either manifestation or proclamation. Proclamation stresses the otherness of God and manifestation stresses the immanence of God.[20] Browning follows in the manifestation tradition, as does Tracy himself, in which 'Being appears as something I belong to. In manifestation, God is disclosed as present even in ordinary things. Religious classics express "the ambiguous and complex actuality of a lived existence of participation and non-participation in a reality greater than the self"'.[21] We may say that Browning is attempting to explore this greater reality through a thorough reflection on praxis. His method allows him to correlate ordinary experience with religious praxis in order to develop a conversation in which there is a mutual understanding within a single perspective in relation to a wider religious horizon. Browning uses systematics and ethics to talk about this wider horizon and its implications.

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18 Browning, *A Fundamental*, p 47.
19 e.g. G. Gibbs, *Teaching Students to Learn*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes 1981; G. Gibbs, et al., *53 Interesting Things to Do in Your Lectures*, Technical and Educational Services, Bristol 1988; T. Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1980; *Sharing Faith*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1991; M. Knowles, *The Adult Learner* 5th ed, Gulf Publishing, Houston 1990; A. Rogers, *Teaching Adults*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes 1986.
20 K. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, CUP, Cambridge 1990, pp 167ff.
21 Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, 167ff with a quotation from David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, SCM, London 1981, p 200.

Narrative Systematics and the Ethics of Transformation

One of the fascinating things about Browning's work is its inclusiveness. He cannot be reduced to one thing or another, e.g. liberalism or specialised pastoral theology also his way of structuring Practical Theology keeps him open to conversation partners. But Browning is also clear about the need to define the character and goal of Practical Theology. Thus he is committed to both an 'envelope' of *narrative systematics* (Creator, Judge, Redeemer) and an ethical centre focused on *transformation.* This means that his conclusions draw on recognisably Christian systematics and moral theology in providing an orientation for a given context. In addition, as we have seen, his approach is hermeneutically sensitive through the revised correlation method which forms the foundation of his fundamental perspective. However, it is here that some differences begin to develop from the goal of Practical Theology as proposed above. I suggest that the revised correlation method, even if it draws on narrative systematics and moral theology, has as its goal the enactment of practical *religious* knowledge and not practical *Christian* knowledge. This difference is a key issue in the current revival of Practical Theology.

Let us consider how Browning's Practical Theology is oriented, i.e. the perspective of the orientation. Browning's envelope of systematics and his ethics of transformation owes much to Reinhold Niebuhr and to the tradition of deontology. These two form the visional and the obligational dimensions of Practical Theology (which can be critically correlated with cultural anthropology and social anthropology, respectively). We may wish to challenge both the theological and ethical resources upon which Browning is drawing, but he is not concerned about defending the Niebuhrian tradition but rather with deploying this perspective *apologetically* in order to develop a conversation at the level of the cultural horizon, a horizon which he thinks is ultimately religious. He does this in order to establish the *religious* nature of the practical knowledge which is developed at all levels of Practical Theology. Browning can therefore show how practical knowledge, which is interdependent upon the concrete situational levels, is also *religious.*

This emphasis on what I am calling practical religious knowledge as the goal of Practical Theology can be seen in Browning's exploration of transformation in chapter 11 of *A Fundamental Practical Theology.* Here he says that the goal of Practical Theology is to join together the norms of change and the goals of change. Transformation takes place in a dialogue between the witness and those to whom they witness; the underlying agent of change is God and all other agents of change are metaphors of God's transforming love. Browning sees crisis situations and the witness to transformation as essential conditions for change, but the truly transformative source for change comes from the motivation provided by the horizons of meaning. 'These new horizons transform our fundamental visions and narratives that provide the envelope for practical reason.'[22] His early admission that the

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22 Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, p 285.

description of transformation is difficult to define becomes more and more true as he seeks to describe transformation. In this way he begins to cast doubt on the ability of his approach to produce the criteria for truth which he thinks can be found within praxis. Further, qualifying statements like 'Transformation will be either incomplete or nonexistent if the tension between moral ideals and love is not present'[23] do not help us, even though they are insightful, to achieve a definition of what transformation looks like.

