Foundations in Practical Theology:

A Critical Appraisal of Contemporary Contributions

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY
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by

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IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Co-Supervisor: Associate Professor Gerard Hall

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Statement of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

Name ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

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Date………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
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Abstract

Practical theology is an emerging discipline with divergent understandings of what practical theology is and a plethora of theological methods on offer. Indicative of the nascent state of the discipline is the lack of an agreed-upon name. At times the prefixes “pastoral” and “practical” are used interchangeably; at other times the prefixes are sharply differentiated.

Underpinning the current thesis is the belief that for practical theology to be taken seriously it needs to have a clear definition, and to know the manner whereby it relates to other theological disciplines and to the human sciences.

Current writing on what is practical theology reflects a celebration of diversity. Systematic approaches to practical theology are simply noted as instances of many possible contradictory or complementary approaches. Informed by the work of Bernard Lonergan, the thesis conducts, through a dialectical process, the critical appraisal of three contemporary contributions to practical theology: A Fundamental Practical Theology, by Don Browning; Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven, by Terry Veling; and Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education, by Rebecca Chopp.

According to Lonergan:

The dialectic process is the actual elimination of the contradiction. For it is a natural tendency of reason to get rid of contradictions. If the contradiction in question is only implicit, it is fast made explicit; then one side of the contradiction can be clearly affirmed and the other denied. Where reason is somewhat tardy, or the matter itself rather difficult, the process is gradual: one by one, different elements of the contradiction are made explicit, until eventually the whole contradiction is eliminated.

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1 Don S. Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991).
Further drawing on the work of Lonergan, I then propose a method in practical theology; and, informed by the definition of systematic theology developed by Robert Doran, I suggest what practical theology is, and discuss what practical theologians do.

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Chapter 1  The State of the Question

1.0  Introduction

Practical theology begins in practice and in reflection on practice. This thesis is a contribution to the development of a methodological approach to the doing of practical theology. It aims to provide a method to facilitate an effective unfolding of the reign of God in particular individual, communal, social and cultural contexts. A specific goal of this thesis is the development of a method of doing practical theology that, as a heuristic structure, would facilitate the clarification of the multivalent relationships between the current situation (usually observed as a problem needing a solution), the religious tradition as received, and the practical theologian as actor in realising the effective unfolding of the reign of God in concrete contemporary human situations. Theological method is currently an area of scholarly dispute in practical theology. Specific methodological questions include: (1) the relationship of practical theology to the forces of decline and progress at work in human history as they concretely work their way through the created universe in culture, community and individuals in their existential relationships to one another and to God; (2) the relationship of practical theology to other theological disciplines; (3) the influence of hermeneutical theories in doing practical theology, particularly in relation to the interpretation of Scripture; and (4) the relationship of the discipline of practical theology to the human sciences.

My interest in practical theology is grounded in the experience of almost thirty years’ work as a pastoral practitioner. My ecclesial, theological and professional background is as a married layman in a mainstream Roman Catholic milieu. I undertook undergraduate theological studies at Yarra Theological Union, a college of the Melbourne College of Divinity. Subsequently I undertook postgraduate theological studies in the secular setting of the University of Sydney, and postgraduate studies in education and pastoral studies at Catholic colleges that later became part of Australian Catholic University. In terms of practice, following a number of years’ teaching in Catholic secondary education I moved to adult faith education, working for an archdiocesan agency in the field of parish renewal and
evangelisation. My next move was into an archdiocesan Catholic social service agency, where the principal tasks were initially marriage and relationship education; later I moved to research and policy development. At the time of writing this thesis I hold a senior position in an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference that is concerned with evangelisation. Concurrent with this role, I teach practical theology and professional ethics at Australian Catholic University and, on a sessional basis, I work with couples as they prepare to be married in the Catholic Church. As a reflective practitioner and theological educator in the mainstream of the Catholic Church, I am searching for new foundations for Christian knowing, doing, and living. My desire is to develop a critically grounded, theoretical method for practical theology that is intellectually coherent, consistent with mainstream Catholicism, and pastorally effective. This thesis proposes that Bernard Lonergan’s theological method has much to offer the field of practical theology as understood in the Catholic Church.

1.1 The development of practical theology

1.1.1 Practical theology and the Second Vatican Council

In November 1973, under the general title of ‘Revolution in Catholic Theology’, Bernard Lonergan delivered the Larkin-Stuart lectures at Trinity College, University of Toronto. The first of the three lectures in the series is called A New Pastoral Theology.¹ In this lecture Lonergan cites the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) from the documents of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), and suggests that, in this document, the term ‘pastoral’ had been employed in a far broader, far more comprehensive sense than was commonly envisaged in pastoral theology in 1973. Lonergan notes that “the statements of the decree were addressed not only to those that invoke the name of Christ but to the whole of mankind [sic].”² Gaudium et Spes presents a vision for the role of the church in the world:

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The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men\textsuperscript{3} \textit{sic} of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men united in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.

Hence this Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. For the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.

Therefore, the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theatre of man’s history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker’s love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ, Who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and reach its fulfilment.\textsuperscript{4}

\textit{Gaudium et Spes} begins with an expression of solidarity between the followers of Christ and the people of this age and notes a particular concern for the poor and afflicted. In the era following the council, these ideas would be developed into the language of a preferential option for the poor and a more fully realised understanding of the notion of solidarity.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3} With regard to the issue of inclusive language, every effort has been made in the body of the text to ensure that non-sexist terms are used. However, quotes cited are reproduced as they appear in their original context. I have made the judgement that noting each particular instance of exclusive language using \textit{sic} would significantly disrupt the flow of the text and therefore have decided not to note such instances henceforth. In making this judgement I am presuming that the reader understands the importance of academic accuracy and appreciates the need for the text to flow to ensure the communication of meaning. A similar convention has been employed with regard to spelling. My own work in the body of the text uses Australian spelling but quotes from texts from the United States of America are reproduced as they appear in their original context.


\textsuperscript{5} For a contemporary ecclesial understanding of these notions, see in particular John Paul II, \textit{Sollicitudo Rei Socialis}, 1987, accessed July 4, 2013,
opening paragraphs of *Gaudium et Spes*, the word ‘pastoral’ appears to equate with ‘evangelisation’ as we find in the text the council’s yearning to explain to everyone what it understands as the mission of the church. We also note however that the church itself is a human community and, as such, is not separated from or above the rest of humanity. Indeed the church is truly linked with the whole of humankind and its history by deep bonds. The opening paragraphs of *Gaudium et Spes* emphatically announce that the mission of the church is for the whole human family, in all of its tragedies and triumphs, with a particular concern for the poor.

In the first of the Larkin-Stuart lectures Lonergan outlines the view that Vatican II initiated a revolution in Roman Catholic theology. For Lonergan, however, the notion of theological change as the fruit of a revolution has a precise meaning. Commenting on the topic of change Lonergan makes a clear distinction between church doctrines and theology as he writes: “The issue, finally, is change in theology: not in Roman Catholic Church doctrines, but on that reflection on doctrines and beliefs that for some centuries has gone by the name of theology.”

Vatican II, for Lonergan, did not usher in any change in church doctrines but it did usher in a revolution with regard to reflection upon the doctrines. Consistent with a desire for precision in meaning, Lonergan distinguishes two types of revolution, namely, political and scientific. His understanding of a political revolution includes the destruction of the previous regime. The revolutions in China, Cuba and Russia are cited as examples of political revolution. On scientific revolution, Lonergan cites Thomas Kuhn, who, he says, views science as an occupation normally regarded as an ongoing series of minor achievements with major breakthroughs occurring only intermittently. Following Kuhn, Lonergan notes that most scientific endeavour is a “matter of working out, of clarifying, of applying in a great variety of manners, the implications of the last great breakthrough.” Writing specifically on this point Lonergan states:


Only intermittently do there occur in the field of science the major achievements that change the whole face of things and initiate a new period of normal science in which the new viewpoint is assimilated, its implications worked out, and their significance applied to problems that have long existed but now could be seen in a far clearer and more revealing light.10

Lonergan applies this analogy to theology, describing the period leading up to Vatican II as whole centuries of normal science in which theological achievements were very minor.11 Lonergan sees *Gaudium et Spes* as a major achievement. It marks a significant shift in what has traditionally been understood as pastoral theology. In this document the term ‘pastoral’ is transposed from an emphasis on the activities of the priest in his parish, “the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ,”12 to an emphasis on the church’s concern for the “whole of humanity” and its relationship to the world, “the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives . . . the theatre of man’s history.”13

According to Lonergan, Vatican II initiated a revolution in Catholic theology without changing Catholic doctrine. In particular, he interprets *Gaudium et Spes* as a major achievement in thinking about pastoral theology in the Catholic Church because it created the environment for the development of a new area of theological investigation. It is to this topic that we now turn.

1.1.2 Field, discourse or discipline?

Kathleen Cahalan charts the dynamic growth of the emergent discipline of practical theology through an examination of Sandra Schneiders’ description of the development of a distinct discipline of ‘spirituality’.14 Cahalan suggests that the developmental stages described by

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12 GS, 1.
13 GS, 3.
Schneiders in the field of spirituality serve as a useful way to conceptualise the progress and current status of practical theology vis-à-vis academic disciplines, in contradistinction to discourses or fields of interest. According to Cahalan, Schneiders describes a ‘discourse’ as an ongoing conversation about a common interest that includes several groups, including professionals, specialists, teachers, and practitioners of all sorts. According to Cahalan, Schneiders warns, however, that a discourse “risks becoming a catch-all term for whatever anyone wants.”

In a similar manner, Schneiders describes a ‘field of interest’ as pertaining to “an open space in which activities which have something in common take place.” For Cahalan, following Schneiders, a discipline is distinct from either a discourse or a field of interest. Specifically a discipline is an activity that includes teaching, learning, research, and writing undertaken in an academic context, and involves the formation of discipline-specific professional associations.

Using the distinctions cited by Cahalan, I suggest that, in the Catholic Church, pastoral theology has principally operated as a quasi-discipline in the context of formation for ministry. That is, up until the breakthrough of Vatican II, pastoral/practical theology was seen as applied systematic theology concerned with equipping a priest to undertake his

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15 Cahalan, “Beyond Pastoral Theology.”
parochial duties. Thus defined, it has only been relatively recently\textsuperscript{18} that ‘practical theology’ has begun to emerge as a distinct discipline in the Catholic Church. More broadly, it is also only relatively recently that practical theology has developed from a field of interest exercised by a few talented and dedicated individuals into a nascent unique academic discipline complete with professional associations and peer-reviewed journals.\textsuperscript{19} This development will be addressed further later in this chapter.

On the issue of pastoral theology as a quasi-discipline, Cahalan describes the state of pastoral theology in Catholic tertiary settings in the United States as follows:

[Pastoral theology] has never gained much of an identity or status in Catholic theological education; it has few of the identifying markers of a discipline, such as academic journals, a professional society, or doctoral programs; it suffers from low regard and status, and positions in pastoral theology are often filled by part-time teachers, many of whom lack doctoral credentials.\textsuperscript{20}

I suggest that Cahalan’s description of the situation vis-à-vis the status of pastoral theology in the United States mirrors that in Australia.

1.2 The current state of practical theology

1.2.1 Practical theology/ pastoral theology

Consistent with Cahalan’s description, I propose that, as an academic discipline, practical theology is in the early stages of its development. That is, because the nature and purpose of practical theology are not clear, there is an inherent difficulty in practical theology’s

\textsuperscript{18} See Appendix C. One indication of the relative newness of practical theology as a discipline is the “history” page on the website of the International Association of Practical Theology (see Appendix D), which says: “in the future you will find a brief history of the International Academy of Practical Theology. For now we mention with gratitude the names of the founding fathers/mothers, Riet Bons-Storm, Don Browning, James Fowler, Karl Ernst, Nipkow, Rick Osmer, Dietrich Rossler, Friedrich Schweitzer, Hans Van der Ven,” accessed February 13, 2008, http://www.ia-pt.org. This page also has links to corrections about past conferences. The earliest link is labelled “Manchester 2003.”

\textsuperscript{19} An example of such a journal is the International Journal of Practical Theology, edited by Wilhelm Grab, Elaine Graham, and James Nieman, and published twice a year by De Gruyter. This journal began in 1997.

\textsuperscript{20} Cahalan, “Beyond Pastoral Theology.”
establishing fruitful dialogue with other theological disciplines and with the human sciences. Indicative of the unsettled state of the discipline is the apparent lack of agreement with regard to its name. For some, ‘practical theology’ is the term used in Protestant circles for what Catholics refer to as ‘pastoral theology’. Others propose that practical theology is a subgenus of pastoral theology. Yet others propose that pastoral theology is a subgenus of practical theology. It is to this issue that we now turn.

The Society for Pastoral Theology (SPT) is an association of scholars and teachers based in the United States, appears to view pastoral theology as a type of practical theology. The SPT’s Mission Statement, Identity and Purpose states: “We understand pastoral theology as a constructive practical theological enterprise focused on the religious care of persons, families and communities. As such, it draws on interdisciplinary methods growing out of classical and contemporary theological traditions.”

For the SPT, pastoral theology is a type of practical theology that is focused on the religious care of persons, families and communities and is concerned with activities that occur within a church community.

The Association of Practical Theology (APT) is an association that appears to have developed out of an interest group at American Academy of Religion conferences. On the APT website, the purpose of the association is described as “the promotion of critical discourse that integrates theological reflection and practice.”

For the APT, practical theology is “an integrative hermeneutical endeavour at the heart of theological education, characterizing not only the ministerial sub-disciplines but also a manner and method of engaged reflection.” Embedded in this description is the suggestion that the manner and method of practical theology might also influence theological education more broadly. In this instance, practical theology appears not to be restricted to education for ministry but aims to have an influence on theological education in general.


23 “Association of Practical Theology.”
The *International Academy of Practical Theology* (IAPT) views itself as an academic association and has a different outlook from that of the APT or the SPT. For the IAPT, “practical theology serves the practice of the Christian church in society.” On this view, the church, in its mission to society, is highlighted, rather than the role of ministry within the church. On the IAPT website, the academy is described as “a scholarly organization dedicated primarily to study and analysis of the theory of theologically informed practice.” Whereas the APT and SPT are primarily concerned with theological education, the IAPT is primarily concerned with theologically informed practice. In paragraph II of the IAPT by-laws, “Description of the Academy,” practical theology is described as a primary discipline that contains the ministerial subdisciplines of pastoral care, homiletics, religious education and liturgy. Of note is that social service in both the ecclesial and public spheres is listed in this section of the by-laws as a discipline to which the IAPT is oriented. The inclusion of social services signals that this academy views practical theology as concerned with issues beyond theological education and the practice of ministry to include reflection on the work of church-based service agencies that have a public focus. Other areas of interest and inquiry listed in this section of the by-laws are the application of organisational theories in congregational studies and church development.

A key concern for the IAPT appears to be with theological method and the development of models to account for the theoretical coherence and unity of the discipline engaged in doing practical theology. The IAPT is interested in investigating and developing comprehensive frameworks for ordering practical theology and in exploring the relationship of practical theology to other theological disciplines and to modern human sciences. The central concern of the current thesis echoes the interest of the IAPT.

Turning now to descriptions and definitions of practical theology as provided by individual authors: in the foreword to Terry Veling’s book, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in

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25 International Academy of Practical Theology, “Description.”
26 International Academy of Practical Theology, “Description.”
27 International Academy of Practical Theology, “Description.”
Heaven (henceforth Practical Theology), the influential practical theologian, Bernard Lee, lists a range of possible definitions for practical theology as follows:

Practical theology has multiple meanings. A common one in Protestant circles, reflected in the dictionary definition is the study of institutional activities of religion (as preaching, church administration, pastoral care and liturgics). Another meaning, common in Catholic culture, makes practical theology and pastoral theology interchangeable. Still another meaning is that it is applied systematic theology.

Lee notes that denominational affiliation influences how practical theology is understood and suggests that it is common in Catholic circles not to differentiate between pastoral theology and practical theology.

In the lead article of The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology, Woodward and Pattison write:

Practical theology is unsystematic. Because it continuously has to re-engage with fragmented realities and changes of the contemporary world and the issues it presents, much practical theology is not systematic or complete. It provides shafts of light into situations and issues rather than final answers or durable solutions. It is, in a way ‘throwaway’ theology that has always to reinvent its tasks and methods.

It seems that, for Woodward and Pattison, the practical pastoral response to the fragmented, postmodern world is an intentionally unsystematic ‘throwaway’ theology. It also appears that a partial, fragmented and unsystematic theological response to complex practical problems is the best that practical theology can offer.

Published in English in the mid-1960s Karl Rahner observes: “Since there is no really clear and generally accepted agreement on the Catholic side as to what practical theology is and should be, and consequently there is amongst us no general consensus as to its relationship with the other departments of theological study and as to what demands it can and must make

29 Veling, Practical Theology, xi.
While it is nearly fifty years since Rahner made this observation, there is still no really clear and generally accepted agreement on the Catholic side as to what practical theology is or should be.

Rahner defines practical theology as “that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualisation here and now – both that which is and that which ought to be.” He further suggests that the church must reflect consciously upon the question of how its self-actualisation is to take place out of, and in response to, its given situation in each instance. For Rahner, practical theology is the scientific organisation of this reflection. He continues: “In order to be able to perform this analysis of the present by means of scientific reflection and to recognise the Church’s situation, practical theology certainly needs sociology, political science, contemporary history etc.” Rahner is clearly sympathetic to the use of these disciplines in theology. He does however express the need for caution, warning that practical theology cannot simply use these social sciences uncritically as all these sciences:

are in the nature of ancillary studies for practical theology. However, although the contemporary analysis provided by these profane sciences is necessary and sufficient for its use, it cannot simply draw on it uncritically as though it were already complete and given. Practical theology must itself critically distil this analysis within a theological and ecclesial perspective, a task which cannot be taken over by any other theological discipline.

Rahner suggests that one of the tasks proper to practical theology is the critical analysis of the social sciences within a theological and ecclesial perspective. It appears that he sees the relationship between the social sciences and practical theology as one in which, first, the social sciences are critically evaluated from a theological and ecclesial perspective, and then, following the distillation process of critical evaluation, the modified human sciences are employed to assist the church to critically reflect upon its present self-actualisation.

31 Rahner, Practical Theology, 101.
32 Rahner, Practical Theology, 101.
33 Rahner, Practical Theology, 103.
34 Rahner, Practical Theology, 105.
35 Rahner, Practical Theology, 105.
1.2.2 Pastoral theology as a scientific discipline

Writing specifically on the place of pastoral theology in the framework of scholastic theology disciplines, Whelan asserts:

Scholastic theology was based on the Aristotelian principle that what is most scientific is that which defines things according to their unchangeable causal forms. As pastoral theology obviously dealt with a changeable thing such as pastoral practice (it will have different characteristics in different places) it could not therefore be scientific and must be considered only a kind of second order theological discipline.36

For Whelan, when Catholic theology was grounded in a neo-scholastic notion of immutable and universal causes, pastoral theology was seen as second-rate, not really worthy of serious theological investigations. By contrast, Protestant theology remains influenced by Luther’s statement that “real theology is practical theology and Christ lies at its foundations and whose death mediated faith to us. All those who dissent from us today and who refuse to profess our doctrine are those given to speculation.”37

For Luther, those given to speculation are those who make use of scholastic philosophy. In both the Protestant and Catholic traditions, however, practical/pastoral theology had been constrained. It was (and is) viewed as a second-rate quasi-discipline in Catholic circles, “having a subordinate role within a constellation of other theological subjects which had a more clearly philosophical basis.”38 In Protestant circles it was (and is) restricted to a type of applied ethics.39 According to Whelan, Protestants “saw practical theology having a role within an approach to theology that was itself practical and which rejected philosophical speculation.”40 Whelan goes on to describe how, in both traditions, manuals for pastors were developed. The Protestant manual was developed in a context in which all theology was seen

37 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
38 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
39 Within the overall “practical task” of doing theology, Schleiermacher distinguished a subdiscipline that also had the title of “practical theology.” We shall see this pattern continued in A Fundamental Practical Theology, where Browning distinguishes a subdiscipline he calls “strategic practical theology.”
40 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
as practical. The theological sub-discipline of “practical theology” grew out of reflection on the manuals. In Catholic circles, manuals for “properly scientific” dogmatic theology served as the model for manuals in pastoral theology. This modelling reinforced the idea that pastoral theology is a second-rate quasi-theological discipline.41

Despite the differences in approach and background between Catholic and Protestant circles, from the seventeenth century onwards, more or less the same discipline emerged in each tradition, though under different titles. “Differences lay in the fact that Protestants called it practical theology and Catholics called it pastoral theology.”42 Neither Catholics nor Protestants considered practical/pastoral theology to be scientific. “Protestants tended to accept that none of theology was scientific [and] Catholics laid their hope in the scientific basis of faith in dogmatic theology.”43

From a contemporary perspective, Whelan writes on Lonergan’s understanding of practical theology as follows:

Lonergan will claim that only a theology that takes historical consciousness seriously will have credibility in the modern world but that this philosophical approach must be critical of particular biases that are also present in modern philosophy. He [Lonergan] claims that such a new approach to theology would include a new approach to the discipline of pastoral or practical theology which would consider it to be fully scientific and to be a theological discipline of equal dignity with others.44

For Lonergan, when the whole of Catholic theology takes historical consciousness seriously, practical theology will be seen as a theological discipline that shares equal dignity with other theological disciplines. By contrast, one contemporary understanding of practical theology is that of the craft of practising theology. This leads us to the next topic for investigation.

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41 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
42 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
43 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
44 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
1.3 Practice as theology, theology as practice
1.3.1 Theology as a craft

In *Practical Theology* Terry Veling asserts that the whole discipline of theology is fragmented as a result of specialisation.\(^45\) Veling views the development of theory and the ever more refined theological definitions and distinctions that have developed as a result of focused theological scholarship as a fall from a previous, idyllic state. According to Veling, practical theology is seeking to reintegrate theology “into the weave and fabric of human living, in which theology becomes a ‘practice’ or a way of life.”\(^46\) Under the heading, *A Craft More Than a Method*, Veling cites the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, claiming that, “in contrast to ‘method’, Gadamer preferred to speak of ‘truth’ or ‘understanding.’”\(^47\) Veling continues in this vein: “whereas method tends to distance us from what we seek to know – as though we were mere observers of life – understanding seeks to invite our very selves into the interpretive process.”\(^48\) Here Veling appears to identify “understanding” with the process of interpretation. To illustrate his viewpoint in relation to “understanding,” Veling cites an analogy used by Martin Heidegger of an apprentice cabinet-maker learning his craft. Heidegger describes two types of cabinet-makers. One type simply works with wood to produce objects. Such a woodworker is then contrasted with the “true” cabinet-maker. The “true” cabinet-maker “responds above all to the different kinds of wood and to the shapes slumbering within the wood.”\(^49\) But more than this, the “true” cabinet-maker responds “to wood as it enters into man’s dwelling with all the hidden riches of its nature.”\(^50\)

For Veling, the “true” cabinet-maker has come to “understand” the hidden riches of the nature of wood through “practical wisdom” or *phronēsis*. This practical wisdom, this way of understanding wood, has been shaped through many years of reflective practice to the point when the practice of the craft becomes a way of life, a *habitus*, a disposition of the mind and heart from which actions in relation to working with wood flow naturally. In describing

\(^{45}\) See Veling, *Practical Theology*, 3.
\(^{46}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 3.
\(^{47}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 15.
\(^{48}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 15.
\(^{49}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.
\(^{50}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.
practical theology as a craft, Veling proposes that *phronēsis* – in this case, practical theological wisdom – is the fruit of many years of Christian practice leading to *habitus*. That is a disposition of the mind and heart from which actions consistent with Christian life flow naturally. Viewed as a craft, practical theology is grounded in the notion that it is coterminous with practice understood to include all forms of activity that arise from living as a Christian. On this view, one becomes a better practical theologian, a better Christian, by gaining practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) through sustained practice. The aim is to reach the point when one’s Christian practice becomes a way of life (*habitus*).

For Veling, “understanding” is opposed to “method.” Because it is through “understanding” that all of the different aspects of living a Christian life come together as an integrated whole “understanding” is viewed as the pinnacle of Christian life and practice. “Method” by contrast is characterised as distancing practitioners from what they seek to know. Veling portrays those who are concerned with method as distant observers of life. Veling’s own (unacknowledged) theological method will be explored in chapter 4 of this thesis. His view of practical theology has a romantic tone complete with a vision of an idealised past. In contrast, Rahner, who also counts the work of Heidegger as one of his influences,\(^5\) sees practical theology as a science.

1.3.2 Theology as a science

According to Lonergan, a science emerges when thinking in a given field moves to the level of system.\(^5\) Historical examples cited by Lonergan include Euclid in geometry, Newton in mechanics, and Mendeleev in chemistry. What each of these thinkers did was to collect and organise the ideas that had preceded them and place the disparate data in an organised, unified system. Each system then operates and provides a ground for further development. For example, in chemistry, over many years, there had been experiments, theories and attempts at setting up a system. However, it was only in 1869, when Mendeleev proposed the

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periodic table as a system that could account for, and organise, all the known elements that the science of chemistry could begin.\textsuperscript{53}

Lonergan proposes that theology became a science (in a way similar to chemistry) when it became “a single whole with a clear method, clear criteria, and full awareness of what pertains to it and what does not.”\textsuperscript{54} For Lonergan, this occurred with the discovery of the supernatural order by Philip the Chancellor in about 1230. Simply put, the supernatural order sets out the following sets of terms and relations: grace is above nature, faith is above reason, charity is above ordinary human good will, and merit for eternal life is above any human deserts.\textsuperscript{55} According to Lonergan, with the discovery of the supernatural order, “theology became a subject all by itself with a domain of its own.”\textsuperscript{56} Although the terms “grace” and “nature” had been used by theologians of the twelfth century, including Anselm, Abelard and Richard of St Victor, they all had great difficulty distinguishing between the mysteries of faith and the truths of natural reason. The problem was that they “could not figure out why it was that nature was not a grace too.”\textsuperscript{57} “With the notion of the supernatural there were settled the object or field of theology, the method of theology, the fundamental criteria of theology.”\textsuperscript{58} Operating in this framework in order to ascertain whether a question is theological or not, one simply asks the question: “Is it supernatural?” Lonergan proposes that, with the discovery of the supernatural order, the relationship between “nature” and “grace” became clearer and it became possible to accurately describe the relationship between grace, Christ and the church. He writes: “there is an entitative order of grace, faith,


\textsuperscript{55} See Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 242.

\textsuperscript{56} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 242.

\textsuperscript{57} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 242.

\textsuperscript{58} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 243.
charity, and merit that comes to us through Christ, that is known by faith, that is realized by charity, that is socialized in the mystical body which is the church.”

As noted, Lonergan understands a “science” to emerge when thinking in a given field moves to the level of system. Another definition of “science” is one proposed by Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism. Comte rejected as science all disciplines that had any normative claims as to how things should be. He proposed that only attempts to describe how things “are,” the so-called positive sciences, can be considered science. Comte listed six major positive sciences in hierarchical order, ranging from the most abstract and independent to the most concrete and dependent. In order, Comte’s list reads: mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology. It would seem from this list that Comte admits the study of society as a science but rejects the possibility of a science of the human person. On this view anthropology and psychology in all there many forms are less than sciences and philosophy is at best a generalised theory.

Voegelin suggests that Comte’s understanding of science and his views on philosophy have been extraordinarily influential in Western academic circles. Voegelin writes on this influence as follows: “The popular assumption that mathematical natural science is the model of science par excellence, and that an operation not using its methods cannot be characterized as scientific, is neither a proposition of mathematical science, nor any science whatsoever, but merely an ideological dogma thriving in the sphere of scientism.”

Following Voegelin, it can be argued that a form of scientism provides the background for much of Western education at all levels and that incrementally this view has filtered, in an uncritical manner, into the thought forms of modern Western individuals and their intellectual culture. In this intellectual milieu, theology is viewed by many as somewhat

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arcane, related to esoteric practices and beliefs on the fringe of the mainstream intellectual milieu. On this point Lonergan writes: “today the English word, science, means natural science. One descends a rung or more in the ladder when one speaks of behavioural or human sciences. Theologians finally often have to be content if their subject is included in a list not of sciences but of academic disciplines.”

In reference to practical theology Browning makes a similar point:

the field of practical theology has been throughout its history the most beleaguered and despised of the theological disciplines. The discipline of theology itself has had few friends, even in the church. To admit in academic circles that one is a theologian has been, in recent years, to court embarrassment. To admit one is a practical theologian invites even deeper scepticism. To admit in a major university that one is a practical theologian has been to invite humiliation.

In chapter 3 of this thesis we will critically examine Browning’s attempt to demonstrate to his academic colleagues the utility of practical theology. Through the course of this thesis, we shall see that theology shares a number of methodological similarities with the social sciences, history and philosophy.

1.3.3 Theology as a methodological discipline

The designation “method,” prefixed by a name in common use, indicates a step-by-step approach, proposed by an expert, to a problem or issue. One might find such an approach in a recipe book or a do-it-yourself exercise and diet weight-loss program. Such methods are akin to “a set of rules that, even when followed blindly by anyone, none the less yield satisfactory results.”

Lonergan concedes that “method” understood in this way may be useful and effective in setting up an assembly line or in developing ways to clean clothes in “The New Method Laundry”; however, this is not the type of method he proposes for doing theology. For Lonergan, “a method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding

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cumulative and progressive results.”

In contrast to the notion of “method” as an assembly line, where each person has a prescribed role and the product is predetermined, for Lonergan, method is a “framework for collaborative creativity.”

Building on Lonergan’s work, Doran defines theology as:

A ‘disciplined, methodologically tutored reflection on two interrelated dimensions of reality’: first, ‘the supernatural self-communication of God in grace to historically emergent humankind,’ a self-communication that reaches its irreversible climax in Jesus Christ; and second, ‘the existential relationship of persons to God, to one another in culture and community, to their very selves, to the created universe’ and the forces of decline and progress at work in human history.

It is beyond the scope of this introductory chapter to develop Doran’s definition. It will however be explored in some detail in chapter 6 of this thesis. Lonergan’s thinking on theological method, on the other hand, will be explored in chapter 2. Later, again in chapter 6, the notion of the dynamic development of practical theology as an emergent, fully fledged theological discipline will be addressed.

The notion of method as “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results” is in stark contrast to the notion of method as an assembly line, where each person has a prescribed role and the product is predetermined. As just mentioned, method, for Lonergan, is a “framework for collaborative creativity.” One concrete contemporary example of method in theology, operating as a collaborative framework to yield cumulative and progressive results, is the process by which the magisterium came to affirm the church’s preferential option for the poor. This process involved practical theologians reflecting on the “reception” of the gospel in particular contexts and inviting systematic theologians to make sense of their reflections. Subsequently systematic theologians invited those who work in dogmatic theology to re-evaluate doctrinal positions in the light of work done in systematics. Then, through developments in dogmatic

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theology, the magisterium further refined its understanding of the permanent deposit of faith. The preferential option for the poor was not always part of the permanent deposit of faith, but it is now.\(^{72}\) A mention of the magisterium inevitably leads to discussion on theology as an ecclesial discipline.

### 1.3.4 Theology as an ecclesial discipline

According to Lonergan, “a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix.”\(^{73}\) Christians typically practise their religion in and through a historical Christian community. Thus understood, I suggest that Lonergan’s statement can be modified to read: “A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion as exercised in a particular ecclesial context.” The particular context for this thesis and its author is the Catholic Church. Theologians working in the Catholic Church are understood by that ecclesial community to be exercising an ecclesial vocation.\(^{74}\) We have already noted that from the seventeenth century onwards practical

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\(^{73}\) Lonergan, *Method*, xi.


Examining both documents together, the following characteristics of a Catholic theologian arise. Primarily, the theologian is one who responds to a personal call from God. Secondly, the call is received, understood and exercised in an ecclesial context. Thirdly, for a Catholic, a constitutive element of the ecclesial context is the historical authoritative teaching body, the magisterium. Fourthly, the relationship between the magisterium, the theologian and the word of God as revealed in Scripture and tradition is as follows: the whole church is subject to the word of God and the magisterium has the authoritative role within the church to faithfully communicate the deposit of faith to the current generation and preserve it as the living word of God for future generations. The task of the Catholic theologian is to assist the magisterium in its task.
theology more or less emerged as a field of interest, with Protestants calling it “practical theology” and Catholics calling it “pastoral theology.” We have also noted that the practical theology professional associations are discipline-specific and ecumenical. Two of the books that will be evaluated later in this thesis, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* by Don Browning, and *Saving Work* by Rebecca Chopp, were written by theologians who are members of, or significantly influenced by, Protestant ecclesial communities. The third book, *Practical Theology* by Terry Veling, we shall see, is significantly influenced by a particular strand of Jewish theological reflections. We have observed that, in the Catholic Church, practical theology as a nascent theological discipline has really only begun to take shape since Vatican II. Consequently, in terms of theological method, practical theologians who

Thus described, it must be stressed, however, that theologians perform their role in assisting the magisterium not merely as servants of the magisterium, as it were, waiting upon the teaching authority of the church for specific requests for assistance. The notion of an ecclesial vocation denotes the privilege of baptism bestowing the right and the responsibility of every baptised Christian to seek to understand his or her faith in the concrete historical context in which it has been received. The particular role of the dogmatic and systematic theologian is to assist the magisterium in its understanding of the faith as received. Equally, the role of the practical theologian is to mediate the faith, as understood, to particular concrete historical contexts and to communicate an understanding of particular concrete historical contexts to the realm of systematic theology.

It has been my experience that practical theologians from both Catholic and Protestant traditions work with little difficulty in forming and maintaining ecumenical professional associations concerned with practical theology. By way of contrast, professional associations concerned with systematic theology tend to be divided along ecclesial lines. While there is some content-related and methodological overlap between Protestant systematic theology and Catholic systematic theology, and there exist instances of formal ecumenical dialogical endeavours, for the most part, ecclesial and methodological differences between these two theological traditions in practice prohibit the formation of professional associations that are broadly ecumenical. For example, following a preamble, the first point in the Constitution of the Australian Catholic Theological Association reads: “The aims of the association shall be: … 2.1 To foster systematic theological reflection within the Catholic tradition” (Australian Catholic Theological Association, accessed March 21, 2012, http://www.catholictheology.asn.au/images/stories/actaconstitution.pdf).

Similarly, in the Constitution of the Catholic Theological Society of America, its purpose is stated as: “within the context of the Roman Catholic tradition, shall be to promote studies and research in theology, to relate theological science to current problems, and to foster a more effective theological education, by providing a forum for an exchange of views among theologians and with scholars in other disciplines.” Catholic Theological Society of America, accessed March 21, 2012, http://www.ctsa-online.org/constitution.html.
broadly operate in the context of the Catholic Church often draw upon theological methods developed in other traditions.

As will become evident, this thesis has two main foci. The first is to critically evaluate the theological methods that are currently influential for Catholic pastoral practitioners and practical theologians. The second is to propose a method of practical theology that is intellectually coherent, pastorally effective, and consistent with a mainstream Catholic doctrinal and theological understanding of the mission and message of Jesus Christ.

1.3.4.1 Practical theology and the communication of the message of Christ

According to Lonergan the Christian church is “the community that results from the outer communication of Christ’s message and from the inner gift of God’s love.” He continues, stating that “since God can be counted on to bestow his grace, practical theology is concerned with the effective communication of Christ’s message.” For Lonergan the church is the community formed as a result of a combination of the inner gift of God’s love, which God bestows, and the effective communication of Christ’s message. In such a vision the importance of practical theology for the church cannot be overestimated, for, without practical theology, Christ’s message is not effectively communicated. If Christ’s message is not effectively communicated the church ceases to exist.

As noted above, while God can be counted on to bestow grace, effective communication of the message of Christ is contingent upon practical theology. The message of Christ has cognitive, constitutive and effective components. It is cognitive in that “it announces what Christians are to believe.” It is constitutive in that it “crystallizes the hidden inner gift of love into overt Christian fellowship,” and “it is effective inasmuch as it directs Christian service to human society to bring about the kingdom of God.”

76 Lonergan, Method, 361.
Lonergan’s notion of functional specialties will be introduced later in this chapter and addressed in detail in chapter 2 of this thesis, but to anticipate that discussion a little at this point, Lonergan situates practical theology within his eighth and final functional specialty, Communications, and views it as a major concern. On Communications he writes: “for it is in this final stage that theological reflection bears fruit. Without the first seven stages, of course, there is no fruit to be borne. But without the last the first seven are in vain for they fail to mature.” Sharing equal billing with all other theological disciplines, practical theology is theology’s face to the church and to the world beyond the church. Understood as an expression of Lonergan’s eighth functional specialty, practical theology also informs the church’s action with regard to priorities and strategies for communicating the meaning and the message of Jesus Christ. Another role of the functional specialty Communications (as noted above with the example of the preferential option for the poor) is that of informing those engaged in the seventh of Lonergan’s functional specialties, Systematics, of the manner in which the communicated message is received. Before introducing Lonergan’s method more fully, however, we will briefly examine the contemporary modern/postmodern context in which Christ’s message is communicated and received.

1.4 Doing practical theology in a postmodern world

Paul Lakeland describes three religious responses to postmodernity: late modern, countermodern, and radical postmodern. Late moderns are characterised as operating with an understanding that the modern project is unfinished. They are willing to continue exploring the possibility that ethics and politics can be grounded in universal principles or a “thin” metanarrative. On a late modern view, the universal foundation is a shared capacity for conversation and dialogue that moves towards truthful engagement in and with the world.

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81 Lonergan, Method, 355.
82 Paul Lakeland, Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 7.
While significantly different from one another, the countermodern and radical postmodern positions nevertheless reject both modernity and what they see as late modern attempts to salvage the Enlightenment. Countermoderns look backwards in order to look forwards. Lakeland views the countermodern project as an attempt to retrieve values that, it believes, were abandoned by the Enlightenment. He elaborates on the two main methods of achieving this proposed retrieval. The first involves reclaiming metaphysics. This position can be observed in some Catholic liberal arts colleges whose curriculum in philosophy is heavily weighted towards works of the thirteenth century, particularly those of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. The second method for attempting to retrieve values that were abandoned by the Enlightenment is through adherence to values and practices of a particular religious and/or cultural tradition. Adherents of the first method judge that the solid rock on which to base their life of faith is a clear set of guidelines and structures. Amongst some Catholics, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* combined with pronouncements from the pope act as the rock that they can cling to in the face of what they perceive as the storm of postmodernity. Examples of the second method through which the countermodern position is realised include a romanticised vision of the early Christian communities complete with images of rustic monastic life as models for church and family.

Radical postmoderns, by way of contrast, reject any and all attempts to rescue the Enlightenment project. However, unlike the backward looking tendencies of countermoderns, radical postmoderns embrace postmodernity as a young adventurer might surf the waves generated by a cyclone. For those who embrace this position, postmodernity is an opportunity to realise genuine human authenticity. With the protective canopy of an all-encompassing metanarrative stripped away, radical postmoderns embrace the roller-coaster of change. For them, the experience of authenticity is proposed as the benchmark by which all else is evaluated. There are two main characteristics of the radical postmodern position. The first is the view that the deconstruction of the West’s metanarrative is a positive thing.

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85 Examples of this position in Catholicism perhaps include the desire by some to return to the Latin Mass and the practices and structures connected with the religious movements Opus Dei and the Neocatechumenal Way.
The second characteristic is that all attempts to retrieve or develop any metanarrative are to be strenuously resisted.  

1.4.1 The late modern response

Cahalan applies Lakeland’s description of three responses to postmodernity to the field of practical theology. To illustrate a late modern response to the challenge of postmodernity, Cahalan refers to one of the founding fathers of practical theology, Don Browning, and his ambitiously entitled book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*. Browning’s academic background is in the areas of religion, psychology, and ethics. It was from this combination of disciplines that Browning began to reconceive the whole discipline of theology. Working with others at the University of Chicago during the 1980s, Browning launched a new doctoral program in practical theology. Echoing Luther, for Browning, “the task of theology is practical ‘through and through.’” It is the “practical concerns, questions, and issues of contemporary life” that “drive, motivate, and shape theology at every level.” For Browning, practical theology is not a branch of theology or a subdiscipline. Consistent with the title of his book, Browning views practical concerns of contemporary life as important with regard to every aspect of theology. The ground on which Browning builds his vision of a fundamental practical theology is the promotion and creation of the common good. To achieve this end, he makes extensive use of what has come to be known as the revised correlational method of doing theology. In line with a vision of practical theology as the promotion and creation of the common good, Browning sees the task of theology as being a credible voice in the marketplace of ideas. Significantly influenced by social science methods, Browning thinks that both the social sciences and theology are “marked by a hermeneutic of practical reason (*phronēsis*), dialogue, and

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87 Cahalan, “Three Approaches.”
88 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 68.
89 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 68.
90 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 68.
understanding.” ⁹¹ As an ordained minister, Browning identifies strongly with his denomination, the Disciples of Christ. ⁹²

In speculating on the nature of knowledge and the manner through which theology, social science and ethics relate to each other, Browning draws upon modern thought as exemplified in the “pragmatic philosophy, Frankfurt school, and hermeneutical theories advanced by Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Habermas.” ⁹³ The historically situated subject is one of the bases of Browning’s vision of fundamental theology. However, for Browning, while the subject is historically situated, the subject is not trapped in the historical situation “to such a degree that he or she cannot step beyond history, or the ‘story’, to critically reflect on personal and social situations from a (somewhat) universal perspective.” ⁹⁴

Practical theology, for Browning, then, is grounded in a “hermeneutic of practical reason (phronēsis), dialogue, and understanding.” ⁹⁵ While he “does not want to claim a metaphysical foundation to practical reason, [Cahalan says] he does [however] want to claim a certain natural, biological, and psychological predisposition to this capacity.” ⁹⁶ To describe his conception of practical reason, Browning uses the image of an envelope. In this envelope, “the outer sleeve constitutes the tradition’s narratives and practices, and the inner space or ‘core’ is the universal capacity for thinking about all experience in reversible terms.” ⁹⁷ For Browning, reversible thinking is “the basis for understanding our obligations of equal regard,

⁹¹ Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 69.
⁹² The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) grew out of two movements seeking Christian unity that sprang up almost simultaneously in western Pennsylvania and Kentucky. The movements were reactions against the rigid denominationalism of the early 1800s. Presbyterian in origin, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) rebelled against the dogmatic sectarianism that kept members of different denominations from partaking of the Lord’s Supper together and they objected to the use of creeds as tests of “fellowship” within the church. See http://www.disciples.org/AboutTheDisciples/HistoryoftheDisciples/tabid/69/Default.aspx, accessed October 3, 2012.
⁹⁴ Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 69.
⁹⁵ Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 69.
⁹⁶ Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 69.
⁹⁷ Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 70.
mutuality, and agape.”

Key to Browning’s understanding of the inner space or core of the envelope is the claim that “there is evidence that ‘principles like neighbour love and the golden rule, with their features of reversibility and universalisation’ are found in religious and cultural contexts around the world in both ancient and modern times.” In light of the differentiation outlined earlier in relation to the natural and supernatural, it would appear that, for Browning, love of neighbour and the golden rule are examples of anthropological constants. That is, they are part of human nature and, as such, are a constitutive component of human culture. Browning appears to merge the human capacity to think about all experience in reversible terms with the actual exercise of this capacity in the realisation of cultural insights such as the love of neighbour and the golden rule. These issues will be further explored in chapter 3 of this thesis, in which Browning’s book will be examined in greater detail, building on the following brief examination of his book.

1.4.1.1 A Fundamental Practical Theology (Browning)

In the English-speaking world, Browning has been a significant figure in the field of pastoral/practical theology. The International Academy for Practical Theology (IAPT) lists Don Browning on its website as among the academy’s founders. Browning describes himself as one who has shifted from theological liberalism to neo-orthodoxy: “I gradually developed a theological stance that brought together the neo-orthodox anthropologies of the Niebuhrs and Tillich with the process philosophy view of God found in Whitehead, Hartshorne and William James.”

In doing practical theology, Browning draws on a wide range of perspectives from the human sciences, including cultural anthropology, sociobiology, psychology and sociology and object-relations depth psychology. In *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Browning pursues a theological line consistent with late modernity (and hence aligns himself with those who see the modern project as not yet spent). As we noted above with reference to courting

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100 See Appendix D.
embarrassment and inviting humiliation in his being clearly identified as one who works in a multidisciplinary academic environment,\textsuperscript{102} it appears that, primarily, Browning wants to justify his own discipline in the eyes of his academic colleagues. In an earlier work in which Browning reports on a project in which he was a member of an interdisciplinary team, he states that theology must be “faith seeking reasons and a faith determined to articulate itself before both believing and non-believing publics.”\textsuperscript{103}

Browning is informed and influenced by a number of social sciences and is concerned to ensure that, in his context, that of a North American university, theology be taken seriously as a distinct discipline and not subsumed into the field of social science. Expressing this concern, he writes, “it is better to articulate one’s faith assumptions in a more public and philosophical language . . . better than lapsing into the jargon of the social sciences.”\textsuperscript{104}

In the development of his theological method, Browning claims to build on the work of David Tracy in his application of the critical correlational method. He quotes Tracy’s definition of practical theology as “the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation.”\textsuperscript{105} Browning retraces the lineage of the application of the correlational method to Paul Tillich. He writes that “Tillich believed that theology is a correlation of existential questions that emerge from cultural experiences and answers from the Christian message.”\textsuperscript{106} For Browning, correlational theological method begins with Tillich and his attempt to relate existential questions to the Christian message. He observes that Tillich’s method was developed by Tracy to embrace the broader field of the theory and practice of the contemporary situation and renamed the “revised” or “critical” correlation method. Building on the work of these two theologians Browning claims that he has taken Tracy’s definition and expanded it into a theological enterprise that is the most inclusive of all theologies: a discipline he names “fundamental practical theology.” For Browning,

\textsuperscript{102} Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 3.
\textsuperscript{104} Browning, “Integrating the Approaches,” 191–198.
\textsuperscript{105} Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 47.
\textsuperscript{106} Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 46.
fundamental practical theology is a framework that can accommodate all theological subdisciplines. Specifically Browning identifies descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology and strategic practical theology as subdisciplines that are organised and related to each other within the framework of fundamental practical theology.