The problem is that we are not given the shape of what the revised correlation between Christianity and culture will look like, so even if we know that transformation should be the result of this correlation, we do not know what this transformation is, or how to recognise it, or perhaps whether it has even taken place. Thus we may say that we have successfully correlated Christianity and culture and a change has taken place, but we cannot fully assess that change and affirm that it is a good transformation. Browning has been careful not to box himself in; his way of transformation which has no pre-givens is therefore a form of religious pluralism in which there is a presumed possibility of correlation between Christianity and culture. This presupposition is problematic: on what is it grounded? The result is a programme which suffers from the same problem as the transformation paradigm originally proposed by H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture*. The problem is that the presumed possibility of a correlation implies too much; this presupposition is the liberal agenda in which it is thought that Christianity can be correlated with culture in an ongoing negotiation whose shape is worked out in the process of critically correlating Christianity with culture. We may therefore see that Browning can guide us in a thorough exploration of the three levels of Practical Theology, but we may also want to say that his approach to the goal of Practical Theology is something which needs to be internalised within a Christian perspective.

Practical religious knowledge

Browning's paper on 'The Nature and Criteria of Theological Scholarship'[24] illustrates the problem and the promise of his position. He rehearses his proposal as a hermeneutics of revised correlation and suggests that the pattern of the fourfold stages of theological reflection (of descriptive, historical, critical and strategic studies) is a way of resolving the disjunction between religious and theological studies. However, the wider strategy of his proposals now begins to emerge. He suggests that both theological studies and religious studies attempt to establish a critical distance from their subject:

> The distance or objectivity that theological studies achieves comes out of a prior commitment to educate leaders for the broad tasks of the church in its mission to the world. The objectivity or distance which religious

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23 Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, p 288.
24 Don Browning, 'The Nature and Criteria of Theological Scholarship', prepared for the Council on Theological Scholarship and Research, 1994.

studies achieves comes out of a prior commitment to the health and integrity of a wide range of institutions and cultural expressions (law, medicine, education, the arts). This would include religious institutions and their associated cultural monuments.[25]

The question is: what grounds the significance and relationship of theological and religious studies in the study of the mission of the church in the world or religious and cultural institutions? What Browning seems to argue for is the possibility of a conversation between theology and religious studies from an agreed perspective, but the perspective is a *religious*, not a *Christian theological* perspective:

... the primary goal of both religious studies and theological education is to increase critical self-understanding about the *religious* traditions which have formed our culture, institutions and moral sensibility. The task of both types of scholarship is to deepen our understanding of the *religious* 'affective history' which already has shaped our lives in ways we do not fully understand.[26]

Thus religious studies and theological studies are different approaches to exploring the 'Western *religious* traditions'.[27] However, it is not as though the theological perspective is internal to the tradition and the religious perspective is external: 'To be critical, both approaches should attempt to capture the abiding themes of these Western traditions and test them *internally* by distinguishing authentic from inauthentic expressions. Furthermore, both approaches should test these traditions *externally* by analysing their adequacy in light of various models of experience, reason, and the claims of other religious traditions.'[28] Thus the internal and external perspectives are included within the greater perspective of the study of the praxis of the Western *religious* traditions.

Browning's position is the perspective of the study of tradition; this has been the foundational perspective of the religious studies approach. He is now enclosing the religious studies and theological studies perspectives within this wider perspective by inviting these disciplines to see themselves positioned within and without the tradition. However, for him, theological studies and religious studies find their common centre in the exploration of the tradition of *religious* practice which can be explored internally and externally by both.

This sophisticated and eirenic strategy implies the kind of religious horizon which Schleiermacher's project also proposed, and indeed in another paper Browning indicates his affinity for Schleiermacher's project.[29] In his analysis of Schleiermacher, Dalferth suggests that Schleiermacher offered a systematic correlation between culture and theology, reason and

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25 Browning, 'The Nature', p 2. This statement is taken from Browning's more condensed version of his paper, privately distributed.
26 rowning, 'The Nature', p 8, my emphasis.
27 Browning, 'The Nature', p 9, my emphasis.
28 Browning, 'The Nature', p 9, Browning's emphasis.
29 Browning, 'Methods and Foundations'.

faith, i.e. internal and external perspectives, on the basis of a religious dimension to human existence. This Dalferth calls the difference-in-unity model[30] where universal and absolute claims to truth were distinguished so that 'theology conceived Christian faith to be both one religion amongst others and a comprehensive view of reality as a whole. External and internal perspectives were combined by integrating two universal perspectives in a uniform consciousness of truth which united concern for religion and the scientific spirit of the age.'[31] If we follow Browning we will have a religious perspective as the common ground for a religious and a theological approach to the internal and external perspectives on faith.

We may still wish to adopt Browning's religious hermeneutical approach but it would require that it be enfolded within a *theological* perspective in which was affirmed the 'strangeness' of Christian revelation and the otherness of the divine in the *miracle* of the 'correlation' between divinity and humanity in Christ. The kind of 'strangeness' I'm thinking of is discussed in Lamb's *Solidarity with Victims*.[32] Lamb's theological category number three, 'The Primacy of Faith-Love', is the model which describes the Barthian/ Balthasarian approach to the relationship between theory and praxis, in which there is a non-identity between the reality of God in Christ and the question of how theory and praxis are related. I would like to think that this type corresponds to Dalferth's unity-indifference model which is Barth's position, contrasting to that of Schleiermacher. In this model (which is *Dalferth's* interpretation of Barth) the whole of the correlation of faith and reason in relation to religion is internalised within a grand hermeneutical exercise which is established on the basis of the eschatological reality of Jesus as the risen Lord.

On the issue of criteria for transformation I therefore take the line that there are some differences between the religious and theological studies approaches. The possibility of an agreed common method which Browning proposes presumes the kind of difference-in-unity model which I think is at issue. In Gadamerian terms, I would suggest that there could not be an agreed 'method' because there was still a question of 'truth', and the latter takes priority (that is, from the theological perspective). That which represents this question of truth is the Word of God which is a given and stands for the discontinuity of the faith-love reality of God in Jesus Christ in relation to the theory/practice issue. The key for understanding the relationship of the strangeness of divinity in relation to humanity within the life of faith is the person of Jesus understood as an eschatological reality: a Jesus who remains Lord even in the utter subjectivity of his involvement with our lives through the paraclesis of the Holy Spirit.

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30 Dalferth, *Theology*, ch. 9, but see n 33 below and also chapters 4 and 6 of Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1992.
31 Dalferth, *Theology*, ch. 99.
32 M. Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, Crossroad, New York 1982, ch. 3.

It is the relationship between the Bible and the Christian witness which must form the wider hermeneutical exercise in which the theory-practice issue can be resolved along the lines of a fundamental practical theology. And I suggest that the person of Jesus provides the criteria for exploring the content of narrative systematics and the ethics of transformation. The result of this kind of theological reflection is practical Christian knowledge.

Browning has contributed much to the recovery of Practical Theology: he has helped to develop a rationale and a method for the discipline and shown how the discipline can proceed. However, in response to some of his ground-breaking work, I want to suggest that we need a *theological* Practical Theology not a *religious* Practical Theology.[33] Thus my concern in relation to Browning is that his Practical Theology remains too much focused on method and not enough on truth.[34]

Barth – the three levels reviewed

Barth offers a model of divinity which is a thoroughgoing practical herme-neutics. Here I consider briefly Barth's *theologia* – his theology of theological knowledge.

At the first level, we may say that Barth's theology is not as unresponsive to human experience as has been mediated by those popular secondary sources which were once used to provide an introduction to his thought. Nowadays there is another opinion, for example a recent essay by Alan Torrance[35] explores the way in which experience is included by Barth through the ninefold process of the 'acknowledgement' by the believer of the Word of God. Torrance does not explore the ninefold process of acknowl-edgement in terms of a reflective cycle, but that is what seems to be happening. We may say that Barth's concern with human experience was at the heart of his desire to write a theology which could be preached from the pulpit. His work is resonant with mission themes and implications. In this sense he can be read as providing great encouragement to the development of the 'way of being and doing' approach to Practical Theology, not by theologising human existence, but by affirming its humanness in relation to God's godness. Such a positive reading of Barth's emphasis on the otherness of God would provide an alternative to those who see Barth's God as a tyrant

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33 I. U. Dalferth in his essay 'The Visible and the Invisible: Luther's Legacy of a Theological Theology' in S. Sykes, *England and Germany*, Lang, Frankfurt 1982, explores Luther's strategy for re-theologising theology, which is a basic idea of this article in relation to Practical Theology.

34 Others have criticised Browning for his over rationalist approach, see S. Pattison & J. Woodward, *A Vision of Pastoral Theology*, Contact, Edinburgh 1994, p 31 n 8, where a more imaginative alternative is envisaged. My major criticism relates to the issues raised by Gadamer in his book *Truth and Method*, where he argues for the priority of the former over the latter.

35 A. Torrance, 'Christian Experience and Divine Revelation in the Theologies of Fredrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth' in I. H. Marshall, ed., *Christian Experience in Theology and Life*, Rutherford House, Edinburgh 1988, pp 109ff.

exercising domination. The strangeness of God in Christ provides the energy to consider the resistance of the 'why?' of human existence in all the particularity of the 'where?' and the 'when?'.