Browning is influenced by Gadamer’s thought on the impact of past events on present consciousness, and cites him with regard to viewing “the process of understanding as a fusion of the horizon of meaning surrounding the practical questions and fore-meanings that we bring to these texts and the horizons of meaning that the texts themselves project.” For Browning, descriptive theology refers to the meanings of classic Christian texts that form part of the researcher’s foreknowledge and as a consequence shape the questions which arise in particular concrete situations. Browning goes on to state that when hermeneutic sociology is undertaken by a researcher with a religious background it “fades into descriptive theology.” For Browning, descriptive theology is the practice of hermeneutic sociology undertaken by a researcher whose “foremeaning” is significantly influenced by the classic texts of a religious tradition. In other words, methodologically, it is the theological subject with their foreknowledge shaping questions that determines whether or not the hermeneutical sociology is indeed descriptive theology or some other instance of hermeneutical sociology.

The core of *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is a detailed examination of three different church communities. In these studies Browning draws on a range of social sciences, with theology reconfigured to, as it were, mimic social science method so as to engage in effective dialogue with social science practitioners.

1.4.2 The countermodern response

For Cahalan, the “practice literature” provides the clearest example of a countermodern response to the end of modernity. She sees practice literature to be primarily concerned with theologians inviting people to consider the way they live. This view is portrayed as being antithetical to a view of practical theology as the pursuit of philosophical or theological arguments.

The countermodern position can be summarised as follows. For many people the experience of rapid social change has generated an intense spiritual restlessness and subsequent loss of contact with religious traditions. The net effect of these influences creates, in some people, an underlying psychosocial need for stability. Some, in seeking psychosocial stability, argue that it is through practices, that is, through the exercise of habitual gestures and the use of specific words, that “Christian life finds its fullest integrity, coherence, and fittingness insofar as it embodies a grateful human response to God’s presence and promises.”

The practice literature is not generally categorised as a school of thought. For the most part there is not a grand methodological scheme in the sense of Browning’s notion of reversible thinking. One postmodern characteristic identified in need of response is a “perceived common lack of understanding of the importance of regular practice in the promotion of human flourishing.” In the “’practice literature’ model, the congregation is a primary context for the renewal of Christian practices and one of the main tasks of the minister is to be a teacher, sage, guide, and sustainer of Christian practices.” In this model, ministry is viewed as teaching the gospel, and the purpose of the practices is to manifest the gospel. In this context the task of the minister is to create a community of Christian practice. To accomplish this task, the minister seeks to know and teach “the history, source, and context of the community’s practices.”

110 Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 77.
111 Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 78.
112 Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 78.
113 Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 78.
For countermoderns, the purpose of theological studies “is the identification, study, and pursuit of practices that are central to and constitutive of Christian faith and life.”

Theological education begins in the intentional examination of practice, with theological and historical disciplines informing this intentional examination. Specific practices are selected based on the claim that they increase, in the practitioner, intimacy with God, leading to the transformation of the world. For those operating from a countermodern position, practical theology is an undifferentiated amalgam of engagement in practices and reflection on engagement in practices.

Thus described, the influential book, *Practical Theology*, by Australian theologian Terry Veling, is an example of practice literature. Veling identifies his religious tradition as Catholic and he teaches theology at the Australian Catholic University but is strongly influenced by Jewish thought and prayer forms. While influenced by Catholicism in terms of an understanding of tradition and social teaching, consistent with the name of his first book, *Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation*, Veling identifies himself as being on the ecclesial margins. Veling’s work has been particularly influential in the field of practical theology in Australia with Catholics who, in one way or the other, also identify themselves as being on the margins of the Catholic Church.

### 1.4.2.1 *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (Veling)

The second book that will be evaluated in a later chapter is *Practical Theology* by Terry Veling. In describing this book, Bernard Lee writes in the foreword: “I’d be hard-pressed to name the genre of this book. It doesn’t read the way most theological books read, but it is that. It doesn’t read the way books on spirituality read, but it is that. It doesn’t read the way autobiographies read, but there is a lot of that.” Lee goes on to suggest that the reader,

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114 Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 79.
116 This is my own observation after using Veling’s *Practical Theology* as one of the textbooks in a postgraduate course I taught for several years at Australian Catholic University.
117 Veling, *Practical Theology*, xii.
whilst reading this book, is in metaphoric conversation with the writer and is in fact doing practical theology.

In terms of language and the communication of ideas, *Practical Theology* is not difficult to read. However, since this work is described as not theology, not spirituality and not autobiography, as usually understood, it is difficult to characterise this book beyond simple description. In theory and in practice, Veling appears to take pride in eschewing any methodological approach to his subject matter. He writes: “Practical theology does not really have a head for great systems of thought . . . Our serene theories with their grand visions of life too often deny to knowledge any origin in the practical difficulties of life, but rather seek to transcend these difficulties into a vision of Being that is pristine and unaffected by human affairs.”\(^{118}\) Citing Karl Rahner, Veling writes of practical theology that “everything is its subject-matter.”\(^{119}\) Veling then goes on to claim that there is little hope of really capturing what practical theology is and the best that can be hoped for is a whetting of readers’ appetites for the love of learning and the desire for God.

*Practical Theology* unfolds a little like a theological novel or biography and includes many instances where the author directly engages with the reader by conversational aside. Developing his earlier work, *Living in the Margins*, Veling argues that, in effect, Christian practice is practical theology. For Veling, notions of system and method are emblematic of a decline from a state of organic wholeness in which, in an idealised model of monasticism, liturgy, work, prayer and study were all part of an undifferentiated whole. He sees the phrase “practical theology” as a term to conceptualise the doing of theology, and views doing theology as living an authentically Christian life. Veling argues that the boundaries between “systematic” and “pastoral” theology are being redrawn with the emergence of “practical theology,” and goes on to claim that practical theology is not a new theology but a new orientation in theology.\(^{120}\) While Veling makes no overt claim with regard to proposing a

\(^{118}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 6.

\(^{119}\) Rahner, *Practical Theology*, 104.

\(^{120}\) See Terry A. Veling, “Practical Theology: A New Sensibility for Theological Education,” *Pacifica* 11, no. 2
new fundamental theology, methodologically, in fact, this is the central thrust of Practical Theology. This point will be developed in chapter 4 of this thesis. For Veling, practical theology “places a renewed emphasis on theology’s engagement with the questions, issues and concerns of people’s socio-cultural, religious, political and economic situations.”¹²¹ He continues: “as a theological educator, my own concern is to keep each of these ‘fields’ of theology interactive and mutually enriching – so that no one dominates and no one recedes – producing a rich and engaging conversation between a people’s faith tradition and their socio-cultural situation.”¹²² Methodologically, this is simply a prosaic way to describe the revised correlational method advanced by Browning.

There is a romantic undertow in Practical Theology. Statements such as “today, our imaginations are lazier. For the ancients, however, imagination was vigorous and active. It permitted them to picture and ‘make present’ ”¹²³ indicate a vision of the past that is idealised when compared to the present. Drawing on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Veling’s general thrust is that of a romantic vision of reclaiming premodern Jewish practices and thought forms as the ground for practical theology as an integrative discipline. Specifically on this point, he writes: “practical theology is inherent in the Jewish tradition, and exposure of Christianity to its Jewish matrix is a crucial way for helping retrieve the practical sensibilities of theology.”¹²⁴ Veling’s admiration of all things Jewish goes as far as eschewing the historical-critical method for the study of Scripture, recommending instead a return to a premodern rabbinic method of wrestling with Scripture passages until the ethical message of such passages is “liberated” from the words.¹²⁵ In articulating a response to the challenges to Christianity from modern and postmodern thought forms following the categories outlined above from Paul Lakeland, Practical Theology is clearly an example of a countermodern response to the end of the modern era.

¹²³ Veling, Practical Theology, xvii.
¹²⁴ Veling, Practical Theology, 86.
¹²⁵ See Veling, Practical Theology, 14.
1.4.3 The radical postmodern response

The third approach to practical theology addressed by Cahalan corresponds to Lakeland’s identification of the true or radical postmodern position. In this category Cahalan includes theologians who describe themselves as contextual theologians, that is, theologians who use local culture as a primary context for doing theology. An example of the radical postmodern position is in the revised edition of *Models of Contextual Theology*, in which Stephen Bevans claims that “There is no such thing as ‘theology’; there is only *contextual* theology.”\(^{126}\)

Cahalan includes liberation theologies in this approach as they share several features in their approach to practical theology. Consistent with an underlying hermeneutic of suspicion and informed by the work of Foucault, Derrida, and French feminism, it is argued that postmodern theology “begins with a consideration of how European and male-dominated theologies have distorted ideas of truth, reason, history, and authority by claiming their own culturally-tinged perspective as universal.”\(^{127}\)

Striving to free itself from what it judges to be unjustifiable claims of universality, the primary task of practical theology from the radical postmodern position is to bring the gospel’s call for justice and liberation to both the church and society by working to free them both from the domination of distorted, culturally conditioned ideas of truth, reason, history, and authority. A characteristic of contextual theology is that particular manifestations of theology cannot be universalised. This applies to liberation theology too. For example, citing feminist theology as an instance of liberation theology, the experience of white, middle-class women is but one possible sort of experience in a range of women’s experiences from a variety of social locations. As such, the experience of white, middle-class women cannot be universalised.

Cahalan identifies the work of feminist theologian, Rebecca Chopp, in *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education*,\(^ {128}\) as an instance of theology undertaken from a

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127 Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 82.
radical postmodern position. Chopp’s means of doing theology is through the use of rhetoric, and the purpose of her theology is the ongoing reconstruction of symbols and narratives towards both personal and communal transformation. To bring about this transformation, Chopp sees that the meaning of Scripture is to undergo continual reconstruction through the hermeneutical key of the liberation of women. For Chopp, Scripture is a set of symbols and narratives that are radically open to being reconstructed in the service of the liberation of women.

1.4.3.1 *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education (Chopp)*

While Browning strives to salvage the modern project, Rebecca Chopp sees the end of modernity as an opportunity. In *Saving Work*, Chopp pursues a radical postmodern line and views the challenge of postmodernity to traditional Christianity as a chance to reshape theological education for the purposes of the liberation of women.

Chopp is a distinguished academic, theological educator and administrator.\(^{129}\) *Saving Work* is an example of a radical postmodern response to modernity/postmodernity proposed by a theologian whose religious milieu is significantly influenced by a non-sectarian liberal Protestant perspective. Chopp’s pragmatic critical theory, like Browning’s, is built on an understanding of pragmatism that argues for an essential relationship between ethics and epistemology.\(^{130}\)

Chopp’s origins are in the United Methodist Church and her undergraduate studies in theology were rooted in this tradition. Academically, Chopp’s appointment as the fourteenth President of the Quaker-inspired non-sectarian Swarthmore College in 2009, following on from her position as President at the Baptist-inspired non-sectarian Colgate University, would suggest a functionally postdenominational religious outlook.

John Knox, 1995).

\(^{129}\) Chopp had taught and held senior administrative roles at Yale Divinity School and Emory University before taking up the role of President of Colgate University and, later, of President of Swarthmore College. It is interesting to note that the appointment of Chopp as President at Swarthmore makes her the first woman to hold this position in the 145-year history of this prestigious liberal arts college.

\(^{130}\) See Chopp, *Saving Work*, 80–84.
In terms of theological method, in *Saving Work* Chopp presents three interrelated movements that she terms: the practice of narrativity, the practice of “ekklesia”\(^{131}\) and the practice of theology in feminist theological education. Influenced by postmodern thought forms, Chopp reimagines theological education in the context of a seminary from a feminist perspective. She describes her book as being in the second generation of literature on theological education, with the work of David Kelsey\(^{132}\) and Edward Farley\(^{133}\) constituting the first generation. For Chopp, *Saving Work* is an example of remaking “the formal method of the first generation of writers into practical methods that investigate contemporary reality – methods that can anticipate possibilities for transformation.”\(^{134}\)

The line of thought proposed by Chopp in *Saving Work* will be examined in detail in chapter 4 of this thesis, but, for now, I wish to introduce Chopp’s understanding of critical theory and an overview of what she means by the terms “narrativity,” “ekklesiality” and “theology in

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\(^{131}\) In using the term “ekklesia” Chopp draws on and endorses the work of Schüssler Fiorenza, for whom “the ekklesia of wo/men is a discipleship of equals. Not, however, in the sense of a feminine/female or a wo/men’s church that excludes men, and extols femininity. Schüssler Fiorenza also rejects arguments for wo/men being co-opted into the hierarchic structures of the Roman church. Rather she argues that by naming the discipleship of equals as the ‘ekklesia of wo/men’ (women-church).” Schüssler Fiorenza seeks to articulate a radical democratic ethos. See Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).\(^{128}\)

\(^{132}\) David H. Kelsey is the Luther A. Weigle Professor of Theology at the Yale Divinity School. Professor Kelsey has contributed numerous articles to such journals as the *Journal of Religion, Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, and *Theological Education*. He is also a contributor to the *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*. He serves on the editorial board of *Teaching Theology and Religion*. His books include *The Fabric of Paul Tillich’s Theology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967) and *Between Athens and Berlin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1993). Cited from www.yale.edu/divinity/faculty/Fac.DKelsey.shtml, accessed November 29, 2010.

\(^{133}\) Dr William Edward Farley teaches at the Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. Farley is a well-known and respected American Protestant theologian. He is renowned for his prolific writing in systematic theology and his analysis of theological education. On the latter his views have been captured in two books: *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1983) and *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1988). See http://www.lpts.edu/News-Events/article.asp?id=89.

\(^{134}\) Chopp, *Saving Work*, 11.
feminist theological education.” Key to Chopp’s thought is “critical theory,” which is described as “historically and socially contextual.” Critical theory is concerned with exposing the structures that cause oppression and suffering in society, and imagines possibilities for change. For Chopp, critical theory “does not attempt to make universal arguments or constructs that will hold for all times and places. A critical theory arises in a specific situation and, using the symbols, images and concepts involved in that situation, attempts to move against distortion and dysfunction and to shape new forms of flourishing.”

Through the lens of critical theory, “tradition” is viewed in terms of how texts have functioned in historical situations. For Chopp the traditional texts have often functioned in a manner that is counterproductive and even harmful to the present and future flourishing of women and men, and the earth. With other feminist theologians, Chopp sees Christianity as corrupted by patriarchy and in need of transformation, away from its patriarchal distortions. She argues that one of the primary tasks of feminist theology is to deconstruct patriarchal images of God and Christianity. Patriarchy has ordered the very meaning and structure of life as it has sought to establish a hierarchy of divisions that regulate relationships. Flowing from this insight she argues that theology no longer uncovers unchangeable foundations, hands down cognitive truths of tradition, discloses the classic texts, figures out the rules of tradition or even figures out the rules of faith. For Chopp, the task of theology is to provide a symbolic content of faith. This content relates to how we interpret the world, how we experience the world in spirituality, and how we work for change and transformation.

135 Chopp, Saving Work, 11.
136 Chopp, Saving Work, 12.
137 Key figures in feminist theology who share and inform this perspective, each within their own particular fields, are Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in her studies of the cultural milieu in which the New Testament was formed, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, in her studies of the impact of patriarchal culture on themes addressed in systematic theology.
138 See Chopp, Saving Work, 8.
139 See Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 84.
140 See Chopp, Saving Work, 85.
1.4.3.1.1 Feminist and hermeneutical theology

Chopp differentiates feminist theology from hermeneutical theology. She argues that, whereas hermeneutical theologies tend to view the “Christian thing” as the Christian written tradition, feminist theology understands the “Christian thing” to be the activity of emancipatory praxis as much in the present and future as in the past, inspired and informed by the Christian written tradition but not bound by it. She observes that there is no set discourse, no well-established narrative about the woman preacher, pastor, or priest. The very presence of such women in the contemporary context requires narrativity. Chopp argues that new narratives need to be written – narratives that tell of women’s lives being transformed dramatically through the experience of seminary theological education, narratives that intensify the current Western cultural upheaval regarding women. Narrativity is the intentional process that gives women space and resources for writing their lives in new ways.

Interrelated with narrativity, women and men participate in new forms and shapes of Christian community. Through worship services, spirituality groups and feminist classes, students participate in a reality of church that many find full of power and transformation. Following Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Chopp calls this participation in new forms and shapes of Christianity “ekklesiality.” Reflecting on the experience of observing women who, on critiquing the church, are told (much more often than men) to love it or leave it, “women in the church and in theological education, have not so much left the church and formed new denominations as they have called for the transformation of the present ecclesial reality.”

She describes the work of feminist theology as a communal act of sharing, and uses the metaphor of quilting to describe the process of bringing “scraps” of material from elsewhere and joining them in new ways to create “the warming quilt of God.” Feminist theology imaged as quilting is conceived as a work of emancipatory praxis.

*Saving Work* fits into the larger context of feminist theology that Chopp describes as “a reworking and reshaping of Christian practices within the context of the movement of

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142 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 46.
143 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 73.
feminist liberationist Christianity.”\textsuperscript{144} It is through an imaginative and aesthetic application of Christian symbols and symbolic patterns that reality is perceived. This dynamic process, in turn, then may lead to refashioning of the meanings of basic Christian symbols and symbolic patterns in the light of questions about agency, world and symbol, and how they function together within a Christian structure.\textsuperscript{145}

According to Chopp, “theology includes transformation of social structures as well as transformation of personal narratives and of interpersonal relations.”\textsuperscript{146} Grounded in critical theory and consistent with liberation theology more broadly,\textsuperscript{147} Chopp’s theology begins with the experience of oppression and suffering in society and attempts to illustrate the origin of oppressive structures and how they function. Then, through an imaginative vision of what could or should be, it anticipates possibilities for change.

Having introduced the approaches taken by Browning, Veling and Chopp, we turn now to an introduction to the methodological approach to theology proposed by Bernard Lonergan. This topic will be developed more fully, however, in chapter 2 of this thesis.

1.5 Lonergan and practical theology

Lonergan envisages the discipline of theology as consisting of eight distinct tasks: Research, Interpretation, History, Dialectic, Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics and Communications.\textsuperscript{148} These tasks are introduced now to locate Lonergan’s understanding of the role of “practical theology” in the larger theological task. The first functional specialty is Research. Through Research data is made available. Underpinned by the imperative “be attentive” in this functional specialty, theology interacts with the world of texts, documents, monuments, and so on, asking the question, “What is the data?” In the second functional specialty, Interpretation, data that has been amassed through Research is to be understood. The question here is, “What does it mean?” and the process is underpinned by the imperative

\textsuperscript{144} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 75.
\textsuperscript{146} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 77.
\textsuperscript{147} See Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 90–92.
\textsuperscript{148} Lonergan, \textit{Method}. 
“be intelligent.” The third functional specialty is History, which, for Lonergan, relates to a judgement as to what is moving forwards following an examination of what has happened in the past. History as a functional specialty is particularly important in relation to the development of dogma and doctrine within particular religious traditions. In the fourth specialty, Dialectic, conflicts are identified by reducing them to their roots through the comparing the various outcomes of Research, Interpretation and History, in their functional speciality, with one another. It is in encountering the values and beliefs that underpin these points of view that the theologian is invited to make a decision with regard to the truth or otherwise of the various claims. The first, or mediated, phase of Lonergan’s method is constituted by these four specialties. This phase is concerned with the religious tradition as received.

The next four specialties, which make up the second, or mediating, phase, relate to theologians offering an account and accepting responsibility for that account. But before outlining the mediating phase more fully we need briefly to explore the role of conversion in the functional specialty Foundations. According to Lonergan, Foundations elicits a call for conversion in the theologian. It is at this point that the distinctiveness of Lonergan’s theological method becomes most evident. The key to Lonergan’s theological method is the theologian as converted subject. More will be said on this important part of the method in the next chapter. For the moment it is enough to simply list the conversions Lonergan envisages. The first, religious conversion, is a “falling in love without restriction” and it arises out of the gift of God’s love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5). The second conversion, moral conversion, entails the recognition of personal moral responsibility, that is, that it is through one’s moral decisions that one makes oneself who one is and who one is to become. Lonergan characterises the third instance of conversion as intellectual conversion, which he describes as a strange experience; it entails recognising the link between understanding and reality. Following intellectual conversion individuals see reality as intrinsically meaningful and that truth is arrived at through a judgement of the correct interpretation.

The fifth functional specialty – the first in the second, or mediating, phase of Lonergan’s method – is Foundations. In Foundations the theologian takes a stand and identifies the
presence or absence of conversion by evaluating the judgements that have been made in the first phase, and develops the general and special categories congruent with conversion While Foundations focuses upon the converted subject, the concern of the sixth functional specialty, Doctrines, is the judgements that flow from that conversion. Doctrines require that the subject commit themselves to concrete, particular judgements that are central to their life. The underlying question in this context is, “What do I hold to be true?” The seventh specialty is Systematics. The task of this specialty is to give systematic expression to what has been stated in Doctrines. The final theological task, Communications, is concerned with the “external” relations of theology towards the culture in which it finds itself. In this functional specialty, theology again interacts with the world of common sense. Lonergan’s understanding of “common sense,” however, will be addressed in the next chapter.

1.6 The structure of this thesis

The principal concern of this thesis is to provide a framework for collaboration between those working in theological disciplines and those working in other fields of human endeavour in the service of facilitating an effective unfolding of the reign of God in the concrete individual, communal and social particularity of human experience.

The thesis has six chapters. In this opening chapter I have outlined the current state of the question vis-à-vis the development of practical theology and introduced three texts that illustrate three contemporary approaches or schools of thought in the field of practical theology respectively and that will be evaluated later in the thesis. They are *A Fundamental Practical Theology* by Don Browning, *Practical Theology* by Terry Veling, and *Saving Work* by Rebecca Chopp. Also noted was that the choice of these texts was informed by the work of Kathleen Cahalan, who, in a seminal article in the *International Journal of Practical Theology*, drew on categories described by Paul Lakeland \(^{149}\) to identify three practical theological responses to modernity/postmodernity as modern, countermodern or radical postmodern. \(^{150}\) Each of the chosen texts has been selected to illustrate an application of one of the types of theological responses identified.

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\(^{149}\) Lakeland, *Postmodernity*, 1–12.

\(^{150}\) Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 63–94.
Chapter 2 will be an explication of the broad outline of the theological method developed by Bernard Lonergan as presented in his *Method in Theology*, with a detailed exposition of particular sections of this influential text that are judged to serve the aim of the thesis. The theological method proposed by Lonergan and its underlying philosophical ground serve as a base for comparison and contrast in the critical assessment of three responses to modernity/postmodernity as illustrated in the three texts under investigation. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 critically examine each of the three texts in the light of the theological method proposed by Lonergan. Pertinent aspects of Lonergan’s thought will be developed in each of the respective chapters.

The thesis will conclude in chapter 6 with a summary of the strengths of the three theological methods as illustrated in the three texts under investigation. It will then present a proposal for a method for doing practical theology that has the potential to offer a framework or method for collaboration between those working in theological disciplines and those working in other fields of human endeavour in the service of facilitating an effective unfolding of the reign of God in the concrete individual, communal and social particularity of human experience.
Chapter 2  Method in Theology (Lonergan)

2.0 Introduction

Bernard Lonergan was one of the leading Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century. The two works for which he is best known are Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, published in 1957, and Method in Theology, which appeared in 1971. Apart from these major works, his collected writings currently run into over twenty volumes and cover a wide range of topics from theological discussion on the dogma of the Assumption of Mary to macro-economic theory.1 The topic of theological method permeated the whole of Lonergan’s academic career and we shall see presently that his thinking on theological method has been influential in a wide range of areas. Method is divided into two main parts: “Background” and “Foreground.” The content of this chapter reflects the division in the book. Thus, as the names of the book’s parts suggest, the topics covered in the first part form a background for the material presented in the second part. Echoing the second part of Method the latter part of this chapter outlines the eight distinct tasks or functional specialties that Lonergan envisages as needed to do theology methodically. The current chapter is intended to serve as both a theoretical background – to critically evaluate the three books under investigation – and a framework for a method of practical theology to be proposed and developed in chapter 6. This chapter begins with a brief exploration of Method in relation to Lonergan’s major philosophical work, Insight. The scope of this thesis prohibits an exhaustive examination of Method. This chapter presents an overview of material drawn from Method and other related sources that are judged to serve the aim of the project.

The method proposed in Method, often referred to as “Lonergan’s method,” is employed in a variety of fields, including systematic theology, ethics,2 Scripture studies,3 and spirituality.4

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1 For an overview of the pattern of Lonergan’s life-word see Frederick E. Crowe, The Lonergan Enterprise (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley, 1980).
Method builds on Insight, and the two books can be seen as two volumes of the one project. Reading Insight is a formidable task as its structure and content invite the reader to engage in an extended self-directed pedagogical exercise of appropriating and differentiating one’s conscious activities. The purpose of Method is to illustrate the application of a self-appropriated differentiated consciousness to the discipline of theology. Lonergan’s task in writing Method is not to instruct the reader to simply apply what “Lonergan says.” The purpose of Method is, at once, simpler and more challenging. It is “simple” in that, in one sense, all Lonergan does in Method is describe what he has observed to be the normative pattern of operations in the human task of coming to know “anything” and apply this to the discipline of theology. It is “challenging” in that the purpose of the book cannot be realised “without an exceptional amount of exertion and activity on the part of the reader.”

Both Insight and Method are pedagogical in structure in that both are written from a moving viewpoint, that is, comprehending the later chapters depends on understanding the earlier chapters. It is also the case that comprehending Method depends on understanding Insight. Lonergan makes some attempt to summarise Insight in the early pages of Method as he considers awareness of one’s own conscious operations crucial for understanding what he is attempting in Method. Lonergan writes, “please observe that I am offering only a summary, that summary can do no more than present a general idea, that the process of self-appropriation occurs only slowly, and usually, only through a struggle with some such book as Insight.” Lonergan is clearly indicating that if the work of struggling with Insight is not undertaken by the reader, the whole of Method will be “about as illuminating as a blind man finds a lecture on color.” This description echoes my own experience in that it was only after attempting to read Method that I took on the task of wrestling with Insight, aided by an audio recorded course presented by Robert Doran. For me, the fruit of wrestling with Insight was that Method began to make sense.

5 Lonergan, Method, 7.
6 See Lonergan, Method, 7.
7 Lonergan, Method, 7, note 2.
8 Lonergan, Method, 7.
The label “Lonergan’s method” is somewhat problematic in that, once a theologian has achieved a degree of self-appropriation through a differentiation of consciousness, the theological method used by that theologian is not “Lonergan’s method”: it has become their own theological method. By analogy, this movement resembles the pattern oft described in Augustine’s maxim, “Love God and do as you will.” In this case, we find that the self-aware Augustine views his own will to be so aligned with the will of God that his will, as it were, mirrors the will of God. Mirroring the will of God, Augustine becomes an originating source of value. Eschewing any claim of mirroring the will of God, those theologians who have achieved a degree of self-appropriation through a differentiation of consciousness, in the pattern described by Lonergan, can say, “achieve a differentiation of consciousness and do as you think,” as methodologically their pattern of approaching theology reflects the pattern uncovered by Lonergan.

2.1 Background

This section examines Lonergan’s “Introduction” to Method and is followed by an overview of other chapters from the “Background,” specifically, “Method,” “The Human Good,” and “Meaning.” In Method there is a separate chapter on “Religion.” The topic of religion is to be addressed in chapters 3 to 5 of the current work as part of the critical assessment of each of the books under investigation.

2.1.1 Introduction to Method

Lonergan’s introduction to Method contains a broad outline of the main themes of the book with a particular emphasis on his understanding of culture. We noted in chapter 1 of this thesis that Method begins with the statement: “A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix.”10 This functional definition describes a set of relationships between four key terms: theology, mediation, culture and religion. Method is an exploration of sets of relationships between these terms.

10 Lonergan, Method, xi.
2.1.1.1 Culture

We begin with an examination of the contrast between classicist and empirical notions of culture. For Lonergan the classical notion of culture regards one particular cultural expression as normative, universal and permanent. Those who do not share this cultural expression are viewed as less than “cultured.” By contrast, an empirical notion of culture identifies culture as a “set of meanings and values that informs a way of life.” Comparing these two notions of culture and their relationship to theology Lonergan writes: “when the classicist notion of culture prevails, theology is conceived as a permanent achievement, and then one discourses on its nature. When culture is conceived empirically, theology is known to be an ongoing process, and then one writes on its method.”

Building on his achievement in *Insight*, in *Method* Lonergan proposes a critically grounded method for doing theology that engages modern scholarship and modern science while remaining continuous with Christianity as traditionally understood.

2.1.1.2 Method

2.1.1.2.1 A preliminary notion of method

According to Lonergan an examination of the method of operation used in the natural sciences yields the following functional definition: “A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.” He continues:

There is a method, then, where there are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the

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11 For a critical exposition on the manner in which the notion of culture has been used historically and on its ongoing influence, see Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).
pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not repetitious, but cumulative and progressive.\textsuperscript{15}

For Lonergan modern science derives its distinctive character from the grouping together of logical and non-logical operations: “The logical tend to consolidate what has been achieved. The non-logical keep all achievement open to further advance.”\textsuperscript{16} When the logical and the non-logical are combined there results a process that is open, ongoing, progressive and cumulative.\textsuperscript{17}

\subsection*{2.1.1.2.2 The basic pattern of operations}

Central to Lonergan’s understanding of the operations of an active mind is the subject’s capacity to attend to his or her conscious operations. To clarify what this means Lonergan explores the notion of “introspection.” For him, the word “introspection” can be misleading as it has its origins in the mistaken belief that all cognitional events are to be conceived on the analogy of ocular vision. In such a schema introspection alludes to an “inward inspection.” Introspection conceived as an “inward look” gives rise to the notion of a disembodied entity simply observing cognitional processes in action as one might imagine a detached observer viewing the action of players on a stage. Stripped of such mythic connotations, however, introspection can be viewed as a radical self-awareness, a process through which the subject, as subject, objectifies the intentional operations of his or her own consciousness.\textsuperscript{18} According to Lonergan when a subject has realised his or her capacity to objectify his or her cognitive processes, four levels of conscious intentionality can be identified and distinguished:

- There is the \textit{empirical} level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move.
- There is an \textit{intellectual} level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression.
- There is the \textit{rational} level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgement on the truth or falsity, certainty or probability, of a statement.
- There is the \textit{responsible} level on

\textsuperscript{15} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 4.
\textsuperscript{16} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 6.
\textsuperscript{18} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 8.
which we are concerned with ourselves, our operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.\textsuperscript{19}

The four levels will be explored presently but before addressing them in detail the issue of what it is that causes questions to arise in our consciousness and what it is that attracts or drives the human subject to move from one level of consciousness to another is addressed. For Lonergan the answer to both questions is identified as the striving for human authenticity, a striving that is manifested in the drive for self-transcendence.

2.1.1.2.3 Transcendental method

For Lonergan the dynamism that drives us to ask questions and moves us from one level of consciousness to the next is the desire to live an authentic life. One characteristic of the search for authenticity is the desire to be liberated from the prison of oneself as existing within a “habitat.” Consistent with the human condition our desire is to transcend the notion of mere existence so as to live in an unrestricted universe of meaning. Existing may be understood as simply inhabiting a world of stimulus and response motivated by basic needs of individual and species survival. For Lonergan the human person begins the path towards self-transcendence in asking questions, and such questioning is unrestricted.\textsuperscript{20} It is data of experience that give rise to questions for intelligence. The answers to questions for intelligence give rise to questions for reflection. From questions for reflection, “we move beyond imagination and guess-work, idea and hypothesis, theory and system, to ask whether or not this really is so or that really could be.”\textsuperscript{21} It is at this point that Lonergan’s particular understanding of self-transcendence begins to manifest. For Lonergan, not only does the drive for self-transcendence move subjects beyond themselves; it also seeks what is independent of the subject, what is so. He notes that there is a real difference between the statements such as “It appears to me,” “I imagine,” “I think,” “I wish,” “I would be inclined to say,” on the one hand, and a definitive judgement affirming that “This or that is so,” on the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{20} See Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 104.
\end{itemize}
other hand.\textsuperscript{22} For Lonergan the capacity to make a judgement is grounded in the human drive for self-transcendence and the drive is manifested in the effort to discover meaning in the realm of existence. Self-transcendence at this level however is only cognitive; it is not in the order of doing. It is on the level of questions for deliberation that self-transcendence becomes moral. It is on this level that “we ask whether this or that is worthwhile, whether it is not just apparently good but truly good, and we enquire not about pleasure or pain, not about comfort or ill ease, not about sensitive spontaneity, not about group or individual advantage but about objective value.”\textsuperscript{23}

Lonergan continues in this line of thought, claiming that because we can ask such questions and come to satisfactory answers, “we can effect in our living a moral self-transcendence.”\textsuperscript{24} Self-transcendence as it relates to the moral sphere gives rise to the possibility of “benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love, of swinging completely out of the habitat of an animal and of becoming a person in a human society.”\textsuperscript{25} In summary, it is questions for intelligence, for reflection and for deliberation that constitute our capacity for self-transcendence.

\section*{2.1.2.4 Self-transcendence, grace and the question of God}

For Lonergan the “question of God is implicit in all our questioning and as such the love of God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality.”\textsuperscript{26} We have seen that our desire to live an authentically human life is manifested in the desire to ask questions for intelligence, reflection and deliberation. We have also noted that a fruit of self-transcendence is that we escape the prison of mere subjectivity to the point where we can make a judgement affirming that this or that exists, that this or that is true, independent of the subject. Lonergan understands both the desire to transcend the limitations of habitat and enter into the universe

\textsuperscript{22} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 104.
\textsuperscript{23} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 104.
\textsuperscript{24} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 104.
\textsuperscript{25} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 104.
\textsuperscript{26} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 105.
of meaning, and the capacity to make judgements that affirm what is real and true, as
grounded in “the eros of the human spirit.”

Mathews writes on the notion of the eros of the human spirit as follows: “in Verbum
Lonergan, with reference to Aquinas, states that the wisdom sought by intellectual light is
‘the most convincing sample in us of the stuff of which the author of the universe and of our
minds consists’ and it is ‘acquired gradually.’ ”

Our questioning, our exercising of the eros
of the human spirit, indicates the manner in which we are created in the image of God. On
this point Doran also notes that, while “such an eros is natural to the human spirit, [it] cannot
be sustained or incrementally realized without what Christian theology has called grace.”

It is grace that makes it possible for individuals to consistently actualise their innate desire to
ask questions, habitually exercise their capacity to make judgements, and come to sound
decisions. We now examine each level of questioning in greater detail.

2.2 Four levels of consciousness according to Lonergan

2.2.1 Empirical level

According to Lonergan all of the operations on the four levels, empirical, intellectual,
rational and responsible, are intentional and conscious. The differences between levels relate
to the differences in content between them. The empirical level is the level on which we
sense or perceive. The intending of our senses in attending is “normally selective but not
creative.”

In terms of selecting we have the capacity to filter or select particular sensational
stimuli. For example, we filter out background noise when we attempt to converse with
someone on a busy city street. In contrast “the intending of our imagination may be
representative or creative.” Through the use of imagination we can imagine possible
speculative options or assemble images to represent the fruit of insight. It is through the

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27 Lonergan, Method, 11.
Konig, and David Martin Braithwaite, 37–71 (Hindmarsh: ATF, 2011), 70.
29 Doran, Dialectics of History, 7.
30 Lonergan, Method, 10.
31 Lonergan, Method, 10.
senses and imagination that data is made available to us at the empirical level, and it is this data made available to us at the empirical level that provokes inquiry, prompting a move to the intellectual level.

2.2.2 Intellectual level

For Lonergan, “what is sought by inquiry is never just another datum but the idea or form, the intelligible unity or relatedness that organizes data into intelligible wholes.”32 Once data is experienced then, consistent with the eros of the human spirit, spontaneously we move to the intellectual level to enquire as to what the data might mean. The results of inquiry into the sensible data can, and in fact do, give rise to multiple ways in which the data may be intelligently organised in ideas. This fact elicits an exigency to judge the validity of the insight in the light of evidence. This exigency prompts a move to the rational level of consciousness, to ask “Is it so?”

2.2.3 Rational level

It is on the rational level that an idea is subjected to the criteria for sufficient evidence. Specifically, on the rational level ideas are judged on the basis of sufficient evidence in the light of a single-minded detached and disinterested concern for truth.33 It is “reasonableness [that] takes us beyond the answers of intelligence to ask whether the answers are true and whether what they mean really is so.”34 Once it has been established that there is sufficient evidence to affirm a judgement of fact (in the sense that it is true and real), the next stage in the unfolding of the eros of the human spirit is the spontaneous move to the responsible level of consciousness, to ask “What am I now to do?”

32 Lonergan, Method, 10.

33 On the disinterested concern for truth, Lonergan writes: “As intelligent, the subject seeks insight and, as insights accumulate, he reveals them in his behaviour, his speech, his grasp of situations, his mastery of theoretic domains. But as reflectively conscious, he incarnates detachment and disinterestedness.” Method, 10.

34 Lonergan, Method, 11.
2.2.4 Responsible level

It is on the responsible level that what we do with what we know becomes salient. The movement from affirmation of a fact to acting in a deliberative manner in the light of fact is, however, not automatic. The existential questions raised in response to affirmations of truth arise spontaneously. The manner in which they are answered, however, requires a deliberate choice. These choices fundamentally affect the development of personal identity. On this point Lonergan writes that is through decisions made at this level that:

we set ourselves apart from the drifters. For drifters have not yet found themselves. They have not yet found their own deed and so are content to do what everyone else is doing. They have not yet found a will of their own, and so they are content to choose what everyone else is choosing. They have not yet developed minds of their own and so they are content to think and say what everyone else is thinking and saying.35

Having discovered and articulated the basic pattern that underpins all conscious human operations Lonergan then moves to apply this discovery to a useful end. It is to this topic that we now turn.

2.3 Transcendental method and levels of consciousness

“Transcendental method is concerned with meeting the opportunities presented by the human mind itself.”36 While the use of transcendental method is common in that most people spontaneously act in a way that is attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible, the task of alluding to the fact that one is engaged in these processes can be difficult. The source of the difficulty is that being attentive to cognitive processes “is a matter of heightening one’s consciousness by objectifying it and that is something that each one, ultimately, has to do in himself and for himself.”37 It is only through the individual’s heightening their own consciousness, by objectifying it, that the four levels of consciousness and the relationship

36 Lonergan, Method, 14.
37 Lonergan, Method, 14.
between the levels can be accurately attended to, intelligently understood, reasonably affirmed and responsibly evaluated, with certainty.

According to Lonergan, the order of this pattern of operations is normative because the articulated order of operations reflects the actual order by which human beings operate: “Spontaneously we move from experiencing to the effort to understand . . . Spontaneously we move from understanding with its manifold and conflicting expressions to critical reflection . . . Spontaneously we move from judgement of fact or possibility to judgements of value and to the deliberateness of decision and commitment.”38 The normative force of the method described by Lonergan is grounded in the native spontaneities and inevitabilities of our consciousness. The rock on which transcendent method is built is the person in their “conscious, unobjectified attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility.”39 The reason a person works to objectify themselves and their conscious operations is “that thereby one begins to learn what these are and that they are.”40 The method is labelled “transcendental” because it is not restricted to any particular case or any particular discipline. The exigency to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible is at the root of common sense, scientific method, historical method and all other fields of scholarship.

In relation to theology, “transcendental method is not the intrusion into theology of alien matter from an alien source.”41 Lonergan did not invent it and “it adds no resource to theology but simply draws attention to a resource that has always been used.”42 For theology, the function of transcendental method is “to advert to the fact that theologies are produced by theologians, [and] that theologians have minds and use them.”43

As we see above transcendental method culminates in the existential level of decision. The goal of decision is the human good and its ground is genuine value. To these issues we now turn.

38 Lonergan, Method, 18.
40 Lonergan, Method, 20.
42 Lonergan, Method, 24.
2.3.1 The human good

2.3.1.1 Values

For Lonergan values concern both the value of persons as persons and the “qualitative value of beauty, understanding, truth, virtuous acts, noble deeds.”

Value is a transcendent notion. It is what is intended in questions for deliberation, just as the intelligible is what is intended in questions for intelligence, and just as truth and being are what are intended in questions for reflection.

The judgement that something is agreeable or disagreeable is ambiguous. What is judged as subjectively agreeable or disagreeable may, or may not, be a true good. What is subjectively agreeable may align with a true good, “but it also happens that what is a true good may be disagreeable.” For example, most people of good will “have to accept unpleasant work, privations, pain, and their virtue is a matter of doing so without excessive self-centered lamentation.” Such people do something that is subjectively disagreeable in the service of something that is a true good.

2.3.1.1.1 Scale of values

For Lonergan feelings are intimately connected to values. Specifically, feelings respond to values in accord with a scale of preference, with vital, social, cultural, personal and religious values in an ascending order. Vital values refer to things “such as health and strength, grace and vigor, [and] normally [they] are preferred to avoiding the work, privations, pains involved in acquiring, maintaining, restoring them.” Social values, such as the good of order, however, create the environment in which the vital values of the whole community might be met and it is for this reason that social values are “to be preferred to the vital values of individual members of the community.” Moving up the scale to cultural values,

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44 Lonergan, Method, 31.
45 Lonergan, Method, 34.
48 Lonergan, Method, 34.
49 Lonergan, Method, 31.
50 Lonergan, Method, 31.
Lonergan asserts that “over and above mere living and operating, men have to find a meaning and value in their living and operating.”\textsuperscript{51} “One does not live by bread alone” (Matt 4:4, NRSV). It is the function of culture to discover, express, validate, criticise, correct, develop and improve community meaning and values.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore cultural values rank higher than social values. “Personal value is the person in his self-transcendence, as loving and being loved, as originator of values in himself and in his milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise.”\textsuperscript{53} As originators of values, persons in their self-transcendence “can be principles of benevolence and beneficence, capable of genuine collaboration and of true love.”\textsuperscript{54} It is one thing for a person to be an originator of values occasionally, by fits and starts. It is another to do it regularly, easily, spontaneously.\textsuperscript{55} “It is, finally, only by reaching the sustained self-transcendence of the virtuous man that one becomes a good judge, not on this or that human act, but on the whole range of human goodness.”\textsuperscript{56} According to Lonergan, to maintain self-transcendence the virtuous person needs to be sustained by religious values. Religious values form the ground of the meaning and significance of a person’s life and world. Such values also provide an orientation with regard to a person’s ultimate horizon. Therefore religious values rank highest in the ascending scale of values. They help overcome bias and a tendency to moral impotence. To this topic we now turn.

\subsection*{2.3.1.2 Bias}

We have noted Lonergan’s assertion that our affective response to a particular value prompts, in a person, a judgement of value. Self-transcendence however is difficult. It is limited by a temptation “to remain at a level where one pretends to oneself that more animal-like motivations of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain are sufficient motivation for decision making.”\textsuperscript{57} For Lonergan, yielding to this temptation is the source of unauthenticity. He

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Gerard Whelan, “La Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa e il Terzo Livello de Coscienza” (“Catholic Social
identifies unauthenticity in instances of dramatic bias, individual bias, group bias and general bias. Dramatic bias concerns our ability to attend to data. The inability to attend to data may be rooted in unconscious resistances, or complexes that have their origin in childhood experience.\textsuperscript{58} Traumatic events in childhood may limit the capacity to attend to particular sets of data.\textsuperscript{59} By contrast, individual bias refers to biased acts of knowing in which one makes a conscious choice to ignore data that may impact on decision making. That is, one is aware of data, but wilfully ignores it because if it were fully comprehended it may disturb well-settled attitudes and patterns of action. Group bias manifests by “a loyalty to one’s own group matched by hostility to other groups.”\textsuperscript{60} General bias “involves a set of attitudes that insist that common sense realities are the only realities worth considering.”\textsuperscript{61} Those who operate under the influence of general bias believe “that knowing is achieved by ‘taking a good look’, that all the important things in life are obvious enough and people who say otherwise are worthy of ridicule.”\textsuperscript{62}

We have differentiated instances of bias for the purpose of analysis. In fact, there is often a combination of differing biases operating in individuals and these biases reinforce or complement each other in unauthenticity. For some, unauthenticity marks a flight from responsibility; for others unauthenticity marks a refusal to exercise the human desire for meaning. We now turn to the topic of meaning.

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\textsuperscript{58} Whelan, “Dottrina Sociale.”


\textsuperscript{60} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 53.

\textsuperscript{61} Whelan, “Dottrina Sociale.”

\textsuperscript{62} Whelan, “Dottrina Sociale.”
2.3.2 Meaning

Lonergan understands culture to be a “set of meanings and values that informs a way of life” and the sphere of religion as the “world as mediated by ultimate meaning and motivated by ultimate value.” Having addressed values we begin our consideration of meaning by examining it in terms of the difference between immediate and mediated meaning. This will be followed by an exploration of the notion of the control of meaning. Next will be an appraisal of carriers of meaning as intersubjective meaning, art, symbols, linguistic meaning and incarnate meaning. This section on meaning concludes with a discussion of both the function and realms of meaning. Given the theological task is to mediate meaning, a discussion of meaning is essential to all theology.

2.3.2.1 Immediate and mediated meaning

For Lonergan operations are said to be immediate when their objects are present: “So seeing is immediate to what is being seen, hearing to what is being heard, touch to what is being touched.” Operations are said to be mediated with respect to what is represented or signified in imagination, language and symbols. According to Lonergan the distinction between immediate and mediate operations provides a basis for a distinction between lower and higher cultures. Lower culture regards the world mediated by meaning but, because there is a lack of control over meaning, those who occupy these cultural matrixes easily indulge in magic and myth. By contrast, higher cultures develop “reflexive techniques that operate on the mediate operations themselves in an effort to safeguard meaning.”