At the second level we may first consider the way in which Barth's theology includes a practical hermeneutic for reflection in the different aspects of *mediation* and *method*. [36] For Barth there is a definite mediation to his theology: he signals this by calling his work *Church Dogmatics*. The change from Christian to *Church* Dogmatics which Barth made when he abandoned his first attempt to rework his theology (i.e. after the Göttingen Dogmatics) indicated that he was making a point about the 'who?' of theology. He was quite concerned to show that the place of the church was crucial for theological reflection, that there was no theology without it being done in relation to the Christian community which is focused on Jesus Christ. This was in order to restate the faith for people of a given time and culture, i.e. theology could not be done on the basis of individual rationality or experience alone[37] and it was to be done for the sake of the church's mission.

Secondly, Barth's method is something which emerges as a 'theology with a spiral binding': there is a circling around a centre, the revelational given, which touches on many aspects of doctrine and life in a kind of rotating fashion which leads on from one theme to the next. The centre is always maintained but never finally defined in a way which would limit the making of another circle of the spiral. An example of this is not only the whole structure of the *Church Dogmatics* with its developing themes of the doctrines of God, creation, reconciliation and redemption, but also the way in which Barth understands the disciplines of theology as a kind of reflective cycle: *explicatio* (Biblical Studies), *meditatio* (Systematic Theology), *applicatio* (Practical Theology) – with Church History supporting all three. His way of expressing his method gives a special emphasis to the Bible. The approach is to listen to what the Bible is saying in a given context, to meditate on what is being said and then to put it into practice. Despite the complexity and length of Barth's theological meditations, his commitment to the practical expression of theological reflection should not be forgotten as the outcome of this threefold reflection.

Barth's theology is also a theology concerned with *mood*. We may say that the mood of the *Church Dogmatics* is something which is distinctive; in fact Barth's theology maintains itself as one of the foremost theologies because of the strength of its mood. The 'what?' of Barth's theology is the 'what?' of theological reflection characterises the argument and content of his thought. There is a distinctive centre without there being an argument for the essence of Christian theology. Hartwell put it:

> His theology is like a vision dating from what may be termed the resurrection-period. It is as if he had walked with Jesus and His disciples during the forty days between Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead

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36 See the summary of Barth's programme in *Church Dogmatics* I/ii, pp 881-884.
37 *Church Dogmatics* I/i, p 1-16.

and His ascension when Jesus no longer appeared to His disciples only as the man Jesus of Nazareth whom they had known in the flesh but as the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, was now truly revealed to them in the full majesty and glory of His Godhead.[38]

Orientation in Barth's theology

Thus at the third level we come to the orientation of a Barthian practical hermeneutics. Here we may recognise that the above two levels have begun to build a possible complete theological orientation; however, nothing is complete without a way of orienting oneself in the world. Dalferth suggests that 'Barth's theology is not only an exemplary piece of constructive dogmatics but a sustained hermeneutical enterprise which does not deny the secularity of the world but reinterprets it theologically in the light of the presence of Christ and the world of meaning which it carries with it.'[39]

For Dalferth this means that Barth uses his basic christological model to reconstruct theology and then reworks secular life and thought from the perspective of this reconstruction: 'at the first level we find statements about theological topics such as Christ, faith, creation or prehistory, at a second level theological statements about non-theological topics such as man, religion, the world or history'.[40] The relationship between the first level and the meta-level is through the analogy of faith, and the rationale for this analogy is the person of Jesus Christ himself who is the eschatological reality who has assumed flesh and is slowly drawing all life to himself in a process in which the world is becoming more real. This process matches the hypostatic union of Christ's divine-human person but emphasises the dependence of creation upon the reality of Christ's eschatological risen reality.[41]

Dalferth describes Barth's theology as the unity-in-difference model: the differences of the faith perspective and the perspective of reason are united but maintained in the unity of the reality of the risen Lord. Barth's model, according to Dalferth, can incorporate the conversation of faith and reason within the orientation of a faith perspective on reality. Thus the experiential level can always be reinterpreted using the resources of the second reflective level on the basis of the hermeneutics of the orientational level which can include both internal and external perspectives. The foundation for this all-encompassing orientation is the revelation of Jesus Christ:

> As a theological category 'revelation' is used to refer not merely to a special source of knowledge alongside other ('natural') sources, but to the primordial eschatological event of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection which for Christians rupture all common experiential contexts and force an irreversible transition from the old life to the new. In this comprehensive sense, theology refers to God's revelation in Christ as the