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2.3.2.1.1 Control of meaning

For Lonergan the root of social and cultural change is a change in meaning. That is, when a new meaning is grasped and accepted, society and its culture changes. He describes changes in the control of meaning as marking off the great epochs in human history.\(^{70}\) The early Platonic dialogues are identified as a “classic expression of the effort to control meaning.”\(^{71}\) Using the example of “courage” as portrayed in the *Dialogues*, “Socrates wanted universal definitions. That is, brief and exact statements that fitted every case of courage and, at the same time fitted nothing except courage.”\(^{72}\) On the level of everyday language the Athenians knew perfectly well what the difference between courage and cowardice was. According to Lonergan this “knowledge” was common-sense knowledge and it “did not enable them to proceed to the secondary, reflexive level, and work out [a] satisfactory definition”\(^{73}\) of courage that applied to every instance of courage and “to no instance of something else.”\(^{74}\) In the absence of control of meaning the potential for myth and magic to “penetrate, surround, dominate both the routine activities of daily life and the profound aspirations of the human heart”\(^{75}\) is greatly increased. Developing this point, Lonergan notes that “the human mind, led by imagination and affect and uncontrolled by any reflexive technique, luxuriates in a world of myth with its glories to be achieved and its evils banished by the charms of magic.”\(^{76}\) For Lonergan, the movement associated with the name of Socrates is “the breaking through of a radically new era in history of man.”\(^{77}\)

In chapter 4 of this thesis, we will see examples of what appears to be the deliberate use of ambiguity\(^{78}\) as Veling “plays” with words in the sense of exploiting intentional “slippage” in

\(^{70}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 256.
\(^{71}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 256.
\(^{72}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 257.
\(^{73}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 257.
\(^{74}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 257.
\(^{75}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 257–258.
\(^{77}\) Mathews, “Kant,” 258.
\(^{78}\) For Veling the desire to control meaning is part of the problem that needs to be addressed as he identifies the
meaning. Lonergan further distinguishes between classical high culture and modern high culture. This distinction is grounded in the general type of their controls. “The classical thinks of the control as a universal fixed for all time; the modern thinks of the controls as themselves involved in an ongoing process.” Theological method as articulated by Lonergan is an instance of modern high culture.

2.3.2.2 Carriers of meaning

For Lonergan, “the focus [of meaning] is not on the outer word, utterance, or sentence, but on the word that is uttered interiorly by the speaker.” “The inner word is what is meant immediately by the outer,” that is, “meaning exists primarily in persons, in hearts and minds, and only secondarily in what is said, written or otherwise expressed.” In Method Lonergan identifies five distinct “carriers of meaning” as intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, literary, and incarnate. Each “carrier” expresses the “inner word” in a different way and each carrier is potentially a means through which meaning may be mediated.

2.3.2.2.1 Intersubjective meaning

Spontaneous intersubjectivity arises from a vital and functional identification with the other. To illustrate intersubjectivity as a carrier of meaning Lonergan examines the phenomenology of a smile. A smile is not simply a combination of facial muscle movements; it is a combination that has meaning. “Because we all know that meaning exists, we do not go

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83 Ormerod, “Vatican II,” 626.
about the streets smiling at everyone we meet. We know that we should be misunderstood.”

The study of what has become known as “body language,” in which particular gestures and stances and combinations thereof are experienced as carrying meaning, is another instance of intersubjective meaning in action.

2.3.2.2 Art

Drawing on Susanne Langer’s *Feeling and Form*, Lonergan defines art as “the objectification of a purely experiential pattern.” He continues, claiming that “the proper expression of the elemental meaning is the work of art itself.” As such, for Lonergan “the proper apprehension and appreciation of the work of art is not any conceptual clarification or judicial weighing of conceptualized evidence.” A work of art qua a work of art is “an invitation to participate, to try it, to see for oneself, to encounter the work of art and be transformed by it.” Lonergan is careful to differentiate art criticism, art history and art. He sees the cognitive process of doing art criticism or art history as different from the cognitive processes involved in creating art. In doing art criticism the critic is bringing conceptual clarification to the experience of elemental meaning. Transposed to practical theology, the practice of religion, as elemental, may be seen, by analogy, to equate with the artist in action and the work of art produced. Theology as an academic discipline then brings conceptual clarification to the elemental experience of religion. When this differentiation is not maintained in “art,” art criticism and art history are mistakenly equated with art. When this differentiation is not maintained in “religion,” the “practice of religion” is mistakenly equated with the “practice of theology.”

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85 The Australian couple Barbara and Allan Pease through a number of books written for the nonspecialist reader have introduced the notion of body language into mainstream Western popular culture. See B. Pease and A. Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (New York: Bantam, 2006).
89 Lonergan, *Method*, 64.
90 Lonergan, *Method*, 64.
91 The distinction between the practice of religion and the practice of theology will be examined in chapter 4 of
2.3.2.2.3 Symbols

According to Lonergan, a symbol is “an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.” It is the feeling associated with the object that gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive and power. The feelings, values, fears and desires that are given form in symbols and symbolic action (or that arise in response to symbols and symbolic action) are a rich data source for further investigation and theological reflection. One of the tasks of theology is to answer the question of those who ask “whether there is any real fire behind the smoke of symbols employed in this or that religion.”

In terms of personal and communal growth, “affective development, or aberration, involves a transvaluation and transformation of symbols.” Another characteristic of symbolic action and symbols is that they allow for the simultaneous presentation of multiple meanings and have the potential to hold, in dialectical tension, things that are logically incompatible. For example, take the symbol of a crucifix. A crucifix symbolises both the success of evil and its defeat. The symbol as a carrier of meaning “complements and fills out logic and dialectic, for it meets a need that these refinements cannot meet.” Functionally, for individuals, symbols also have the potential to facilitate internal communications between intentional consciousness (spirit), psychic vitality (heart) and organic vitality (body). The use of symbols as both a means of individual internal communication and communal carriers of meaning will be explored in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

2.3.2.2.4 Linguistic meaning

For Lonergan, meaning finds its greatest liberation in a set of conventional signs that is language. “As language develops there emerges a distinction between ordinary, technical and literary language.” Ordinary language is grounded in the common-sense world of ordinary

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92 Lonergan, *Method*, 64.
everyday discourse. Technical language develops as areas of specialisation emerge through the division of labour. In specialist areas there arises a distinction between words in common use and the technical words used by experts in various fields as they talk amongst themselves about their specialty. Literary language is marked by having a permanent quality and is used in a context where there is a lack of mutual presence: it is intended both to convey a technical message and to evoke an emotional response in the reader. As such, “literary language tends to float somewhere between logic and symbol.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 72.} Such an understanding of literary language has some important implications with regard to the methods of interpreting Scripture proposed in the three works under investigation.

\textbf{2.3.2.2.5 Incarnate meaning}

Incarnate meaning is “the meaning of a person, of his way of life, of his words, or of his deeds.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 73.} Such meaning can be at once intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, and linguistic. An individual person may convey meaning for another person or for a large or small group, a nation or a religious tradition. An example of incarnate meaning is the person of Nelson Mandela as a carrier of meaning for all those who had been seeking to end apartheid in South Africa.

\textbf{2.3.2.3 Functions of meaning}

Lonergan identifies four functions of meaning as cognitive, efficient, constitutive and communicative. The cognitive function intends what is true, what really is. This function “takes us out of the infant’s world of immediacy, and places us in the adult’s world, which is a world mediated by meaning.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 76.} The second function is efficient. Lonergan describes this function as follows: “Men work. But their work is not mindless. What we make we first intend. We imagine, we plan, we investigate possibilities.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 78.} Indeed, according to Lonergan, the whole of “the man-made artificial world is the cumulative, now planned, now chaotic,
product of human acts of meaning.”

Technology is an instance of the embodiment of effective (efficient) meaning. The third function of meaning serves to constitute individuals, communities and social institutions. Social institutions have meanings as intrinsic components. Cultural achievements such as religion, art, science and the humanities are “all inextricably involved in acts of meaning.” Meaning is also an intrinsic component in social institutions such as the family, the state and the economy. Social institutions adapt with changing circumstances and “a change of idea or concept, a change of judgement or evaluations, a change of order or request” involves a change of constitutive meaning. In the fourth function of meaning, the communicative, it is through the process of communication that individual meaning becomes common meaning.

2.3.2.3.1 Common meaning

While meaning becomes common through communication, common meanings also have histories as they are transmitted to successive generations through education. Gradually, through successive generations, common meaning can be enriched, deepened and transformed; alternatively it can be “impoverished, emptied out, and deformed.” The communicative function of meaning induces, in the receiver of the communication, a portion of the cognitive and constitutive meaning intended by the communicator. When the constitutive and communicative functions of meaning come together the key notion of community arises.

2.3.2.3.2 Common meaning and community

Community is constituted by individuals who share some sense of meaning. The source of such meaning amongst individuals is a common or shared experience. Understanding of common experience by individuals calls for common or complementary ways of comprehending or understanding experience. When there is a lack of common meaning

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103 Lonergan, *Method*, 78.
amongst those who constitute a community this can lead to misunderstanding, fear and violence.\textsuperscript{105} When there is an absence of common judgement arising out of disparate understandings people can be described as living in different worlds. Common meaning calls for common values, goals and policies. When these characteristics are lacking the individuals that constitute the community may act at cross-purposes. Reflexively, individual identity is constituted through membership of a community. The meaning shared by the individuals that make up a community is generated through an ongoing process of communication. It is also through the processes of communication that people come to share the same cognitive meaning. People form and maintain communities when they recognise in each other shared cognitive, effective and constitutive meaning.

\textbf{2.3.2.4 Realms of meaning}

Lonergan also identifies four realms of meaning: common sense, theory, interiority, and transcendence.\textsuperscript{106}

\textbf{2.3.2.4.1 Common sense}

Lonergan notes, “There is the realm of common sense and the realm of theory. We use different languages to speak of them.”\textsuperscript{107} For Lonergan, both of these realms regard the same real objects. The objects however “are viewed from such different standpoints that they can be related only by shifting from one standpoint to another.”\textsuperscript{108} Common sense is characterised by the meaning persons and things have for individuals and communities. As common, it is marked by a common set of meanings and values. As meanings and values differ through history and geography, so there is a variety of common senses dependent upon the culture. In the realm of common sense, the meaning of words is dependent upon the context in which they are used. Particular words can have particular meanings in particular cultural or geographic communities that are not shared by all who share the language. The

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{105} Lonergan, Method, 244.
\textsuperscript{106} Lonergan, Method, 81–85.
\textsuperscript{107} Lonergan, Method, 83.
\textsuperscript{108} Lonergan, Method, 80.
\end{verbatim}
claim by Stephen Bevans (noted in chapter 1 of this thesis) that “there is no such thing as ‘theology’; there is only contextual theology,” I suggest, indicates that Bevans does his theology in the realm of common sense. While it is true that all meaning arises from within culture and is in some sense dependent upon culture it is equally true that some meanings are transcultural in the sense of transcending culture. This is exemplified in the transcultural context of science. It appears that, for Bevans, theology can be done only in the linguistic and conceptual context that is peculiar to particular populations who share a common fund of meaning, a fund of meaning not shared by others in a different cultural context. Presumably, at least theoretically, there are countless such populations. The view of Bevans echoes that of Pattison and Woodward also noted in chapter 1, that is, practical theology is not systematic or complete but “throwaway,” always having to reinvent its tasks and methods as each issue or situation is sui generis.

2.3.2.4.2 Theory

The realm of theory is concerned with the relationships between things or terms, regardless of their context. The physical laws that arise from reflection on the observation of the movement of the planets in the solar system can be understood as constant regardless of when or where the data is collected.

According to Ormerod, “different communities develop different theoretical realms – scientific, technical, theological and so on. But each is driven by the same systematic exigence, the drive to understand things in relation to other things, not just to ourselves.” For individuals the theoretical realm and the realm of common sense exist in tension. In presentations and writings Lonergan draws on a range of examples to illustrate the difference between the two realms. He describes a zoologist who takes his young son to the zoo and

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109 Bevans, Models, 3.
111 Neil Ormerod, Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2005), 44.
who both there observe a giraffe running. The boy observes a strange-looking animal and wonders “Does it bite? Can it jump the fence? Am I safe?” The father observes a complex combination of interacting biomechanical and skeletal systems that enable the giraffe to run and wonders about the various processes that enable the systems to work together to produce locomotion. The boy quite naturally is operating in the realm of common sense. His concerns are based in the relationship of the giraffe to “him.” The boy’s father, as it were, looking through his son’s eyes, also sees a strange-looking animal that evokes curiosity and fear. The father, however, as a skilled zoologist, observes things that that his son does not see, and what he sees gives rise to a different set of questions. In this case it is inappropriate to ask who is right in their observation: the son or the father? They are both correct. The point of interest, however, is the father who can share with his son the wonder and awe of the sight of the giraffe in the realm of common sense while having the knowledge and skill to observe a complex combination of interacting biomechanical systems. For the father, his knowledge of the theoretical realm of science does not prevent him from sharing in his son’s common-sense experience or, indeed, from having his own common-sense experience.

### 2.3.2.4.3 Interiority

We now turn to an examination of the relationship between these two realms of meaning. Lonergan asks: “Is common sense just primitive ignorance to be brushed aside with an acclaim to science as the dawn of intelligence and reason? Or is science merely pragmatic value, teaching us to control nature, but failing to reveal what nature is?” Following Lonergan, Ormerod writes that the answers to these questions “can be found not in the development of a new theory, which would simply heighten the tension, but by moving to a new realm of meaning, that of interiority.” Ormerod continues, stating that the realm of interiority is uncovered through an act of self-appropriation, not as withdrawal from the world, but as a heightening of consciousness, an act of attending to the conscious subject as it engages in its intentional activities. In the realm of interiority one can uncover the structures, norms and potentialities of human subjectivity. For Lonergan, however, “the withdrawal into interiority is not an end in itself. From it, one returns to the realm of common sense and

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114 Ormerod, *Trinity*, 44.
theory with the ability to meet the methodological exigence." According to Ormerod, “mastery of this interior realm can provide one with the resources needed to address critical epistemological and metaphysical questions, and heal the tensions between the realms of common sense and theory.” For Lonergan, the identification of the realm of interiority is closely associated with self-appropriation and the subject’s grasp of transcendental method. This is so because it is that ‘grasp’ that “provides one with the tools, not only for an analysis of common sense procedures, but also for the differentiation of the sciences and the construction of their methods.” Awareness of the realm of interiority and an appreciation of the importance of self-appropriation for the grasping of transcendental method are to provide the tools for critically analysing the theoretical and common-sense procedures in the three books under investigation in this thesis.

From my own observation at professional gatherings of practical theologians, and from reading collections of essays in handbooks on practical theology, it appears that many practical theologians, when presenting particular instances of practical theology, uncritically move back and forth between a common-sense realm and the realm of theory, unaware they are oscillating between these two quite distinct realms of meaning. For example, Bevans dismisses Lonergan’s identification of a differentiated realm of theory as a privileged instance of a Western and male, culturally conditioned version of common sense. I suggest that, because Bevans views everything through the lens of common sense, from his standpoint, Lonergan’s differentiation between common sense and theory must necessarily be a particular, perhaps privileged (white, Western and educated), instance of common sense. I suggest that those who deny or minimise the importance of the realm of interiority in fact operate in an undifferentiated amalgam of common sense and theory. In practice they draw upon elements of theory to reinforce their common-sense understanding while failing to differentiate these two distinct realms of meaning. In such an amalgam nonsense is just as
likely to be present as elements of theory and common sense and, often, one is left to make judgements solely on the basis of rhetoric.

One example of this confusion in the Catholic Church is the appearance of two main schools of thought to explain the dramatic decline in the number of Catholics who regularly worship at Sunday Mass that has occurred in Australia since the mid-1960s. One school of thought sees a causal association between the fruits of the Second Vatican Council, for instance, the use of the vernacular for Mass and an openness to other faith traditions and the decline in church attendance. Such a view proposes a return to a pre–Vatican II religious culture. The other school selectively reads the documents of the council to argue that, while the incidence of religious worship has indeed decreased, this is a necessary and perhaps welcome development as the perceived crisis provides a unique opportunity to refound the church in the light of that school’s reading of the documents of Vatican II.

In evaluating these approaches, the theoretical tools of history, statistics and hermeneutic methods are cited on both sides, but both schools of thought selectively choose both the data to be investigated and the particular theoretical tools of investigation in the service of their preconceptions about the ideal response. In terms of rhetoric, proponents from each school tend to seek out extreme examples as representative of the opposing school to criticise the other’s position. In this practice, theology mimics the strategies of partisan politicians rather than presenting itself as a scientific discipline inhabited by disinterested parties simply seeking insights into particular situations.\textsuperscript{120}

This situation points to the need for a more rigorously critical understanding of the relationships between the various realms of meaning characterised as follows. In the theoretical realm, a term has a precise meaning and this meaning is regulated by its relationships to other terms within a particular theoretical system. In the realm of common

\textsuperscript{120} I suggest that work of the influential writer George Weigel is one such example of rhetorical argument drawing on self-selected elements of common sense and theory to argue for a return to a preconciliar understanding of papal authority. While there are many lesser lights in the other school, perhaps it is best exemplified by the Pfarrer Initiative in Austria, with a group of priests calling for radical, immediate reform on the issue of the ordination of women.
sense, the meaning of a word depends upon the contexts of both its production and its reception. A characteristic of the realm of interiority is a developed, critical capacity to differentiate and use both the realm of common sense and the realm of theory, when appropriate, and to be self-aware of which realm one is operating in, and why, in any particular instance. In the realm of interiority, the basic terms and relations are derived within human consciousness and an awareness of interior movements. That is, an awareness of feelings associated with the self-transcendent thrust towards authenticity (understood as the constant withdrawal from unauthenticity) provides the subject with a critical control of meaning in that errors or incomplete understanding of meaning are experienced as instances of unauthentic expressions and consequently promote self-correction and/or development. When operating in the realm of interiority individuals also consciously and purposively move back and forth, as judged appropriate, between the differentiated realms of interiority, common sense and theory.¹²¹ This level of self-awareness sets the ground for the possibility of theological rigour in an open system.

Writing on the idea of rigour in theology, McShane notes that a visit:

to a zoological library with adequate journal holdings would, I suspect, be a sobering experience for a theologian with the standard literary education. He or she is faced with a massive array of incomprehensible specialized efforts. In contrast, many theological journals offer general eclectic sweeps, regularly eminently readable for the wrong reasons.¹²²

McShane continues in this vein, unfavourably contrasting conferences of theologians with conferences of chemists. He notes that all the chemists attending a conference would be comfortable with Mendeleev’s theoretical advance as the basis for discussion.¹²³ As noted above, in the field of practical theology it is not unusual for presentations to consist of an undifferentiated amalgam of theory and common sense that runs the risk of being an amalgam of theory and nonsense.

¹²¹ See Lonergan, Method, 83.
¹²³ McShane, “Systematics.”
2.3.2.4.4 Transcendent realm

“Finally Lonergan identifies a transcendent realm corresponding to the human desire for complete intelligibility, unconditioned judgement and a good beyond all criticism.”¹²⁴ While the transcendent realm, as identified by Lonergan, forms part of the broader context for this thesis, a detailed exploration of this realm is beyond its scope.¹²⁵

2.4 Foreground: Functional specialties

We now move from the background material in Method to an examination of the “foreground” of Lonergan’s method in theology. Specifically we will examine the eight functional specialties, first noting the grounds for their three-way division followed by a summary of each of them. This part of the thesis chapter concludes with an extended examination of the eighth functional specialty, Communications. It is in the functional specialty of Communications that Lonergan identifies effective communication of Christ’s message with practical theology.¹²⁶

2.4.1 Three types of specialisations

According to Lonergan, specialties may be distinguished in three manners: (1) by field specialisation, that is, by dividing and subdividing the field of “data” under investigation; (2) by subject specialisation, that is, by classifying and dividing the “results” of investigations; and (3) by functional specialisation, that is, by distinguishing and separating “stages of the process” from data to results.¹²⁷ This idea will be developed later in this chapter; suffice to say at this stage that the theological method proposed by Lonergan follows the pattern of a functional specialisation. In Method Lonergan identifies eight distinct, but interlocking,

¹²⁴ Ormerod, Trinity, 63.
¹²⁶ See Lonergan, Method, 362.
¹²⁷ Lonergan, Method, 125.
functional specialties. As introduced in chapter 1 of this thesis, Lonergan names these functional specialties as Research, Interpretation, History, Dialectic, Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics and Communications. In preparing to address each of the functional specialties the grounds for the division of the eight functional specialties is briefly outlined.

2.4.2 Grounds for the division of the eight functional specialties

Lonergan uses two principles to explain the grounds for the division of the eight functional specialties. The first principle is that theological operations occur in two basic phases: (1) theology in oratione oblique, in which theologians investigate what has been written on a particular topic by others; and (2) theology in oratione recta, in which theologians, enlightened by what they have learnt from those who have gone before them, confront the problems of their own day. The second principle is grounded in the fact that our conscious and intentional operations occur on four distinct levels identified as: experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Each of these levels has its own proper achievement and end. The proper achievement and end of the first level, experiencing, is the apprehension of data. That for understanding is insight into the apprehended data. That for judgement is the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses and theories put forward in understanding to account for the data. Finally, the proper achievement and end of the fourth level, decision, is the acknowledgement of values and the selection of the methods or other means that lead to their realisation.

For those theologians who operate in the realm of common sense, the four levels of consciousness (experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding) are employed without any explicit awareness of distinction between levels. In a scientific, or discipline-specific, investigation, the ends proper to particular levels may become the objective sought by operations on all four levels while an explicit distinction between levels is maintained. To illustrate this point Lonergan refers to the operations that a textual critic executes in carrying out textual criticism. The textual critic first selects a method (decision) that it is felt will lead to the discovery (understanding) of what one may reasonably affirm (judgement) to have

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been written in the original text (experience).\textsuperscript{129} In this example the textual critic consciously operates on all four levels with the aim of ascertaining accurate data.\textsuperscript{130} In terms of functional specialty the textual critic is operating in the first functional specialty, Research. To extend the example, once accurate data in the form of a reliable text is made available, the baton, so to speak, is passed to the functional specialty, Interpretation. Any given person may work in both Research and Interpretation and indeed any other functional specialty. The aim of identifying the functional specialties is not simply to divide labour, although this may be an incidental consequence. The method identified by Lonergan is grounded in the belief that, through being attentive to their own operations, theologians will be clearer and more accurate in their theological work. The method is also grounded in an understanding that the role of the Christian theologian is to strive for an ever increasingly authentic understanding of the message and meaning of the person, words and actions of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{131} It is understood that the ultimate aim of all theological work and the thus the context for all Christian theology is an effective communication of the Gospel for the transformation of the world in Christ. We shall see in later discussion that, for Lonergan, theological reflection bears fruit in the eighth or final functional specialty, Communications.

2.4.3 Functional specialties

2.4.3.1 Research

As illustrated in the example above on textual criticism, “research makes available the data relevant to theological investigation.”\textsuperscript{132} Lonergan differentiates research as either general or special. “Special research is concerned with assembling the data relevant to some particular

\textsuperscript{129} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 134.

\textsuperscript{130} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 134.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Method in Theology} is not a work of theology. In the introduction to the book, Lonergan writes: “I am writing not theology but method in theology. I am concerned not with the objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform” (\textit{Method}, xii). While neither of Lonergan’s most influential books, \textit{Insight} and \textit{Method}, are works of Christian theology, they can be seen as a twofold moment, a making of tools, in a lifelong intellectual mission as a Jesuit priest in “fulfilling the redemptive and constructive roles of the Christian church in human society” (\textit{Method}, 368).

\textsuperscript{132} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 127.
question or problem, such as the doctrine of Mr X on the question of Y.”\textsuperscript{133} General research, by contrast, “collects and catalogues manuscripts, and prepares critical editions of texts.”\textsuperscript{134} Other examples of general research include the composition of bibliographies, abstracts, bulletins, handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and the like.\textsuperscript{135}

2.4.3.2 Interpretation

The functional specialty Interpretation is underpinned by the belief that it is possible to come to a level of understanding at which point a judgement can be made as to what had been meant by an author when they wrote a particular text. “Interpretation understands what was meant. It grasps that meaning in its proper historical context, in accord with its proper mode and level of thought and expression, in the light of the circumstances and intention of the writer.”\textsuperscript{136}

2.4.3.3 History

History, for Lonergan, is basic, special, or general. Basic history tells where and when who did what and what the results were. It “makes as specific and precise as possible the more easily recognisable and acknowledged features of human activity in their geographical distribution and temporal succession.”\textsuperscript{137} Special histories tell of cultural, institutional or doctrinal movements in a wide range of areas.\textsuperscript{138} Lonergan describes general history as “perhaps just an ideal.”\textsuperscript{139} If it was ever realised, general history “would be basic history illuminated and completed by special histories.”\textsuperscript{140} Within theology the functional specialty History is concerned with basic, special, and general history. “In the main it has to presuppose basic history. Its substantial concern is the doctrinal history of Christian theology.

\textsuperscript{133} Lonergan, Method, 127.
\textsuperscript{134} Lonergan, Method, 127.
\textsuperscript{135} Lonergan, Method, 127.
\textsuperscript{136} Lonergan, Method, 127.
\textsuperscript{137} Lonergan, Method, 128.
\textsuperscript{138} Lonergan, Method, 128.
\textsuperscript{139} Lonergan, Method, 128.
\textsuperscript{140} Lonergan, Method, 128.
with its antecedents and consequents in the cultural and institutional histories of the Christian religion and the Christian Churches and sects."\textsuperscript{141}

Using the insights provided by the functional specialty Interpretation, the theologian operating in the functional specialty of History works at identifying and naming what had been moving forwards in terms of doctrinal development as the Christian message moved from one context to another. Taking a panoramic view, examples of transpositions from one context to another include the movements: (1) from the Hebraic world to Hellenic thought forms; (2) from the world of the Roman Empire to medieval Europe; and (3) from the medieval into the modern world. In terms of doctrinal development, “history” as a functional theological specialty is concerned with ascertaining what has moved forwards doctrinally from the beginnings of Christianity until the present.

**2.4.3.4 Dialectic**

The fourth functional specialty identified by Lonergan is Dialectic. It is “concerned with things that are concrete, dynamic and contradictory.”\textsuperscript{142} Dialectic “seeks some single base from which it can proceed to an understanding of the character, the oppositions, and the relations of the many viewpoints exhibited in conflicting Christian movements, their confusing histories and conflicting interpretations.”\textsuperscript{143} In seeking a comprehensive viewpoint from which to elicit understanding, the secondary conflicts in historical accounts and theological interpretations of movements must also be added to the mix. Dialectic compares and evaluates “the conflicting views of historians, the diverse interpretations of exegetes, the varying emphases of researchers.”\textsuperscript{144}

In Dialectic it is observed that there are firmly held different positions or points of view that have developed as different people have used the results of differing outcomes of Research, Interpretation and History. The task in Dialectic is to understand the sources of differences in

\textsuperscript{141} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 128.
\textsuperscript{142} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 129.
\textsuperscript{143} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 129.
points of view through developing the respective positions to their logical conclusions. This process brings to light whether the sources of differences are: (1) contradictory, that is, the positions are incompatible with each other; (2) complementary, that is, the positions can be reconciled under a higher viewpoint; or (3) genetic, that is, the positions “can be regarded as successive stages in a single process of development.”\textsuperscript{145} Through Dialectic it can be ascertained as to whether differences in position are serious or not, “so that attention, study, analysis can be devoted to differences that are serious and profound.”\textsuperscript{146} However, “not every viewpoint is coherent, and those that are not can be invited to advance a consistent position.”\textsuperscript{147} Yet “not every reason is a sound reason, and Christianity has nothing to lose from a purge of unsound reasons.”\textsuperscript{148} Dialectic brings conflicts to light and provides a technique that objectifies subjective differences.\textsuperscript{149} If it is found that the differences in points of view are incompatible with each other, it can be judged that the source of the differences lies in the presence or absence of intellectual, moral or religious conversion. The solution to reconciling irreconcilable differences is nothing less than conversion and it is the notion of conversion that is to be developed in the next functional specialty, Foundations.

\textsuperscript{145} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 129.
\textsuperscript{146} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 130.
\textsuperscript{147} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 130.
\textsuperscript{148} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 130.
\textsuperscript{149} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 235.
2.4.3.5 Foundations

In this functional specialty “we are seeking the foundations, not of the whole of theology, but of the last three [of the eight] specialities, Doctrines, Systematics and Communications.” Foundations relates not to theology but to the theologian. It is in Foundations that religious, moral and intellectual conversion become salient. Through taking the results of a serious and sustained engagement in Dialectic the theologian has gained a good grasp of what others believe and why. The theologian is faced with the question, “What do I believe?” This question and its answer are existential, intensely personal and utterly intimate and provide a context for conversion.

For Lonergan “conversion is understood as a transformation of the subject and his world” and, as noted earlier, has three dimensions: intellectual, moral, and religious.

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150 Robert Doran has proposed that the functional specialty Foundations be split into two specialties named “Horizons” and “Categories,” effectively creating a revised eighth functional specialty and a new, ninth functional specialty. According to Doran: “Horizons would stand outside the other eight, since it objectifies the source of the movement from the functional specialities of the first phase to the functional specialities of the second. The place in the structure currently assigned to Foundations, the speciality that begins the second phase, I would call Categories.”. See Robert M. Doran, Essays in Systematic Theology 38: The Ninth Functional Speciality (2011), accessed March 20, 2012, http://www.lonerganresource.com/pdf/books/1/38%20-%20The%20Ninth%20Functional%20Speciality.pdf. I have not incorporated this idea of Doran’s into this thesis as I am working with Lonergan’s basic framework, not more recent suggestions. I do however return to some of Doran’s other insights in chapter 6

151 Lonergan, Method, 267.

152 See section 1.5, Lonergan and practical theology

153 Lonergan, Method, 130.

154 Lonergan, Method, 130.

155 Doran proposes a fourth conversion, which he terms “psychic conversion.” While Doran writes that Lonergan fundamentally agreed with Doran’s idea, Lonergan himself did not develop this idea to any great extent. For a critical overview of Doran’s notion of psychic conversion, see Robert M. Doran, Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981).
2.4.3.5.1 Intellectual conversion

This is the elimination of the myth that “knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what there is to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at.”\(^{156}\) As noted earlier, according to Lonergan this myth overlooks the distinction between the world of the infant and the world mediated by meaning. In the world of the infant, a world of immediacy, the only source of knowledge is input from the senses.\(^{157}\) By contrast, “the world mediated by meaning is a world not known by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgements of the community.”\(^{158}\) For the person who has undergone intellectual conversion, knowing is a compound of experiencing, understanding, judging and believing.\(^{159}\) It is not simply taking a good look, or gaining insight in relation to phenomena through the operations of senses. Through intellectual conversion one knows “precisely what one is doing when one is knowing.”\(^{160}\)

2.4.3.5.2 Moral conversion

This is marked by a change in the criteria used to make decisions and choices from satisfactions to values. This change involves the gradual development to the existential moment when we realise that it is up to each of us to decide what we are to make of ourselves through the choices we make.\(^{161}\) Moral conversion “consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict.”\(^{162}\)

\(^{156}\) Lonergan, Method, 238.
\(^{157}\) Lonergan, Method, 238.
\(^{158}\) Lonergan, Method, 238.
\(^{159}\) Lonergan, Method, 238.
\(^{160}\) Lonergan, Method, 240.
\(^{161}\) Lonergan, Method, 240.
\(^{162}\) Lonergan, Method, 240.
2.4.3.5.3 Religious conversion

Such conversion, for Lonergan, is “being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love.” A surrender not as act, but “as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. It is revealed in retrospect as an undertow of existential consciousness.” For Christians religious conversion is God’s love filling our heart through the Holy Spirit given to us. As a functional specialty Foundations emerges as conversion is explicitly objectified. Foundations is understood as the horizon within which ecclesial and theological doctrines can be apprehended.

2.4.3.6 Doctrines

Through the application of the specialty of Foundations to the range of positions that are examined in Dialectic the theologian arrives at Doctrines as judgements of religious truth and value. As a functional specialty Doctrines is concerned with what is affirmed as true. What is so affirmed is the fruit of understanding the data found through the procedures of Research, Interpretation, History and Dialectic. Included in the beliefs held by a Christian religious community are mysteries so hidden in God that the ecclesial community knows them only because God has revealed them to them. The first four functional specialties, Research, Interpretation, History and Dialectic, are concerned with understanding what others think and have written as the theologian evaluates the views of others. Performed in accord with the existential stance taken in Foundations, the functional specialty Doctrines involves a selection from among the different positions considered in Dialectic. In making this selection, Lonergan distinguishes primary sources, church doctrines, theological doctrines and methodological doctrines. Common to all these doctrines is that they are

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taught. They differ from each other, however, in terms of authority.\textsuperscript{170} “In the primary sources a distinction is to be drawn between the doctrine of the original message and doctrines about this doctrine.”\textsuperscript{171} Church doctrines “have their antecedents both in the New Testament confessions of faith and in the decision of assembled Christians.”\textsuperscript{172} To illustrate this last point Lonergan cites Acts 15:28: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials.” Lonergan continues, noting that church doctrines are developed to meet the questions that arise in particular historical periods consistent with the intent of the original message. As a functional specialty, Doctrines is concerned with the affirmations and negations, not only of dogmatic theology, but also of moral, ascetical, mystical and practical theology and of any similar branch of theology.\textsuperscript{173}

2.4.3.7 Systematics

The aim of Systematics is to understand the religious realities that have been affirmed by Doctrines.\textsuperscript{174} The task performed in Systematics is to make sense of the facts and values (theological and church doctrines) affirmed in Doctrines in a coherent, systematic way. Turning to theological doctrines, it is through theological doctrines that systematic theology seeks, “to put order and coherence into the mass of materials assembled from scripture and tradition”.\textsuperscript{175} Systematic theology also seeks to create systems for bringing coherence to the solutions offered in response to the questions that constantly arise. In the search for a substructure, or methodological underpinning, to achieve this task, scholastic theologians turned to Aristotle.\textsuperscript{176} With regard to methodological doctrines, for Lonergan, the way to resolve seemingly intractable differences in theological method as exemplified by opposition between the Thomist and Scotist schools, and between Catholics and Protestants, is not to

\textsuperscript{170} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 295.
\textsuperscript{171} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 295.
\textsuperscript{172} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 296.
\textsuperscript{173} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 132.
\textsuperscript{174} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 349.
\textsuperscript{175} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 297.
\textsuperscript{176} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 297.
hark back to Aristotle but to develop “a theological method radical enough to meet head on the basic issues in philosophy”. 177

One way Systematics makes sense of theological and church doctrines is through the use of analogies grounded in human experience. 178 Systematics is an imperfect effort on the part of human understanding to gain some insight into revealed truths. 179 The intent of Systematics is not to bring an increase in certitude. It is to seek and promote an understanding of what one has affirmed as true in Doctrines. 180 The task in Systematics is to get to the core message to be communicated. Reciprocally, as we shall see, the functional specialty Communications often poses new questions for Systematics. 181

There is a distinction between theologians based on the specialties in which they work. Systematic theologians normally work in the functional specialty of Systematics and practitioners normally work in the functional specialty of Communications. However theologians may work across a number of different functional specialties. Method provides a framework for the movement from research and reflection to action. Through methodological reflection the theologian is aware of which functional specialty they are working in at any particular time. It is understood that, as such an awareness increases, it is increasingly probable that the demands of each specialty are rigorously met and that confusion of purpose is avoided. For example, as a pastoral practitioner I operate in the functional specialty of Communications. This thesis however is an exercise in Foundations drawing on Dialectics to clarify, by contrasting them, differing understandings of practical theology.

177 Lonergan, Method, 297.
178 Lonergan, Method, 132.
179 Lonergan, Philosophy of God, ix.
180 Lonergan, Method, 336.
181 Lonergan, Method, 142.
2.4.3.8 Communications

Lonergan addresses the eighth functional specialty, Communications, in chapter 14, the last chapter of Method. Topics covered in the chapter include “Meaning and Ontology,” “Common Meaning and Ontology,” “Society, State, Church” and “The Christian Church and Its Contemporary Situation.” The chapter, and indeed the book, concludes with a section on “The Church and the Churches.” I suggest that the brief and somewhat eclectic collection of topics in thirteen pages that form the chapter on Communications do not adequately reflect Lonergan’s own description of Communications as “a major concern.” It appears that, as Lonergan was completing the final manuscript of Method, his health was deteriorating and that this was a contributing factor in the somewhat cursory nature of the chapter on Communications.

Lonergan begins the chapter on Communications by affirming how important the specialty is; then he identifies himself as a methodologist, as opposed to a theologian, and sends the reader to a five-volume German theological handbook, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*. Edited by a team of German theologians including Karl Rahner and published from 1964 to 1969, this 2652-page “handbook” consists of a collection of essays, all in German.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Lonergan’s thought has had so little influence in the field of practical theology. For theologians and pastoral practitioners concerned with pressing pastoral matters, interreligious dialogue, interdisciplinary study, or the development and implementation of policies that are designed to have a social and/or cultural impact, a fleeting reference to a five-volume German work on page 355 of a book written by an author who self-identifies as a methodologist is not likely to impress others or exert much influence.

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184 Lonergan’s deteriorating health and its impact on the completion of *Method in Theology* was confirmed by Robert Doran in a conversation I had with him on April 27, 2011.
For Lonergan, “practical theology as a familiar distinction in theology roughly corresponds to the functional specialty Communications.”

As the eighth functional specialty, Communications is dependent upon the seven that precede it. The theological material that practical theology works with is the progressive fruit of the first seven functional specialties manifested in the seventh functional specialty, Systematics. As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, in the brief discussion on the preferential option for the poor, one of the tasks of those who operate principally in the functional specialty of Communications is to provide feedback to those working in the functional specialties of Systematics with regard to the manner in which particular understandings of church or theological doctrines are being received by the faithful. In turn, those who work in Systematics may influence those working in Doctrines and Foundations. I begin here, however, with a brief exploration of three ways in which the fruit of the first seven functional specialties is transmitted to those who are not theologians. The aim of this task is to affect the lives of individuals, communities, societies and cultures.

2.4.3.8.1 Three kinds of communications

Lonergan identifies three kinds of communications. The first kind concerns the task of relating to other religions, art, language, literature, the natural and human sciences, philosophy and history. The second concerns the task of transposing theological thought so that it can be received by men and women of all cultures, educational background and socio-economic status. The third concerns making the necessary adaptations so as to make full and proper use of the diverse communication media available. For Lonergan the task of communicating the Christian message is “to lead another to share in one’s cognitive, constitutive, effective meaning.” For those who work primarily in the functional specialty of Communications, to communicate the cognitive meaning of the Christian message, they must first know it. In order to know the Christian message practical theologians draw on the fruits of the seven previous functional specialties as they have progressively developed and

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become manifest in Systematics. On the task of sharing constitutive meaning Lonergan writes: “Those that would communicate the constitutive meaning of the Christian message, first of all, must live it. For without living the Christian message one does not possess its constitutive meaning; and one cannot lead another to share what one oneself does not possess.” Finally for Lonergan, for the communication of the Christian message to be effective, those who want to communicate the Christian message must practise it. “For actions speak louder than words, while preaching what one does not practise recalls sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.”

2.4.3.8.2 Communication and culture

Lonergan affirms the gospel imperative that “the Christian message is to be communicated to all nations.” The task of communicating the Christian message to a culture other than one’s own consists in working in such a way that the Christian message becomes a line of development within the receiving culture and not an alien patch superimposed upon it. According to Lonergan, preachers and teachers who are engaged in communicating the Christian message to a culture other than their own are not to disregard their own culture but to “enlarge their horizons to include an accurate and intimate understanding of the culture and the language of the people they address.”

2.4.3.8.3 Communication and community

Lonergan identifies two distinct instances in the manner through which communication and community relate to each other. In the first instance, individuals are drawn to form community as they share in the reception and affirmation of a meaningful message. In the second, the community constituted by common meaning is maintained, developed and, in the sense of heuristic anticipation, perfected, through communication. To illustrate this distinction in action, the relationship between evangelisation, in the sense of inviting new

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members to join the community, and the instance of working to perfect an already constituted community, is now examined.

Lonergan describes the church as “a process of self-constitution occurring within worldwide human society.”¹⁹³ He sees the self-constitution process as the joining of two distinct but related elements: the Christian message and the inner gift of God’s love. The process of the Christian church’s self-constitution manifests itself in Christian witness, Christian fellowship, and Christian service to humankind.¹⁹⁴ Evangelisation consists in announcing the Christian message, consistent with the inner gift of God’s love, so that the hearer recognises a congruency between what they hear in the message and their natural innate desire for God combined with God’s particular supernatural call to them. The innate desire for God is made manifest in the universal desire for meaning and for love. God’s particular supernatural call is manifested in the mysterious fact that the gift of faith in Jesus Christ appears as the result of a response to a particular and personal call from God.

In the instance of working to perfect an already constituted community, communication works to maintain common meaning, which then leads to shared identity. Common meaning and identity are manifested in Christian witness, Christian fellowship and Christian service to humankind. Reflexively, Christian witness, Christian fellowship and Christian service to humankind reinforce the maintenance of common meaning. Shared or common meaning leads to enhanced individual commitment as a member of the community and enhanced communal identity as the church of Jesus Christ. It is through communication that the community, constituted by common meaning, is maintained, developed, and perfected.

2.4.3.8.4 Communication: Theology learning from culture

The notion of theology mediating between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religious tradition in that matrix can be thought of as a two-way street. “In addition to communicating truths retrieved from the founding inspiration of a religion, a religion must

take into consideration – and at times learn from – new insights emerging within a culture.”

On this point Lonergan writes:

There is not to be overlooked the fact of dependence in the opposite direction. Questions for systematics can arise from communications . . . there is, then, a reciprocal dependence within each of the two phases . . . but the greatest care must be taken that this influence from the second phase does not destroy either the proper openness of the first phase to all relevant data.

Whelan notes that “Christian theology will at times be challenged to ‘catch up’ with insights that are perhaps more widely accepted outside the official borders than within it.”

Specifically addressing this issue Doran asserts:

The functional specialty ‘communications’ (the operation of theologians vis-à-vis pastoral situations, dialogue with other sciences, communication with other religions, ecumenical contacts within Christianity itself, use of the diverse media of communication) entails a process of mutual self-mediation that takes theology back through the functional specialties, at times to the articulation of new doctrines and their understanding in systematics, at times to the modification and even abandonment of former items that the church had been teaching. The mediation of faith and culture that characterizes theology is a mutual self-mediation.

In relation to practical theology feeding back to other theological specialties, Whelan “describes Rahner as beginning his account of practical theology “by agreeing that it is the responsibility of the practical theologian to study and to make practical proposals for guiding Church praxis both ad intra and ad extra.”

Whelan cites Rahner, who also insists that there is a particular role for the practical theologian within the theological academy. That is, “the practical theologian should recognize the relevant new questions emerging within a culture that have not yet been adequately treated in Christian theology and should carry them to the other specialist theologians so that they reflect upon them.”

196 Lonergan, Method, 142–143.
197 Whelan, “Dottrina Sociale.”
199 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
200 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
Embedded in this view is the notion that while the practical theologian may be a specialist in his particular area of expertise ( Communications ), he or she is not omnicompetent and it is up to others working in dogmatic theology and systematic theology ( Doctrines and Systematics ) to formulate a theological response to these questions. Of course, “if and when a development of doctrine should occur within the theological academy, this achievement will return, so to speak, to the practical theologian who will then have the task of helping pastoral agents communicate these new insights into Christian preaching and practice.”

2.5 Lonergan and practical theology

As noted earlier in this chapter, Lonergan completed Method in haste as his health was deteriorating and this may have contributed to the brevity of his final chapter. I suggest that his deteriorating health was also a factor in the composition of the following paragraph:

Having insisted on the great importance of this final specialty, I must at once recall the distinction between the methodologist and the theologian. It is up to the theologians to carry out both the first seven specialties and no less the eighth. The methodologist has the far lighter task of indicating what the various tasks of theologians are and how each presupposes or complements the others.

In one sense, this statement is unremarkable; however, when the thirteen-page chapter on Communications is compared with the meticulous and nuanced argumentation that is evident in Insight and earlier chapters of Method, it is not unreasonable for those theologians who follow Lonergan and work principally in the functional specialty of Communications to feel short-changed. Thankfully, in 1974, three years after Method was first published, Lonergan responded to questions put to him at a workshop at Boston College and his responses were recorded and subsequently transcribed with the transcription posted on the Lonergan Archive website. In this series of questions and responses we get something of Lonergan the “theologian” speaking specifically on the topic of pastoral theology.

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201 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”


2.5.1 Suffering, guilt and death

In response to a question about the relationship between speculative (systematic) theology and pastoral (practical) theology on the issue of suffering, guilt and death, Lonergan responds with three main points. He first notes that the term “pastoral concern” “contains a lot of different meanings. There are the pastoral concerns of each parish, of each city, of each diocese, of each region, of each country, of the church in the world. And they are not all separate and independent.” Acknowledging in a way that is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, in which local problems are best dealt with on the local level with local means, Lonergan notes that “not all problems are of that type [that is, local or regional] and that graver problems, the really deep ones, the ones that hurt are most likely not of that type.” For Lonergan, “problems on the local or regional level cannot always be solved on that level. You haven’t got a broad enough basis to investigate them and work out solutions, or the resources to carry out solutions.” Grave problems are normally not restricted to particular instances; they can be understood only on a broader base and “without that broader basis people are banging their heads against a stone wall.”

Lonergan then remarks that there is an ambiguity in the word “problem,” noting that problems are of two kinds. The first kind is manifested in either of two ways: either as (1) a problem that occasions a bright idea, “making a discovery, hitting upon an invention”; or (2) a problem for intelligence in which “the more you worry about it, rack your brains, the closer you are to a solution.” In both of these manifestations a solution to the problem is possible, at least theoretically. Lonergan goes on to identify another sense of the word “problem,” in which “what you are concerned with is an inverse insight.” By “inverse insight” Lonergan means “that understanding is beside the point, that the root difficulty is the

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204 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
205 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
206 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
207 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
208 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
209 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
210 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
211 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
presence of stupidity [or] ill-will; there is not any intelligibility there to be discovered, there is no invention to be made.”212 This second kind of problem is functionally unsolvable as the difficulty lies with what is “an absurdity, an objective surd.”213 This type of problem is the fruit of ill will and sin and is therefore irrational. Continuing this line of thought he notes:

Irrationality is not confined to the will. It is also found in the action, and it is found in the situation that the action produces. It is perpetuated by all the people who say we have to deal with the facts as they are, and consequently they compromise themselves with these things and keep on doing things that are irrational and making the situation still more irrational.214

For Lonergan, it is only through a detailed and thorough investigation of the problem that one might have the insight that the basis of the problem is ill will and sin, that there is no rationality to be discovered. Consequently, unless the problem is named for what it is, it is likely to generate greater irrationality. Lonergan then returns to the part of the question that seeks a response to the idea of pastoral theology mediating “the kind of religious subjectivity which confronts problems of suffering, guilt, and death.”215 In responding to this part of the question he not only addresses the problems of suffering, guilt and death but he explores the relationship between pastoral (practical) theology and other theological areas. Beginning with a brief excursus on the notion of theological specialty he notes that: “There are different kinds of specialties, and pastoral theology is not the kind of specialty that divides up an area of data and says, Well now, I’ll take this little part here and devote my life to that, and I won’t have to bother my head about anything else.”216 He continues with the remark that “history and anything that is documentary can be approached in that way.”217 As noted earlier in this chapter, Lonergan calls this division “field specialization.”

To further illustrate these distinctions we will briefly examine how they apply to church history. In “field specialisation” as applied to church history, the historical development of

212 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
213 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
214 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
216 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
217 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
the church can be divided into pre- and post-Constantine, pre- and post-East-West
schism, pre- and post-Reformation, pre- and post-Vatican II, or pre- and post- any similar
point of historical division. Each era can then be further divided in terms of its manifestation
in a particular geographical or cultural location, with further subdivisions occurring until a
scholar could spend their whole life examining the sack of Constantinople in the Fourth
Crusade. Lonergan affirms that the drive to pursue ever more refined areas of interest leads to
excellent specialisation and he observes that this way of operating can be discerned through
the whole history of theology. It is in this context that Lonergan observes that “pastoral
theology is not that kind of thing. It is taking the whole of theology and applying it to some
concrete issue.”\(^{218}\) This point will be developed in chapter 6 of this thesis.

Later in the question and answer session, in response to a question about determining
priorities for pastoral action to address concrete issues, Lonergan responds as follows. His
first suggestion is to “put in a little delay.”\(^{219}\) With allusions to an image rich in practicality,
he cites that the reason for the suggestion of delay is “because there is no use rolling up your
shirtsleeves before you know what ditch you are going to dig!”\(^{220}\) The purpose of this initial
delay is so that, as a Christian community, we might discover if “there is anything we could
learn that would enable us to find out whether we could do something about it.”\(^{221}\) He
continues by juxtaposing the idea of consulting a book (manual) on pastoral theology and
working from that, with his preferred response, which is asking questions seeking knowledge
about the concrete situation. He also notes that in “almost any book you will find lists of
things to be done.”\(^{222}\) Making this observation he cautions those who describe themselves as
“practical people,” who, as “practical people,” believe that they do not need to bother
themselves with speculative theology. He states unambiguously “that doesn’t work.” For
Lonergan, insofar as theology is profoundly spiritual, it reveals the necessity of self-
sacrificing love in confronting human suffering, the experience of guilt and the limit of death.

\(^{218}\) Lonergan, “Workshop.”
\(^{219}\) Lonergan, “Workshop.”
\(^{220}\) Lonergan, “Workshop.”
\(^{221}\) Lonergan, “Workshop.”
\(^{222}\) Lonergan, “Workshop.”
To illustrate this point he cites an example from his own work in his book *De Verbo Incarnato,* in which he notes that the meaning of Christ’s death “has to do with the way God, divine Providence, proposes to deal with the evil of sin. Not by wiping it all out by a *fiat,* but by showing the way God himself feels it: absorbing the evils, undergoing them, and inviting – an invitation to others to undergo them and thereby defeat them, not let the evil be a self-perpetuating process.” For Lonergan self-transcendence to the point of self-sacrifice is the fundamental way of dealing with evil. The implication is that those who claim to be practical people are not going to come to understand the meaning of Christ’s death and the impact that such an understanding may have on their praxis unless they “bother” themselves with the fruit of speculative theology.

### 2.5.2 Orthopraxis and orthodoxy

In response to a question on the sometimes contentious issue of the relationship between orthopraxis and orthodoxy, Lonergan notes that “there is no opposition between orthopraxis and orthodoxy. Orthopraxis sublates orthodoxy, and for Lonergan sublate means to keep, to preserve, to maintain, and to add on something that’s more perfect.” He develops the idea of sublation, noting that “intelligence sublates sensitivity. The intelligent man, the man that has learned a science doesn’t see less than a person who hasn’t. His specialization in intelligence means that he sees an awful lot more.” In a similar manner to the example concerning the zoologist with his son observing a giraffe that we noted earlier in this chapter, Lonergan illustrates this point by comparing a common-sense view of a bug walking across a table with the technical view of this held by an entomologist. The person operating in the realm of common sense sees a bug walking across a table and says, “There’s a bug,” whereas “an entomologist would see it and tell you a thousand things about it. And you wouldn’t understand most of the words.” The entomologist has names for all sorts of things that the person operating in the realm of common sense has never bothered to acquire the name for.

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224 Lonergan, “Workshop.”

225 Lonergan, “Workshop.”

226 Lonergan, “Workshop.”

227 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
The entomologist “can see all sorts of differences and talk about them because he’s got the names.”

Lonergan then goes on to make the general point that we can see and talk about what we have the names for and if we don’t have a name for it we hardly see it. “The more developed the intelligence, the greater and the finer the perceptivity.” The common-sense description of “bug” is not inaccurate, but, depending on the circumstances, it may be insufficient. The entomologist sublates “bug” as a description with a more accurate, fuller and more detailed description.

Returning to the notion of orthopraxis sublating orthodoxy, – “orthodoxy that is just orthodoxy is faith without works, which according to James is dead,” – it is orthodoxy in the realm of common sense that may manifest a dependence on a source of authority as the first and last justification for a doctrine of belief. For Lonergan, the sublation of orthodoxy in orthopraxis brings orthodoxy to life in such a way that it does not appear militant. Orthopraxis as practical wisdom or *habitus* is a disposition of the mind and heart from which actions consistent with Christian life flow naturally. If orthopraxis is viewed as a rejection of orthodoxy, a rejection of the substantials of the faith, Lonergan refers to this as “cackle-praxy.”

### 2.5.3 Cultural decline

Responding to a question on strategies to reverse the long cycle of cultural decline, Lonergan cites a book by Christian Duquoc in which Duquoc praises *Gaudium et Spes* and the encyclicals of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. The point of praise that he terms “a great leap forward,” however, is restricted to the notion that these documents no longer assume “that we live in a pre-industrial, agricultural society.” Citing Duquoc, Lonergan “goes on to point

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228 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
229 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
230 See Lonergan, “Workshop.”
231 See Lonergan, “Workshop.”
233 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
out that, unfortunately, the people in the Council did not have the technical knowledge to talk about the current situation, and they satisfied themselves with vague moral advice.”

Lonergan is unambiguous in his thoughts on this situation, stating that vague moral advice gets one nowhere. “You need people that are going to give you something more than vague moral advice if you are going to deal with real problems.”

He then comments on the theology of liberation in South America and reflects on his own experience, saying, “in those whom I have met or read there is a total absence of a realization of errors in economic theory that they are struggling against.”

He continues, stressing the need for theory to meet practical problems, stating, “I think one has to go into theory and do it seriously and not be afraid to differ from common opinion.” For Lonergan, what is needed to deal with real problems is technical expertise, informed and inspired by church teachings, integrated in a developed theoretical, theological framework.

As we have seen, Lonergan does not discount or undervalue the influence of deep self-sacrificing spirituality in the reversal or overcoming of evil. This is necessary but not, however, sufficient. What is also needed is the equipment – the theoretical and technical expertise to effect the fact of reversal – and that it be at the level of creative thinking. The theologian also needs the patience and endurance to deal with the fact that, in all likelihood, the results of their creative thought may not be seen for many years. Specifically addressing the issue of the relationship between theory and practice, Lonergan cites the example of Karl Marx as a speculative thinker. He remarks that “Karl Marx was the most influential thinker in the modern world. [However] in the nineteenth century he was viewed as an old fool with a long white beard who wasted his time in the British Museum.”

In something of a lament that perhaps reflected his view of the state of theology in 1974, Lonergan pointedly remarks that “what the Catholic Church lacked in the 19th century was other old fools” also engaged in speculative, creative thinking.

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234 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
235 Lonergan, “Workshop”.
236 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
237 Lonergan, “Workshop”
238 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
239 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
In response to the question, “Should foundations include categories for fields other than theology?” Lonergan begins his response, saying, “I think it is best for theologians to leave the other areas to think out their own categories, and to begin by learning what their categories precisely are.” He goes on to criticise an ecclesiologist who, he was informed, had “done some rather profound thinking on the nature of society.” Lonergan remarks dismissively, “Of course, if he had read the sociologists, he would have had something far better.” According to Lonergan, “theologians, insofar as they move into other fields, have to be able to learn from the other fields. That’s the first and fundamental step.” For Lonergan the role of theology in relation to other disciplines is to discover and correct “what is insufficient or erroneous or aberrant in the fundamental concepts that are being held” in the particular discipline.

In a question that highlights the role of the theologian working in the functional specialty of Communications, Lonergan was asked, “How does the theoretician deal with this [sic] coming up against people who can’t understand him?” Lonergan appears to hedge his bets in responding to this question. His first response notes that “people with ideas have to bide their time. The world isn’t eager to buy them!” He continues with a brief excursus into the nature of common sense. “What common sense doesn’t understand is common sense. It hasn’t got a more general theory that includes science and interiority, and so on.” As noted earlier in this chapter, what Lonergan is getting at is that, in the absence of a differentiated consciousness through which one recognises the differing realms of common sense, theory and interiority, everything is viewed through the filter of common sense. From a common-sense point of view, that which is not immediately useful is viewed as nonsense. According

240 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
241 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
242 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
243 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
244 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
245 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
246 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
247 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
248 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
to Lonergan, “there are all sorts of common sense. There isn’t just one common sense for the whole of humanity. The common sense of Americans isn’t the common sense of Mexicans or Russians or Japanese.”

He continues, making his point more local, with the statement that the “the common sense of the next village is not the common sense of this village. ‘The people over there are a little strange, you know.’”

In attempting to communicate with those who operate in the realm of common sense, there is a need to understand the particular instance of common sense held by the person or community one is attempting to communicate with. This task requires a transposition of the maximum possible number of the ideas developed in the realms of theory and interiority into the common sense idiom of the particular instance of common sense that one is attempting to influence and inform.

Note, however, that there is nothing wrong with the realm of common sense or with those who operate principally in this realm as it is developed in its own concrete sphere. Members of particular common sense communities can become extremely competent in operating in their particular expression of common sense. It is not a question of intelligence, skill, emotional stability or holiness that marks off those who operate principally in their brand of common sense from those who have managed to achieve self-appropriation. Those who have achieved (or are achieving) self-appropriation are aware that there are different realms of consciousness: common sense, theory, interiority, and (perhaps “for most” only in imaginative theory – the possibility of) transcendence. They are more or less, depending on circumstances, aware of which realm they are operating in at any particular time. Lonergan writes that, as noted earlier in this chapter, “the process of self-appropriation occurs only slowly, and, usually, only through a struggle with some such book as Insight.”

In one sense the task of self-appropriation is ever incomplete. In another sense the realisation that, in fact, the process is ever incomplete does mark something of a milestone in the ever incomplete process.

In the understanding that those who often occupy roles of authority and responsibility in cultural, political and religious institutions principally operate in the realm of common sense

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249 Lonergan, “Workshop.”

250 Lonergan, “Workshop.”

251 Lonergan, Method, 7, note 2.
(and, as such, are not aware that there are other realms of consciousness), we return to the issue of influencing those who operate in this realm. In an answer that reinforces Lonergan’s idea that the realm of common sense is not to be left behind or devalued, he suggests a strategy that is perhaps more consistent with those who are skilled operators in the realm of common sense than we have come to expect from the master of theory and interiority. To accompany the advice about biding one’s time, Lonergan provides the following analogy. Normally, in a production factory, if you have a new and better idea, it is no use talking about it while the plant is operating. The time to suggest an idea is when there is a breakdown, when things have stopped. As the plant has stopped operating anyway, those in a position of authority may be more open to listening to new ideas. The point is that it is difficult to introduce new ideas when things appear to be going “well enough.” When the rate of gradual cultural and institutional decline is slow, choosing a time to identify the problem as one of chronic decline is, in practice, not easy. To a certain extent, those with ideas often have to suffer the indignity of being dismissed as either crazy or as spouting nonsense. In a world hungry for quick and simple solutions, all theorists including practical theologians are subject to ridicule.

2.5.4 The role of the church in society

As noted earlier, the first line of the introduction to Method reads: “A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix.”252 That is, for Lonergan, theology mediates back and forth between culture and religion. Note as well that in the very last paragraph of Method, as Lonergan reflects on the church as divided, he writes: “The constitutive meaning and effective meaning are matters on which most Christians very largely agree. Such agreement, however, needs expression and while we await common cognitive agreement, the possible expression is collaboration in fulfilling the redemptive and constructive roles of the Christian church in human society.”253

I suggest that the purpose behind Lonergan’s efforts in writing Method and indeed the underlying purpose behind his two-part project of Insight and Method is to assist the

252 Lonergan, Method, xi.
253 Lonergan, Method, 368.
Christian church to fulfil its redemptive and constructive role in human society. From the introduction to *Insight* we read that Lonergan’s aim in writing the book “is both concrete and practical, and the motives for undertaking its execution reside, not in the realm of easy generalities, but in the difficult domain of matters of fact.” While Lonergan is not generally associated with the field of practical theology, it could be argued that, consistent with his long and abiding interest in economics, the underlying motivation behind the whole *Insight–Method* project was to prepare the ground for the final chapter of *Method*, “Communications,” where he writes that it is in “this final stage that theological reflection bears fruit.” It was noted earlier that Lonergan somewhat prematurely finished *Method* by not adequately developing the final functional specialty. Perhaps this somewhat premature end to *Method* has resulted in the view held by many involved in the field and discipline of practical theology that Lonergan’s major contribution to theology was in the fields of philosophy and systematic theology to the point where it is sometimes said that “Lonergan was forever sharpening his knife, but never cutting anything with it.”

According to Brown, much of Lonergan’s earliest work:

> was inspired by the effort to work out the theoretical structures necessary to implement *Quadragesimo anno*’s call for a reconstruction of the social and economic orders. And though little of his later work was conducted under the explicit auspices of contributing to the advancement of Catholic social thought, a great deal of that work is relevant to that goal.

The argument proposed in the light of the discussion so far is that each of the first seven functional specialties identified by Lonergan, namely Research, Interpretation, History,

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255 Lonergan’s writing on economics spans forty years and is collected into two volumes. *Bernard J. F. Lonergan, For a New Political Economy*, ed. Philip McShane, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 21 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). was written early in his theological career, and *Macroeconomic Dynamics* represents his thought on the field at the end of his career. Both books indicate an abiding concern with the practical implications of the gospel.


258 Brown, “‘Aiming Excessively High,” 625.
Dialectic, Foundations, Doctrines and Systematics, serve the last functional specialty, Communications. To be sure, “without the first seven stages . . . there is no fruit to be borne. But without the last the first seven are in vain for they fail to mature.” Further, within Lonergan’s framework, systematic theology, properly understood, is an instance of the functional specialty Systematics and is concerned with assisting the Christian community to constitute itself as an authentic, concrete expression of the message of Jesus Christ. As noted above, according to Lonergan, the fourth function of meaning is communicative, with communication occurring intersubjectively, artistically, symbolically, linguistically and incarnately.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented a theoretical background for the critical evaluation, in chapters 3, 4, and 5, of the three books being investigated in this thesis in the light of Lonergan’s thought (namely Don Browning’s *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Terry Veling’s *Practical Theology*, and Rebecca Chopp’s *Saving Work*). In chapter 6, Lonergan’s conception of Practical Theology as located within the confines of Communications is significantly modified and a method in practical theology that is consistent with the role of the functional specialties, as identified by Lonergan, is introduced.

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Chapter 3  A Fundamental Practical Theology:  
Descriptive and Strategic Proposals (Browning)

3.0 Introduction

For Don Browning A Fundamental Practical Theology is a watershed. In his early work he expressed a concern to recover how the dimension of practical reason permeates and even constitutes theology. As early as 1976, in a book entitled The Moral Context of Pastoral Care, Browning argued that pastoral care necessarily had a moral context as it was, at root, an exercise of practical wisdom or phronēsis and thus oriented towards application. In A Fundamental Practical Theology Browning addresses the need for active theological participation in the ongoing cultural conversation about meaning-making and transformative action. In doing so he proposes a new organisation for the whole of theology based on a movement from practice to theory and back to practice, a movement that he understands to follow the pattern of human thought.

3.1 The influence of Don Browning on practical theology

As noted in chapter 1 of this current work, Browning is identified as one of the founders of practical theology by the International Academy of Practical Theology. Cahalan writes of Browning’s interests and influence as follows:

In the mid-1980s Browning, along with several of his colleagues at the University of Chicago, launched a new doctoral program in practical theology. Browning, who had taught at the university for thirty years in the areas of religion, psychology, and ethics, was beginning to extend his work toward conceiving a new model of practical theology. Initially, Browning explored questions about the nature of theology, its practical dimensions, and its relationship to the social sciences and ethics. He found ready conversation partners about the practical nature of knowledge with pragmatic philosophy, the Frankfurt school, and hermeneutical theories advanced by Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg

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3 McGinniss, “Book Reviews.”
4 See Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 9.
Gadamer, and Habermas. Since then Browning has made significant contributions to the methods of practical theology, which is best exemplified in his research on the family.\(^6\)

I suggest that Browning’s work is “mined,” so to speak, by practitioners, practical theologians and theological educators in a wide variety of denominational settings. His work provides methodological strategies for issues related to the practice of ministry.\(^7\) That is to say, practitioners, theological educators and those writing in the field of practical theology adopt the methodological strategies suggested by Browning to aid them in their strategic planning, or what Browning refers to as, “fully practical theology.”

### 3.2 *A Fundamental Practical Theology*

#### 3.2.1 Purpose in writing

Browning’s purpose in writing *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is to present a theological method: a way of relating the various theological sub-disciplines to each other under the canopy of what he names “fundamental practical theology.” Part of the background to *A Fundamental Practical Theology* was Browning’s membership of a multidisciplinary research team that examined church communities in the early 1980s. The team was made up of sociologists, psychologists, an anthropologist, theologians, Browning as a practical theologian, and three professional church consultants. It was from reflecting on experience, which he gained during membership of this team that Browning grew in the conviction that this project lacked an integrating centre.\(^8\)

The process and results of this project were published as the book, *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church*,\(^9\) edited by Carl Dudley and James Anderson. Browning writes specifically of the relationship of this book to his own book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, as follows:

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\(^7\) This suggestion is made in the light of over twenty-five years’ experience in the field as a student, teacher, pastoral practitioner and practical theologian.

\(^8\) See Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 18–22.

We failed to announce forcefully at the beginning of the book [Building Effective Ministry] that all of these analytic and descriptive points of view were aimed at contributing vitally to the practical theological examination of this church\(^\text{10}\) and the practical theological task of making proposals about its future. Further, in that book we failed to implement that agenda thoroughly. Implementing such an agenda is a task that I intend to illustrate in this book\(^\text{11}\).

According to Browning the main limitation with Building Effective Ministry “was its inability to situate description within a larger theological task.”\(^\text{12}\) For Browning, Building Effective Ministry warranted a re-examination “because in many ways it exemplifies how churches use the social sciences.”\(^\text{13}\) In writing A Fundamental Practical Theology, Browning’s intention is to add a hermeneutical understanding of the task of description to the findings recorded in Building Effective Ministry through “honestly and explicitly positioning the social location of the researcher.”\(^\text{14}\) This hermeneutical understanding forms part of the background for A Fundamental Practical Theology.

The extra question to be put to researchers that was absent from Building Effective Ministry was: “How did your interests and social location influence the questions that guided you?”\(^\text{15}\) Other issues addressed in A Fundamental Practical Theology that were not addressed in Dudley’s book include how to situate “description” within a larger theological task, and the nature of practical thinking.

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\(^{10}\) While the study was undertaken on real churches, in subsequent reporting the names and locations of the churches investigated were changed.

\(^{11}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 21–22.

\(^{12}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 22.

\(^{13}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 22.

\(^{14}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 22–23.

\(^{15}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 22–23.
3.2.2 Descriptive and strategic proposals

Reflecting the full title of the book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*, Browning makes “claims about the nature of theology as a whole.” He defines theology *per se* as fundamental practical theology. He justifies this claim by organising the whole of theology into descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology. Browning opines that “viewing theology as a practical discipline through and through leads to discoveries that will benefit theology, the churches, and theological education.”

*A Fundamental Practical Theology* is divided into four parts:

1. “Fundamental Practical Theology”
2. “Descriptive Theology”
3. “Systematic Theology and Theological Ethics”
4. “Strategic Practical Theology.”

Part 1, “Fundamental Practical Theology,” begins by describing three parish communities: the Wiltshire Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, and the Apostolic Church of God. Browning offers this choice of congregations because: “They will provide illustrative material throughout the book to help make some of the denser theological discussion clearer. Two of the cases – Wiltshire Methodist Church and the Church of the Covenant – are already in the published literature of the fledgling field of congregational studies.”

The Apostolic Church of God is an African-American Pentecostal Church located in Browning’s home city of Chicago. Browning researched this congregation himself. He chose this particular church because it was geographically close to his normal workplace and offered a radically different ecclesial experience from that which he had participated in previously. While the Methodist Wiltshire Church and the Presbyterian Church of the

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18 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 16.
19 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 16.
Covenant can be described as part of the “mainstream” Protestant ecclesial tradition and, as such, require little introduction, the same cannot be said of the Apostolic Church of God. Consequently, a little background information on this church is in order.

The Apostolic Church of God is a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. According to Browning there are three related churches, the mainly white “Assemblies of God,” the mainly black “Church of God in Christ,” and the mainly black “Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.” All three take their origin from a church that was located in the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, where, in around 1906, under the leadership of W. J. Seymour, an uneducated black minister, “both blacks and whites became grasped by the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues.”

A contemporary indicator of the influence of these origins in the Apostolic Church of God is the underlying belief that “the power that produced change in people was first of all the Holy Spirit and only secondarily human psychotherapy.”

Following chapters in which the three congregations are described, Browning explores the notion of practical wisdom. Central to Browning’s theological method is a chapter entitled “Practicing Strategic Practical Theology.” In this chapter Browning develops five validity claims that he proposes “reflect the five levels or dimensions of all forms of practical thinking, whether explicitly religious or avowedly secular.”

The five dimensions are: (1) the visional level, which he claims inevitably raises metaphysical validity claims; (2) the obligational level, which raises normative ethical claims; (3) the anthropological dimension, which raises claims about human nature, its basic needs, and the kinds of pre-moral goods required to meet these needs; (4) the environmental-social dimension, which raises claims that deal primarily with social-systematic and ecological constraints on our tendencies and needs; and (5) the rule-role dimension, which raises claims about the concrete patterns we should enlist in our actual praxis in the everyday world.

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20 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 30.
21 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 30.
22 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 71.
23 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 71.
Part 2 of Browning’s book, “Descriptive Theology,” explores the human sciences, hermeneutics, and practical moral thinking, and uses the five validity claims developed in part 1 to do a “thick” description of practice in the Wiltshire church. This is “thick” in the sense that the description interweaves “many strands of motivation; social, environmental and ecological context; moral principle; and narrative.”

Part 3, “Systematic Theology and Theological Ethics,” examines the contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr to systematic theology and ethics, and uses the five validity claims to continue the analysis of the Wiltshire church to illustrate the use of practical reason in a theological context and the relationship between the Christian narrative and practical reason.

Part 4, “Strategic Practical Theology,” outlines a careful assessment of life in the Covenant Presbyterian Church and in the Apostolic Church of God by drawing on the categories provided by the five validity claims. The book concludes with a chapter entitled “Transformation,” in which transformation is described as following a practice-theory-practice rhythm, and God is described as “always the final agent of transformation, all other agents of transformation – community, minister, lay leader [are described as] metaphors of God’s deeper transformative love.”

Browning grounds his book in the claim that “practical thinking is at the center of human thinking and that theoretical and technical thinking are abstractions from practical thinking.” With a keen awareness of the importance of method in theology, Browning writes: “how we solve problems about the organisation of theology makes a difference in how we think and act at the most concrete levels of our lives.” He describes his theological method as a critical practical theology, that is, “a practical theology that begins with the intuition of faith but ends, when needed, with reasons and justifications for the practical

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24 The idea of “thick” description was introduced and developed by Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
actions it proposes.”

It is interesting to note that, despite naming his method “critical,” Browning makes no attempt to explain what he means by “the intuition of faith,” and he appears to presume that the reader shares his understanding of what such a term might mean. The notion of “intuition” will be explored later in this chapter.

In terms of the relationship between theory and practice, Browning writes: “we never really move from theory to practice even when it seems we do. Theory is always embedded in practice. When theory seems to stand alone it is only because we have abstracted it from its practical context.”

For Browning, “theory” is associated with “abstraction,” a term that appears to have a negative connotation. Indeed, for Browning, talk of theory per se is an indication that “we have become mentally blind to the practical activities that both precede and follow it.”

3.3 Methods in theology

To clarify through contrast, before introducing his fully developed method for the whole of theology, Browning presents other ways he observes that theology is organised. Specifically he examines the theological methods proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Paul Tillich, Schubert Ogden and David Tracy. We now briefly examine Browning’s description of the “method of theology” developed by each of these writers.

3.3.1 Schleiermacher

According to Browning, Schleiermacher views theology as organised into philosophical theology, historical theology, and practical theology, all grounded in a “theory to practice” structure. As seen by Browning, Schleiermacher understands theology to be a positive science, that is, a discipline that assembles scientific elements for the purpose of carrying out a practical task. According to Browning, “Schleiermacher saw theology in general as moving

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29 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 3.
30 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 9.
31 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 9.
from historical knowledge to practical application; [but] he had little idea how the practices of the church form the questions we bring to the historical sources.”

3.3.2 Tillich

According to Browning, Tillich also divides theology into historical theology, systematic theology and practical theology. Tillich, however, “granted that practical theology has a role in formulating the questions that systematic theology answers.” For Tillich, it is the technical point of view that distinguishes “practical” from “theoretical” theology. For Browning, in every cognitive approach to reality, a bifurcation between pure and applied knowledge takes place, and he sees Tillich’s approach to theology as “cognitive,” in that “meaning, rather than the reconstruction of practice, was [Tillich’s] central thrust.”

3.3.3 Ogden

According to Browning, in a similar way to Tillich, Ogden proposes a division of theology into historical, systematic, and practical theology, and sees theology “proper” as systematic theology. For Ogden systematic theology is characterised as “understanding the meaning of Christian witness and assessing its truth.” In this scheme “practical theology” is the application in practice of the truth norms discovered by historical and systematic theology. Ogden distinguishes theology from the actions of faithful Christians. In this scheme, faithful Christians give witness to the faith but they do not engage in theology.

3.3.4 Tracy

In developing his own theological method Browning draws substantially on the work of Tracy. Browning describes Tracy’s revisionist view of theology as one that sees the task of

32 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 43.
33 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 43.
34 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 43.
35 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 43.
36 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 44.
37 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 44.
theology as a critical correlation between the values and claims of experience, and the texts of the Christian tradition. The principal reason Browning gives for drawing on Tracy’s work is his belief that it most adequately connects the two poles of theology, which he thinks tend to split it into separate camps. Browning identifies these two poles or camps as the “confessional approach” (which sees theology as primarily witnessing to the narrative structure of the faith) and the “apologetic approach” (which defends the rationality of the faith and tries to increase its plausibility to the contemporary secular mind).38

Browning is of the view that people living in modern, pluralistic societies have a variety of confessional beginning points. If they are Christians, or are in some way attempting to consult Christian classics, they tend to bring questions engendered by the conflict between their contemporary practices and these classics. With practice understood as “theory-laden” for these people, questions emerge out of the conflict between the Christian and non-Christian aspects of their life. From a Catholic point of view, the division of aspects of one’s life into Christian is problematic. In this instance Browning appears to be attempting to distinguish the sacred and the profane but is in fact separating them. There is indeed a conceptual distinction between the sacred and the profane but a conceptual distinction is not necessarily a real separation and as such it is an error to separate aspects of a person’s life into Christian and non-Christian aspects.

According to Browning, it is this conflict that forms the background to Tracy’s view of theology. On this topic Browning writes:

Tracy’s view of theology is correlational; it correlates the confessional beginning point of theology with questions shaped both by faith and by other aspects of our cultural experience. More than that, Tracy’s correlational theology is a ‘revised’ or ‘critical’ correlational program. The meaning of this becomes clear when Tracy distinguishes his correlational approach to theology from Tillich’s. Tillich believed that theology is a correlation of existential questions that emerge from cultural experiences and practices.39

38 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 44.
39 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 46.
Tracy envisages theology as a mutually critical dialogue between interpretations of the Christian message and interpretations of contemporary cultural experiences and practices. “According to Tracy, the Christian theologian must in principle have this critical conversation with ‘all other answers’ from wherever they come.”

Browning notes his indebtedness to Tracy in regard to his claim of developing a new fundamental theology. According to Tracy, “fundamental theology determines the conditions for the possibility of the theological enterprise.” Thus defined, Browning then argues that if the conditions for doing theology are significantly influenced by the close association between hermeneutics and *phronēsis*, then fundamental theology, understood as the conditions for the possibility of the theological enterprise, “would be seen first as dealing with the normative and critical grounds of our religious praxis.” For Browning fundamental theology determines the conditions for the possibility of doing theology and these conditions are influenced to the point of being determined by religious praxis.

### 3.3.5 Fundamental practical theology

Browning takes Tracy’s definition of *practical* theology as “the mutually critical correlation of interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation” and combines it with Tracy’s understanding of *fundamental* theology to arrive at a notion of “fundamental practical theology.” In Browning’s notion of “fundamental practical theology,” descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic practical theology all act to determine the conditions for the possibility of doing theology; and this is why it is “fundamental” theology. That is, for Browning, the concern with “application” is present from the beginning of the theological process and permeates all stages. In the line of Schleiermacher, Tillich, Ogden and Tracy, Browning’s particular contribution to theological

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41 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47.
42 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47.
43 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47.
method is the addition of the view, under the influence of Hans Georg Gadamer, that understanding is best understood as hermeneutical or in the model of a conversation.44

Two questions underpin A Fundamental Practical Theology: “In what way do religious communities make sense? [and] Who would ask such a question?” Browning suggests that the answer to the second question is “people on the boundary – the boundary between religious and secular life, between tradition and modernity, and between faith and reason.”46 For Browning, it is the boundary or interface between religious and secular, or tradition and modernity, or faith and reason that is the region inhabited by practical theology and, by extension, practical theologians.

Browning’s claim is that practical theology, as he understands it, supplies both the ground and framework for collaboration (method) for the whole of theology. In A Fundamental Practical Theology Browning is not simply addressing those things that are associated with practice, things he identifies as instances of “strategic or fully practical theology.”47 The purpose of A Fundamental Practical Theology is to present a complete theological method that “should be seen as practical through and through at its very heart.”48 He presents a theological method in which “historical, systematic, and practical theology (in the more specific sense of the term) [are] seen as subspecialties of the larger and more encompassing discipline called fundamental practical theology.”49

3.3.6 Browning’s theological method

For Browning, fundamental practical theology is constituted by what he refers to as four “theologies”: descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology. In developing his organisation of the whole of theology Browning is significantly influenced by a “group of philosophical positions that emphasize the importance

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45 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 1.
46 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 1.
47 See Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 8–9.
48 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 7.
49 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 8.
of wisdom or \textit{phronēsis} in contrast to theoretical (\textit{theoria}) or technical reason (\textit{technē}).”\textsuperscript{50} He sees the “modern experiment” as “dedicated to the improvement of human life through the increase of objective scientific knowledge (\textit{theoria}) that is then applied to the solution of human problems (\textit{technē}).”\textsuperscript{51} Browning identifies the “rebirth” of practical philosophy as signalling a wider desire to question some characteristics of modernity, specifically the dominance of theoretical and technical reason.\textsuperscript{52}

3.4 Practical philosophy

According to Browning a loosely associated group of philosophical positions that emphasise the importance of practical wisdom or \textit{phronēsis} in direct contrast to theoretical reason (\textit{theoria}) or technical reason (\textit{technē}) has created the intellectual environment for the rebirth of practical theology.\textsuperscript{53} Among the philosophies identified by Browning is the work of Gadamer. According to Browning, Aristotle’s concept of \textit{phronēsis} or practical wisdom serves as Gadamer’s model of the process of understanding. As cited by Browning, Gadamer writes in \textit{Truth and Method}: “If we relate Aristotle’s description of the ethical phenomena and especially the virtue of moral knowledge to our own investigation, we find that Aristotle’s analysis is in fact a kind of model of the problem of hermeneutics.”\textsuperscript{54} For Gadamer:

The hermeneutic process aimed at understanding any kind of human action – a classic text, work of art, letter, sermon, or political act – is like a moral conversation, when the word \textit{moral} is understood in the broadest sense. The hermeneutical conversation is like Aristotle’s practical wisdom because neither applies abstract universals to concrete situations.\textsuperscript{55}

With “understanding” conceived as a moral conversation shaped by practical concerns, Gadamer writes: “application is neither a subsequent nor a merely occasional part of the

\textsuperscript{50} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 34.
\textsuperscript{51} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 34.
\textsuperscript{52} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 34.
\textsuperscript{53} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 34.
\textsuperscript{54} Gadamer, \textit{Truth and method}, 289.
\textsuperscript{55} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 38–39.
phenomena of understanding, but co-determines it as a whole from the beginning. Another influential notion proposed by Gadamer is that of “effective history,” in which the events of the past shape present historical consciousness, giving rise to a fusion of the whole of the past with the present.

The central question occupying Gadamer and his predecessors (Heidegger, Husserl, Dilthey and Schleiermacher) is how to distinguish the cultural or moral sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) as exemplified in the disciplines of history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and law from the prestigious natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften) of physics, chemistry, and certain branches of biology. The natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften) are identified as disciplines that study objects. The cultural or moral sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) study intentional, human subjects. Gadamer’s response to the issue of distinguishing these two “types” of sciences is that while the natural sciences study objects external to the subject, the cultural disciplines (Geisteswissenschaften) are “rooted in the fundamental structure of human understanding – a structure he describes under the model of ‘dialogue’ and ‘conversation.’”

The ground of Gadamer’s thinking and, consequently, of Browning’s is an understanding that the fundamental structure of human understanding follows the model of dialogue and conversation. With conversation or dialogue understood as the ground, the fusion of horizons is viewed as the fruit of a synthesis of the horizons of the two dialogue partners. For example, when the notion of fusion of horizon is applied to historical study, the identified concerns of the present are seen to be in conversation with an understanding of a historical event. The fruit of this conversation, or the fusion of horizons, is both a new understanding of the present and a new understanding of the historical event. When applied to the study of Scripture, the concerns and questions of the present are brought into conversation with the world of the text of Scripture and each of the horizons modifies how both horizons or worlds are understood. In this context, understanding is viewed as the end point of the dialogue and is understood to be fully realised when it is acted upon. When practical theology is

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56 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 39.
57 See Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 40.
58 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 37.
undertaken within the context of this viewpoint, methodologically, the concerns and questions of the present and the normative texts of the faith tradition are brought into conversation and the result of the conversation is a new understanding of the normative texts and a new understanding of the current situation.

3.4.1 Prejudice, bias and objectivity

In addressing the issue of personal prejudice and its potential impact on interpretation, Gadamer argues that the kind of objectivity and self-emptying required by Dilthey and Husserl was impossible to achieve. In contrast to the Enlightenment project of aiming to expunge all biases or prejudgements from understanding, Gadamer promotes the positive use of biases or prejudgements to engender good understanding and adequate praxis. The acknowledged biases or prejudgements are understood as foreknowledge. For Gadamer, we understand things only in “relation to” or in “contrast with” them.\(^59\) Citing Gadamer, Browning writes: “the important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings.”\(^60\) Perhaps Gadamer’s theory of hermeneutics might best be understood metaphorically as an “interpretive cloud” in which the past and present, current questions and normative texts, personal prejudices and commitments, and self-awareness of personal prejudices and commitments all mutually interact with one another and, through conversation and dialogue, all modify each other.

3.4.2 Practical reason

With reference to Bernstein, Rorty and Kuhn, Browning writes: “these hermeneutic thinkers have all undercut what philosophers call “foundationalist” preoccupations with anchoring knowledge on pure and undistorted sense impressions or something like \textit{a priori} first principles or transcendental notions, that is, something certain, objective and neutral.”\(^61\) According to Browning, both Gadamerian hermeneutics and North American pragmatism

\(^59\) Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 38.
\(^60\) Gadamer, \textit{Truth and method}, 238.
\(^61\) Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 40.
have helped in understanding how all cultural sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) and many, if not all, natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften) can best be understood as dialectical movements from traditions of theory-laden practice to theory and back to new theory-laden practices.\(^{62}\) In developing this line of thought, Browning then equates Gadamerian hermeneutics and North American pragmatism with phronēsis and calls this particular understanding of phronēsis the “envelope” of practical reason.

With no apparent concern with bifurcation, Browning distinguishes the “envelope” of practical reason from the “inner core” of practical reason. He continues, stating that “the inner core of practical wisdom has a mixed deontological structure,”\(^{63}\) with a “dominant deontological logic of equal regard with a subordinate teleological moment that promotes the increase of the pre-moral good.”\(^{64}\) Examples of the inner core of practical reason cited by Browning are the reversible reasoning of “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matt 19:19) and “in everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31).\(^{65}\) By contrast, “the outer envelope of practical reason is its fund of inherited narratives and practices that tradition has delivered to us and that always surrounds our practical thinking.”\(^{66}\)

Browning contrasts his concept of practical reason with the views of Metz and Hauerwas. He writes that they “correctly suggest that the Christian narrative contributes something essential to practical reason. They are wrong in arguing that practical reason has no independence from this narrative.”\(^{67}\) For Browning, “the inner core of practical reason needs the envelope of this larger interpretive and hermeneutic process in order to have a sense of the wider reality in which it functions.”\(^{68}\) For Browning, it is the elements of the Christian tradition that are consistent with reversible reasoning that shape the inner core of practical reason.

\(^{62}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 40.
\(^{63}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 193.
\(^{64}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 193.
\(^{65}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 11.
\(^{66}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 11.
\(^{67}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 194.
\(^{68}\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 40.
Reversible reasoning relates to the cognitive developmental stages identified by Piaget. In the 3rd stage which Piaget terms Concrete Operational (Reversible) in which the developing child can comprehend things in reverse order. For example an inflated balloon that is deflated is recognised by the child as still a balloon that can be inflated again.\(^{69}\) In contrast, the outer envelope is assisted in its formation by the “narrative that tells how the life and death of Jesus Christ further God’s plan for the world,”\(^{70}\) and by what Browning refers to as the “the three great metaphors of God as Creator, Governor, and Redeemer.”\(^{71}\) It is the Christian narrative and the three great Christian metaphors that make up the outer envelope as they inform and provide the context for Christian practical reasoning. The inner core of practical reason is not specifically Christian “as it is discerned in other narrative contexts as well.”\(^{72}\) It just so happens that the examples cited above from Scripture are consistent with the dictates of reversible thinking. It appears that, for Browning, those things that are consistent with the dictates of reversible thinking function as anthropological constants. Developing this idea to include non-religious narratives, he writes: “the difference between the so-called secular and religious forms of practical reason is not the former is irreligious and the latter religious. The difference is between systems in which the religious framework (or at least the framework of faith) is explicit and where it is implicit.”\(^{73}\)

For Browning, the inner core of practical reason as characterised by being consistent with reversible thinking is “universal.” It is the outer envelope of either a religious or a non-religious narrative that forms the context in which the inner core is understood.

### 3.4.3 Practical philosophy

Browning’s embrace of practical philosophy is an attempt to reintegrate practical reason systematically into theological discourse, as he and others\(^{74}\) observe it to have been

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74 Browning cites Edward Farley’s book *Theologia* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1983) and *The Fragility of*
effectively sidelined since the beginning of the “modern experiment.” For Browning, the reintegration of practical wisdom into theology in the form of a practice-to-theory-to-practice sequence is “simply following the nature of human thought.” 75 As noted earlier, following Gadamer, Browning sees the nature of human thought as grounded in the conversation or hermeneutical model of understanding. He writes that he is addressing his “argument to those already attracted by the conversation or hermeneutical model of understanding.” 76 It seems that Browning sees no need to examine critically the adequacy or otherwise of Gadamer’s hermeneutical theories. It appears that, for Browning, consistent with the dictates of practical philosophy, the validity of the conversation or hermeneutical model of understanding is demonstrated through the fruitfulness of its application in the creation of fundamental practical theology.

As noted earlier in this thesis chapter, Browning arrives at the definition of fundamental practical theology by combining two theological definitions offered by Tracy. He then describes his new theological method as the “most inclusive understanding of theology and [describes] the disciplines of descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic practical theologies [as] sub-movements within this larger framework.” 77

3.4.4 Theological submovements

3.4.4.1 Descriptive theology

For Browning descriptive theology is the description of theory-laden religious and cultural practice. As such, it can be viewed as a form of hermeneutical sociology in which:

the researcher brings his or her pre-understanding into dialogue with the actions, meanings, and pre-understandings of the subjects. Social-systematic, material, and psychological determinates are traced and explained as well as possible, but they are placed within the larger set of meanings . . . that given them direction in the scheme of human action. These larger meanings that constitute the theory embedded in our practices

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Knowledge, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1988), as being particularly important in identifying the absence of practical reason in theological education.

75 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 9.
76 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 42.
77 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 47.
invariably have a religious dimension. This is why hermeneutic sociology, when properly conceived, fades into descriptive theology.\textsuperscript{78}

In a similar manner to the way Browning understands practical reason as consisting of an inner core and a narrative outer envelope that informs the interpretive and hermeneutic process, he views descriptive theology as, effectively, hermeneutic sociology. That is a sociology that includes an explanation of the set of meanings that give human action direction. Browning identifies the theory embedded in the sets of meaning that give direction to human action as invariably religious, with non-religious sets of meaning understood as implicitly religious, as opposed to explicitly religious.\textsuperscript{79}

It is from this position that he claims an equivalency between hermeneutic sociology and descriptive theology. As previously noted in developing his theological method and demonstrating its effectiveness, Browning examines three church communities. In describing a religious community, it is not unreasonable to assume that the theory embedded in a set of meanings that give direction to human action is invariably religious. However, in terms of proposing a theological method that is applicable to the whole of theology, I argue that this assumption cannot be maintained. The argument offered here is that the assumption that hermeneutic sociology fades into descriptive theology is grounded on the belief that all meaning-making systems are either explicitly or implicitly religious.

Commenting on the notion that all meaning-making systems are either explicitly or implicitly religious Whelan writes:

Theologians at the University of Paris before Aquinas such as Philip the Chancellor and Albert the Great (who would be the teacher of Aquinas) developed a distinction between ‘natural’ realities and ‘supernatural’ realities; they stated that natural realities are those matters studied by philosophy and are accessible by reason; by contrast with this, they identified supernatural realities that we could not have anticipated by reason and are revealed only by Jesus Christ. They posited that while such mysteries could never be fully explained by human understanding nevertheless some limited but helpful understanding of

\textsuperscript{78} See Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 48.

\textsuperscript{79} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 11.
them could be gained by attempting a ‘supernatural metaphysics’ and using categories derived from Aristotle’s metaphysics to explain the mysteries of the Christian faith.  

As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, (1.3.2 Theology as a science) Lonergan drew attention to Philip’s discovery that there is “a distinction between two entitatively disproportionate orders: grace was above nature, faith was above reason; charity was above human good will; merit before God was above the good opinion of one’s neighbours.” It seems that, for Browning, the difference between religious and non-religious sets of meaning is whether or not persons function explicitly with regard to their “faith” or are informed by an implicit “faith.” One is reminded of the thought of John Milbank who is fond of the phrases “naturalising the supernatural” and “supernaturalising the natural”. Milbank clearly enunciates the intent of his major work *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* with the statement “once there was no “secular” and the secular was not latent, waiting to fill more space with the stream of the ‘purely human’, when the pressure of the sacred was relaxed”. Between “naturalising the supernatural” and “supernaturalising the natural” Milbank opts for the latter option, arguing that only ecclesiology is the “true” sociology. Browning however appears to hover between “naturalising the supernatural” and “supernaturalising the natural” and fails to grasp the nature of the grace-nature distinction as articulated by Philip the Chancellor.

### 3.4.4.2 Historical theology

According to Browning, historical theology is concerned with what the normative texts that are part of a religious tradition “really imply for our praxis.” It is in historical theology where the “technical literary-historical, textual, and social scientific explanatory interests are understood as part of a larger practical hermeneutical enterprise.” Consistent with Browning’s endeavour to create a new theological method, his fundamental practical

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80 Whelan, “New Theological Discipline.”
81 Lonergan, Method, 310.
83 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 49.
84 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 49.
theology, he appropriates all of the technical disciplines that are designed to ascertain what the text of the tradition “meant” for their original audience. For Browning, the purpose of technical literary-historical, textual and social scientific study of Scripture is “to gain clarity within a larger hermeneutic effort to understand our praxis and the theory behind it.”