38 H. Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction*, Duckworth, London 1964, p 98.
39 Dalferth, 'The Visible and the Invisible', p 121.
40 Dalferth, 'The Visible and the Invisible', p 122.
41 Dalferth, 'The Visible and the Invisible', pp 119f.

fundamental principle of Christian life, thought and theology by which all beliefs and actions are to be judged, but which cannot itself be judged by anything more fundamental.[42]

In order for revelation to function in this way and for it to become orientational knowledge, the reality of the risen Lord needs to be known in a way which is localising and directional. This requires that revelation be made operational rather than conceptual. One way of representing this is to use repetition as both the outcome and context in which revelation is understood and practised, i.e. repetition as a practical hermeneutics, a practical hermeneutics of transformation.

I shall bring alongside Browning and Barth some conceptual categories to help us begin to think through the issues and understand what are the alternatives. Thus in what follows I consider the nature of hermeneutics as *repetition* and the alternative of *recollection*.

Caputo on Recollection and Repetition

In his exploration of the nature of hermeneutics Caputo reviews two traditions: that of repetition and recollection.[43] In exploring these themes, he has in mind Plato and Kierkegaard respectively. Caputo's main point is that Plato and Kierkegaard handle the question of the movement of life in two different ways. For Plato (and the Eleàtic tradition) philosophy is about the non-relation of knowledge to motion.

The Being of the soul, Plato maintained, is to return whence it came. Its coming into the world in the first place was a fall, and so the essential thing is to undo the fall as quickly as possible, to redress the wrong which has confined the soul to the realm of change. The essential destiny of the soul is to recover its origins in the sphere of primordial Being and pure essence. Knowledge, accordingly, is not a discovery which forges ahead – for that would be real movement – but recovery, a recollection, which recoups a lost cognition. Learning means to re-establish contact with a cognition that we have always already possessed, which quells the seductive aporia about how we can acquire something new. The philosopher is no friend of movement, and the Platonic account of motion is in fact a theory of anti movement, of undoing what motion there has been.[44]

In contrast, for Kierkegaard, Christian theology offers an alternative perspective (which builds on the tradition of Aristotle's philosophy).

Repetition means the task set for the individual to persevere in time, to stay with the flux, to produce his identity as an effect. And this ultimately is the religious task. The higher expression of repetition is the religious movement in which the individual passes from sin to atonement. Here is the most dramatic instance of a qualitative transition, of a transformation

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42 Dalferth, 'The Visible and the Invisible', p 39.
43 J. D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1989, pp 13-21.
44 Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, p 13.

of the individual in which something new and transcendent is produced. Atonement, which is completely transcendent to the sin which it displaces, is repetition in the highest sense.[45]

These two traditions are both understood as offering approaches to hermeneutics, the kind of hermeneutics which brings what I have called orientational knowledge. The question we must now ask is 'what kind of theological traditions have influenced the development of modern theology and thus the development and identity of Practical Theology?' A Practical Theology which relies on the recollection tradition will not be able to take action, change and movement seriously, whereas one relying on the tradition of repetition will be able to go about the task of reflection with full commitment to action and change.

What Caputo offers is a way of acknowledging the dynamic relationship of God with humanity in the movement of Christ's ongoing self-repetition through enacted practical Christian knowledge. It is not the idea of this repetition which is proposed here, but rather the practice of faith in Christ as the living Lord. Browning's transformation needs to be safeguarded from the possibility of it becoming mere recollection. What is needed is a way of developing a theological perspective on Browning so that his insights about transformation are included within a repetition-type hermeneutic.

Repeating transformation

Barth and Browning can be seen as representing two traditions: in the modern context these are the postliberal and the revisionist schools which can be related to the Yale-Chicago theological continuum in the United States. However, what is important here is that we recognise the underlying strategies of different approaches to Practical Theology.

The roots of these two traditions can be traced back to the tension between the liberal theology of Schleiermacher and Barth's neo-orthodox theology.[46] As Dalferth points out, both are hermeneutically aware and both are trying to solve the problem of how faith and reason are related. Schleiermacher opts to locate the relationship in a correlation of religious consciousness of the One on whom we depend; Barth includes faith and reason perspectives within a faith perspective in which the unity of faith and reason is governed by the christological metaphor of the unity between God and humanity in Christ. However in Barth the means by which faith and reason are related together in this way is by an analogy of faith and not by systematic reason. For our purposes, this analogy of faith has the character of practical Christian knowledge in which the repetition of Christ's life is made known in practice.