Somewhat dismissively, Browning views the quest to find what God wanted to communicate through careful investigation of “what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words” as temporary, technical and distancing manoeuvres. This position puts Browning at odds with the dominant approaches to Scripture scholarship in all of the mainstream Christian traditions.

3.4.4.3 Systematic theology

For Browning systematic theology is “the fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of the normative Christian texts.” This fusion tries “to examine the large encompassing themes of our present practices and the vision latent in them. The systematic character of this movement comes from its effort to investigate general themes of the gospel to the general questions that characterise the situation of the present.”

Such a view stands in stark contrast to the view of theology as promulgated in the first Vatican council in Dei Filius. With reference to this document Lonergan writes of the role of systematic theology as follows.

Among the principal objects of faith are the mysteries hidden in God, which, were they not revealed, could not be known by us (DS 3015, cf 3005).

Reason illumined by faith, when it inquires diligently, piously, soberly, reaches with God’s help some extremely fruitful understanding of the mysteries. Such understanding rests on the analogy of things known naturally and on the

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85 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 49.
87 See Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 49.
88 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 51.
89 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 51.
interconnection of the mysteries with one another and with man’s last end. But it never becomes capable of grasping them after the fashion it can understand the truths that lie within its proper range. For the divine mysteries by their very nature so exceed created intellect that, even given in revelation and accepted by faith, they remain as it were wrapped in the veil of faith \((DS 3016)\).^90

Systematic theology is this view is utilising reason illumined by faith to inquire diligently, piously, soberly to gain understanding of the mysteries hidden in God, which, were they not revealed, could not be known by us.

### 3.5 *A Fundamental Practical Theology* as theology

Practical theology as a discipline has much to gain from a thoroughgoing hermeneutic sociology of the issue of concern in all of its “thick” complexity. The subject of Browning’s investigation is three Christian churches. Practical theology, however, is concerned with extra-ecclesial issues as well as ecclesial ones.\(^91\) In introducing *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Browning writes: “from one perspective it is a book in religiously orientated practical philosophy. From another perspective, it is a practical philosophy of religion.”\(^92\) In the light of my critique of Browning’s construal of the relationship of grace and nature, this description can be rephrased thus: “from one perspective, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is a book which demonstrates the manner in which the inner core of practical philosophy can be oriented by the outer envelope of the Christian narrative. From another perspective, it presents Christianity as a religion whose practical expression is consistent with the dictates of practical philosophy.” In this context, it is reasonable to ask in what way, then, is *A Fundamental Practical Theology* an exercise in “theology”? Apparently anticipating this question, Browning states: “the practical theology offered here is a critical practical theology.

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^91 On extra-ecclesial issues Browning describes Reinhold Niebuhr as a highly engaging practical theologian who was concerned with a variety of concrete problems – the anguish of industrial civilisation, its inequalities, the labour movement, race relations, war and peace issues around World War II, etc. See *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 141.

It is a practical theology that begins with the intuition of faith but ends, when needed, with reasons and justifications for the practical actions it proposes. As noted earlier, Browning identifies “the intuition of faith” as the beginning of his critical practical theology but he does not explain what he understands by “intuition.” It is to this topic that we now turn as a preparation for examining Browning’s five dimensions of practical moral reasoning in the light of Lonergan’s thought.

3.5.1 Intuition

Habermas differentiates two understandings of “intuition”: generative intuition and intuition that is immediately given. According to Habermas, “the intuition of generative activity thus is not to be confused with the intuition of what is immediately given, a concept Husserl introduced programmatically by appealing to the model of sense experience.” For Habermas, generative intuition is akin to a hunch that needs to be tested. Intuition of what is immediately given, by contrast, is akin to a concept arriving fully formed, complete with understanding. It is not clear that Browning is aware of this differentiation.

In the light of the distinction proposed by Habermas, “intuition” can be understood in two main ways. In popular culture, or from a common-sense point of view, “intuition” is akin to a sixth sense, that is, it is self-justifying. It would appear that this is akin to what Habermas refers to as “immediate” intuition. The second understanding of intuition is akin to what Habermas describes as “generative” intuition and this refers to a hunch, insight or suspicion that calls for verification or rejection through the use of intelligence working on the data provided by the imagination or sense impression. In this understanding of intuition, knowledge is hard-won, judgement is a key component and one consciously, reasonably and deliberately assents that something in fact “is” after one has affirmed the correctness of one’s understanding of the experience of one’s sense impression or imagination. This process

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499 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 3.
describes an exercise of deliberate action in choosing consciously to affirm what one now knows as a result of going through a series of cognitive processes. On this view, knowledge does not simply arrive fully formed but, “makes a slow, if not bloody entrance.”

In terms of faith, for Lonergan, belief is believing someone: the judgements one makes are judgements of value: “it regards the trustworthiness of a witness, a source, a report, the competence of an expert, the soundness of judgement of a teacher, a counsellor, a leader, a statesman, an authority.” If intuition is understood as “generative,” faith per se is not the result of immediate intuition but a conscious, rational and reasonable choice to believe something or someone, or to believe in some institution. On this understanding, “intuition of faith” marks a beginning in that it refers to something or someone stimulating questions for a person with regard to ultimate meaning and purpose. Answering those existential questions however may be a lifelong task. On the parallel topic of learning Lonergan writes:

> to learn thoroughly is a vast undertaking that calls for relentless perseverance. To strike out on a new line and become more than a weekend celebrity calls for years in which one’s living is more or less constantly absorbed in the effort to understand, in which one’s understanding gradually works round and up a spiral of viewpoints with each complementing its predecessor and only the last embracing the whole field to be mastered.

In the context of faith, and in the light of our discussion, intuition understood as “generative” or a hunch might best be described as an unease initiated by a sense of call that sets one on the “long search” of personal response in which one’s living is more or less constantly absorbed for years, seeking to understand.

It was noted earlier that, for Browning, his critical practical theology is “a practical theology that begins with the intuition of faith but ends, when needed, with reasons and justifications for the practical actions it proposes.” If intuition is understood as “immediate,” then critical

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practical theology begins with a surety of faith, and justification and reasons are provided only when the theologian judges that they are needed. One presumes that the purpose of providing reasons and justification is simply to convince others. For theologians, there is no need of such justification, as they know through “immediate intuition” that they are correct. If, however, intuition is understood as “generative,” a critical practical theology would begin with a hunch or insight into faith that calls for verification or rejection through the use of intelligence working on the hunch or insight. That is, a critical practical theology would begin with a critically grounded faith and attempt to understand that faith before developing practical responses. It seems that Browning understands the intuition of faith as immediately given and presumes that his readers share this understanding. It appears too that, for Browning, the purpose of providing reasons and justifications for proposed actions is to communicate, only when necessary, with those who do not share the same “immediate” intuition of faith.

To further the examination of the notion of intuition as understood by Browning we briefly examine what intuition meant for another significant influence on Browning; Kant. According to Sala, Heidegger formulated Kant’s first epistemological principle “with extreme exactitude: To understand the KRV (Critique of Pure Reason) one must, as it were, hammer into one’s head the principle: Knowledge is primarily intuition.”99 Sala continues, writing that “it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the intuition principle in Kant’s epistemology.” 100 He continues: “Kant inclines to reduce knowledge to this single act.”101 One of the consequences of this view is that thinking and judging, because they are not intuitive activities, do not add anything to knowledge. For Kant, thinking and judging simply transport the knowledge that is grasped immediately in intuition from one level to another.102 If Scala is correct in his understanding of Kant’s view of intuition then it seems that Browning accepts and shares (takes for granted) Kant’s view on intuition.

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100 Sala, Lonergan and Kant, 10.
101 Sala, Lonergan and Kant, 13.
102 Sala, Lonergan and Kant, 13.
3.6 Five dimensions of moral thinking

As noted earlier in this chapter, for Browning, descriptive theology aims to provide a thick description of situations. As a practical aid in the task of adequately describing situations and a guide to generating a normative proposal for reconstruction, Browning offers what he calls five dimensions of moral thinking. Browning names the five dimensions “visional,” “obligational,” “tendency-need,” “environmental-social,” and “rule-role.”

3.6.1 Visional

By “visional” Browning understands that moral thinking cannot be separated from the stories and traditions of the communities in which the thinking occurs. It is these stories and traditions that constitute the “envelope of practical reason.” “Our moral thinking begins in the context of specific traditions and . . . these traditions are carried by particular narratives, stories, metaphors and shape the self-understanding of the communities that belong to the tradition.” The visional dimension is made up of the narratives that bind the community. The narratives are, however, not simply the formal, given story. The narratives are dynamically formed from reflection on the interaction of story with the practices, responses, and constraints within and upon the community.

3.6.2 Obligational

By “obligational” Browning has in mind moral principles that form a common structure in different traditions. These moral principles equate with the inner core of practical reason. The obligational dimension is the spelling out of the general principles that arise from the vision. “Within the context of Judaism and Christianity, the principle of neighbour love (Lev 19:18, 34; Matt 22:39) and the golden rule (Luke 6:31) are the chief examples of the general principles of obligation.” These general principles, Christian, Kantian, or utilitarian in form, then serve as embedded guides to practice. As general principles, however, they are 

103 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 110.
104 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 105.
105 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 106.
abstracted from the actual praxis of the community and constrained by human needs and the environment.

3.6.3 Tendency-need

The “tendency-need” dimension is a recognition that the function of moral principles is to organise, mediate and coordinate the needs of individuals and societies. The tendency-need dimension addresses the issues raised when considering sociobiology, and embraces the pre-moral (fundamental human tendencies and needs). It is constitutive of those embedded values that arise from our very humanness. The “tendency-need” dimension is concerned with values that go beyond the apparent result of socialisation and tradition. Browning writes:

Evolution has made us social creatures who live to protect and enhance our own genes through our offspring and kin (kin altruism). We also enter into various reciprocal arrangements of mutual help with our neighbours (reciprocal altruism). Reason and our enduring capacity to think impartially and reversibly (from the other person’s point of view) extend and complete our kin and reciprocal altruism to include progressively wider areas of social experience, that is, persons and groups beyond our families, neighbors, and natural groups. These might include distant strangers and sometimes even enemies.

In describing the tendency-need dimension, Browning alludes to the notion of an anthropological constant, that is, that which goes beyond the apparent result of socialisation and tradition and wants “to claim a certain natural, biological, and psychological predisposition to this capacity.” Browning’s notion of the capacity for practical reason has some parallels with the notion of faith as an anthropological constant proposed by Schillebeeckx, who writes that “‘faith,’ the ground for hope, is an anthropological constant throughout human history, a constant without which human life and action worthy of men

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and capable of realization becomes impossible.\textsuperscript{110} Reflecting on the anthropological approach to spirituality, Schneiders notes that, from this approach, “spirituality is an anthropological constant, a constitutive dimension of the \textit{humanum}.\textsuperscript{111} That is to say that “human beings are characterized by a capacity for self-transcendence toward ultimate value, whether or not they nurture this capacity or do so in religious or non-religious ways.”\textsuperscript{112} For Browning, one anthropological constant is the capacity to engage in practical reasoning; for Schillebeeckx one of his anthropological constants is the capacity to believe that grounds hope; and, as described by Schneiders, an anthropological constant is a capacity for self-transcendence towards ultimate value.

As understood by Browning, hermeneutic sociology invariably fades into descriptive theology. I have argued earlier in this chapter (3.4.4.1 Descriptive theology) that this contention presumes that the larger set of meanings that gives human actions direction in the extra-ecclesial context must, therefore, be viewed as having a religious dimension. Without the religious dimension one is not doing theology, descriptive or otherwise. It was also suggested that Browning can maintain the premise that hermeneutic sociology invariably fades into descriptive theology only if religion is redefined as that larger set of meanings that gives direction and meaning to the scheme of human actions.

In terms of an anthropological constant, while for Schneiders it is possible to nurture the capacity for self-transcendence in religious or non-religious ways, it seems that, for Browning, it is possible to exercise practical reasoning only in a religious manner (either implicitly or explicitly). In describing the anthropological approach to spirituality, Schneiders indicates that, within this conceptual framework, it is possible to speak of non-religious spirituality. It would appear, however, that for Browning to claim that the anthropological constant that he has identified as the capacity for practical reasoning can be exercised in a religious context only (evidenced by the notion that hermeneutic sociology invariably fades

\textsuperscript{112} Schneiders, “Approaches,” 26.
into descriptive theology) means that either he understands religion to be that larger set of meanings that gives direction and meaning to the scheme of human actions, or he understands theology to be either “religiously orientated practical philosophy”\textsuperscript{113} or a “practical philosophy of religion.”\textsuperscript{114} Embedded in this understanding there is apparently no need to differentiate the natural from the supernatural, grace from nature, as religion is redefined by Browning, effectively, as that larger set of meanings that gives direction and meaning to the scheme of human actions. What is argued here is that the notion that “hermeneutic sociology invariably fades into descriptive theology”\textsuperscript{115} can be maintained only in the context of a conceptual framework in which religion is redefined as that larger set of meanings that gives direction and meaning, or if one restricts one’s theological investigations to specifically ecclesial subjects.\textsuperscript{116}

3.6.4 Environmental-social

Browning identifies the “environmental-social” dimension of practical reasoning with the social structures and ecological constraints that place limits on the moral ordering of goods. This dimension describes those factors that serve to influence the group’s behaviour and self-understanding that are external to the group.\textsuperscript{117}

3.6.5 Rule-role

The final dimension of moral thinking, “rule-role,” refers to the practices and behaviours of people. In this dimension we can actually see the behaviour of the group, its praxis. Browning proposes that the five dimensions both “describe the thickness of the situation and . . . guide our critical thinking about their [the five dimensions] reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{118} In terms

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} See Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 48.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Browning’s tendency to either supernaturalises the natural, or naturalises the supernatural has echoes with Milbank’s option that the only ecclesiology is “true” sociology. See 3.4.4.1 Descriptive theology, for an outline of Milbank’s position.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} See Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 106.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 107.
\end{itemize}
of theological method, Browning envisages the five dimensions of moral thinking (visional, obligational, tendency-need, environmental-social, rule-role) constituting each of the four subtypes of theology that he proposes make up fundamental practical theology.

### 3.6.6 The five dimensions and the late modern position

To justify the five dimensions of moral reasoning, Browning calls upon Habermas, writing that “at most, these five dimensions have been developed through something like the ‘reconstructive science’ that Habermas has used to develop the four validity claims presupposed by competent communicative action.”

On the topic of “reconstructive science” Browning writes:

> Habermas distinguishes a reconstructive science from transcendental philosophy on the one hand and the empirical sciences on the other. A reconstructive science is not built on the logical and *a priori* structures of the mind without which thought and communication cannot be conceived to take place. Nor is a reconstructive science built on the ordering of collections of empirical observations of events. Rather, reconstructive sciences, especially as they are used in determining the competencies that go into good communication, are ‘sciences that systematically reconstruct the intuitive knowledge of competent subjects.’

Through the use of the phrase “intuitive knowledge of competent subjects,” Browning presumes that his readers share his understanding of what intuition is, even though, as addressed earlier (3.5.1 Intuition), he makes no attempt to explain what he understands.

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intuition to be. It appears that, either intentionally or unintentionally, Browning simply accepts, as a given, the epistemological framework developed by Kant.\textsuperscript{122}

For Browning, following Habermas, the reconstructive sciences, which are the sciences that systematically reconstruct the intuitive knowledge of competent subjects, “like all other types of knowledge have only a hypothetical status . . . [they] are tested by how well they organise our experience.”\textsuperscript{123} For Browning, the knowledge that arrives as a fully formed concept through immediate intuition is hypothetical knowledge. Such knowledge moves out of the realm of hypothesis when its heuristic usefulness is demonstrated.

In summary, the five dimensions of practical reason that are used in the four theologies – descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic practical – that constitute Browning’s fundamental practical theology are grounded in an understanding of theology as being akin to reconstructive science, with reconstructive science understood to involve the systematic reconstruction of the intuitive knowledge of competent subjects. The validity or otherwise of the process as it unfolds is measured by its effectiveness with regard to the perceived success of the organisation of the intuitive experience.

It appears that the foundation of Browning’s fundamental practical theology and, hence, of his proposed theological method lies in the notion of personal immediate intuition of faith combined with an affirmation of a universal capacity for practical reasoning. It also appears that, in \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, Browning is not only offering a new method of doing all theology but he is offering a new understanding of theology \textit{per se}. If the whole of theology is to be understood as fundamental practical theology, then the whole of theology is to be understood as either a religiously oriented practical philosophy or a practical philosophy of religion. While such an understanding of theology may place it somewhat uneasily amongst the human sciences studied by his academic colleagues, it is difficult to see how Browning’s fundamental practical theology can account for the meaning of the message

\textsuperscript{122} In writing on the topic of practical wisdom and communities, Browning notes that he draws on several intellectual traditions, including the practical wisdom associated with Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume and Kant and the critical theory of Habermas. See Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 2.

\textsuperscript{123} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 108.
of Jesus Christ as mediated through Scripture and the history of systematic reflection on the experience of faith undertaken in the context of an historical ecclesial community.

I suggest that, as a work of “theology,” *A Fundamental Practical Theology* may be described as a highly personal exercise in practical philosophy undertaken by a committed Christian, developed through reflection on considerable research on three ecclesial communities, and verified through its perceived effectiveness. In other words, the reason this particular exercise in practical philosophy as described by Browning in *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is viewed as “theology” is because the subject matter under investigation is ecclesial communities. In terms of theological method it is difficult to see how an investigation into other practical theological areas of concern, such as labour relations, health care policy or indigenous education, would be anything more than exercises in practical philosophy undertaken by a committed Christian. Depending on the faith commitment and skill of the action researcher the fruit of such investigations may potentially be useful. From what we have seen, this is arguably the case with Browning’s work.

However, in terms of the relationship between theology and the human sciences our investigation indicates that, in Browning’s theological method, the human sciences are simply drawn on “uncritically as though the [analysis provided by the profane sciences] were already complete and given.” In other words, Browning has not heeded Rahner’s call, noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, for practical theology to critically analyse the profane sciences “within a theological and ecclesial perspective” before the modified human sciences are employed to assist the church to reflect critically upon “the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.” Adopting the classic Lutheran image of the essentially corrupted person covered in the cloak of Christ, by analogy and acknowledging that every analogy is inadequate, we might say that, for Browning, the exercise of the human sciences undertaken by a committed Christian occurs within the cloak or covering of the Christian narrative. However, the narrative has no essential impact or effect on the sciences.

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125 *Rahner, Practical Theology*, 105.
126 *GS*, 2.
per se but only on how the results of such scientific investigation are to be interpreted or understood.

3.7 Browning, Gadamer and the hermeneutical model of understanding

Browning’s claim that his new theological method is the “most inclusive understanding of theology”\(^{127}\) is grounded in his addition of the hermeneutic thinking developed by Gadamer to the theological tradition exemplified by Schleiermacher, Tillich, Ogden and Tracy. Indeed, Browning specifically states that *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is written for “those already attracted by the conversation or hermeneutical model of understanding.”\(^{128}\) A systematic critique of all of Browning’s philosophical and theological influences is beyond the scope of this present work. However, given the centrality of Gadamer’s thought to Browning’s proposed theological method, it is necessary to investigate this line of thought critically and this is the next task.

In an article entitled “The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Post Modern Concern for the Other,”\(^{129}\) Lawrence examines what he terms “Modern Romanticism’s Immanentization of the Subject.” Beginning with Descartes, Lawrence writes that “the Cartesian subject perceives itself as an already-in-here-object that perceives objects already-out-there-now.”\(^{130}\) There is a clear distinction between subject and object, with the objectified subject perceiving an object that is already-out-there-now just waiting to be perceived by the subject. Enter Rousseau and the rise of the Romantic subject. According to Lawrence, the Romantic subject not only feels, but feels its feelings, and this feeling of feelings is what is meant by “sentiment.” Lawrence continues, citing Rousseau’s differentiation of the bourgeois subject from the Romantic subject: “For Rousseau and the Romantics, the truncated bourgeois subject is busy about objects all the time and so is

\(^{127}\) Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47.
\(^{128}\) Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 42.
\(^{130}\) Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 179.
shallow, distracted from his or her own depths. The Romantic subject is deep, because it likes to feel its own feelings, which are inexhaustibly deep. "\textsuperscript{131}

For the Romantic these feelings are variously described as the voice of conscience or “the élan of nature as surfacing within the self and perhaps holding the key to external nature.”\textsuperscript{132} The Romantics believed that it was they who had access to the secrets hidden in the voice of conscience or the élan of nature. At the same time these secrets were “withheld from the prying gaze of the manipulative bourgeois subjects” who, caught in the pragmatic and mundane affairs of life, “supposedly” lived “full and productive lives.” The Romantics, however, knew better as they had access to a realm hidden from the bourgeois.

For Lawrence, Gadamer is heir to the Romantic tradition as he writes: “for Gadamer then, ‘experience as being’ occurs as mediation – of past and present, of self and other, of whole and part. It is enacted as Verstehen, as interpretation, as question and answer, as decision and self-correction.”\textsuperscript{133} Juxtaposed with the Cartesian split, in all its compactness and undifferentiated notions of fusion, Gadamer’s position “is never merely a matter of the pure perception or feeling of internal immediacy (the ‘already-in-here-now’ of the self) or of external immediacy (the ‘already-out-there-now’ of objects).”\textsuperscript{134} Operating in the Romantic paradigm, “hermeneutic consciousness acknowledges that ‘the dialectic of experience has its proper fulfilment not in definitive knowledge, but in openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself.’ ”\textsuperscript{135} Hermeneutic consciousness finds itself in something of a closed loop as it attempts to come to terms with human finitude.

In the quest, then, to come to terms with such finitude, for Gadamer, “hermeneutic consciousness realizes that the truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience because the nature of experience is conceived in terms of something that

\textsuperscript{131} Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 179.
\textsuperscript{132} Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 179.
\textsuperscript{133} Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 183.
\textsuperscript{134} Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 183.
\textsuperscript{135} Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 184.
surpasses it.\textsuperscript{136} Gadamer’s suggestion for an escape from the trap of experience as always pointing beyond itself is when human beings become aware of their finiteness through a real experience of another in what he calls “the hermeneutical experience of the Thou.”\textsuperscript{137} According to Lawrence, “Gadamer was incapable of thematizing with full accuracy the idea of consciousness as experience over against the mistaken idea of consciousness as perception.”\textsuperscript{138} Gadamer recognises the idea of consciousness as perception is mistaken, that is, he rejects the Cartesian already-in-there subject perceiving the already-out-there object. However, in accepting the Romantic paradigm of consciousness as “experience,” Gadamer is not able to accurately and systematically explain the notion of consciousness as experience because, as noted above, experience always points beyond itself. Lawrence then introduces the more complete way to think about consciousness contained in the work of Lonergan.

Lawrence writes that, when Lonergan elaborates on being oneself as conscious being, he explains that it is not an object, part of the spectacle, that we contemplate, but the presence to oneself of the spectator, the contemplator. It is not an object of introspection, but the prior presence that makes introspection possible.\textsuperscript{139} According to Lawrence, for Descartes, consciousness is viewed “as a power of inner, reflexive perception [that] can be known by means of a doubling back of inward reflexive perception upon itself.”\textsuperscript{140} Such an understanding, then, leads to the Cartesian notion of the subject or res cogitans as the primary object. For Lonergan however, “[conscious being] is conscious, but that does not mean that properly it is known.”\textsuperscript{141} For Lonergan, knowledge of consciousness occurs after the experience of consciousness has been interrogated and understood, and the provisional understanding has been reflected upon and, then, once judged, affirmed to be accurate.

“Lonergan thereby rejects, on the one hand, the Cartesian notion of consciousness either as

\begin{enumerate}
\item Lawrance, “Consciousness,” 184.
\item Lawrance, “Consciousness,” 184.
\item Lawrance, “Consciousness,” 185.
\item Lawrance, “Consciousness,” 186.
\item Lawrance, “Consciousness,” 186.
\item Lawrance, “Consciousness,” 186.
\end{enumerate}
identical with or as knowable only by an inner, reflexive perception; while, on the other, he disagrees with Kant’s position that consciousness cannot be objectively known.”

According to Lawrence, Lonergan discovered that conscious being can be known, not through some kind of inner looking but “by a heightening of consciousness comparable to that which occurs in “high” therapies in which people come to experience, identify, and name their emotions and feelings.”

Using an illustration, Lawrence continues quoting Lonergan:

> It is one thing to feel blue and another to advert to the fact that you are feeling blue. It is one thing to be in love and another to discover that what has happened to you is that you have fallen in love. Being oneself is prior to knowing oneself. St. Ignatius said that love shows itself more in deeds than in words; but being in love is neither deeds nor words; it is the prior conscious reality that words and, more securely, deeds reveal.

It was noted above (3.2.1 Purpose in writing), that Browning’s intention in writing *A Fundamental Practical Theology* was to add a hermeneutical understanding of the task of description to the findings recorded in *Building Effective Ministry*. Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory forms the basis of Browning’s particular formulation of a method in practical theology. Also noted above (3.4 Practical philosophy) the basis of Gadamer’s thinking and, consequently, of Browning’s thought, is an understanding that the fundamental structure of human understanding is conversation or dialogue, understood as the fusion of horizons. In the light of Lawrence’s critique of Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory Browning’s stated reason for writing *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is not valid.

### 3.8 Correlation

As noted earlier, another major influence for Browning in his development of the theological method he refers to as fundamental practical theology is the practice of correlation as developed by Tracy. Combining Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory with Tracy’s understanding

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142 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 186.
of theology as a critical correlation between the values and claims of experience and the texts
of the Christian tradition, Browning defines practical theology as the “mutually critical
correlation of interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory
and praxis of the contemporary situation.” As an illustration of the influence of
Browning’s thought in the field of practical theology, Veling writes: “the task of practical
theology, according to a widely accepted working definition, is ‘to establish mutually critical
correlations between an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of the
contemporary situation.’ ”

While the method of correlation has many prominent adherents, including Tillich, Rahner,
Schillebeeckx and Tracy, it has been critiqued by those influenced by the work of
Lonergan. Drawing on the work of Doran, Ormerod specifically critically evaluates the
method of correlation in a 1996 article in *Theological Studies* entitled “Quarrels with the
Method of Correlation.”

After acknowledging that there are many descriptions of the method of correlation in the
literature, Ormerod cites Haight as one who contends that correlation is the method for
theology, and that it is how theology has always been done.

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145 Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47.
146 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 54.
719.
148 Doran, *Dialectics of History*.
149 Ormerod, “Quarrels.”
150 Thiel critiques Doran’s criticism of correlation, claiming that Doran assumes that those who employ a “pure”
method of correlation are interpretatively naive and states that Doran provides no examples of whom he had in
mind when making such a claim. Thiel also critiques Ormerod for his critique of Haight by acknowledging that,
while Haight and Tracy provide terse definitions of the method of correlation they employ, he argues that a
more nuanced understanding of their positions can be gleaned from a careful reading of the text. See John E.
Thiel, *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
theology. Accessed 13 June 2012 Whatever the merits or otherwise of Thiel’s critique of Doran and Ormerod, I
According to Haight:

A method of correlation rests on this necessary fusion of past and present in the reception of revelation. It consists in distinguishing and then bringing together original revelation as mediated through its traditional symbols and the situation of human consciousness in which it is received at any given time. What are correlated are the meaning of the original revelation and present-day human experience.\(^\text{152}\)

In contrast with Haight’s claim, a claim which echoes the “Tracy–Browning” theological method, Ormerod cites Doran, who spells out his own understanding of theology as follows:

Theology is a “disciplined, methodologically tutored reflection on two interrelated dimensions of reality”: first, “the supernatural self-communication of God in grace to historically emergent humankind, a self-communication that reaches its irreversible climax in Jesus Christ;” and second, “the existential relationship of persons to God, to one another in culture and community, to their very selves, to the created universe” and the forces of decline and progress at work in human history.\(^\text{153}\)

For Doran, theological reflection is not simply an exercise of interpreting the present from, as it were, a bird’s eye view, drawing upon self-chosen elements of both the tradition and the current situation. It is, he claims, also transformative activity: “it is a transformative praxis that evokes alternatives to the present situation which more closely approximate the reign of God on earth.”\(^\text{154}\)

The ground of Doran’s and Ormerod’s methodological quarrel with correlation is an understanding of cognition. In the preface to *Insight*, Lonergan claims that “every statement in philosophy and metaphysics can be shown to imply statements regarding cognitional fact.”\(^\text{155}\) Ormerod argues that, in the same way, “methodological disputes can also be reduced to questions of cognitional fact, [as] methodologies often make a claim to be a specification

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\(^\text{151}\) Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 716.

\(^\text{152}\) Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 708.

\(^\text{153}\) Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 710; Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 446.

\(^\text{154}\) Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 710.

of how in fact we come to know and what cognitional issues are involved in knowing.”

In fact, as we have seen Browning does just this. Ormerod cites Doran, who argues that the method of correlation is “a contemporary variant of the Scotist conceptualism that lies at the root of so much of the underdevelopment of modernity.” In support of this argument, Ormerod cites Lonergan’s *Verbum*:

Scotus . . . posits concepts first, then the apprehension of nexus between concepts . . . The Scotist rejection of insight into phantasm necessarily reduced the act of understanding to seeing the nexus between concepts; hence, while for Aquinas, understanding precedes conceptualization which is rational, for Scotus, understanding is preceded by conceptualization which is a matter of metaphysical mechanics.

Doran identifies the difference between Lonergan’s theological method and that of correlation as being in different understandings of “how one moves from questions to answers.” In the method of correlation, following Scotus, “finding answers to questions [is] a matter of finding the nexus or correlation between two preexisting concepts.” In Browning’s scheme, conceptual elements from the tradition are correlated with conceptual elements from the situation. For Lonergan, following Aquinas, finding answers to questions is “a matter of insights emerging from phantasm, with the insight controlling subsequent conceptualization.” For Aquinas, Lonergan, Doran and Ormerod, insight precedes concepts and gives rise to them. For Scotus, Tracy and Browning, insights arise as a result of correlating concepts that are understood to be “given” or pre-existent through an intuition as immediate knowledge.

The theological method of correlation is grounded in the notion that answers emerge through grasping the nexus between past tradition and present situation. Doran’s concern, as articulated by Ormerod, is that there are three elements in this theological approach “that are

157 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 716.
160 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 717.
161 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 716.
not given methodological grounding: the criteria for appropriating the tradition, the choice of analysis of the present situation, and the criteria for bringing the two into correlation.”

Out of the whole of Christian tradition, elements are chosen in accord with some hermeneutical theory. For Browning, the hermeneutic theory is characterised by the notion that the elements chosen from the tradition are to be consistent with the notion of reversibility yielding anthropological constants. In the context of the complex ecclesial situations Browning uses to illustrate his theological method, he chooses some elements (but not others) from the “thick” description generated by the application of a range of human sciences to particular ecclesial communities in their historical location. He chooses elements of the tradition on the basis of a self-selected criterion and then correlates them with elements of the present situation; and he chooses elements from the present situation also on the basis of a self-selected criterion, perhaps through “intuition” understood as immediately given. None of these choices is critically grounded or justified.

3.9 Foundations of theology and the converted theologian

As an alternative approach to Browning’s account of foundation, “Doran locates the foundations of theology not in either tradition or situation, nor in a mutually conditioned correlation of both, but in the religiously, morally, intellectually, and psychically converted theologian.”

For Doran, in the tradition of Lonergan, conversion (whether religious, moral, intellectual or psychic) in the theologian is the only thing that can provide the needed criteria for understanding and evaluating both the tradition and the present situation in a way that is not arbitrary. In addressing the notion of conversion, the question arises as to what conversion is from and what conversion is to. Lonergan’s response to this question is as follows:

Conversion is a change of direction and, indeed, a change for the better. One frees oneself from the unauthentic. One grows in authenticity. Harmful dangerous misleading satisfactions are dropped. Fears of discomfort, pain, privation have less power to deflect one from one’s course. Values are apprehended where before they were overlooked.

Scales of preference shift. Errors, rationalizations, ideologies fall and shatter to leave one open to things as they are and man as he should be.165

Such conversions do not occur in some private realm where the object of conversion is simply to one’s better self: “Rather the tradition itself promotes such conversions as part of its religious, moral, intellectual, and affective impact on human culture and society to promote progress and reverse decline.”166

3.10 Special and general categories

Tracy, and Browning (with his own adaptations), envisages theology as a mutually critical dialogue between interpretations of the Christian message and interpretations of contemporary cultural experiences and practices.167 In contrast, “Doran makes two distinctions. The first is between the divine self-communication in history, and the relationship between persons, God, history, and creation. The second is between special and general categories.”168 According to Lonergan, “general categories regard objects that come within the purview of other disciplines. Special categories regard objects proper to theology.”169 For Doran, “both special and general categories are employed in any theological understanding of both tradition and situation.”170 Doran insists that Christianity has consistently used both general and special categories in its ongoing development.171 Doran is adamant that his distinctions do not line up with that between tradition and situation.172 According to Ormerod:

The major source of misunderstanding in talk of a method of correlation is a failure to recognize that it is one thing to distinguish the categories that are proper to theology from those that theology shares with other disciplines, and quite another to conceive tradition.

165 Lonergan, Method, 52.
166 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 713.
167 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 47.
168 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 711.
169 Lonergan, Method, 282.
170 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 711.
171 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 711.
172 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 711.
and situation as foundations of theology to be correlated by relating categories derived from tradition with categories descriptive of situation.\textsuperscript{173}

For Ormerod, following Doran, the most radical objection to the method of correlation is the confusion between foundations and sources, that is, tradition and situation are not foundations but sources for theology. If this is the case, then no matter how critical the correlations are between the two sources, in and of themselves, tradition and the situation do not provide their own criteria for selection.\textsuperscript{174}

On this point Doran argues:

If criteria of appropriateness to the tradition, generally worked out in some hermeneutical theory, and criteria of intelligibility in the prevailing situation, generally elaborated in some form of philosophical analysis or human-scientific research, and criteria of the relation of the interpreted tradition to analyzed situation, specified through a method of correlation, are assumed to be the ultimate foundations of direct theological discourse, the result is an arbitrary and still ungrounded conceptualism. One cannot determine what is genuinely appropriate to the tradition or what is intelligible in the contemporary situation unless one has differentiated the grounds for appropriating and evaluating both the tradition and the situation.\textsuperscript{175}

We have seen that the hermeneutical theory Browning employs is grounded in the intuition of faith and the elements of the Christian tradition that are consistent with reversible reasoning and the Christian narrative. The human-scientific research Browning employs is what he calls descriptive theology or hermeneutical sociology. For Browning, both the selection of the elements of the Christian tradition to be correlated and the elements of the situation have a self-contained, circular quality until there is a fusion of horizons. As the horizon of the tradition fuses with the situation perhaps it is imagined that the theologian will just “know” through a romantic intuitive process when the “correct” elements from the tradition “ring true” with the “correct” element from the situation and fusion of horizon is experienced. Ormerod writes: “since the method [of correlation] itself does not specify how these criteria arise, each theologian using the method adopts his or her own, perhaps covert,
often uncritical, even “commonsense,” criteria that, from the methodological viewpoint, are arbitrary.” Browning’s criteria for selection of both elements of the tradition and elements of the situation are not simply common sense as he offers a theoretical justification for his selection criteria. However, when “intuition of faith” and acknowledged bias with regard to elements of the tradition are fused with the fruits of hermeneutical sociology, one can only conclude that Browning’s claim of having developed a new method for the whole of theology appears to be unsustainable.

We noted earlier that that both Doran and Ormerod have a major concern with methods of correlation as, in their view, such methods conceive tradition and situation as foundations of theology, with the correlation occurring between categories derived from tradition and categories descriptive of situation. For Doran, theological interpretation should “provide the meaning constitutive of a praxis that would transform [the] world, including both tradition and situation, into a new and better world more closely approximating the rule of God in human affairs.” According to Ormerod:

What is at stake is the understanding of ‘one real world.’ The Christian tradition, like other traditions, has had an incalculable impact on that world in shaping its cultural milieu and social structures. Moreover, there has never been some ‘pure form’ of Christianity that has not been incarnate in the ‘one real world.’ Tradition and situation are not as disparate as a pure method of correlation would insinuate.

For Doran and Ormerod, the task is to seek insight into the one real world as it exists using both general and special categories rather than artificially dividing the world into an abstracted conceptual tradition and an abstract and conceptual “situation.” Further to this Ormerod continues, noting that reflection on insight into the one real world “is not simply interpretive of the present, but also transformative. Citing Doran, Ormerod states that theological interpretation should “provide the meaning constitutive of a praxis that would transform [the] world, including both tradition and situation, into a new and better world

176 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 712.
177 Doran, Dialectics of History, 454.
178 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 712.
more closely approximating the rule of God in human affairs."  

Ormerod continues, again citing Doran, claiming that the task of theology is not simply “interpretation,” as supposed by the method of correlation, but the evocation of “historical and more radically, of existential transformations.”  

In order to achieve this transformation the theologian must develop various general and special categories.  

Drawing on Doran, Ormerod continues, noting that “special categories emerge by and large from the theologian’s dialogue with an interpreted tradition,” while general categories derive from other disciplines including “pre-eminently philosophy and human science.”  

As noted in chapter 2 of this thesis, “control of meaning” is a crucial issue for theology as an academic discipline. A differentiation between realms of meaning as common sense, theory, interiority and transcendence was also addressed in chapter 2. Ormerod defines the relationship between control of meaning and realms of meaning as follows: “the ‘control of meaning’ . . . of both special and general [categories] is found in the ‘foundational maieutic of authenticity.’ ”  

For Ormerod, the ground from which the one real world is investigated theologically is in the interior realm and its controlling context is authenticity, understood as a constant withdrawal from unauthenticity.

We shall return to this critique of the method of correlation and Doran’s definition of theology in the final chapter when we seek to develop a more methodologically grounded definition of practical theology.

### 3.11 Summary

In this chapter the attempt by Browning to introduce a new method for doing the whole of theology as outlined in *A Fundamental Practical Theology* has been critically assessed in the

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179 Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 454.
180 Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 457.
182 Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 449.
183 Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 450.
184 Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 711.
light of the thinking of Lonergan. Specifically, following a descriptive summary of the content and main lines of thought presented in *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Browning’s understanding of “intuition” was critically addressed, drawing on insights from Habermas. Then, as Browning’s treatment of Gadamer has a taken-for-granted quality, a brief analysis of the Romantic background to Gadamer’s thought was introduced. This section was informed by the work of Lawrence. Finally, as Browning defines practical theology as the “mutually critical correlation of interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation,”¹⁸⁵ the theological underpinnings of the whole method of correlation were addressed in the light of work by Doran and Ormerod.

In the course of this chapter we noted that Veling agrees with Browning’s understanding of practical theology, as Veling writes: “the task of practical theology, according to a widely accepted working definition, is ‘to establish mutually critical correlation between an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary situation.’”¹⁸⁶ Grounded in this working definition, Veling develops his own particular understanding of what he believes practical theology to be and it is this understanding that we examine in the next chapter.

¹⁸⁵ Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47.
¹⁸⁶ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 54.
Chapter 4  Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven (Veling)

4.0  Introduction

In his 1996 book, Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation,\(^1\) Terry Veling explored the impact of social and ecclesial location on the task of interpretation in his role as something of a theological “outsider.” Since the publication of that book, somewhat by contrast, Veling’s Practical Theology has been described by Thomas Groome from Boston College as a major contribution to the establishment of practical theology and by Robert Schreiter from Catholic Theological Union as “essential reading.”\(^2\) Indeed, the book has been received as an important contribution to the “becoming of practical theology.”\(^3\) The book has also been well received by its intended audience, listed in the preface as “pastoral workers and ministers, parents in small faith communities . . . social workers and the ‘crowds.’ “\(^4\) Endorsed by significant figures in the fields of religious education and contextual theology, enthusiastically received by pastoral practitioners,\(^5\) and recognised as an important contribution to the field by his fellow practical theologians,\(^6\) Practical Theology is a book worthy of investigation.

In chapter 1 of this thesis, three theological responses to modernity/postmodernity were considered. Developed by Lakeland and cited by Cahalan, the responses were identified as late modern, countermodern, and radical postmodern. Our study has examined, within

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1 Terry A. Veling, Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation (New York: Crossroad, 1996).

2 See Veling, Practical Theology, back cover.

3 Foreword by Bernard J. Lee in Veling, Living in the Margins, xiii.

4 Veling, Practical Theology, xv.

5 Almost without exception any pastoral practitioner or educator that I have asked has indicated that they liked the book and found it useful.

6 Terry Veling is a respected member of both the International Academy for Practical Theology and the Association for Practical Theology in Oceania and this book and his work more generally are respected by his fellow members.
practical theology, the late modern response as represented by Don Browning. It now considers the counterm modern strand.

To briefly restate, countermmoderns believe that in order to move forwards there is a need to look backwards, “to retrieve values abandoned by the Enlightenment, either through metaphysics or the values and practices of a particular religious and cultural tradition.”\(^7\) Lakeland identifies a group of postmodern theologians “who are frankly alarmed by postmodern culture, but whose tendency is to blame modernity’s destruction of prior harmony for the weakness of postmodern exploits.”\(^8\) Lakeland identifies John Milbank as a counterm modern theologian specifically in Milbank’s belief that “the fullness of the gospel demands . . . something like a premodern understanding of the integrity of the Christian community.”\(^9\)

As also noted in chapter 1, Veling sets the tone for his book, *Practical Theology*, when, on the first page of his first chapter, he cites Jean Leclercq’s *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*:\(^10\)

> Leclercq paints a wonderful picture of monastic culture in which we get a feel for what theology was like before it became fragmented and specialized. . . . a time when study and the love of learning was part and parcel of the desire for God and was never divorced from liturgy and prayer, human work and labour, contemplation of the scriptures, the search for wisdom (in philosophy and the arts), or pastoral concern and the ‘love of neighbour’.\(^11\)

This nostalgic, romantic description of an idealised monastic life presents an image of “a certain reintegration of theology into the weave and fabric of human living, in which theology becomes a ‘practice’ or way of life.”\(^12\) For Veling, to answer the question “What is

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\(^7\) Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 66.
\(^8\) Lakeland, *Postmodernity*, 43.
\(^9\) Lakeland, *Postmodernity*, 43.
\(^12\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 3.
practical theology?’” is to raise what he considers to be the “better” question: “What does it mean to practice theology?”

This chapter presents an overview of the purpose and content of *Practical Theology*; identifies Veling as representing a countermodern response to modernity/postmodernity; discusses the influence of his work in the field of practical theology; identifies the main themes contained in the book in terms of theological method; and, following the pattern employed in chapter 3, critically evaluates Veling’s explicit and implicit theological method in the light of Lonergan’s thought.

### 4.1 *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (Veling)

*Practical Theology* has 280 pages divided into twelve chapters, with a foreword and a preface, and it concludes with an epilogue. The book is divided into three parts: Part 1, “On Earth as It Is in Heaven,” has four chapters, beginning with “What is Practical Theology?” This is followed by three chapters that explore the role of hermeneutics in practical theology. Part 2, “May Your Name Be Held Holy,” “turns its attention to the sanctification or hallowing of God’s name that takes place through the sanctification of humanity and the relations between us.” In this part there is a particular examination of the Jewish tradition as pre-eminently practical. Part 3, “Your Kingdom Come,” takes up some of the themes more expected of practical theology but also includes a chapter entitled “To Dwell Poetically in the World.” In that chapter Veling proffers the view that the seemingly unassailable chasm between idealism and pragmatism is being bridged through prayer and an affirmation of the reality of God.

The focus of this thesis is an examination of theological method in practical theology. The specific concern of this chapter is an examination of the theological method Veling employs in *Practical Theology* and of his purpose in writing the book. Issues to be addressed in examining Veling’s theological method include Veling’s answer to the question, “What is

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14 Veling, *Practical Theology*, xix.
practical theology? the philosophical ground of the notion that the symbol gives rise to thought, and the role of hermeneutics in the discipline.

4.2 The purpose of Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven

In the preface to the book, under the heading “To You, the Reader” Veling identifies those for whom the book is written. As previously noted, amongst those listed are teachers of theology, pastoral workers and ministers, parents who belong to small faith communities, and social workers. Apart from the mention of parents who are members of small intentional communities (a group who could be seen as providing public religious witness), Practical Theology was written to be read by professional pastoral practitioners. Consistent with the breadth of his intended audience Veling employs a conversational literary style to communicate his ideas.

Commenting on the style of Practical Theology, Bernard Lee writes in the foreword:

I’d be hard pressed to name the genre of this book. It doesn’t read the way most theological books read, but it is that. It doesn’t read the way books on spirituality read, but it is that. It doesn’t read the way autobiographies read, but there is a lot of that. I think I would say, finally, that this is an extraordinary conversation because it is so personal from the author’s side, and evokes responses from our side. It’s a conversation book.  

According to Lee, Practical Theology is both a theological book and a spirituality book that uses autobiographical literary techniques to evoke responses from its readers. Lee continues, indicating that the book actually engages in practical theology while simultaneously developing the genre. It seems that, for Lee, echoing Veling, a defining characteristic of practical theology is “conversation.”

The theme of conversation as the dominant paradigm for practical theology runs through the whole of Veling’s book. While he specifically identifies his intended readership as pastoral practitioners, the positive endorsements from recognised theorists in the field of practical

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15 Veling, Practical Theology, xii–xiii.
16 See Veling, Practical Theology, xiii.
17 Lee confirmed the general thrust of this understanding in a personal discussion I had with him in July 2007. The conversation occurred at Australian Catholic University, Mount Saint Mary Campus, July 12, 2007.
theology – Thomas Groome, Chair of the Department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, and Professor of Theology and Religious Education at Boston College; Maureen R. O’Brien, Associate Professor of Theology, and Director of Pastoral Ministry, Department of Theology, Duquesne University; and Robert Schreiter, Vatican II Professor of Theology, Catholic Theological Union – indicate that the book has another purpose as well. Illustrative of this additional purpose, Groome writes: “This work by Terry Veling will be a major contribution to establish this crucial way of doing theology and move it towards maturity.”

O’Brien describes the book as “a unique and deeply valuable contribution to all who engage in practical theology.” In the same vein, Schreiter writes: “There are a number of introductions to the emerging field of practical theology but this book is the first to reveal the art and soul of the discipline.”

These endorsements, when combined with the foreword written by Lee in his specific role, as the Professor of Theology, Director, Center for the Study of Catholic Culture, St Mary’s University in Texas, suggest that there is a clear indication that Veling has at least two audiences in mind. Alongside the list of pastoral practitioners listed under the heading “To You, the Reader” Practical Theology has been received by academic theologians as making a significant contribution to thinking about the “discipline” of practical theology.

It would appear, at first sight, that Veling sees practical theology as something of a capstone discipline in that he believes that it has the potential to integrate what he describes as a division between thinking and acting as characterised by a “long-standing division of theology into two primary areas, namely ‘systematic theology’ and ‘pastoral theology.’” At the same time, however, Veling writes that “practical theology does not really have a head for great systems of thought and it is suspicious of any theology that is too solid, too well-

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18 Veling, Practical Theology, back cover.
19 Veling, Practical Theology, back cover.
20 Veling, Practical Theology, back cover.
21 A capstone course is a university course designed to foster interdisciplanary partnerships among university departments and assist students in integrating what they have learned in a variety of disciplines.
22 Veling, Practical Theology, 5.
built, too built-up.” He continues, describing practical theology as “a theology that is given over to a passion for what could yet be, what is still in-the-making, in process, not yet, still coming.” While Veling views practical theology to be potentially a means for healing theological division, it appears that this form of theology is manifested only in particular, individual instances. In other words, for Veling, practical theology is perhaps restricted to the thoughts and actions of individual practical theologians. Fundamental to Veling’s understanding of practical theology is the notion that “the human story is the very “site” of God’s revelation [and] this is why practical theology is always attentive to the context of human culture and human experience in its unique singularity and concrete particularity.”

There is much truth in Bernard Lee’s comment earlier about the conversational style used by Veling in *Practical Theology*. It brings a real strength to the book in communicating with his stated intended audience. The book is written in an engaging style and students have reported that they find reading it an enriching experience. As an exercise in theological education, Veling’s book invites practitioners to reflect on their experience of God and it introduces the reader to stories and perspectives that perhaps they have not encountered elsewhere. *Practical Theology* provides a rich and eclectic mix of spiritual and theological resources for pastoral practitioners. Included in the mix are stories, personal anecdotes, and quotes from a wide variety of sources.

In something of a personal aside in the epilogue to *Practical Theology*, Veling writes:

> I find a great difficulty with the various identities and labels that we human beings are apt to place on ourselves and others. I’m not sure I want to be another one of those who too confidently says, ‘I am this . . .’ I think it is better to have the question put to me, such that I must continually and secretly work it out and give an answer with my own life: ‘Who are you?’ ‘Are you a Christian?’ ‘Are you Catholic?’

Support for this position is found in a paper by Archbishop Bruno Forte, writing as a member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization:

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Thus it is that the thinking non-believer, just as the conscientious believer, wrestles with God. ‘My religion is to wrestle with God’: according to Miguel de Unamuno, a voice speaking for the ‘tragic sentiment of life’, the whole of religion lies in this ‘wrestling with God’. And since ‘to live is to yearn for eternal life’, living is inevitably marked by the tragedy of having to fight this unequal combat. By respecting this dignity of non-belief, which emerged in all its clarity after the tragically heady days of ideological atheism and its fall, believers are called to question their faith and discover the abyss of non-belief within them.

In his own musings on his position vis-à-vis the Catholic Church, Veling is perhaps reflecting something of the form of the postmodern religious quest as identified by Forte.

While ostensibly written for pastoral practitioners, as noted above, academic theologians, that is, those normally concerned with theory, theological method and academic rigour, have also positively received Practical Theology. While perhaps it is not unusual for theologians to endorse books designed for pastoral practitioners, the content of the endorsements for the book by eminent scholars in the field indicates that Practical Theology is written simultaneously to meet the needs of pastoral practitioners and to explore theological method. It is the methodological aspect of the book, however, that will be critically evaluated in this chapter of the thesis.

4.3 Veling’s theological method

In chapter 1 of Practical Theology, “What Is Practical Theology?”, Veling discusses what he believes practical theology “is” by characterising and critiquing what he considers to be extant understandings of theology. He begins the discussion by describing a split in which theology is often seen as somewhat aloof, viewed as “a speculative enterprise in which people think about important questions concerning God, faith, belief, and the religious meaning of life.”

Veling calls this the “world of theology.” For Veling the “world of theology” is in opposition to “the ‘real world’ where theological knowledge is applied and

27 This paper was prepared for a conversation with delegates at the Australian Catholic Theological Association conference in Melbourne, July 6, 2012.
28 Veling, Practical Theology, 5.
29 Veling, Practical Theology, 5.
put into practice.”

30 Veling’s “world of theology” “presumes a one-way relationship between theory and practice with theory always the point of departure; theory is something from ‘outside’ to be applied and practice something to receive it.”

31 In beginning to answer the question “What is practical theology?” Veling writes that practical theology “resists our attempts to pin it down and define it.”

32 He describes it as more “verb-like” than “noun-like” and argues that “we would be better to speak of ‘practicing theology’ rather than ‘practical theology.’”

33 This statement has clear methodological overtones.

4.3.1 What is practical theology?

For Veling, both Christian practice and reflection on Christian practice are instances of practical theology. In order to clarify Veling’s understanding of “what practical theology is,” we examine the main themes from the book through three lenses: practical theology as an academic discipline, practical theology as Christian practice, and the relationship between practical theology as an academic discipline and the practice of Christian discipleship.

4.3.1.1 Practical theology as an academic discipline

In responding to his own question “What is practical theology?” Veling appears to be reluctant to give a definitive answer. Specifically he writes: “in asking ‘What is practical theology about?’ we are asking about its theory.”

34 He continues: “as might be expected from its very name, the ‘theory’ of practical theology, as Karl Rahner suggests, ‘indwells the practice itself.’”

35 For Veling, “theory ‘indwells’ practice, not in the sense that we put theory into practice; rather, in the sense that it is only in the practice of doing theology that we begin

30 Veling, Practical Theology, 5.
32 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
33 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
34 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
35 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
to realize and understand its meanings and its workings more deeply.” In this line, Veling shifts from addressing “practical” theology to addressing the practice of all of theology. What Veling means by the “practice” of, or doing, theology is also something that he appears loath to define. On this point he shifts between an understanding of practical theology as identified with Christian practice and an understanding of practical theology as an academic discipline. Veling then, somewhat surprisingly, recruits two theologians who developed solid well-built theological systems, into the ranks of practical theology as he writes:

in many ways, all good theology is practical theology – attentive, searching, responsive, indeed even the great classic works of theology (Augustine or Aquinas for example) represent theological responses worked out in response to contemporary pastoral situations – bold and innovative attempts to listen to and understand present realities rather than simply regurgitating answers from the past.

In this statement, Veling appears to be claiming that, in their theological work, Augustine and Aquinas employed the theological method that, subsequently, Browning describes. Specifically, from Veling’s point of view, Augustine and Aquinas worked to establish a “mutually critical correlation between an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary situation.” For Veling, classic works of theology, as exemplified in the work of Augustine and Aquinas, are judged to be “good theology” because they are the historical instances of Browning’s theological method in action. As this thesis chapter develops we will see other instances in which Veling attempts to associate himself and his theological method with noted theorists while simultaneously eschewing theory.

Under the heading “Practical Theology Is Not a Thing,” as noted earlier, Veling writes that “practical theology is more ‘verb-like’ than ‘noun-like,’ ” that is, it is more akin to “‘practicing theology’ rather than ‘practical theology.’” In terms of deciphering whether,

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37 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 17.
38 Robert McQueen Grant and David Tracy, “Part Two,” in *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1988), 170.
40 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 5.
in this instance, Veling is referring to practical theology as an academic discipline or as something identified with Christian practice, the doublet of “practicing theology”–“practical theology” does not clarify his meaning. However, the literary context of Veling’s question “What does it mean to practice theology?” does provide an indication of his meaning. As the question is preceded by a quote from Don Browning and immediately followed by a discussion on theology as a “speculative enterprise in which people think about important questions concerning God, faith, belief and the religious meaning of life,” it seems that, in this instance, Veling is referring to practical theology as an academic discipline. It appears that Veling intentionally strives for ambiguity rather than precision as he associates precision in meaning with impersonal theoretical systems.

4.3.1.2 Practical theology as Christian practice

Illustrative of Veling’s notion that practical theology equates with Christian practice, he writes: practical theology shows a preference for the stranger in our midst, for the neighbour who is close to us, for the one who pleads for mercy or who cries out for justice, the one who says, ‘love should be put into action.’ In this statement Veling equates engagement in Christian practice with theology, as such practice leads to a deeper understanding of God manifested in a vision for the kingdom and a vision for the Christian community. As a further illustration of his understanding of practical theology as identical with the practice of Christian discipleship, Veling writes:

That it is only in the practice or doing of theology that we begin to understand its meaning and its workings more deeply, as the Christian community for example engages in the practices of prayer, study, hospitality, forgiveness – as we do these things – we begin to deepen our understanding of what the kingdom of God is all about, and what it means to be a people of God.

Continuing, Veling claims that “the work of practical theology is the work of the kingdom of God, and of the Spirit given us: ‘Whoever has faith in me will do what I am doing, they will

41 Veling, Practical Theology, 5.
42 Veling, Practical Theology, 10.
43 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
do even greater things’ (John 14:12).” In the same vein, Veling states that “practical theology is a craft in which we continually ‘answer and respond’ to the call and vocation of apprenticeship and discipleship in God’s way.” These statements clearly refer to instances of Christian discipleship and indicate that, for Veling, practical theology is also identified with the practice of Christian discipleship.

### 4.3.1.3 Practical theology as an academic discipline, and the practice of Christian discipleship

As illustrated above, Veling understands practical theology as both the practice of Christian discipleship and an academic discipline. This bifocal view raises the question as to how he views the relationship between these two distinct understandings of practical theology. It is at this point that we begin to critically evaluate Veling’s notion of what practical theology is. In attempting to overcome the difficulty in defining practical theology, Veling introduces the notion of “practical wisdom,” or *phronēsis*, as that which “is shaped over years of practicing the wisdom of a craft, a teaching.” He then suggests that, “for practical theology, this process is known as *habitus*, a disposition of mind and heart from which our actions flow naturally, or if you like, ‘according to the Spirit’ dwelling within us.” Veling appropriates the notion of *habitus* and employs it as a principle of unity for his two distinct understandings of practical theology, stating that “along with the ‘tools’ and methods of practical theology, we must also develop an essential ‘relatedness’ to theology whereby theological practice becomes a way of life.”

### 4.3.1.4 Rahner, practical theology and indwelling

As we have already seen in addressing the question “What is practical theology?” Veling refers to Karl Rahner, whom he quotes as suggesting that the theory of practical theology...

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45 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 17.
46 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.
47 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.
48 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.
Building on Rahner’s notion that the theory of practical theology “indwells the practice itself,” Veling continues, stating that “theory ‘indwells’ practice not in the sense that we put theory into practice; rather, in the sense that it is only in the practice or doing of theology that we begin to realize and understand its meanings and its workings more deeply.” Karl Rahner is a significant theological authority and the notion of “indwelling” is central to Veling’s understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. Veling’s citation of Rahner in support of his argument will be examined critically later in this thesis chapter.

4.4 Veling and the interpretation of Scripture

For Veling there are “two fundamentally interpretive acts that are central to theological activity – ‘searching the Scriptures’ and ‘reading the signs of the times.’” The manner through which these two interpretive acts relate to each other is an important part of Veling’s account of practical theology. For Veling:

searching the scriptures refers to the reading and studying of God’s word. It means paying attention to the biblical testimony and the way this testimony has been lived and received across generations of people of faith. Searching the scriptures is an interpretive and communal exercise that links us with a rich tradition of faith, filled with commentary and teaching, liturgy and art, prophetic witness and saintly lives.

This multilayered statement will be discussed in the light of Veling’s underlying theological approach, beginning with what Veling means by “God’s word.” While the biblical testimony is the first item mentioned in his list of sources that “one should pay attention to,” it is clear that, for Veling, God’s word is not restricted to the texts that make up the canon of Scripture. Veling self-identifies as standing in the Catholic tradition and as one who has been influenced by, and attracted to, Jewish methods of scriptural interpretation. Writing on the topic of Talmudic scriptural interpretation and its affinity with Christian scriptural

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49 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
50 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
51 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
52 Veling, Practical Theology, 25.
53 Veling, Practical Theology, 25.
interpretation, he states: “I sense something in my own Catholic tradition shares the spirit of this vibrant interpretive activity.”

A significant influence for Veling is the thought of the Jewish philosopher and Talmudic commentator Emmanuel Levinas. In *Practical Theology*, Veling cites nineteen books by Levinas, and of the 241 pages of text in *Practical Theology*, Levinas is mentioned on 79 occasions. For Levinas, the Talmudic tradition is part of the oral law that “is traced back to its own source in the Revelation at Sinai.” Levinas believes that, “alongside the written Torah, there is an oral Torah whose authority is at least equal.” He continues with the view that the discussions that make up the oral law “are an extension of more ancient traditions and reflect the shift which was taking place in the centre of Jewish spirituality, away from the temple towards the house of study, from worship to study.”

Returning specifically to the Talmudic tradition and its impact on scriptural interpretation, Levinas writes, “it is the Talmud which allows us to distinguish the Jewish reading of the Bible from the Christian or ‘scientific’ reading of historians or philosophers.”

For Levinas, the Talmudic tradition is an open tradition, one that invites discussion, a tradition that runs through history and is not bound by the fruits of past discussion. Indeed he sees that “the mode of being [of the Scriptures] is such that the history of each piece of writing is less important than the lessons it contains, and its inspiration is measured in terms of what is inspired.” Levinas views the Scriptures as a springboard for inspiration and learning. When and where they were written and who wrote them and the particular

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54 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 69.
55 Veling has had a long association with the work of Levinas. In October 1999 in *Pacifica* (vol. 12) he authored a paper titled “In the Name of Who? Levinas, God and the Other side of Theology.” As of October 2011 he was preparing to publish a book titled *For You Alone: Transcendence and Relationship in the Writing of Emmanuel Levinas* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books).
circumstances that prompted their production are not important. It appears that Levinas views the oral Torah as ever open to new interpretation and that he is ambivalent to the Talmud as a collection of texts. He writes, almost with a sense of disappointment: “the oral Torah is committed to writing in the Talmud. So (yes) the oral Torah is in fact written. But it was put into writing belatedly. This event can be explained by contingent and dramatic circumstances in Jewish history, extrinsic to the true nature and manner of its message.”

For Levinas, the oral Torah is another source of revelation alongside the written Torah. The oral Torah, however, is a living, open-ended tradition of discussion. It appears that, for Levinas, the fact that this living tradition was codified in the Talmud at one time is only because of extraordinary historical circumstance. The Talmudic tradition of discussion is more important than the Talmud as text.

As a further illustration of the assumptions that underpin Veling’s theological method, Levinas writes of the Talmudic tradition as follows:

> No Credo influences the reading of the texts or dictates its method, in which even those discoveries which renew the reading and lend new meanings to the verses resemble, in their effect, the pouring of new wine into old goatskins, where it retains its ancient shape and even its former bouquet. The formulation of articles of faith is a philosophical or theological genre which came to Judaism late.

In this quote we see another instance of Levinas’s begrudging admittance of articles of faith as a late intrusion – as it would also seem for Levinas – into a living and ever-renewing tradition of interpretation-revelation. In developing this line of thought, Levinas relates it to the notion of religious authority, stating that “without any need for a magisterium, an authority on doctrinal matters, the ‘subjective’ interpretations of the Jewish Revelation have managed to maintain, in this people, the consciousness of their unity, despite their geographical dispersion.”

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Levinas notes that there is no central authority responsible for doctrinal orthodoxy and governance in the Jewish spiritual tradition that moved away from the temple with its centralised worship rituals and hierarchical structures towards the idea of distributed small houses of study. He also notes that the absence of such a central authority and institutional structures has not been detrimental to Jewish identity. Taken together, Levinas sees the combination of these two facts as a source of evidence for the validity of his line of thought.64

Veling strongly identifies with Levinas’s depiction of the move away from the temple (institutionalised religion) to a house of study. I suggest that this identification is also reflected in Veling’s own religious practice. On this topic he writes:

In my experience of belonging to small Christian communities, I have always sensed that this represents a time and space that is marked with an essential quality. This is conversation that matters. It is where people are bound together to speak of experiences that count, questions that weigh, issues that matter. The conversation is characterised by stories, commentaries, questions, digressions, needs, responses, actions, and reflections. This is where the interpretive edge of small Christian communities takes on most of its creative power and energy.65

4.4.1 Scripture, Kabbalah and the relationship between symbol and thought

Veling’s understanding of the relationship between symbol and thought is foundational for his method of interpreting Scripture and for his use of Kabbalah. He introduces his line of thought quoting Ricoeur as proposing that “the symbol gives rise to thought.”66 Veling develops this idea again citing Ricoeur, this time without specific attribution as he writes:

Ricoeur suggests that the symbolic world is always prior as the genesis of all our thinking and acting in the world. Our thoughts, our theories, our articulations of meaning – these arise from the symbolic or metaphorical apprehension of the way we experience the world around us. It is ‘the symbol’ that gives rise to thought, and not our thinking that gives rise to symbols.67

64 See Levinas and Hand, Levinas Reader, 196.
65 Veling, Practical Theology, 72–73.
66 Veling, Practical Theology, xviii.
67 Veling, Practical Theology, xvii.
The notion that symbols give rise to thought underpins Veling’s method of interpreting Scripture. For Veling, Scripture acts symbolically and interpretation consists in the associations that the Scripture operating as symbol evokes as the oral Torah is further developed.

Having outlined the main contours of Veling’s thought as expressed in Practical Theology, we now turn to a critical assessment of these lines of thought. Following the critical assessment of Veling’s theological method, a method of interpreting Scripture that is consistent with the dictates of critical realism, as understood by Lonergan, will be introduced.

4.5 Critique

We begin with a critical examination of the idea that it is habitus that acts as a principle of unity for Veling’s two distinct notions of practical theology: practical theology as identical with Christian practice and practical theology as an academic discipline. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (1910–1997) became a world-renowned figure through her care for the poor in India. According to the first of Veling’s understandings of practical theology, Teresa could be classified as a practical theologian. Manifestly, Teresa was indeed one whose mind and heart aligned itself according to the Spirit. The principal manner through which Teresa provided witness to the Christian message, however, was through incarnate meaning. We saw earlier, in chapter 2, that incarnate meaning is “the meaning of a person, of his way of life, of his words, or of his deeds.” On that basis, Teresa was a woman who, arguably, exercised her Christian discipleship by ministering to the poor and, as such, acted as an incarnate carrier of meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Though Teresa was clearly a carrier of meaning through her life and work she could be named as a “theologian” only if theology is identified with the practice of Christian discipleship.

One Christian may have a highly developed disposition of mind and heart from which words and actions flow naturally according to the indwelling Spirit. Another Christian may be an academic theologian with a highly developed understanding of the tools and methods of rigorous academic theology but with a less highly developed disposition of heart. Yet another Christian may have both a highly developed disposition of mind and heart, and a highly

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68 Lonergan, Method, 73.
developed understanding of the tools and methods of rigorous academic theology. While it is possible that a person may have both a highly developed understanding of the tools and methods of rigorous academic theology and a highly developed disposition of mind and heart from which words and actions flow naturally according to the indwelling Spirit, having one or other of these dispositions does not ensure that one has both. It is possible, though far from ideal, to be an academic theologian with an underdeveloped disposition of heart.

A highly developed disposition of mind and heart reflected in a way of life, however, does not mean that one is a theologian or that one's actions are instances of theology. In chapter 2 the difference between an artist and art critic was discussed. By analogy, Teresa of Calcutta can be seen as an artist giving shape to elemental meaning through her life and her work. Others who write on the significance and meaning of her life and work can be viewed as akin to art critics. Many artists, when asked to explain their work, simply point to it and invite the viewer to respond to it. There are many art critics who have very little skill or talent in creating a work of art. There is a smaller, third group of individuals who have the skills and capacity to operate as both artists and art critics. Just as it is an error to equate art with art criticism, it is an error to equate the practice of religion with theology. One may be both an artist and an art critic and one may be a religious person and a theologian, but just as being a good artist does not make one an art critic, having a highly developed religious sensibility does not make one a theologian.

Many of the saints canonised in the Catholic Church are not theologians. There are a few theologians who are canonised saints. There are many influential theologians whose cause for canonisation is never likely to be opened. On occasion, a theologian may also be a saint, but being recognised by the church as a saint does not retrospectively confer the role of theologian on the one canonised. As a Christian, a theologian is first a disciple of Jesus Christ. The manner in which a theologian exercises this discipleship is in the intellectual apostolate. We noted in chapter 1 that the theologian has a particular ecclesial vocation. Some disciples are called to a life of ministry, some to a life of witness, some to the

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intellectual apostolate in the academic discipline of theology. Some disciples are called to fulfil multiple roles, but just as not all theologians are called to be pastors, not all pastors are theologians. Doing pastoral work and doing theology are related undertakings, but it is a mistake to deny there is a difference between them by harking back to supposedly simpler times and simply naming the practice of Christian ministry or Christian witness “practical theology.” While intimately related to each other it is an error to conflate practical theology with the practice of Christian life or ministry.

There are, of course, practical theologians who have also lived lives of exemplary Christian witness or service. Notable in this category are Gregory the Great, 70 Ignatius Loyola, 71 Alphonsus Liguori, 72 and Teresa of Avila. 73 In a similar manner to Augustine and Aquinas, named by Veling as practical theologians, these individuals each left a substantial legacy in the form of texts that offer the fruit of their reflection on their life of Christian discipleship. These Christians gave witness to the Christian message incarnately, in holiness, similar to that of Teresa of Calcutta, but they also carried the meaning of the Christian message forwards linguistically in the form of their considered written reflections. Both of these ways of carrying meaning (incarnately and linguistically) are legitimate areas for scholarly investigation. Veling, however, is mistaken de facto in suggesting that Christian practice, and

70 Gregory the Great is a doctor of the Catholic Church. It is told in legend that Pope Gregory I (c.540–604) had to be dragged out of his monastery to take up the role of pope. He is noted as a liturgical reformer and for his books, among which is Pastoral Care, which is an instruction book of advice for bishops.

71 Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). In terms of spiritual practice, some of his early extreme ascetic practices were to adversely affect his health for the rest of his life. In terms of works of practical theology, he is noted as the author of the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Both of these texts continue to inform and guide the Jesuits and others in the Ignatian tradition.

72 Alphonsus Liguori (1696–1787) founded the religious congregation, the Redemptorists. In terms of practical theology, he is noted for the system of moral theology that he developed and that is noted for its prudence. He is also one of the thirty-three doctors of the church.

73 Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) was a mystic, a spiritual writer, an administrator, and a founder of the Discalced Carmelites. In terms of practical theology, her writings on the spiritual life saw her recognised in 1970 as a doctor of the church. Famous amongst her writings are The Interior Castle and The Way of Perfection, which provide practical advice for progressing in the spiritual life.
practical theology, as an academic discipline, are both forms of practical theology, that is, that they are both the fruit of habitus and that it is habitus that unites them. One person may develop a disposition of mind and heart from which actions flow naturally according to the Spirit and exercise that disposition in pastoral ministry. Another person may develop a disposition of mind and heart from which actions flow naturally according to the Spirit, and exercise that disposition in communicating the fruit of theological reflection. While both may be observed to demonstrate habitus as a quality, habitus per se is not the defining characteristic for either ministry or practical theology. I suggest that, in fact, the notion of habitus fails adequately to act as a principle of unity for the two understandings of practical theology. As a category habitus simply highlights ways in which the two understandings manifest themselves.

We now turn to a critical examination of Veling’s citation of a line from Rahner that Veling uses as an authoritative warrant in his claim that the “theory of practical theology indwells the practice itself” through a careful examination of the source Veling cites.

First, Rahner’s reference to “indwelling” occurs in the midst of discourse on practical theology in the life of the church. Specifically, Rahner writes that the “theory of practical theology, as actually carried on, is itself one factor in the Church’s practice.” Already we can see that, for Rahner, practical theology has a theory. He continues:

But in being this kind of theory practical theology is not simply an ‘essential’ science but a quite unique one, a testing of the spirits with a view to the act of committal; it implies a prophetic element – which one may be permitted to call ‘political’ – since it must be aware of the impulse of the Church’s Spirit which is not simply identical with the perpetually valid truth in the Church, but translates the latter into the concrete challenge valid at the particular hour.

For Rahner, practical theology is unique in theology as it operates with a view to action. It translates what is perpetually valid in the church to meet the concrete challenges of the present. Rahner continues, stating that: “Practical theology can and must be this, because the

74 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
75 Rahner, “Practical Theology, 103.
76 Rahner, Practical Theology, 103–104.
theoria realised in actuality is also an internal factor of the Church’s practice and only remains genuine theoria under this presupposition.”⁷⁷ For Rahner, practical theology is an ecclesial discipline and its realisation has an impact on the life of the church. Specifically addressing the quote from Rahner cited by Veling, we see that Rahner emphasises his earlier idea by stating:

in a word it [practical theology] is ‘theory’ and thus science. But it is the theoria which indwells the practice itself as an internal factor and which is thus not simply identical with the objectifying ‘essential’ sciences, which simply ascertain from a ‘neutral’ position what is the case, or what must always be, or that will surely occur independently of decisions.⁷⁸

Rahner goes to some length to emphasise that practical theology is indeed a theological science but its point of difference, in terms of other theological sciences, is that, where his own discipline of fundamental theology engages in ascertaining from a “neutral” position that which must always be (church dogma), practical theology is “that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualisation here and now – both that which is and that which ought to be.”⁷⁹ Indeed, according to Rahner:

the Church has the task of making a commitment to realise this particular historical form in responsibility and freedom, and can therefore also fall short of it. Consequently the Church must reflect consciously upon the question how the Church’s self-actualisation is to take place out of and in response to its particular given situation in each instance. Practical theology is the scientific organisation of this reflection.⁸⁰

For Rahner, practical theology is the scientific reflection on the church as self-actualising, and the theory of practical theology “indwells” the practice of scientifically organised reflection.

Veling attempts to associate Rahner’s theological authority with his own account of practical theology through an appropriation of Rahner’s phrase ‘indwelling in practice itself’. Veling develops this phrase to claim that “it is only in the practice or doing of theology that we

⁷⁷ Rahner, Practical Theology, 104.
⁷⁸ Rahner, Practical Theology, 104.
⁷⁹ Rahner, Practical Theology, 101.
⁸⁰ Rahner, Practical Theology, 103.
begin to realize and understand its meanings and its workings more deeply”.

For Veling, practical theology is concerned with practice and this is what he means by ‘indwelling in practice itself’. In stressing this point Veling claims “In many ways, we would be better to speak of “practicing theology” rather than “practical theology”.”

For Rahner practical theology is “that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualisation here and now — both that which is and that which ought to be”. It is conscious reflection on the Church’s self-actualisation as it responds to particular given situations. This is what Rahner means by ‘indwelling in practice itself’. For Veling practice is equated with practical theology. For Rahner, practical theology is the fruit of scientific reflection on the church’s self-actualisation as it puts theory into practice.

Rahner suggests that practical theology occupies “a new kind of 'middle' position between precise research and haute vulgarisation.” Applying this principle to scripture studies Rahner writes that “the true exegetical specialist should not think it beneath his dignity to write such books but regard it as a higher task”.

We now turn to critically access Veling’s use of Ricoeur

4.5.1 Ricoeur on symbol and thought

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) had a long academic career and he continued to develop his ideas over the course of his life. It is beyond the scope of the present study to engage in an in-depth study of his thought. The purpose of the following discussion is to illustrate the manner in which Veling uses Ricoeur’s ideas. The quotes cited in this excursus are from the same work that Veling used in support of his argument.

81 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
82 Veling, Practical Theology, 4.
83 Rahner, Practical Theology, 102.
84 Rahner, Practical Theology, 110.
According to Veling, ancient interpreters of the biblical texts “felt free to wander and play in the “vineyard of the text” to harvest its fruits, to let it intoxicate their imaginations.”\textsuperscript{86} In a quote from Ricoeur that was obviously not written in response to Veling, but, arguably, almost could have been, we read:

\begin{quote}

does that mean that we could go back to a primitive naiveté? Not at all. In every way, something has been lost, irretrievably lost: immediacy of belief. But if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naiveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

For Ricoeur, primitive naiveté is “irremediably lost” and even if it were true that the ancients had extraordinary imaginative powers, any attempt to regain this naiveté so that contemporary persons may “freely play in the vineyard of the text” has gone. That way of understanding the sacred (if it ever existed as idealistically described by Veling) is irretrievably lost. As we noted earlier in his description of an idealised image of early monastic life, for Veling the proposed solution to the loss of naiveté is to seek to return to an imagined past, a primitive naiveté, a sense of immediacy of belief. For Ricoeur, the way we can “hear again” in the manner of aiming at a second naiveté is in and through criticism. Whatever the merits or otherwise of Veling’s method of interpreting Scripture, it is difficult to maintain that it is one that could be supported by Ricoeur.

We now examine Veling’s attempt to return to a state of primitive naiveté through his preferred method for interpreting Scripture: the use of premodern “rabbinic” dialogical practice. Underlying all of Veling’s theological reflection is an unacknowledged methodological attempt to do Christian theology in the “spirit” of the Talmudic tradition as understood by Levinas. With this in mind, Veling’s appropriation of ideas presented by Rahner and Ricoeur, as outlined above, while not justified, at least makes sense. An underlying assumption in the Talmudic tradition (as understood by Levinas) is that it is not important what an ancient text originally meant. What is important is what it evokes in the reader in terms of associations, connections, ideas and learning. In this method of theological

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{86}{Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, xvii.}
\footnotetext{87}{Ricoeur, \textit{Evil}, 351.}
\end{footnotes}
reflection, texts simply act as a springboard for creative discussion and add fuel to the fire that is the oral tradition, the oral Torah.

For Levinas, the oral Torah, whose authority is at least equal to that of written Torah,\textsuperscript{88} is still being developed as God is continuing to reveal Godself through the process of Talmudic-style interpretation. In a context in which theological reflection, undertaken in the style of Talmudic interpretation (as understood by Levinas) is equated with practical theology, Veling’s implicit assumption that practical theology is coterminous with the practice of religion also makes sense. For Veling, to be engaged in co-creating the oral Torah is to be engaged in practical theology.

Heavily influenced by Levinas, Veling sees practising Christian theology as Christians being engaged in conversations characterised by “stories, commentaries, questions, digressions, needs, responses, actions, and reflections.”\textsuperscript{89} The conversational, evocative and literary style of \textit{Practical Theology} reflects this understanding. It is also in this context that Lee’s assertion that “this book is a way of actually engaging in practical theology”\textsuperscript{90} makes sense. Lee goes on to write, in approval of Veling’s theological method, that “in fact it [\textit{Practical Theology}] engages in the development of this genre.”\textsuperscript{91}

These considerations have thrown further light on what Groome means when, in endorsing \textit{Practical Theology}, he writes: “this work by Terry Veling will be a major contribution to establish this crucial way of doing theology and move it towards maturity.”\textsuperscript{92} Veling is not simply seeking to develop the emerging discipline of practical theology; rather, it appears that he intends to introduce a new method of doing theology, a method grounded in the Talmudic tradition as understood by Levinas.

In light of the above, I contend that when Veling could not find an existing theological category to label his nascent method, he appropriated the name of an emerging theological

\textsuperscript{88} See Levinas and Hand, \textit{Levinas Reader}, 196–197.

\textsuperscript{89} Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, 72.

\textsuperscript{90} Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, xiii.

\textsuperscript{91} Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, xiii.

\textsuperscript{92} Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, back cover; my emphasis.
field, “practical theology,” and made it his own. In an article entitled “Catholic Practical Theology: Reflections on an Emerging Field,” Veling writes: “for some years now, I’ve never quite known where to place myself as a theologian. When I am asked (at conferences or conventions, for example), ‘What is your area?’ or ‘What do you teach?’, I always feel a little lost for words. None of the designated areas of theology offer me a ready place to hang my hat.”

It appears that Veling then discovered practical theology, as he writes:

I was initially attracted to practical theology because of its interests in connecting theories/ideas/texts with practice/life/reality. It seemed to understand the link between theology and life, heaven and earth, question and answer, call and response. I also liked its lack of self-regard – it didn’t seem too pre-occupied with itself and it didn’t feel ‘boxed-in’ or ‘pinned-down.’ I liked its beautiful ambiguity, its unabashed complexity, its passion, its life, its energy.

All things considered, it does not seem unfair to suggest that Veling embraces the ambiguity that accompanies an emerging discipline and claims practical theology as something of an open field, and, to mix metaphors, also as a place to hang his theological hat. We noted in chapter 1 of this present work that even finding agreement on a name for the emerging discipline causes some difficulty.

We now turn to critically examining Veling’s implicit theological method as a “theological method,” asking the questions: “Is Veling’s method a valid way of doing theology?” and “Is it really an instance of practical theology?” It seems that, in terms of this second question, Veling himself is unsure, as he writes: “I have a love-hate relationship with the phrase ‘practical theology.’” Writing of himself, he claims in Practical Theology that “I was surprised to find myself arguing against practical theology as much as I argued for it.”

Practical theology, for Veling, is an attempt to heal what he sees as the fragmentation of

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95 Veling, “Emerging Field,” 35.
96 Veling, “Emerging Field,” 35.
theology by reclaiming “a certain reintegration of theology into the weave and fabric of human living, in which theology becomes a ‘practice’ or a way of life.”

To adapt Lee’s words from his foreword to *Practical Theology*, perhaps a more appropriate “foreword” would read as follows:

I’d be hard pressed to name the genre of this book. It doesn’t read the way most theological books read. It doesn’t read the way books on spirituality read, but it does invite the reader to seriously examine their relationships with God and others. It doesn’t read the way autobiographies read, but there is a lot of that. It claims not to employ a theological method as it contrasts method and truth, but there is a method underlying this book. It claims to be written for pastoral practitioners whom (I am sure) will enthusiastically receive it. At its heart, however, it is a book about theological method; it’s an invitation to the whole of Christian theology to embrace the Talmudic tradition of interpretation as understood by Emmanuel Levinas as a new way of doing Christian theology, a way that Veling calls “practical theology.”

### 4.5.2 Veling, Levinas, the Talmudic tradition and practical theology

Returning to Veling’s notion of practical theology as a way of practising theology and Lee’s attempt in his foreword to describe the genre of *Practical Theology* as “not this, not that,” a case could be made that, in *Practical Theology*, Veling is actually attempting to do Christian theology in the Talmudic tradition as understood by Levinas. Further, this understanding is indicated in the style of the book, as Veling pays “attention to the biblical testimony and the way this testimony has been lived and received across generations of people of faith,” with stories, associations and quotes from a range of sources as he brings the ideas of contemporary thinkers into conversation with those of ancient authors. We noted above that Veling appropriated Aquinas as a practical theologian. Reflecting his own theological

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98 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 3.
100 See Veling, *Practical Theology*, 15, where, citing Gadamer, Veling contrasts “method” with “truth,” and “truth” is equated with “understanding.”
method and claiming continuity with Aquinas, Veling writes: “in many ways, there is a kinship between [the] interpretive activity of Aquinas and the interpretive activity of the rabbis,”102 with Aquinas “crafting his commentary by creatively playing with ‘the old’ and ‘the new’ – with the scriptures, Augustine, and the Fathers all around him, but also with Aristotle, ‘that pagan philosopher,’ daringly positioned on a table nearby.”103 For Veling, the philosopher daringly positioned on the table nearby is Levinas. It is reasonable to suspect that Veling views his methodological continuity with Aquinas as found, not in the use of the philosophy of Aristotle, but as a fellow theologian utilising a novel philosophical system in the service of theological reflection. I suggest effectively Veling is attempting to establish the acceptance of the validity of the philosophy of Levinas as an important instrument in theological reflection. Further, it would appear that, through Practical Theology, Veling is attempting to introduce the method of scriptural interpretation employed by Levinas. This methodological shift applies not just to the emerging discipline of practical theology, but for all of theology in a manner similar to that which we observed with Browning in regard to his proposed theological method. In regard to this claim Veling writes: “it is perhaps not surprising that practical theology is interested in hermeneutics and the art of interpretation. It often speaks of two fundamentally interpretive acts that are central to theological activity – ‘searching the scriptures’ and ‘reading the signs of the times.’ ”104

Two points are worthy of note in this quote. The first is Veling’s “personification” of practical theology as exemplified in the phrases, “practical theology is interested in” and “it often speaks.” In this instance, Veling views practical theology as a discipline or science that often operates in a particular manner. Through these phrases, Veling moves from reflection on his own practice of doing practical theology to a generalised view of the discipline (“practical theology is … it often speaks”). Reframed as Veling’s personal reflection, the statement would read: “When I engage in theological activity I am interested in “two fundamentally interpretive acts that are central to theological activity – ‘searching the scriptures’ and ‘reading the signs of the times.’ ” What we have, however, with no supporting

102 Veling, Practical Theology, 69.
103 Veling, Practical Theology, 69–70.
104 Veling, Practical Theology, 25.
sources referenced, is the claim that what Veling is interested in is what practical theology is interested in. In short, Veling sees his view as a personification of the discipline. This view is consistent with Lee’s observation that “some of the delight in reading this book is watching the becoming of practical theology take place in our company.”

Secondly, with reference to observations earlier in this thesis chapter regarding Veling’s intended audience, I suggest that the claims made in the sentence “It [practical theology] often speaks of two fundamentally interpretive acts that are central to theological activity” is a clear example of the text having been written for an audience that goes beyond the pastoral practitioners listed as the intended audience to include those concerned with theological method. In the light of Veling’s observed theological method, we move now to address the method he uses to interpret Scripture.

### 4.6 Veling’s method of doing theology

A detailed exploration of the philosophy of Levinas and his work as a Talmudic commentator is beyond the scope of this thesis. Space also prohibits a comprehensive response to the many topics Veling addresses in *Practical Theology* as he cites modern and ancient authors and weaves them into his text with a rich array of “stories, commentaries, questions, digressions, needs, responses, actions, and reflections.” One point of contrast that may serve to illustrate Veling’s application of an underlying theological method is his approach to the interpretation of Scripture, which, as we have seen, is heavily influenced by the method of Talmudic commentary as practised by Levinas.

#### 4.6.1 Critical realism and the interpretation of Scripture

An author influenced by the critical realism as developed and articulated by Lonergan who has written specifically on critical realist hermeneutics and the interpretation of Scripture is Ben Meyer. We begin this section with an overview of critical realist hermeneutics in

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105 Veling, *Practical Theology*, xiii.
107 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 72.
108 Ben F. Meyer (1927–1995). After early studies with the Jesuits, Meyer received his doctorate from the
which Meyer identifies seven features. This overview will be followed by a detailed exploration of the notion of the primacy of the intended sense of scriptural texts.

The first feature of critical realist hermeneutics identified by Meyer is “its focus on the concrete structures of human operation.” For Meyer, following Lonergan, “the ‘existence’ of the human subject consists in ‘standing out’ (ex-sistere) from the closed circle of natural routines.” That is, the human subject is drawn to move “from the real to the possible, from the familiar past to a new future, from the seen to the unseen and from the finite to the infinite.” At the base of this capacity for transcendence, Meyer suggests, “lies an inner dimension – the world of interiority or subjectivity – in which he finds himself.” For Meyer and Lonergan, as addressed in chapter 2, the world of interiority “is constituted by the presence of the subject to himself in the act of being a subject.” It is in the world of interiority or subjectivity where the subject “lives out the experiences of wonder and questioning, of bafflement and discovery, of self-orientation now headed for fulfilment, now for self-destruction.” In line with Lonergan’s view, Meyer describes this interior world as “spontaneously self-structuring,” with “the human subject in his conscious (but not yet objectified) functioning – his attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility.” For Meyer, it is the spontaneously self-structuring human subject in his attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility that “is the living norm against which all theories on him (as human subject) are measured.” “Critical realism, in short, is intensely empirical.”

Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1965. From 1969 until 1995, Meyer worked in the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. His areas of specialization included “the historical Jesus” and the hermeneutics of Bernard Lonergan.

109 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
110 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
111 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
112 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
113 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
114 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
115 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
116 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
117 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
The second feature of critical realism identified by Meyer is the “defining correlativity of ‘true’ and ‘real.’” Following Lonergan, for Meyer, “critical realism locates the issue of real/unreal at the level of sense only insofar as sense knowledge provides data for higher-level operations that terminate in judgement.” What is sensed is affirmed as real “not by the senses alone but by understanding and judgement taking account of sense data.”

The third feature of critical realist hermeneutics is that it “accords a primacy to the grasp of individual meaning over generalization and the universal.” Critical realist hermeneutic interpretation is not scientific analysis in the sense of the methods used in the natural sciences. Veling also critiques scientific methods as tending to “distance us from what we seek to know – as though we were mere observers of life.” For Meyer what is sought is “insight into textual meaning that, however representative or allusive, is contextually unique.” Scripture, as text, calls for interpretative effort and, for Meyer, the interpretation of Scripture deals with human meaning and not things that are clear in themselves. Typically, the interpretation of Scripture involves “a highly individual treatment of great issues, which are perennially divisive.”

The fourth feature of critical realist hermeneutics is that “the text has a prima facie claim on the reader, namely to be construed in accord with its intended sense.” The text had an author, the author had an audience in mind while writing, and the author’s intention was to communicate something to that audience. “The intended sense is what grounds the difference between language in general (langue) and particular utterance (parole), for it makes the latter to be what it is.” Reflecting on this feature, Meyer makes reference to text as ink spots or

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118 Meyer, Critical Realism, x.
119 Meyer, Critical Realism, xi.
120 Meyer, Critical Realism, xi.
121 Veling, Practical Theology, 15.
122 Meyer, Critical Realism, xi.
123 Meyer, Critical Realism, xi.
124 Meyer, Critical Realism, xii.
125 Meyer, Critical Realism, xii.
what R. G. Collingwood called “curious marks on paper.” Meyer continues: “these inkspots are, of course, signs; the reader’s deciphering of the signs yields a word-sequence which the reader construes to mean such-and-such.” Meyer then cites Frye, who, he says, “had the wit to notice, first, that the page yielded not meaning, but inkspots; second, that the inkspots were signs; third, that anything over and above a reissue of the same signs in the same order was bound to be the product of the reader.”

In this sense, every text is a picnic to which the writer brings the words and the reader the meaning. Such a view is not inconsistent with Veling’s reference to the Jewish tradition of scriptural interpretation: “when the rabbis come across a difficult biblical text, even when it is not especially evident . . . They will stay with the text, bending and twisting it until its ethical import rings free.” Or consider Veling’s description of “stories, commentaries, questions, digressions, needs, responses, actions, and reflections” that arise in conversation as the process of communal interpretation takes place.

According to Meyer, there is however a fundamental oversight in this point of view. The inkspots are signs that, when deciphered, arrange the words in a particular order. These curious marks on paper also give the reader his marching orders. That is to say, “the signs yield this word-sequence and no other; and, normally, the meaning that the reader brings to the picnic is the meaning that the writer had managed to express – to objectify verbally and textually.” To be sure, the reader does bring meaning to the text as the reader’s sense of the meaning of the text is mediated by the reader’s own experience, intelligence, and judgement. However, “when the reader is competent and his reading accurate, the meaning

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131 Veling, *Practical Theology*, 73.
so mediated is precisely the meaning that the writer intended and more or less skillfully expressed in words signified by letters (= inkspots).”

Whenever the reader catches the meaning of the writer we do not get a picnic to which the writer brings the words and the reader the meaning but a successful communication of meaning. The success or otherwise of the effort to communicate meaning depends upon both the skill of the writer as writer and the skill of the reader as reader. Both are needed. If the writer has nothing of interest to say or lacks the skill to say it well, meaning will not be communicated. By the same token, “nothing and nobody can save the day, not even a Homer or a Shakespeare, if the reader is unable somehow to measure up to the text.”

Every act of successful reading illustrates two things. First, reading is not the merely passive registering of a meaning already fully constituted on the page and, secondly, it is not entirely the creative response of the reader (a picnic where the writer brings the words and the reader brings the meaning). What is sought is the “accurate recovery of whatever meaning the writer has managed to objectify in words.” That particular meaning, however, is recovered only if the reader reads well. To read well is to attend “to an exact decoding of signs, to the particularities of the word-sequence that emerges, to how every element in it works with every other.”

The fifth feature of critical realist hermeneutics is that it “distinguishes between understanding and judgement and makes judgement integral to the task of interpreting.” From a critical realist perspective, “the content of understanding is intrinsically hypothetical; the step into ‘knowledge’ (usually no more than probable knowledge) is effected by the grasp of evidence as ‘sufficient’ and the consequently reasonable act of judgement.”

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139 Meyer, *Critical Realism*, xii.
140 Meyer, *Critical Realism*, xii.
interpretations with no means of escape. One may studiously work at avoiding making judgements, though, by ignoring the inevitable questions that arise once the task of interpretation has begun – for example, the question “I think this is what the text means; I wonder if it really means what I think it does?”