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45 J. D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, p 20.
46 In fact, Frei in one of his papers explored the possibility of a rapprochement between Schleiermacher and Barth in connection with Practical Theology: H. Frei, 'Barth and Schleiermacher: Divergence and Convergence' in J. Duke & R. Streetman, *Barth and Schleiermacher: Beyond the Impasse?*, Fortress, Philadelphia 1988.

My proposal is that we include the focus on transformation within an orientation determined by the perspective of Barth's practical Christian knowledge. This would mean an emphasis on repetition as the way of understanding the narrative and values of transformation as these are found and made known through Jesus Christ. Thus the danger of correlation becoming recollection would be avoided. The possibility of this happening is implied in the expected affinity between Christianity and culture which Browning's method reveals. If this expectation becomes the governing fundamental perspective, then recollection becomes the model and there is some kind of overly strong relationship established between the gospel and human culture in which the depth of God's presence is presumed and then discerned as being manifested in ordinary experience.

However, in the repetition approach, there is no presupposition of a fundamental deep presence, rather there is the story of God's incarnational and recreational revelation in Jesus Christ who enables the affirmation of God's presence to be proclaimed in and through the lives of human beings. This kind of intra-textual narrative approach does not simply impose the biblical story on the world, rather there is a negotiated practical hermeneutics in which the world is transformed in the process of what Dalferth calls 'continuous communication'.[47] This enables a harmony between internal and external perspectives through 'creatively designing semiotic means to be used and interpreted in either perspective'.[48] Such an active approach is another way of expressing an evangelical or prophetic imagination where there is no comfortable metaphysics which provides a fundamental synthesis, but rather a challenging call to live life evangelistically by creatively expressing the *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ's being in our lives.

Repetition gets us 'inside' the practical significance of Barth's position.[49] Our created reality is becoming more real as it is assumed into the risen reality of Jesus. This process is the repetition of Jesus in our lives which is a transformation described in referential terms in relation to the risen Lord but not in relation to the empirical, metaphysical or idealist philosophies of created reality.

In the face of the fact that Jesus lives there can be no question on the human side of anything but hearing, obedience, and discipleship. We can only participate in a *repetition* in which we have nothing of our own to utter or express or produce, but can only discharge the debt of response to what come upon us in the encounter. It is in this response that there is achieved the knowledge in which faith and confession occur. In achieving it, humankind can only confirm that the life of Jesus Christ speaks for itself.[50]

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47 Dalferth, 'The Visible and the Invisible', p 148.
48 Dalferth, 'The Visible and the Invisible', p 148.
49 cf *Church Dogmatics* IV/3/i, p 45. Note also the use of the term 'non-identical repetition' in David Ford, 'What Happens in the Eucharist' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48, (1995), pp 359-81.
50 see n 49 above, my emphasis. On the speech of God as understood by Barth, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, CUP, Cambridge 1994, ch. 4. Wolterstorff's criticisms of Barth might be alleviated by the repetition approach.

Our response to the encounter with the risen Lord is the witness of our lives. This witness is the practical repetition of Jesus through the paraclesis of the Holy Spirit: a living theology of enacted practical Christian knowledge.

Conclusion: hermeneutics as practising a repeating transformation

Practical Theology is an interpretative discipline where the integration and use of knowledge are key issues. The Enlightenment made naïve epistemology impossible and modernity also made us aware that all our knowing is an interpretative exercise that has a historical and social context. Thus the movement of life, the flux and motion of human existence, has entered into the very heart of what it means to know. This development has given rise to an acknowledgement that all knowledge is in some way hermeneutical.[51]

This article has begun to explore what it might mean to develop a practical theology in which the reality of the risen Lord Jesus provides the orientation for a enacted Christian knowledge. This practical theology would work at three levels of reflection and provide a hermeneutics in which there is an evangelical interpretation of reality in the practice of witnessing to the risen Lord through an ordinary life which is being transformed in relation to the resurrection reality of Jesus. This does not take for granted the presence of Being in the midst of life, but actively expresses faith in the presence of a God who has revealed himself in Jesus. This practical theology is not a method but a living theology worked out in *ad hoc* creativity, i.e. doing theology on safari.

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51 See H. Peukert, *Science, Action and Fundamental Theology*, MIT, Cambridge 1984; C. Scrag, *Radical Reflection*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette 1980; C. Wood, *The Formation of Christian Understanding*, Westminster, Philadelphia 1981.