According to Meyer critical realist hermeneutics is a break from what he refers to as the “hermeneutics of innocence.”\textsuperscript{141} That is to say “it does not suppose that the meaning of the text is ‘already out there now’, to be somehow read off the page.”\textsuperscript{142} This does not mean, however, that, as an interpreter, one is free to conjure up the meaning of the text out of one’s own resources or from the fruits of conversation or from shared reflection. The quality of the scriptural text itself, combined with its role in the tradition, demands the kind of critical reflection that asks “Is this the meaning that the text is aiming at?”\textsuperscript{143} In short, is there a textual warrant that makes this meaning probable? What measure of assurance is there that contributes to reasonable, probable judgement?

The sixth feature of critical realist hermeneutics identified by Meyer is that it “acknowledges the triangular structure of reader, text, and referent. The referent (\textit{die Sache}) is what the text is about. Things (the referent) and words (the text) are reciprocally illuminating elements of a hermeneutic circle.”\textsuperscript{144} From the point of view of critical realism, the text of Scripture refers to things. Metaphorically, critical realist hermeneutics works to get to that fire, which is the source of symbol, story, text and community. For the critical realist, the text does not simply refer to other texts in an endless referent cycle that simply invites deeper or richer levels of understanding while never actually making a judgement as to what the fire might be. It is through judgement that the critical realist escapes the apparently endless cycle of interpretation (ever full of potential) into actual being, the real.

The seventh and final feature of critical realist hermeneutics identified by Meyer is that: “critical realism takes sober account of the interpreter’s need to measure up to the text and to

\textsuperscript{141} Meyer, \textit{Critical Realism}, xii.
\textsuperscript{142} Meyer, \textit{Critical Realism}, xii.
\textsuperscript{143} Meyer, \textit{Critical Realism}, xii.
\textsuperscript{144} Meyer, \textit{Critical Realism}, xii.
be attuned to it. When the literature to be interpreted is great, it may well call for an understanding of the world and a self-understanding on the part of the interpreter that at the moment are simply beyond him.”

Those who set out to interpret Scripture “must somehow come to terms with astonishing texts, from the powerful currents of Isaian faith to the agony of Job, from the symbolic acts of Jesus to the audacious theology of Paul.” Rather than viewing difficult texts as simply a springboard for conversation, critical realists are aware that major texts, such as those in the Bible, “not only are beyond the initial horizon of their interpreters but may also demand an intellectual, moral, religious conversion before the interpreter can measure up to his task.”

Everyone can read a comic strip and many people enjoy light fiction, but not everyone can read the works of Tolstoy, Joyce or Dante. The interpreter of such texts as the latter kind is challenged to measure up to the task. This may require development and, perhaps, a change of direction in a variety of life characteristics. One, of course, may take a line or passage from Tolstoy and use it as a springboard for conversation, evoking stories, commentaries, questions, digressions, needs, responses, actions, and reflections, but I suggest that it is difficult to see this activity as little more than purposively playing with symbols.

It could be said, then, that, consistent with Lonergan’s notion of effective communication as addressed in chapter 2 of the present work, purposively playing with symbols can serve to form common meaning and, therefore, contribute to the development of community. Also addressed in chapter 2 was Lonergan’s notion that symbols have the potential to facilitate internal communications between intentional consciousness, psychic vitality and organic vitality in the individual. In this context, purposively playing with symbols, either as an individual, with another, or as part of a larger group, in the sense of allowing them to evoke stories, commentaries, questions, digressions, needs, responses, actions, and reflections, does have the potential to serve as a source of personal, relational or communal integration.

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145 Meyer, Critical Realism, xiii.
146 Meyer, Critical Realism, xiii.
147 Meyer, Critical Realism, xiii.
As an integrative function, “playing” with symbols can serve personal integration and an increase in interpersonal intimacy, as well assist in the formation of communal identity. The actions of each person in a couple actively imagining their future life together and then sharing the fruit of their imaginative experience with the other may serve to enhance intimacy between them. National consultative exercises in relation to flag design or constitutional amendments may serve to enliven discussion around national identity.

The point of this brief excursus into symbols is to highlight the possible strengths and limitations of the “Levinas–Veling” method of scriptural interpretation in the service of theology. As a method of personal, interpersonal and communal integration, “playing” with symbols has the potential to be both fruitful and useful. The question remains, however, as to the manner in which such a practice can really be considered to be theological. That is, in what way can Veling’s application of the Talmudic method of interpretation, as understood by Levinas, be understood as theology, practical or otherwise?

It is not unreasonable to promote the use of Scripture as symbol in the service of personal integration, the development of intimacy, or communal or societal development. Methodologically, however, viewed through a Lonerganian lens, questions remain as to which “realm of meaning” is exemplified in the activity, and with which “functional speciality” such practice aligns. In terms of realms of meaning, as there is no systematic control of meaning (nor should there be), and each symbol is assessed in its relationship to the individual person (that is, not to other symbols in a system of symbols), this practice is a clear example of the common-sense realm of meaning.

In terms of functional specialty as understood by Lonergan, as the stated principal objective of this method of scriptural interpretation, following rabbinic practice, is to wrestle the ethical import from the text, the practice of such wrestling in the context of conversation would be in Dialectic. For Veling, the first three functional specialities of Research, Interpretation, and History are not critically engaged at all. The scriptural text is taken as given. It is the text of the Scriptures that places a demand on the reader and the fruit of the wrestling is a hopefully converted subject. On this topic Veling seems to be aiming at

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148 SeeVeling, Practical Theology, 14.
religious conversion and perhaps moral conversion, as the text is wrestled with, but there is no indication of intellectual conversion in his account. It is then the religiously and perhaps morally converted subject who states what they now believe they must do (Doctrines). This is followed by the task of devising ways to effectively communicate the fruit of their wrestling (Communications).

Such an exercise is an expression of a personal spiritual reflection, grounded in a sophisticated common-sense understanding of the Scriptures as given, and, as given, they make demands on the reader. In the absence of an ecclesial aspect to this hermeneutical process, this process is an instance of idiosyncratic religious reflection, which stands in stark contrast with what is required of the methods of scriptural interpretation listed in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* in the documents of Vatican II: “Since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.”

While the church is never above the word of God, in the Catholic tradition, the task of the interpreter of Sacred Scripture is to investigate the intent of the author in order to see clearly what God wants to communicate to us. As noted above, wrestling with the text until its ethical message is liberated, or viewing the text as a picnic to which the reader brings the meaning, has the potential to promote personal and communal integration. In some instances, the practice of prayerful reflection on Scripture in the context of small Christian communities also has the potential to highlight particular structural or cultural instances of injustice. The experience of individuals and groups encountering Scripture has the potential to be a rich resource for beginning the process of theological reflection. However, as we noted in chapter 2, there is the ever present danger that, in “the absence of a control of meaning the potential for myth and magic to penetrate, surround, dominate both the routine activities of daily life and the profound aspirations of the human heart.” We will see presently in

149 *DV*, 12.
Veling’s use of Kabbalah an instance in which “the human mind, led by imagination and affect and uncontrolled by any reflexive technique, luxuriates in a world of myth with its glories to be achieved and its evils banished by the charms of magic.”

4.6.2 Veling’s theological method in the light of Lonergan’s method

Our attention now turns to assessing Veling’s theological method in the light of Lonergan’s method in theology. First, we recall Lonergan’s description of method as “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.”

Lonergan then continues:

There is a method, then, where there are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not repetitious, but cumulative and progressive.

Lonergan’s description of method begins with the notion of distinct operations. Veling identifies two operations: searching the Scriptures and reading the signs of the times. We have noted, however, that, for Veling, those two operations are, in fact, not distinct. For Veling, searching the Scriptures and reading the signs of the times are functionally undifferentiated. Veling’s pattern of interpretation follows the style of Talmudic scholarship as understood by Levinas. Compacted in Veling’s theological method is also the notion of application. Citing Gadamer, Veling writes: “the event of understanding can never be separated from the event of applicacio (‘application’) in our current situation.” Searching the Scriptures, reading the signs of the times and application are, for Veling, all aspects of understanding, understood as a revelatory event. On this point, Veling writes that it is “only when the meaning of a text becomes a concern for us today – affecting our values, our

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151 Mathews, “Kant,” 258.
152 Lonergan, Method, 4.
153 Lonergan, Method, 4.
154 Veling, Practical Theology, 45.
behaviours, our actions, our relationships – only then, can we say that the event of understanding is actually under way.\textsuperscript{155}

For Veling, the Scriptures are read in the light of the reader’s personal contemporary concerns and their understanding of both the Scriptures and their concerns come to fruition in application. Further to this, the whole process is confirmed by divine warrant when the understanding is experienced as “always a present event, a happening, an occurrence, something that comes to us and suddenly impacts us – ‘aha!’” \textsuperscript{156} Veling, then, appropriates what he calls traditional theological language to describe this event of understanding as “revelatory.”\textsuperscript{157} For Veling the “aha!” experience is a sign of divine warrant and adds fuel to the oral Torah, which, as we have seen, according to Levinas, is at least as authoritative as the written Torah.\textsuperscript{158}

It would appear that, in terms of the distinctions between “searching the Scriptures,” “reading the signs of the times,” and “application,” the pattern of Veling’s theological method is as follows:

- The individual’s experience of their concrete particularity brings them to the task of searching the Scriptures.
- The individual understands the Scriptures in terms of what they say to them in their concrete particularity.
- The individual brings the Scriptures as they understand them into “conversation” with their world as they understand it.
- The individual’s subsequent reflective process may then generate an “aha!” experience that confirms both the insight and the process of coming to the insight as consistent with, and perhaps even adding to, “revelation.”

This process is consistent with a philosophical outlook shaped by idealism, which, from a perspective informed by Lonergan, acts as a halfway house between naive realism and

\textsuperscript{155} Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, 45.
\textsuperscript{156} Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, 44.
\textsuperscript{157} See Veling, \textit{Practical Theology}, 44.
\textsuperscript{158} See Levinas and Hand, \textit{Levinas Reader}, 196–197.
critical realism. Veling has, rightly, rejected the crude empiricism of literal fundamentalism but he has replaced it with idealism as exemplified in the circular hermeneutic theory proffered by Gadamer. Functionally, in the practice of circular hermeneutics one is perpetually questioning one’s understanding while never coming to a definitive judgement. Within such a philosophical framework, rhetoric takes pride of place. In this case, the principal task of rhetoric is to communicate one’s understanding of one’s context, one’s understanding of the meaning of the text for oneself in the light of one’s personal “aha!” moment. The “aha!” moment is born of the correlation of the other two previous understandings. For Veling it is the “aha!” experience that provides divine warrant for the new understanding.

By way of response, for Lonergan, the “aha!” experience is an instance of insight and such instances are “a dime a dozen.” For Lonergan, insights prompt the question “Is it really so?” and generate subsequent testing until the truth of an insight is affirmed. This is different from the experience of “aha!”, which, as has been noted, is common. The affirmation of a fact is to affirm that one’s judgement on a particular matter has reached a definitive stage. Such decisions are not claimed to be revelatory in nature. They are however viewed to affirm reality in the claim of whatever else remains in the realm of possibility I can affirm that “this” is real, true and an instance of being. This process has gone beyond simply reflection on my experience of the phenomenon “aha!” to the affirmation that something is indeed a fact, independent of me. Consistent with the dictates of critical realism (grounded in Lonergan’s understanding of cognitive functioning), objectivity has been achieved or attained. By exhausting the subjective process of experience, understanding, judgement and decision, the subject can affirm that a fact is a fact, independent of the subject’s experience of it. For Lonergan the experience of “aha!” may or may not be an indication that something is

159 For an accessible introduction to the notion of idealism as a halfway house, see Mark Morelli, “Lonergan’s Debt to Hegel and the Appropriation of Critical Realism,” in Fifty Years of Insight, ed. Ormerod, Konig, and Braithwaite, 1-16

160 Meynell addresses this topic in some detail See Hugo A. Meynell, “On Truth, Method, and Gadamer in Farrell and Soukup. 212-226

true. The experience of “aha!” is simply an instance of experience and no more to be trusted than any other form of experience.

It appears that Veling’s view of “experience” is influenced by the mystical Jewish tradition of Kabbalah. Veling writes that this tradition suggests “that each person has the inherent capacity to affect the life of God.”\(^\text{162}\) He continues this line of thought, writing: “every proper word and deed releases divine energy while every improper action serves to reinforce the disunity with divine life.”\(^\text{163}\) With the idea of divine energy understood metaphorically, such a description is not inconsistent with an understanding of the effects of sin damaging relationships.\(^\text{164}\) In the next line in Veling’s text, however, he seems to stray into some murky theological water as he writes in apparent approval of the Kabbalistic view that:

> earthly deeds stimulate or arouse divine life in such a way as to cause energy from the upper world to descend to the lower world. Humanity’s fallenness has caused an injury to God. God is broken and shattered (shevirah) – and only shards of divine light remain in the world. Prayer and good deeds are vehicles for ‘repairing’ (ikkun) divine life and enabling divine abundance to flow back to the lower realm. For the Kabbalists, we not only enable God, we help mend or heal God’s brokenness in the world.\(^\text{165}\)

In a manner consistent with other instances in his book, Veling immediately follows this quote with a story in which Aquinas says: “Save me Lord; I am going down among the children of men where your truths are smashed to bits.”\(^\text{166}\) The association between the Kabbalist understanding and Aquinas is “going down” and “smashed or broken.” In terms of “going down,” Aquinas seeks assistance from God to teach a potentially unresponsive audience (children of men), while the Kabbalistic is making cosmic references to upper and lower worlds. In terms of “smashed or broken,” for Aquinas it is the teachings of the Lord (your truths) that are smashed to bits while, for the Kabbalist, it is God that is broken and shattered. I suggest that the purpose of the Aquinas story is not to propose that Aquinas

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\(^{162}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 208.

\(^{163}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 208.


\(^{166}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 208.
agrees with the Kabbalists, as clearly this has not been demonstrated. Rather, the Aquinas
story is a rhetorical device designed to “associate” Aquinas with Kabbalah. One can only
speculate as to Veling’s motivation for citing these two stories on the same page but it is not
unreasonable to propose that the purpose of the attempt at association in this case is to give
an air of credibility to a spiritual tradition (Kabbalah) that is on the very edge of Christian
theology, if indeed it be deemed to be suitable as Christian theology at all.

Another significant thinker for Veling, and one who wrote on Kabbalah, is the prolific
French postmodern philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). In terms of Derrida’s
influence on Veling in Practical Theology, Veling draws on seven books and five articles,
and Derrida is mentioned on twenty-two pages. While a thorough investigation of the
influence of Derrida on Veling is beyond the scope of this thesis, Derrida is a significant
voice in postmodern philosophical discourse and is considered to be the founder of
deconstructionism.167 His thought has been influential “in philosophy, in literary criticism
and theory, in art and, in particular, architectural theory, and in political theory.”168 His
influence on Veling can be inferred in two main areas. The first is Derrida’s practice of using
autobiography as part of his philosophical method, a practice noted in Practical Theology.
The second, and more significant, influence on Veling is Derrida’s critique of the search for a
firm and permanent foundation in the transcendental philosophical tradition begun by
Descartes. For Derrida, “the foundation is not a unified self but a divisible limit between
myself and myself as other,”169 perhaps characterised by the notion of the self as subject in
relationship with the self as object. On this view, the two “selfs” remain permanently
divided. In chapter 3 of this thesis we saw the work of Gadamer critically assessed by
Lawrence. In this assessment Lawrence noted that “the Cartesian subject perceives itself as
an already-in-here-object that perceives objects already-out-there-now.”170 That is, it is
conceptualised that there is a clear distinction between subject and object, with the
objectified subject perceiving an object that is already-out-there-now just waiting to be


168 Lawlor, “Jacques Derrida.”

169 Lawlor, “Jacques Derrida.”

170 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 179.
perceived by the subject. Lawrence, then, introduced the work of Lonergan, who elaborated on being oneself as conscious being, not as an object, not part of the spectacle we contemplate, but the presence to himself of the spectator, the contemplator. For Lonergan, the self is not an object of introspection in the sense of my observing myself, but the prior presence that makes introspection (not in the sense of looking, but as heightened awareness) possible.  

A second possible response to Derrida from Lonergan is that the ground of Lonergan’s philosophy is not in the tradition of Descartes but in the cognitive operations of experience, understanding, judgement and decision. Derrida is also the subject of these cognitive processes. For Derrida to have come to his philosophical insights he had to follow the sequential universal set of cognitive activities described by Lonergan. The ground of Lonergan’s philosophical framework underpins Derrida’s critique of a Cartesian epistemology. The influence of Derrida is also addressed in the next chapter which examines a work of Rebecca Chopp as an instance of the radical post-modern response to modernity/postmodernity.

Returning to our current concern (the use of Kabbalah), Veling introduces Derrida’s writing on the notion of “religion without religion,” a viewpoint I suggest that Veling would not disavow. On this point Derrida writes: “indeed, reduced to its textuality, to its numerous plurivocality, absolutely disseminated, the Kabbalah, for example, evinces a kind of atheism, which, read in a certain way – or just simply read – it has doubtless always carried within it.”  

Drob writes of Derrida: “by introducing the notion of ‘atheism’ into the very heart and meaning of prayer, Derrida points to a ‘nondogmatic doublet of dogma . . . the possibility of religion without religion.’ ” Drob continues in this line of thought, suggesting that the notion of religion without religion is “a possibility that he (Derrida) says is shared by thinkers as varied as Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Levinas, but which may well be coiled up in the heart of the Kabbalah as well.” In light of all this, as Veling strongly identifies with Levinas, is influenced by Derrida, and sees fit to use Kabbalah as a source for

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171 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 186.
theological reflection, it is not unreasonable to propose that Veling be added to that list of those who are influenced in their view of religion by the notion that the formation of dogma is an understandable, but regrettable, historical accident. Referring to Rahner’s term “anonymous Christian,” Veling writes: “I have often wondered whether this phrase could also apply to Christians themselves.” Veling continues on this theme, suggesting that “perhaps we should practice our faith ‘anonymously’, without our own name or our own professed identities writ large ‘for all to see.’” A judgement as to the validity or otherwise of this outlook in this particular instance is beyond the scope of the present work but it would be worth pursuing.

4.7 Conclusion

*Practical Theology* is a well-constructed instance of religious literature written by a skilled theological educator in that it is directed to assisting in the formation of pastoral practitioners in the context in which questioning is a constitutive and conspicuous element of belief. Methodologically, however, Veling is “unencumbered” by the meticulous work of textual critics and exegetes over the last hundred years as he promotes a premodern method of scriptural interpretation. Specifically on this point, he writes: “maybe it’s because I have lived too long in the world of academia, where so much that is undertaken is done in the name of ‘critique.’” He continues in this line of thought with the desire: “I really long to live in faith – to believe – and to be called again.” Perhaps it is in this line that we observe the musings of a mature academic that, as we noted at the beginning of this chapter, find echoes in the responses of other significant mature academics in their effusive praise of *Practical Theology*. The author’s intended audience, however, is “pastoral workers and ministers, parents in small faith communities . . . social workers and the ‘crowds.’” I suggest that, methodologically, while ostensibly inviting readers to take up the task of

179 Veling, *Practical Theology*, xv.
searching “by inquiring, by attending, by instinct, by reserve, and by daring.” Veling has not so much invited his intended audience to embark on their own journey of rigorous academic enquiry as he has simply presented the fruits of his own journey. In so doing, Veling recommends his readers adopt a postmodern variant of a premodern method of engaging with Scripture and identifies his own personal insights with the emerging discipline of practical theology.

In chapter 1 of this thesis, we examined Lakeland’s categories of responses to postmodernity as applied by Cahalan. Informed by Lakeland, I suggest that Veling’s response to the complexity of postmodernity in *Practical Theology* is countermodern in that he metaphorically leaps over the whole modern project to reclaim an imagined simpler past, a time before theology was differentiated, and then labels his own idiosyncratic countermodern response to postmodernity in this book “practical theology.” For Veling, practical theology equates with a particular form of religious practice, one that is formed through evoking idyllic monastic settings and employing idiosyncratic methods of engaging with Scripture. I suggest, however, that Veling’s unacknowledged theological method is clearly illustrated in and through the literary style he employs in *Practical Theology*. Throughout the book, stories, personal anecdotes and quotes from authoritative writers are creatively woven together in a series of narrative episodes that lack systematic control of meaning, allowing for significant slippage in the meanings of particular terms.

We have noted that Lee was “hard pressed to name the genre of this book,” but, after critically investigating the text, I am willing to make a judgement as to its genre. Certainly, *Practical Theology* has the potential to enrich and inspire the religious life of its intended readers. However, in performing this task, I contend that *Practical Theology* should be identified as a work of religious literature that fits under the broad umbrella of spirituality rather than theology. As such, perhaps a more appropriate title for the book would be *Practising Religion Today: Premodern Insights for a Postmodern World*.

\(^{180}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, 244.

\(^{181}\) Veling, *Practical Theology*, xii.
Having examined practical theology in terms of two responses to modernity, namely, late modern (Browning) and countermodern (Veling), in the next chapter we shall see an example of a radical and enthusiastic embrace of postmodern thought and culture exemplified in Chopp’s influential book on theological education, *Saving Work.*
Chapter 5  Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education (Chopp)

5.0  Introduction

Rebecca Chopp reports that Saving Work grew out a series of consultations on the future of theological education. The “consultations were designed to bring new voices and new perspectives into the discussions on theological education.”¹ Through this process, she “became convinced of the need to develop a new method of reflection on theological education.”² Specifically, she discerned the need for a method that “attended to cultural movements and actual practices within theological education.”³ For Chopp, the subjects of theological education are the students of theology.⁴ With theological education viewed as an instance of practical theology, Chopp writes:

Theology itself is a practice that, one hopes, is inescapable in theological education. As we shall see, the practice of theology within feminist theological education is best described as a habitus, one that can be defined as ways of naming God. It is a practical knowledge, but one with particular visions, values and norms, all aimed at substantive dialogue with the world.⁵

For Chopp, one is engaged in the practice of theology when one is engaged in theological education. Chopp notes that she had three intentions in writing Saving Work:

1. to provide a “useful resource for women and men who participate in feminist practices of theological education,”⁶
2. to invite further “research in theological education that is sensitive to issues of particularity and contextuality as it exists within theological education,”⁷ and

¹ Chopp, Saving Work, x.
² Chopp, Saving Work, x.
³ Chopp, Saving Work, x.
⁴ See Chopp, Saving Work.
⁵ Chopp, Saving Work, 18.
⁶ Chopp, Saving Work, x.
⁷ Chopp, Saving Work, x.
(3) to present a “method to identify and reflect on feminist practices of theological education.”

In response to Chopp’s proposals, this chapter has two major purposes. The first is to argue that postmodern views of human subjectivity, as presented in Saving Work, are inconsistent with the Christian tradition as received. A consequence of pursuing this goal is the judgement that postmodern views of human subjectivity do not provide an appropriate framework for practising theology. The second aim is to highlight the importance of using a robust theoretical framework in the practical task of working to overcome oppression and injustice and to promote human flourishing. We begin, however, an account the contents of the Chopp’s work and a critical analysis of it.

5.1 Overview of Chopp’s book

In the first of the five chapters that make up Saving Work, Chopp introduces what she refers to as three basic practices of “narrativity, ekklesiality and theology in feminist theological education.” In chapter 2 she develops the practice of narrativity in order to illustrate “how women use theological education to compose or write new narratives for their lives.” Her third chapter is an examination of the feminist construction of church as “ekklesiality.” “That is how feminist practices of church become constructed around the theological symbols of sin and grace.” Following the systematic pattern of presentation, in her fourth chapter, Chopp addresses the construction of feminist theology imagined as “the warming quilt of God,” that is, as a saving work underpinned by what she describes as “a pragmatic critical theory.” The book concludes with what the author describes as “a partial vision of feminist theological education based on the themes of justice, dialogue, and imagination.”

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8 Chopp, Saving Work, xi.
9 Chopp, Saving Work, xi.
10 Chopp, Saving Work, xi.
11 Chopp, Saving Work, xi.
12 Chopp, Saving Work, 73.
13 Chopp, Saving Work, 73.
14 Chopp, Saving Work, 73.
5.2 Limitation or social location

Chopp identifies three factors that limit her study. The first relates to the scope of her research and subsequent reflection, which she describes as limited to “‘mainline’ schools of theological education in the United States.” The second is her experience of active involvement in theological education, which is described as, again, mainly in “mainline schools, including those not specifically denominationally based.” The third limiting factor she notes is her training and academic background. Chopp self-identifies as a systematic theologian concerned with what practices mean to people and the relationship between the symbols involved in these practices.

5.3 Women as subjects of theological education

Informed and stimulated by Rosemary Radford Ruether’s *Sexism and God-Talk*, Chopp describes the subjects of her research, namely, her theological students, as struggling to name the pain of patriarchy. She reports that it was her students who identified the brokenness of their current experience as caused by patriarchy while at the same time announcing new possibilities as a Christian enterprise. Chopp views theological education as a process of spiritual and ecclesial formation that is grounded in what she terms “theological wisdom.” The central thesis of *Saving Work* is identifying practices of narrativity, “ekklesiality,” and theology as transformational for women and men. This view is underpinned by an understanding of the Christian tradition as “a living object liable to growth and change.” One illustration of this dynamic quality is the statement by Chopp that Christian feminism

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15 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 73.
16 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 73.
18 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 1.
20 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 3.
21 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 3.
may have begun as a religious movement in the struggles and dreams of a particular group of people, but it now anticipates transformation for all.\textsuperscript{22}

To further illustrate this point Chopp draws on the religious history of the United States, citing the ironic example of the early American settlers who “came under the guise of piety to establish the city of God, and what resulted were the cities of man.”\textsuperscript{23} Through this example, it appears that Chopp is attempting to convey the notion that one should not be surprised when a foundational vision is transformed into something else. While promoting her own vision of that transformation, Chopp is of the view that “it is the pluralism of the many movements within contemporary theological education in which the promise of the future resides.”\textsuperscript{24} According to Chopp, what feminism adds to the pluralism of theological education is new symbols and ideas that make available “the concrete data of practices and theological \textit{habitus}.”\textsuperscript{25}

5.4 Feminism and theological education

Chopp identifies four main research areas in which feminism has had an impact on theological education. “The Uncovering of New Voices and Faces in History” is concerned with actively seeking out forgotten women leaders, overlooked religious movements among women, and women in the Bible who have thus far been neglected in biblical scholarship.\textsuperscript{26} According to Chopp, this area of research raises historiographical issues with regard to retrieving and representing those figures in history, who, in their contemporary milieu were not seen to be public figures as they did not operate in the fields of the military, commerce, aesthetics or politics.

In the second area, the “Defining New Areas of Research,” Chopp argues that feminism has had an impact on what is now considered to be admissible research. The change brought about by feminism is that admissible research “now includes topics such as how gender is

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{22} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 3. \\
\textsuperscript{23} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 5. \\
\textsuperscript{24} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 5. \\
\textsuperscript{25} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 5. \\
\textsuperscript{26} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 6.}
represented in theological texts or how popular religion is always gendered as feminine in academic literature.”

Thirdly, the discovery of “New Resources, New Models,” draws on the results of research based on women’s experiences, specifically “new models and images of God, community, Christology, and spirituality.” For Chopp, examples of new models influenced by feminism include: God’s being imagined as more loving; the church as more caring; and spirituality as more earthy. She suggests that feminists are now digging deeper, “questioning the very genre of contemporary theology by seeking to discover new forms of theological reflection.”

Fourthly, according to Chopp, the use of “Inclusive Language” is arguably a research area where feminism can claim some success. The use of non-gendered terms for God and humanity or the inclusion of feminine terms for God and humanity are now standard practices in many academic institutions, and numerous scholarly journals now require inclusive language for all writing. Chopp correctly identifies that while there is still debate with regard to changing scriptural references, other uses of inclusive language are standard practice in most academic environments.

Parallel to the four research areas listed, Chopp also identifies what she terms “topics of global concern.” These topics are grounded in the notion that “the problems of women and for women in theological education are not merely women’s historical lack of participation, but how theological education is defined, formed, and structured.” Specific problems in theological education identified by Chopp include: divisions between theory and practice; the manner in which theological disciplines are organised, with clear distinctions between theory and practice; the “reliance on claims of ‘objectivity’”; and the “use of the model of university education, which lacks any concern for integration or spirituality.”

27 Chopp, Saving Work, 6.
28 Chopp, Saving Work, 6.
29 Chopp, Saving Work, 6.
30 Chopp, Saving Work, 8.
31 Chopp, Saving Work, 7.
5.5 A feminist approach to theological education

For Chopp, a specifically feminist approach to theological education begins by attending to the theological students, who, for Chopp, are the subjects of theological education, and by asking what is going on for them in theological education.\(^{32}\) From a feminist perspective, “education is not simply about correct ideas or handing down tradition or training in technical expertise; it is also about human change, transformation, growth.” \(^{33}\) For Chopp, “the crisis of church, culture, and personal lives can be spoken of, in part, as the crisis of symbols.” \(^{34}\) Chopp views the crisis of meaning – illustrated through a crisis of symbols – as providing an opportunity for institutional transformation and individual flourishing. The task of theological education is not only naming the sufferings and distortions of the present situation but also identifying dreams and desires.\(^{35}\) Accordingly, the goal of theological education is “to name God in our midst through and in the concrete reality of present existence.”\(^{36}\)

5.6 Theological education as transforming practices

Chopp is concerned to examine the manner in which “men and women actually use theological education to construct and participate in feminist practices of narrativity, ekklesiality and theology.”\(^{37}\) As already noted, *habitus*, or theological wisdom emerging in and through these practices, is central to Chopp’s vision of theological education. Chopp is clear that narrativity, “ekklesiality,” and theology are “practices,” not “things”; and she has a particular way of understanding “practices.”\(^{38}\) Specifically, “practices” means:

\(^{34}\) Chopp, *Saving Work*, 14.
\(^{35}\) Chopp, *Saving Work*, 15.
\(^{36}\) Chopp, *Saving Work*, 15.
\(^{38}\) For Chopp, “practices” refers to “the social construction of embedded patterns that produce both individual meaning and cultural organization.” In developing this definition Chopp draws on the work of MacIntyre, who “speaks of practices as shared cooperative activities generative of internal goods guided by embedded standards of excellence.” (Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984]) and Foucault, for whom “practices are the dispersions of power and
(1) socially shared forms of behaviour that mediate between what are often called subjective and objective dimensions;
(2) patterns of meaning and action that are both culturally constructed and individually instantiated; and
(3) shared activities of groups of persons that provide meaning and orientation to the world and guide action.

For Chopp, each of the feminist practices of narrativity, “ekklesiality” and theology takes shape through each of the three “aspects” of the practices listed above, and all three practices mediate between subjective and objective dimensions. Specifically, through the practice of narrativity, women use theological education to compose new narratives for their lives. Indeed, narrativity is a pattern of meaning and action that is both culturally constructed and actualised in individual cases. It is a practice that operates as shared activities as groups of persons’ work to provide meaning and orientation to the world in the service of guiding action. “Ekklesiality” also operates in a pattern of meaning and action that is both culturally constructed and individually instantiated. As shared activities in the service of guiding action, it is through the practice of “ekklesiality” that groups of persons work to provide meaning and orientation to the world as they share a common set of symbols.

The practice of theology as a saving work is underpinned by a pragmatic critical theory imagined as the constructing or weaving of “the warming quilt of God.” “In feminist practices of theology, students learn by doing the saving work of theology.” With a view to naming instances of patriarchal destruction and to envisioning new ways of flourishing, students do the saving work of theology by examining how symbols actually work in their churches. In brief, the feminist practice of theology is grounded in dialogue, justice and imagination.

knowledge that is neither subjective nor objective” (Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith [New York: Random House, 1972]). See Chopp, Saving Work, 16.

39 Chopp, Saving Work, 15.
40 Chopp, Saving Work, 94.
41 Chopp, Saving Work, 94.
5.6.1 Narrativity

Chopp claims that the past stability, “assured by traditional bonds of never changing or slowly changing practices of employment, of family, of community,” has now gone. Indeed she views them as “a lost possibility.” For Chopp, there is no harkening back to an idealised past that needs to be rediscovered, such as we observed with Veling. Chopp is also not clinging to a thin metanarrative of modernity such as we saw with Browning. Consistent with her perspective, which Cahalan identifies as radical postmodern, Chopp takes up the challenge of facing a world that has irrevocably changed. Specifically, she writes: “we must now learn a new art, the art of composing our lives anew and finding in that ongoing act of creation new forms of bonds, community, and identity.” Embracing the “new,” Chopp argues that because there is change occurring in practices of work, lifestyle and culture, this dynamic calls us to learn to be skilled at living with ever renewing beginnings.

Chopp describes her students as formed by intellectual forces which reflect a cultural matrix in flux, a matrix in which the traditional bonds, as previously experienced in family, community, and employment practices, can no longer be relied upon. For Chopp, this new situation provides an opportunity for each woman and man to compose or narrate her or his own life on a deeply existential level.

5.6.1.1 Narrativity and the Bible

We noted in chapter 4 of this thesis that Veling promotes a style of scriptural interpretation that he imagines to have existed before the rise of the historical-critical method. Veling’s method of scriptural interpretation is grounded in a conversational hermeneutics that uses images, symbols and stories from Scripture as a springboard for ethical argument. We also noted in chapter 3 that, for Browning, it was those passages of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures

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42 Chopp, Saving Work, 22.
43 Chopp, Saving Work, 22.
44 See Cahalan, “Three Approaches,” 82.
45 Chopp, Saving Work, 22.
46 Chopp, Saving Work, 22.
47 Chopp, Saving Work, 30.
that are able to be justified in the court of the academy, that is, passages judged to be rational and consistent with insights from other philosophical and religious traditions, that are part of the Christian gift to the creation of the common good. For Chopp, though, “the Bible is neither a story that we fit our lives into nor a text that we interpret until it reflects a deep existential experience.”

She rejects both the literalist/fundamentalist view of the Bible as God’s handbook for life and the existential hermeneutic viewpoint in which the text is interpreted and reinterpreted until the message is seen to ring true to personal experience. For Chopp, the Bible “is neither rule book nor mirror, but rather material within which the narrative agency of women constructs the ongoing living narratives and symbols of Christianity.”

Chopp’s theology is not the classic definition of faith seeking understanding; it is not, as Browning claims, something that begins with the intuition of faith but ends, when needed, with reasons and justifications for the practical actions it proposes. Nor is theology for Chopp, as Veling proposes, a conversation born of searching the Scriptures and reading the signs of the times. For Chopp, theology is interpretation with a very specific purpose, that is, the emancipation and transformation of women as they write and rewrite their life narratives.

We move now to Chopp’s second emancipatory practice of saving work, “ekklesia.”

5.6.2 “Ekklesia”

In using the term “ekklesia” (women-church) Chopp draws on the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who “envisions the ideal of women-church as a democratic community, with men and women engaged in their own self-determination.” The mechanism or process in which men and women engage in self-determination is through the use of rhetoric that “judges what it is that ought to be done and thus requires attention to the relations of power.

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48 Chopp, Saving Work, 39.
49 Chopp, Saving Work, 39.
50 Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 3.
51 Chopp, Saving Work, 39.
agency, and structure in a particular situation.”

For Chopp, rhetoric is “well suited to the contextuality of knowledge,” and is “sensitive to moral persuasion within the community and in the larger pluralistic setting.” It is “attentiveness to strategies of rhetoric that allow theologians to meet their fundamental religious and theoretical goal.” The goal in this case is “the persuasion to emancipatory praxis.” For Chopp, the “ekklesia” (women-church) is the place of God’s redemptive presence. “Ekklesia,” according to Chopp, is a space “where women and men can be emancipated from sin and transformed into freedom.” “Ekklesia” names a reality already among us and considers it as important and as real as any other reality.” It is not defined by denominational boundaries and is not identified with separatist groups or with a church for women only. Indeed “the ekklesia exists where the Spirit is present; where the Spirit works through the lives of women and men for the realization of new life for all, including the earth.”

5.6.2.1 Sin and patriarchy

According to Chopp, theology students are formed by the intellectual forces that have given rise to, and reflect, the present cultural matrix. As such, “present reality is distorted and depraved.” Chopp understands present reality as damaging the self, distorting community, destroying relationships with the earth, and disrupting communion with God. For Chopp, a vital part of the saving work of feminist practices of theological education is that “women

53 Chopp, Saving Work, 91–92.
54 Chopp, Saving Work, 92.
55 Chopp, Saving Work, 92.
56 Chopp, Saving Work, 92.
57 Chopp, Saving Work, 92.
58 Chopp, Saving Work, 52.
59 Chopp, Saving Work, 52.
60 Chopp, Saving Work, 51–52.
61 Chopp, Saving Work, 52.
62 Chopp, Saving Work, 55.
63 Chopp, Saving Work, 55.
and men experience and learn how to speak of the destruction and violation of creation, and how to anticipate new ways of human and planetary flourishing.”

5.6.2.1 Rape as a symbol of sin

Chopp understands rape as a complete distortion of relationship, “the mockery and devastation of what religiously ‘relationship’ might mean.” In a manner that communicates her understanding of “spiritual,” Chopp describes rape as “a spiritual act in which the connectedness of humans with one another and with God is violated and broken.” She continues, reflecting on “the reality of defilement, guilt, responsibility, terror, alienation, and separation” that heals as wholeness is gradually restored over time. Chopp also notes that the act of rape is a “betrayal of creation and the refusal of any sense of covenantal relationship” as it also “alienates the humanity of the perpetrator.” For Chopp, spiritual actions are those actions that promote the connectedness of humans with one another and with God and that heal the alienating effects of violated and broken relationships with one another and with God.

The “ekklesia” provides at least three spaces in which to name and oppose sin:

- the space for lamentation about suffering;
- the space for critical analyses of systems of oppression; and
- the space in which to interpret the depth order of sin as idolatry.

The notion of “the depth order of sin as idolatry” has a particular meaning related to patriarchy, which Chopp calls “phallocentrism.” In using this term, Chopp wishes to highlight “the logic of the representation of the genders (what is woman, what is man)

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64 Chopp, Saving Work, 55.
65 Chopp, Saving Work, 56.
66 Chopp, Saving Work, 56.
67 Chopp, Saving Work, 56.
68 Chopp, Saving Work, 56.
69 Chopp, Saving Work, 58.
70 Chopp, Saving Work, 58.
through a particular construct of masculine identity and desire.”\textsuperscript{71} In the cultural logic of phallocentrism, women’s identity, as constructed by men, consists of what women mean to men as sex objects in terms of satisfying (or denying) men’s desire.

Within this context the “ekklesia,” Chopp also identifies three principles or aspects of “ekklesia” as:

- the annunciation of grace: the counter-public sphere of justice;
- the community of friends; and
- the spirituality of connectedness.\textsuperscript{72}

Each aspect will now be briefly addressed.

5.6.2.2 “Ekklesia” as the annunciation of grace: The counterpublic sphere of justice

A twofold understanding of justice stands as a defining characteristic of the “ekklesia” in the counterpublic sphere. First, in the processes pursued by “ekklesia,” justice is viewed as normative. Secondly, “as a counterpublic of justice, the ekklesia works to create larger relations of justice in the broader social order.”\textsuperscript{73} For Chopp, justice is closely connected to spirituality: “by spirituality I mean the actual lived experience of individuals and communities, our way of being and doing in the world.”\textsuperscript{74}

5.6.2.3 “Ekklesia” as the community of friends

Chopp notes that “feminists often use the metaphor of the web to connote spirituality, for the metaphor points to spirituality as that web of connectedness of all that we are and do and to the ongoing intentional activity.”\textsuperscript{75} With an increased emphasis on intentionality and active engagement in the creation of a community of friends, Chopp appears to be referring to

\textsuperscript{71} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 59.
\textsuperscript{72} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 61.
\textsuperscript{73} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 66.
\textsuperscript{74} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 66.
\textsuperscript{75} Chopp, \textit{Saving Work}, 67.
something other than the common image of a spider’s web in which one finds oneself, as it were, caught in a network of connections.

5.6.2.4 “Ekklesia” and the spirituality of connectedness

For Chopp, a spiritual praxis of connectedness and embodiment is necessary “to counter the patriarchal spirituality of detachment and separation.” She writes that: “Christian spirituality has often been understood to be at its highest point with various forms of total detachment: from the body, from the earth, from the other.” Identified as patriarchal spirituality, she argues that the notion that transcendence is the highest spiritual value is maintained “only through separation from others and control of the body.” In contrast, “a spiritual praxis of connectedness is that which both heals and resists patriarchal spirituality.” The critical and creative practices of narrativity and “ekklesia” are not barren processes. Indeed theology, as the third emancipatory practice of saving work, is for Chopp the fruit of the first two, and it is to this topic that we now turn.

5.6.3 Theology

For Chopp, “the work of feminist theology is about a communal act of sharing, about bringing disparate pieces together, about producing something for those in need.” In terms of theological method, in this brief statement we can see that, for Chopp, theology is a communal activity that is eclectic rather than systematic, and works to name something that, at least in part, is already recognised.

To illustrate her theological method, Chopp draws on an evocative American image of a group of women creating a patchwork quilt. The task is undertaken as a communal project, the pieces of material are drawn from a wide range of sources, and the product of the work is useful. Applying the making of such a quilt to theology, Chopp uses the image of theology as

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76 Chopp, Saving Work, 69.
77 Chopp, Saving Work, 69.
78 Chopp, Saving Work, 69.
79 Chopp, Saving Work, 69.
80 Chopp, Saving Work, 73.
making “the warming quilt of God.” As already noted, for Chopp, “theology no longer uncovers unchangeable foundations or hands down cognitive truths of tradition or discloses the classics or even figures out the rules of tradition or even figures out the rules of faith.”

Methodologically, “quilting, weaving, and constructing become the focus of theological work as a communal process of bringing ‘scraps’ of material used elsewhere and joining them in new ways.” This is a work of emancipatory praxis.

*Saving Work* is written through a pedagogical lens and Chopp presents her arguments clearly in logical sequence, and illustrates her argument through the use of case studies. Consistent with Lonergan’s understanding that “literary language tends to float somewhere between logic and symbol,” it is through the use of an engaging literary style that Chopp summons support for her point of view. The image of theology as communally making “the warming quilt of God” is an image that stimulates both imagination and memory while simultaneously acting as a powerful metaphor for the doing of theology.

### 5.6.3.1 The theological method that underpins *Saving Work*

Chopp identifies herself as one who has trained as a systematic theologian. Referring to the practice of systematic theology, she writes: “I tend to ask questions about what practices mean to persons and how the symbols involved relate to the activities produced.” For Chopp, it is “through the symbolic lenses of Christianity we see reality, but reality in turn may lead us to refashion the meaning of basic symbols.” Such a view is not inconsistent with Lonergan’s understanding of theology as mediating between and cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix. Chopp views the mediation between the

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81 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 73.
82 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 73.
83 Chopp, *Saving Work*, 73.
85 Chopp, *Saving Work*, xi.
87 Ibid., 74.
cultural matrix and religion as a mediation that works in both directions, that is, as the culture is influenced by Christianity, the cultural matrix reflexively refashions the basic symbols of Christianity. According to Chopp, “by its very nature, theology focuses on the symbols and symbolic patterns of Christianity, and thus the imagination and aesthetics play an important role in feminist theology.” With regard to the choice or construction of new symbolic lenses, Chopp writes that “feminist theologians locate the very identity of theology in the context of functional warmth, of common beauty, of daily practices.” In this sentence we note the close relationship between theology as working with a symbol system and the identity of theology as being located in practices. The fruit of the relationship between symbol and practice is the idea of feminist theology as “a reworking and reshaping of Christian practices within the context of the movement of feminist liberationist Christianity.”

Thus far, Chopp’s position is that, methodologically, Christian practices are reworked and reshaped in the light of an identified movement and it is through the use of imagination that new symbols are found or constructed, symbols that reflect the reshaped practices. For Chopp, the symbolic lens of Christianity principally serves to begin the process. She writes that “the interpretive lens for theology must focus on questions about agency, world and symbol and how they function together in a particular structure of Christianity.” For Chopp, theology, understood as a practice of feminist liberationist Christianity, has a particular meaning, one that involves “the dialectical relation of present (including the past) and future possibilities.” Included among the list of future possibilities are the “transformation of social structures as well as transformation of personal narratives and of interpersonal relations.”

89 Chopp, 74.
90 Ibid., x., 74.
91 Ibid., 75.
92 Ibid., 76.
93 Ibid., x., 76.
94 Ibid., 77.
5.6.3.1.1 Feminist theology and pragmatic critical theory

For Chopp feminist theology employs a distinct type of knowledge, which she calls a pragmatic critical theory. The purpose of critical theories is to “uncover how discourses construct regimes of domination.” Expanding on this notion, she writes: “critical theory takes as its departure point the reality of oppression and suffering in society and attempts both to display the origin, function and relations of structures that cause oppression and to anticipate possibilities for change.”

5.6.3.1.2 Pragmatic critical theory and hermeneutical theologies

Chopp clearly differentiates pragmatic critical theory from hermeneutical theologies. Citing David Tracy as an example of a hermeneutical theologian, she writes: “Tracy focuses on how we interpret the traditional texts, especially scripture, through a kind of back and forth dialogue between the text and our lives.” She continues: “influenced by Hans-Georg Gadamer, David Tracy argues that theologians begin within the tradition, that indeed the tradition itself forms our prejudgements.” For Chopp, the prejudgements constitute the initial Christian symbolic interpretive lens through which reality is read. Such a lens, as we have seen, for Chopp, can be changed. For Chopp, feminist theology in general differs markedly from hermeneutical theology. According to Chopp, “hermeneutical theologies tend to view the ‘Christian thing’ as the Christian written tradition,” whereas feminist theology (consistent with the notion of symbols being changed in the light of practice undertaken in the context of a broader movement) “understands the ‘Christian thing’ to be the activity of emancipatory praxis as much in the present and future as in the past.”

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95 See ibid., 79.
96 Ibid., x., 79.
97 Ibid., 79.
98 Ibid., 81.
99 Ibid., x., 81.
100 Ibid., 81.
101 Ibid., 81.
Truth is concerned with saving work. By contrast, “tradition,” in terms of how scriptural texts have functioned in historical situations, is viewed as “often counterproductive and even harmful to present or future truth of the surviving and flourishing of women, and men, on the earth.” While it may be an overstatement to claim that Chopp is a post-Christian theologian, it is not unreasonable to name her as a post-biblical theologian. In Chopp’s understanding of feminist theology, “the faith has itself been faulted and corrupted by patriarchy” and it is necessary “to transform faith away from patriarchal distortions.”

5.6.3.1.3 Feminist theology and emancipatory praxis

According to Chopp, feminist theology works to create what she terms “emancipatory praxis.” Employing this notion, she begins the process of describing how all of theology should “work” using three points:

(1) Theology works, or functions, within the emancipatory praxis of feminist liberationist Christianity;
(2) Theology states what envisioning new symbols mean – pointing always to how symbols themselves work to break through the past and envision transformation; and
(3) Theology as emancipatory praxis is itself transformative.

As an instance of practical theology, “women and men engaged in feminist practice of theological education use feminist theology to persuade, to change, to open up, and transform.”

5.6.3.1.4 Feminist theology and doctrines

Using a direct reference to the practice in some churches of excluding women from ordained ministry, Chopp assesses the traditional Christian symbol, “God.” Her “critique of Christian concepts of God lies first in its identification with ‘maleness’ and the assumption and

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102 Ibid., 81.
103 Ibid., 82.
104 Ibid., x., 82.
105 Ibid., 86.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., x., 86.
practice that women cannot represent God because they are not male.”\textsuperscript{108} For Chopp, “the symbol of God as male has functioned within the church to create a two-caste system.”\textsuperscript{109} Men are the superior caste and women the inferior. Hence, “the spirituality of women has led to narratives that too often create selves with little dignity or respect.”\textsuperscript{110} According to Chopp, “this image of the maleness of God is filled in with values of judgement without love, of distance and transcendence without intimacy and immanence.”\textsuperscript{111} For Chopp, the patriarchal symbolisation of God has functioned in Christianity and the broader social order “through large veins and small capillaries of power”\textsuperscript{112} to form a “comprehensive system of personal and political oppression.”\textsuperscript{113} In contrast to patriarchal Christianity, which, according to Chopp, “has ordered the meaning and structure of life through a hierarchy of divisions in which everyone and everything has its place, the feminist vision of life as relatedness is more fluid, more connected with relationality imaged as a web.”\textsuperscript{114}

As noted earlier, for Chopp, “the revisioning of the symbol God in feminist theology, contains [an] emphasis on diverse ways of hearing God and seeing God”\textsuperscript{115} and thus “the recognition of a multiplicity of ways of speaking of God is tied to the diversity of human beings.”\textsuperscript{116} Reflecting the radical postmodern position, Chopp writes: “philosophically, when pluralism is acknowledged and sure foundations cease to be sought after, rhetoric emerges as the way of deliberation.”\textsuperscript{117} In contrast to Browning, who, as we have seen, grounds his theology in the philosophical position of a “thin metanarrative” characterised by a type of “anthropological constant,” and Veling, who seeks to ground his theological method in a postmodern form (Levinas) of a premodern practice (Talmudic interpretation), Chopp simply

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 88.  
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., x., 88.  
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 88.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 88.  
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 89.  
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., x., 89.  
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 89.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 90.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., x., 90.  
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 92.
accepts that sure foundations are now a thing of the past. The idea of sure foundations has been replaced by pluralism and the postmodern philosophical milieu provides an opportunity “to discover . . . imaginative possibilities, to find new solutions to create new forms of life”\textsuperscript{118} through the use of rhetoric.

In a philosophical milieu in which “the political construction of knowledge is accepted, rhetoric becomes the basis of self-conscious deliberation and transformation.”\textsuperscript{119} When the “particular” is seen as important, the “struggles and dreams, beliefs and practices involved in a particular situation” become the “stuff” used for exploring common ground. Rhetoric, in other words, precedes logic: grasping propositions is only possible in specific forms of social life.\textsuperscript{120}

Relating the central role of rhetoric to her theological method, Chopp writes that “rhetorical forms of argument attempt to name what is going on, to reveal distortion and corruption, to imagine possibilities out of present reality.”\textsuperscript{121} She understands rhetorical forms of argument as: (1) naming the present reality; (2) first revealing and then remediating distortions through a self-corrective discursive process; and (3) working with others to imagine other possible realities. In contrast to the notion of transcendental norms, the norms used in rhetorical argument are taken from the situation.\textsuperscript{122} In terms of method, “feminist rhetorical strategies call worlds into being, inscribe new orders of possibility, validate frames of reference, accredit forms of explanation, and reconstitute history as serviceable for present and future projects.”\textsuperscript{123} The process of validating frames of reference is a “back and forth” process of identifying and cross-validating the various elements in the particular situation to name patterns that reflexively confirm or validate the “lens” through which the particular situation is viewed.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., x., 92.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 92.
Chopp’s particular application of this method is as follows. The lens through which a particular situation is viewed is a feminist liberationist position. The history of the role and place of women in the Christian tradition is seen to be one of oppression. This view is seen to be confirmed in the contemporary practice of not allowing women to represent God through ordained ministry. Reciprocally, this practice is seen to be the fruit of a patriarchal symbolic representation of God. The symbols, as used historically, are judged to be destructive to women. The destructive symbols are seen to have been both the fruit of, and reinforced by, what we might think of as transcendental norms. With the development of postmodern philosophies, the transcendental norms are now viewed not to be transcendental but as simply a privileged instance of particular norms (patriarchy) expressed in symbol and practice. With the exception of feminist theology, all theology is viewed to be patriarchal theology as it justifies its particular symbol system as normative by claiming it to be based in a transcendent set of symbolic norms (the Bible).

5.6.3.1.5 Theological education as “saving work”

Chopp’s model of theological education, which she calls “saving work,” has an intentional focus. “Saving work is oriented to the present and the future and combines a productive or rhetorical stress with a hermeneutical one.” Theology, in the rubric of saving work, is concerned with producing discourses of emancipation. For Chopp, the task of engaging in feminist theological education is saving work. The saving work of theological education is concerned with ideas in terms of their function or concrete use: “attentiveness to cultural and political constructs shapes the construction and interpretation of feminist theology.”

For Chopp, feminist theology, in a manner similar to the deconstructive model, “seeks to reveal and oppose the ordering and production of meaning through binary opposition.” However, Chopp sees feminist theology as going beyond “the ‘deconstruction’ operative in the theological model of deconstruction” to include “the subversiveness of how non-

124 Ibid., 94.
125 Ibid., x., 94.
126 Ibid., 95.
127 Ibid., x., 95.
dominant groups were able to read texts and use symbols differently.”\textsuperscript{128} Chopp also sees feminist theological practices as sharing “a sense of dialogue with hermeneutical theologies,”\textsuperscript{129} and she identifies “the continual act of interpretation and the ongoing revisioning of ‘tradition’ as itself a truly Christian act.”\textsuperscript{130} She is of the view that ongoing revisioning of the Christian tradition is consistent with the Christian tradition itself. While feminist theology shares a concern with the cultural-linguistic model of hermeneutics,\textsuperscript{131} with its “stress on how symbols and ideas function as a kind of grammar of faith,”\textsuperscript{132} it adds to this model an “intertwining of justice, dialogue and imagination.”\textsuperscript{133}

5.6.3.1.6 Imagination and saving work

As well as analysis and critique of the present context, Chopp views theology as a saving work aimed at imagining a future. In this task, “feminist theological practices open themselves to poetry and prose.”\textsuperscript{134} Continuing, she writes: “the very genre of feminist theology is opened up to include poetic texts on imagining God (or other symbols), autobiographical texts, and cultural-political analysis texts on the function of ideas in historical situations.”\textsuperscript{135} We note here some similarities with the theological method promoted by Veling in the use of poetic texts, autobiographical texts, and symbols. However, where Veling promotes a Hebraic method of metaphorically open-ended wrestling with the text of Scripture until its ethical import is liberated, Chopp has a particular end in mind. This end is signalled by the addition of cultural-political analysis. For Chopp, the use of imagination in the service of a feminist practice of theology as saving work is “aimed at emancipation that is transformative.”\textsuperscript{136} Theology understood as saving work imaginatively

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{131} For a primary example of the cultural-linguistic model of hermeneutics, see George A. Lindbeck, \textit{The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age} (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).
\textsuperscript{132} Chopp, 95.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., x., 95.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 95.
constructs “new meanings for symbols, new ways of flourishing, new discourses of emancipatory praxis.” Although Chopp identifies her theological method as liberationist, with a particular emphasis on cultural and political analysis of the impact of the tradition of interpretation of Christian symbols on women in terms of imagery, she writes that: “the crazy quilt represents what Christian feminist theology is about. The quilt itself represents the piecing together of our everyday experience in a communal act of love and the acceptance of all people and life experiences.” For Chopp, the crazy quilt (“the warming quilt of God”) operates as a symbol for feminist theology and “redefines beauty, and by redefining what is beautiful, [it] deconstructs and reorders values, norms and structures.”

Consistent with an underlying philosophical position that is suspicious of transcendental notions and locates Christian practice and symbols in particular contexts, Chopp promotes feminist Christianity as a new type of Christianity. For Chopp, there are not different expressions of a “transcendental” Christianity but different forms or types of Christianity. Each form or type has “different emphases and shapes of piety and prayer, of worship and service, of education and morality, and of understanding and language.” As an example of such a form, she notes that “the pietist movement emphasized that heart-felt experience required a theological understanding of the subjectivity of feeling and intention [and] a well-developed discourse of the heart.” Citing another example, she characterises the Catholic understanding of Eucharistic real presence as making sense in the context of the linguistic, aesthetic and liturgical practices of medieval Christianity. For Chopp, “contemporary feminist Christianity requires understanding within its own practices,” – “one which requires its own terms of understanding.”

137 Ibid., 95.
138 Ibid., 96.
139 Ibid., x., 96.
140 Ibid., 99.
141 Ibid., x., 99.
142 Ibid., 99.
143 Ibid., 99.
144 Ibid., 99.
5.7 Response to Chopp

Following the pattern established in the previous two chapters of this thesis, we now turn to an assessment of *Saving Work* in the light of the work of Lonergan. Specific topics that are to be addressed are postmodernity, transcendental method, and the place of the virtually unconditioned in coming to a valid judgement.

For Chopp, the overturning of the modern project presents an opportunity for women to re-imagine themselves in relation to the Christian tradition. In *Saving Work*, Chopp effectively outlines and promotes a new way of being Christian, a way that is only loosely, if at all, connected with the biblical tradition or Christianity as traditionally understood. Chopp calls into question not just Enlightenment rationalism as exemplified by Browning but also the “Romantic reaction to that rationalism ushered in by Rousseau” that we observed in Veling. The “post-modern hermeneutics of suspicion eschews both the Enlightenment myth of progress and any form of Romantic nostalgia for a pristine past beyond restoration in present or future as well.” In an earlier publication, Chopp writes that “the post-modern focus on ambiguity, fragmentariness, and openness has exerted an impact upon contemporary philosophy and theory.” She continues with specific reference to theology, identifying what she terms postmodern values: “openness and multiplicity” which “call upon theologians not only to speak in new ways to the culture but also to evaluate their theological understandings” in the light of postmodern culture. According to Chopp: “Post-modernity, as a challenge to theology, consists of finding ways to address a culture with a penchant for the fragmentary, the open, the ambiguous, and the different. It invites refashioning the very task, genre, and style of theology so that it can help point to new ways of living in post-modern culture.”

146 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 173.
149 Chopp and Taylor, 8.
In what may be construed as a critique of the kind of theological reflection exemplified by Veling, Chopp also draws on a postcolonial sensibility that “critiques and enriches post-modernism and prods it to move toward emancipation and not simply to dwell in self-indulgent play among cultures of privilege.”

Chopp is withering in her critique of transcendental norms, equating “transcendental” with oppressive patriarchy. On the surface it would appear that Lonergan’s transcendental method would fall under Chopp’s critique of transcendent norms. In Saving Work, Chopp makes no mention of Lonergan. However, others who operate from the same post-modern paradigm have commented on Lonergan’s work.

Another theologian whom Cahalan identifies as operating from a radical postmodern position is Stephen Bevans. In his critique of Lonergan, he locates transcendental method in the category of Western, male, (perhaps) oppressive thought forms. Bevans dismisses Lonergan’s achievement of Insight–Method by asking a few questions, including: “Do people really come to understand in the same way, or are there different ways of knowing?” Bevans attaches a confusing endnote to this question, which is reproduced in full below as I suggest it reflects something of Bevans’ stance in relation to Lonergan:

That there may be different ways of knowing is suggested by the title of the book by M. F. Blenky, B. M. Clinchy, N. R. Goldberg, and J. M. Tarule: Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1986). Interestingly, however, the way that these authors describe women’s ways of knowing comes very close to the way transcendental philosophers such as Lonergan describe the way all people come to knowledge. Perhaps the conversion needed is toward a more personal, intuitive

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150 Ibid., 9. Veling privileges Jewish Talmudic culture in his reading of Scripture.
153 In a footnote to this section Bevans writes ‘Followers of Lonergan would deny this objection in the strongest possible way’. Bevans then lists articles by Robert Doran and Matthew Lamb as simply examples of opposition to his own point of view.
154 Bevans, 108.

Examining this quote we see that the premise that there may be different ways of knowing is suggested by a book title. According to Bevans, the contents of the book, however, do not live up to its promise as, according to him, at least in terms of method, the book reflects a form of transcendental philosophy. Bevans then employs a term central to Lonergan’s understanding of interiority, “conversion,” and the term “intuition,” which, as we have seen in chapter 3, has at least two meanings. This point is then followed by a reference to an article by his friend Schreiter on semiotic theory that is included in a German book. I think it is fair to say that, in asking a rhetorical question reinforced by the name of a book title, this footnote does not substantiate the claim made by Bevans and does not represent a real challenge to Lonergan’s position.

Continuing his critique of Lonergan, Bevans cites an essay in which “John Stacer notes that the subjectivity Lonergan and others espouse . . . can degenerate into a ‘therapeutic mentality’ that tends to cut us off from genuine dialogue with the other.”156 In terms of Stacer’s observation, it could be pointed out, I suggest, that identifying a consequence that may arise from the misuse of a method does not invalidate the method itself. Stacer’s observation simply points out that misused and poorly understood methods that involve reflexive subjectivity have the potential to cut the subject off from genuine dialogue with the other. In short, Stacer’s comments do not invalidate the method, but just point out one potential danger in using it. Bevans offers no alternative to Lonergan’s understanding of how

155 Bevans, ibid., 172.
we come to know and leaves his question as a rhetorical one. (Presumably the reader supplies the answer.) For Bevans, this common-sense example confirms his own judgement with regard to simply dismissing Lonergan’s achievement.

It would appear that Bevans is of the view that Lonergan operates in a conceptualist framework and that Lonergan considers the cognitive operations that he has observed in himself to be universal “concepts.” For Bevans, however, the imperatives, “be attentive,” “be intelligent,” “be reasonable” and “be responsible” are conceptual products, historically and culturally situated; and thus situated, the imperatives are acknowledged as being “true” in their context but are easily dismissed when the context changes.

Returning to Chopp’s own reliance on post-modernism, Donna Teevan, referring to an earlier book by Chopp, *The Power to Speak*, notes that Chopp is “deeply indebted to poststructuralist insights.” For Teevan, “the poststructuralist position contends that there is no meaning prior to language.” That is to say, language does not reflect reality; it constructs it. According to Teevan, “for poststructuralist feminism, language consists of a range of discourses which offer different versions of the meaning of social relations.” Operating in an intellectual milieu that celebrates the fact that such a milieu itself has to be constantly reformulated, I suggest that, for Chopp, the whole notion of transcendental method is simply passé. Lonergan would be seen by Chopp as simply another manifestation of an intellectual framework whose time too has passed. Further, because Lonergan’s method is grounded in cognitive operations that are “transcendent,” in the sense that they are not tied to particular instances, it is reasonable to presume that Chopp would view Lonergan’s method, as does Bevans, as part of the white, patriarchal, oppressive problem.

158 Teevan, “Challenges,” 588.
159 Lonergan would agree that meaning (often linguistic meaning) is constitutive of the human world and so does construct reality. Lonergan however rejects the notion that there is no meaning prior to language citing instances of elemental, artistic and symbolic meanings. All elemental meaning is pre-linguistic with the stand out example being “insight”.
5.7.1 Theology and postmodernity

As already noted, Chopp embraces postmodern thought forms as a means for women and men to escape from modernism, in which knowledge is located in the masculine realm of objectivity, universality, autonomy.\footnote{See Chopp., 29.} For the task of responding to Chopp’s unambiguous embrace of streams of postmodern philosophy, we return to the work of Fred Lawrence on Lonergan in relation to those streams.\footnote{Lawrence, “Consciousness.”} Writing specifically on the topic of a Christian theological response to postmodern culture, Lawrence contends that “since Christian theology mediates between the Christian communities of witness and worship and the cultures in which they exist, it has to come to terms with post-modernism precisely in the measure that post-modernism has been affecting our culture.”\footnote{Lawrence, 174.} Lawrence takes the questions raised by postmodernists very seriously, noting that, even if, ultimately, the judgement is made that postmodernists “are simply wrong in their relativist and nihilist conclusions, this does not mean that they are not raising real questions about issues that need to be engaged.”\footnote{Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 174.} He warns against a “strategy of wholesale rejection of post-modernist conclusions”\footnote{Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 174.} and instead encourages an examination of postmodernism in the light of Lonergan. To this end, Lawrence describes Lonergan as a “Christian and Catholic thinker who actually shares many of the deepest concerns of post-modernism; but he does so in a way that takes relativity seriously without being relativistic – and that takes the absurdity and apparently random and chaotic dimensions of our world experience fully seriously without capitulating to nihilism in any form.”\footnote{Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 174.}

Lawrence begins his exploration of the relationship between Lonergan and postmodernism with a discussion on the modern turn to the subject and “what is most crucially distinctive about modern in contrast to pre-modern reflection on human being.”\footnote{Lawrence, 177.} Lawrence notes that
reflection on human consciousness is a central characteristic of the modern turn to the subject. He notes a difference between perception and consciousness. Perception refers to the “act of explicit awareness, or of express advertence to . . . whatever it may be.” By contrast, consciousness is “an internal self-presence [that] has to itself not only a dimension of explicit, foreground awareness, but a tacit or background dimension.” This background dimension is “the most radical presence of ourselves to ourselves – that can never be made explicit exhaustively.”

One of the insights stemming from postmodern lines of inquiry and critique is that the subject as perceiver cannot, by definition, exhaustively perceive the subject as object. Taking the term “introspection” literally, one cannot inspect one’s so-called inner self without presuming that that which is doing the inspecting is different from that which is inspected. In this conceptual framework, self-transcendence is imagined to be both the capacity for, and the performing of, the mental gymnastics of inspecting oneself – of turning one’s eyes in upon one’s self or soul, through exercises in introspection. In this framework it is also presumed that men are better at performing these mental gymnastics than women, as traditionally women have been viewed as too caught up in their bodies and emotions to be able to engage in rational acts of transcendence. In regard to Chopp, she rightly rejects the taken-for-granted sense of masculine superiority that is a characteristic of a spirituality or a philosophical framework in which self-transcendence, understood as controlled introspection, is viewed as the highest value.

For Lonergan, consciousness is not the act of perception but simply an awareness of the human exigency to ask questions. This exigency is manifest in questions related to

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168 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 177.
169 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 177.
170 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 177.
171 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 177.
172 Reflective of this view is a 2013 newspaper article in which a papal theologian, Fr Wojciech Giertych, provides reasons why women cannot be priests. Among the reasons is the following: “Men are more likely to think of God in terms of philosophical definitions and logical syllogisms … a quality valuable for fulfilling a priest’s duty to transmit Church teaching.” Bernard J. Lee, The Becoming of the Church; a Process Theology of the Structures of Christian Experience (New York:, Paulist Press, 1974).
experience. In this instance, a movement in consciousness disturbs one’s equanimity and gives rise to questions of wonder as one asks “What happened?” or “What is happening?” There is, then, a tension in that the questioner is searching for an answer. In time, one or many possible answers or insights may be generated. Consciousness is now confronted with a new question that calls for a judgement as the conscious subject is confronted with a range of possible answers to the question generated through experience and seeks to discern which of the answers does in fact account for that which has been experienced. Perhaps after many attempts one finally can make the judgement with regard to the source of meaning of the initial disturbance of consciousness. When the questions that have arisen out of experience are all answered and the judgement is made that the answers do indeed account for the experience, then the hunch as to what might have happened is transformed into a statement of what did happen or, indeed, is happening. We now have congruence between experience and explanation, which we may legitimately call “truth” or “being” and, as such, a fact may be claimed.

Confronted with this new fact the open-ended exigency operating in the subject prompts the subject to ask a question with regard to this new fact, so harrying the subject to existential conversion or transformation as the implications of this new fact are worked out in the psychic, intellectual, moral and religious dimensions of the subject. For Lonergan, that which is self-transcendent is the invariant cognitive structure of experience, understanding, judgement and decision, not the notion of a transcendental realm through which the subject perceives or introspects other aspects of the subject’s consciousness, which has been subject to a postmodern critique. Chopp’s rejection of modern philosophical positions that are grounded in broadly Kantian transcendental notions is not applicable to Lonergan.

5.7.2 Consciousness and postmodernity

5.7.2.1 Derrida

Operating from the radical postmodern position as identified by Cahalan, Chopp is informed by the major streams of postmodern thought, including the deconstruction modelled by

173 See section 3.6.6, “The five dimensions and the late modern position.”
Derrida and the genealogical approach of Foucault. The influence of Foucault can also be observed in Chopp’s view on the normativity of Scripture and her method of theological education.

Derrida influences Chopp’s project of “re-visioning God from patriarchal destruction, considering how symbols actually work in their churches, and envisioning new ways of flourishing.” According to Lawrence, “Derrida rejects the normativity of the naive realist’s ‘already-out-there-now’ and the idealist’s ‘already-in-here-now.’” Thus rejected, in the absence of a position on normativity to replace those provided by naive realism and idealism, Derrida and his followers find themselves “naturally to be decentered and disoriented.”

Lawrence writes of Derrida: “If one is intelligent enough to realize that extrinsic norms . . . are ultimately fictional and arbitrary . . . why not just make fictiveness and arbitrariness into a virtue, so that decenteredness and disorientedness are no longer signs of being lost, but rather the marks of true authenticity?”

Whereas for Lonergan, authenticity is marked by the self-aware subject constantly withdrawing from unauthenticity, for Derrida, human authenticity is marked by a lack of fictive foundation, resulting in a radical decentredness and disorientedness. Derrida’s rejection of “foundation” is most recognisable in his views on language. On this topic Lawrence writes that “what is constitutive is not the relation of a word as signifier to its referent as signified, but the positive determination of signs by reason of the differences available in any given system of signs.” For Derrida, “pure significance is totally unrelat ed to anything but the internal system of differences in traces or markings.” For Derrida, “the certainty of a transcendent centre ‘beyond the reach of play’ is a fictive device that serves to

174 Chopp, 94.
175 Lawrence, 191.
176 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 191.
177 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 191.
178 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 191.
179 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 191.
fend off anxiety.” With a transcendent centre viewed as fictive, “playfulness and the play of differences” then becomes the underlying intellectual milieu. In this milieu the subject “is simply an effect of différance, an effect inscribed within the system of différence.”

Who or what the subject is, for Derrida, is unrelated to anything but the internal system of differences in traces or markings. According to Lawrence, Derrida is attracted to the notion of différance or the lack of origin, end, foundation or ground because différence “destabilizes any attempts to close down directions of thought or to homogenize dimensions of specificity or particularity or uniqueness in reality.” For Derrida, différence “melts down distinctions between abnormal and normal, literal and figurative, serious and fictive, since they are all rooted in the contingency of arbitrary will that are forgotten either willfully or not.” According to Lawrence “the strategy of deconstruction is one of displacement, intervention, impertinence, explosive laughter, which it shares quite comfortably with the genealogical approach of Foucault.”

5.7.2.2 Foucault

An extensive overview of the thought of Foucault is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, his views on hermeneutics do have particular relevance as background to Chopp’s theological method and it is this aspect that is briefly examined here. Lawrence refers to an essay written by Foucault in 1967, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,” in which Foucault refers to the revolution in hermeneutics wrought by the three works, Genealogy of Morals, by Nietzsche, Interpretation of Dreams, by Freud, and Marx’s Capital, as narcissistic. Lawrence notes that “according to Foucault each of these works demonstrates that interpretation has no foundation and points to nothing beyond itself but further signs, which are themselves sedimented interpretations.” Lawrence continues, noting that “In a later essay, ‘Nietzsche,”

180 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 191.
181 Lawrence, 191-2.
182 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 192.
183 Lawrence, 192.
184 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 192.
185 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 192.
186 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 192.
Genealogy, History’, Foucault calls into question all history in so far as it looks to an endpoint or operates teleologically.”¹⁸⁷ Lawrence includes a direct quote from Foucault that is worth requeoting in its entirety as it provides some background to Chopp’s apparent liberty in effectively rewriting Scripture:

Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.¹⁸⁸

With “truth” understood as the fruit of “accident,” Chopp’s apparently unrestrained endeavour to reframe the Scriptures makes sense. If the truth of the New Testament is grounded in the exteriority of the accidents of first-century Palestine, then that “truth” can be radically reshaped in relation to the accidents of twentieth-century North America. According to Lawrence, “the thrust of Foucault’s practice of genealogy was to incite the experience of discord or discrepancy between the social construction of self, truth, and rationality and that which does not fit neatly within these folds.”¹⁸⁹ Chopp reimagines the task of theological education as one in which theological students are engaged in socially constructing self, truth, and rationality.

Having identified the main philosophical influences on Chopp’s understanding of (a lack of) normativity with regard to Scripture and her method of theological education, we turn now to examine in what way Lonergan can be seen to be addressing the questions and concerns raised by postmodernity to which Chopp is responding.

5.7.3 Lonergan and postmodernity

According to Lawrence, with Derrida and Foucault, Lonergan also “makes good the postmodern decentering of the subject from its modern status as the lord and master of the

¹⁸⁷ Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 192.
¹⁸⁹ Lawrence, 193.
There is a significant difference, however, in what it is that decentres the subject. For Lonergan radical human displacement is the fruit of a divine conversation. In relationship to the ultimate Other, the subject is radically decentred as a subject and experiences its subjectivity as “being oneself as being” or what Lonergan refers to as passionateness of being. Passionateness of being is the “prior opaque and luminous being [that] is not static, fixed, determinate, once-for-all; it is precarious; and its being precarious is the possibility not only of a fall, but also of fuller development.” Consistent with an understanding of the passionateness of being, according to Lonergan, “development is open [and] the dynamism constitutive of our consciousness may be expressed in the imperatives: Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible.” Lonergan continues, noting that these “imperatives are unrestricted – they regard every inquiry, every judgement, every decision and choice.”

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190 Ibid., 185.
191 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 185.
192 Patrick H. Byrne, "The Passionateness of Being: The Legacy of Bernard Lonergan, S. J." http://fordham.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.5422/fso/9780823228089.001.0001/upso-9780823228089-chapter-3. In this work Byrne explicates Lonergan’s use of the phrase the passionateness of being”, and traces the import of this phrase to Lonergan's notion of the implicit and explicit paradigms that shape human ways of thinking, feeling, and judgement. Each individual has an unconscious, implicit ‘metaphysics’ operating in their life: their assumptions and ideologies – inherited from parents, friends, culture, and religion – become the unconscious paradigm of their reality. Lonergan’s contribution is to propose that there is another ‘First Philosophy’ inherent in human beings as well, one which comes from the sense of reality built into our cognitional structure. This innate, explicit metaphysics or First Philosophy has to do with reflective self-awareness, which Lonergan calls ‘self-appropriation’. Byrne shows how the notion of self-appropriation is connected to theology; how it becomes, in effect, the major task of theology: to self-appropriate God’s self-gift of passionate, unconditional love as rendered in the Christian traditions, so as to move us to preach this passionate love and transform the world.

For Lonergan, consciousness is realised in the precarious state of self-transcendence. The notion of self-transcendence is understood as fulfilling the operations of attention, intelligence and rationality, and the choice of responsible action consistent with the fruit of the previous three operations.196 “By experience, we attend to the other; by understanding, we gradually construct our world; by judgement, we discern its independence of ourselves; by deliberate and responsible freedom, we move beyond merely self-regarding norms and make ourselves moral beings.”197

For Lonergan, passionateness of being “has a dimension of its own: it underpins and accompanies and reaches beyond the subject as experientially, intelligently, rationally, morally conscious.”198 Passionateness of being is that which underpins the invitation to self-transcendence in relationship with the ultimate Other. Response to the invitation is not automatic however. The subject may not be sufficiently self-aware as to perceive its presence. In this case the subject’s effective freedom is diminished. Alternatively, in freedom, the subject, having glimpsed the invitation to self-transcendence, may consciously and wilfully reject the invitation to development, preferring instead the, perhaps, habitual inclination to decline. It is in this context that we can speak of the possibility of the gift of redemptive grace’s healing the distorted subjective desire that leads to decline and of its working with the subject to perfect the natural desire for self-transcendence.

5.7.3.1 Contingency and the virtually unconditioned

For Lonergan, “divine revelation is integrally concerned with a concrete world process that is made up of realities that occur contingently.”199 That is, divine revelation need not have happened as it has and it is possible that it might have happened differently. For Aquinas, a legitimate goal of theological science is “the attainment of rationes convenientiae that would explain the matter-of-fact intelligibility of merely accidental or contingent matters such as

196 Lawrence, 189.
199 Lawrence, 195-6.
creation, fall, redemption, and revelation.”

According to Lawrence, “these aspects of Thomist teaching tended, however, to be disregarded by decadent Scholasticism’s overweening preoccupation with the certainties and necessities of Konklusionstheologie.”

The preoccupation with certainties is rightly rejected by theologians influenced by both a romanticist position and a radical postmodern outlook such as Chopp’s. It is also rejected by Lonergan: “For Lonergan, the intelligible connections between the scientific terms that express explanations of accidental or contingent realities have a necessity about them that is not absolute but only hypothetical . . . and such hypothetical necessity is the goal of scientific method.”

Scientific method is a combination of classical method, which reveals instances of “if A, then B,” and statistical method, which discloses how often those instances actually happen.

For Lonergan the only instance of the formal unconditioned that is not hypothetical, but absolute, is God. However, whenever “classical or statistical intelligibilities are verified, Lonergan calls them virtually unconditioned.” That is, while these instances are not absolute, as verified (that is, when all of the conditions have been met), they are not formally unconditioned but they are, in fact, virtually unconditioned.

Lawrence writes that, in contrast to Lonergan’s “highlighting the centrality of contingency for human judgement in terms of the distinction between the formally and the virtually unconditioned . . . deconstructivists and genealogists use their awareness of the contingency to deny judgement any absoluteness whatsoever.” In the absence of the apparent possibility to make judgements leading to the virtually unconditioned [the judgement that all

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200 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 196.
201 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 196. (Konklusionstheologie means “conclusion theology.”) “In an Aristotelian ‘science of faith’ the Catholic theologian can proceed from his revealed first principles through his naturally known premises to his theologically certain conclusions.” See Gerald A. McCool Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 225.
202 Lawrence, 196.
203 See Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 196.
204 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 196.
205 Lawrence, “Consciousness,” 196.
the conditions needed to make such a judgement have been met], those influenced by postmodern thought are content to stay in the play and difference of the “other.”

Chopp sees the task of making judgements with regard to authorial intent in the interpretation of Scripture as impossible. Freed from seeking to meet the demands of fulfilling the task of seeking authorial intent, Chopp sees the Scriptures as prototypical rather than normative. With this position established, she argues that one is then free to choose between differing versions, interpretations or textual rewritings in accord with persuasive rhetoric or the play of difference.

5.7.4 Lonergan and the “other”

Lonergan takes postmodern concerns with regard to otherness seriously. According to Lawrence, “in the posture of sensitivity to otherness . . . radical post-modernists fail to come to terms with the way in which it takes correct judgements to adequately come to terms with the other as other.”

Lonergan is acutely aware of the limitations of solitary introspection in the task of living authentically. However, unlike the deconstructive and genealogical projects that view authenticity as the fruit of radical and permanent disorientation with even the notion of “self” viewed as a baseless, narcissistic construction, Lonergan’s position is that, while the subject as subject is decentred through the process of divine conversation, the process of decentring retains a view of the human subject as one who is invited to enter into the ever incomplete process of knowing oneself as one is known by the divine conversation partner.

Deconstructive and genealogical approaches seek to promote human authenticity by deconstructing human subjectivity and portraying it as two fictive humanoid shells encounter each other in the task of exposing each other’s self-delusion. Lonergan invites the human subject into authenticity through an encounter between a human person and the divine other. This encounter shares the postmodern desire to decentre the human as lord and master but it does not destroy either the human person as a complete human being nor necessitate the

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206 Lawrence, 197.
death of the divine. I suggest that, in the light of Lawrence’s account of Lonergan, in comparison to the deconstructive and genealogical streams of postmodern thought that underpin Chopp’s theological method, radical postmodern thought is not an adequate or appropriate position from which to undertake theology.

5.8 Conclusion

There is no doubt that the questions raised by postmodern thinkers can serve as important correctives for theologies that are grounded in either scholastic conceptualism or naïve realism. Both those influenced by postmodern thought and those who follow Lonergan’s thought want to correct the modern distortion of the subject as lord and master. Chopp wants to correct the particular distorted manifestation of the flawed modern project in her critique of the white male as lord and master. Finding nothing in her tradition to assist her in this noble endeavour, she has turned to the superficially promising (in terms of serving her project) radical critique of modernity manifested in postmodern thought. By way of analogy, during the twentieth century a significant number of nation-states had a desire to break the shackles of their imperial overlords as popular nationalist movements arose. The desire was understandable and in many cases the cause, I suggest, was justified. To achieve their end, some of the revolutionaries grafted Marxist ideology to their desire to achieve independence, and communist states were the result. Arguably, this analogy serves to highlight the importance of theory in the practical task of working to overcome oppression and injustice in the political realm. An incorrect or inadequate theory grafted to strong communal desire can lead, and historically has led, to human atrocities. A just cause combined with a strong desire in the absence of a sound theory can be a very dangerous thing.

Another concern for practical theology is individual and communal flourishing. Again, in this realm, also, the importance of a methodologically grounded theory cannot be overestimated. As noted earlier, the desire for self-transcendence is universal. We also noted that the actualisation of this desire in particular cases can be distorted as individuals, perhaps damaged from early experience, seek to transcend themselves through extreme and ultimately destructive practices. Such practices may be ascetical, physical, intellectual, or sexual or may involve, most obviously destructively, the abuse of drugs. Again, the desire for
personal self-transcendence is universal. It may be ignored or rejected, but as Augustine says: “our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.”\textsuperscript{207} One aspect of practical theology is providing adequate theories so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be effectively communicated to individuals so that the fruit of the message is the human person fully alive. I suggest that such a task is far too important to be left to individual practical theologians idiosyncratically drawing on self-chosen elements of the Christian tradition and self-chosen elements from the human sciences to generate \textit{sui generis} (disposable) theories apparently suitable and appropriate to a particular individual or community.

The theological method of correlation as proposed by Browning is fatally flawed as it is overly influenced by personal, communal and cultural bias and oversight. Bias and oversight are evident in both the elements of the Christian tradition that are selected and the elements from the human sciences that are selected. The combinations are endless: Jung on John’s Gospel,\textsuperscript{208} Marx in relation to Amos,\textsuperscript{209} the personality of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels,\textsuperscript{210} the Decalogue and the Constitution of the United States of America. All of these projects are potentially interesting and, no doubt, through the process of thorough research, some fascinating insights may be yielded. If, however, theology is to be more than a means of generating books to fill dusty library shelves and if the meaning and message of the Christ event is to be effective in every aspect of human life, culture, and society, then I suggest that not only does practical theology need a sound theoretical base but, indeed, the whole of theology needs a framework to facilitate fruitful cooperation between theologians.

In the postmodern world, the theological opinions of the theologically uneducated taxi driver or hairdresser are of equal worth to those of the university professor of systematic theology.

\textsuperscript{208} See John A. Sanford, \textit{Mystical Christianity : A Psychological Commentary on the Gospel of John} (New York: Crossroad, 1993).
\textsuperscript{210} See Jack Dominion, \textit{One Like Us: A Psychological Interpretation of Jesus} (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1998).
In part, this is understandable. While there have been many advances in the theological disciplines in the fields of Scripture study, dogmatics and systematics, it is theology’s runt, practical theology, that is the discipline most likely to be taught by part-time, underqualified lecturers. The teaching of practical theology is often split into two streams. In one stream what is taught is a type of systematic theology in which the theory of practical theology is discussed. In the other stream the “practical,” as opposed to the “theoretical,” is emphasised, resulting in an action-reflection-action cycle that may be grounded in idiosyncratic option.

Chopp’s desire to correct the distortions of both decadent tradition and modernity are shared by many. Her desire to work for the full flourishing of both women and men facilitated by a new set of social relations is also something I greatly admire in *Saving Work*. I suggest, however, that, in a similar way to the twentieth-century revolutionaries who confused means with ends, and despite its initial attraction of decentring the subject as lord and master, the philosophical base of postmodernity is not suitable for Christian theology. Its view of human subjectivity is inadequate and inconsistent with the Christian tradition as received.

It is one thing to critique the theological methods employed by other practical theologians; it is another thing to suggest an alternative. It is to this task that we now turn as we transit to the last chapter of this thesis in which a method in practical theology will be proposed.
Chapter 6  Method in Practical Theology

6.0 Introduction

This chapter proposes, in outline, a method for doing practical theology that offers a framework for collaboration between practical theologians and those working in theological disciplines other than practical theology as well as those working in other fields of human endeavour. A particular feature of the proposed method is that it takes into account the theologian’s personal reflection on concrete situations. The aim of the method is to facilitate an effective unfolding of the reign of God in the concrete individual, communal, and social particularity of the human context. I begin the proposal with a summary of the strengths of the theological methods used in the three texts previously investigated.

A Fundamental Practical Theology is a work of substantial scholarship born of considered reflection on many years of pastoral practice and teaching. Browning is viewed as something of a “giant” among his peers in the field of practical theology. The work is a significant achievement in the drive to develop a systematic and theological approach to addressing particular contemporary concrete concerns and issues. In A Fundamental Practical Theology Browning presents a rationale for the systematic development of a method of practical theology that is based in his understanding of the cognitional process as a movement from practice to theory and back to practice. In developing his fundamental practical theology Browning acknowledges a significant debt to Tracy’s definition of practical theology as “the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation.”\(^1\) For Browning, the parts of the Christian Scriptures that are specifically selected for correlation are those passages that are parallel to insights found in other religious and philosophical traditions and that are consistent with the dictates of reversible thinking.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology, 47.
\(^2\) As outlined in 3.4.2 above reversible thinking at its most basic marks a stage of cognitive development, for example, when a child realises that a balloon that is deflated may be inflated again. In educational theory the notion of reversible thinking can refer to exercises in which the sequence of a story is required to be recalled in reverse, thus illustrating an achieved capacity for comprehending increasing complexity in terms of cause and
Examples of such passages include “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matt. 19:19) and “in everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31). Browning uses a concept drawn from developmental psychology as articulated by Piaget as the basis of his idea of reversible thinking. In terms of philosophy, Gadamer and North American pragmatism are major influences on Browning’s work. Both of these philosophical lines of thought act as guides with regard to how theological sources might be systematically related to each other. To illustrate his method of “fundamental practical theology” Browning draws on a wide range of human sciences to collect data. The data are then correlated with the scriptural passages that are judged to be consistent with reversible thinking.

In *Practical Theology*, Veling utilises his considerable literary skills to construct an engaging text that draws on story, autobiography, anecdotes and quotes organised around a number of themes. While overtly eschewing a methodological approach to doing theology, Veling, in fact, proposes a theological method that is grounded in rabbinic scriptural interpretation as practised by Levinas. Veling takes Browning’s working definition of practical theology, “to establish mutually critical correlation between an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary situation,” as his starting point and develops his own particular method of correlation. Veling’s strength is his ability to effectively communicate complex philosophical and theological ideas to an audience who, perhaps, have only a basic background in theology. Through his text, Veling invites and encourages the reader to engage in self-reflection. Significantly influenced by the hermeneutical philosophy of Gadamer and deconstruction proposed by Derrida, Veling presents his theological and spiritual insights in a manner that is more consistent with premodern patristic writers than with the systematic theological methods employed in scholastic, neo-scholastic and modern scholarship. A totalising tendency is also evident in Veling’s work as he identifies his own method of doing theology with the emerging discipline of practical theology. Confirming this trend, the authoritative scholar Bernard Lee who praises Veling’s work notes that, in reading

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Practical Theology, one is “watching the becoming of practical theology take place in our company.”

In Saving Work, Rebecca Chopp identifies and engages with a cultural matrix in flux. In this new cultural matrix, the traditional bonds of family, communal engagement, and previously taken-for-granted practices, such as those related to employment and family, can no longer be relied upon. Chopp sees this new cultural matrix as presenting an opportunity for each person to seize the possibility and responsibility for composing his or her own life. For Chopp, a vital part of the saving work of theological education is that “women and men experience and learn how to speak of the destruction and violation of creation, and how to anticipate new ways of human and planetary flourishing.” In Saving Work we observe a serious attempt to engage the rapid pace of social change in Western culture without the perceived need to seek a return to an idealised premodern past. Chopp sees the Christian Scriptures as prototypical rather than normative, and sees part of her task as reclaiming the original meaning of the message behind the first attempt at capturing that meaning as recorded in the Bible. This reclaiming task, however, is undertaken in a manner that is consistent with facilitating the full flourishing of women. Freed from the patriarchal overlay of the first expression of the meaning behind the words, women have an opportunity to write “their lives in new ways.” For Chopp, theological students are the “subjects” of theological education. As such, insight into the dynamics of human development and the identification of barriers to full development are central to her method of theological education. Chopp views the practice of theology as “inescapable in theological education.” In so doing, she enthusiastically embraces postmodern philosophical movements, which, she asserts, provide the intellectual milieu for rethinking the task of theological education and, consequently, the task of doing theology per se.

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5 Veling, Practical theology, xiii.
6 Chopp, Saving Work, 55.
7 For a detailed exploration of this notion, see Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian origins, 10th anniv. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1994).
8 Chopp, Saving Work, 18.
9 Chopp, Saving Work, 18.
6.1 Practical Theology and Context

Practical theology is often presented as a form of contextual theology. Influenced by Gadamer, contextual theology views “context” as the ground for theological reflection. In contrast, informed by Lonergan, the method proposed in this chapter of the thesis views the authentic (converting) practical theologian as the ground for practical theology. The proposed method takes context seriously and understands context as “the existential relationship of persons to God, to one another in culture and community, to their very selves, to the created universe and the forces of decline and progress at work in human history.”\(^\text{10}\) Drawing on Ormerod, I suggest that to view religion and context as separate, one has to suspend one’s critical faculties and imagine that one can identify some form of “pure context” devoid of the constitutive influence of religious value to be correlated with some form of “pure religion” devoid of the constitutive influence of culture. Tradition and situation are not disparate entities.\(^\text{11}\)

In chapter 1 of this thesis we noted that Rahner defines practical theology as “that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualisation here and now – both that which is and that which ought to be.”\(^\text{12}\) In developing a new method in practical theology, Rahner’s distinction between “that which is” and “that which ought to be” is transposed from being concerned with the church’s self-actualisation to being concerned with issues both within the church and beyond the church. In the proposed model, “that which is” is understood as comprising the dynamic interactions between concrete personal, social, cultural and religious elements in particular situations and that “which ought to be” is understood as the critical appreciation of the eschatological reign of God as received and understood in particular religious traditions.

The proposed method draws on Lonergan’s method, with its eight functional specialties, as its methodological framework. Specifically, the texts and context that constitute “that which is” are examined through the functional specialties of Research, Interpretation, History and

\(^{10}\) Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 446.

\(^{11}\) See Ormerod, “Quarrels,” 712.

Dialectic. Then, as the theologian works through the functional specialty Foundations, “that which is” is transformed into “that which ought to be” primarily, I argue through a process of moral conversion. Enlightened by the larger horizon of religious conversion and supported by the fruit of intellectual conversion in affirming “that which is” as true and real, the theologian is confronted with the gap between “that which is” and “that which ought to be” in relation to any particular situation or issue and is invited to undergo moral conversion. In one sense the whole sequence is practical theology in action. I suggest, however, that it is in Systematics that the production of academic practical theology occurs as it is in Systematics that the fruits of the work undertaken in the previous five functional specialties as established in Doctrines are systematically related to each other in the production of an understanding of “that which ought to be.” The role of the theologian working in Communications, then, is to develop practical, specific and concrete ways through which the vision of “that which ought to be” might become a reality.

The foundation of practical theology is the authentic, converted, practical theologian, with a particular emphasis on moral conversion. Objectivity in naming “that which is” and “that which ought to be” is achieved in the theologian as he or she strives for authentic subjectivity through constant withdrawal from unauthenticity.

The proposed method is developed in light of the following factors: (1) attentiveness to postmodern philosophical and social movements; (2) the views of its intended audience, comprising practical theologians, pastoral practitioners and theology students, and (3) the desirability of systematically using the eight functional specialties identified by Lonergan as its methodological framework.

6.1.1 A concrete illustration

To illustrate the proposed method of practical theology in action, an outline of the development of a pastoral response to the widespread practice of premarital cohabitation by couples undertaking a marriage preparation program through a Catholic archdiocesan social service agency is presented. A comprehensive examination of the topic would itself be a substantial project and is beyond the scope of this thesis. What follows is a sketch simply to
illustrate the proposed method in action. Informed by Lonergan’s work in theological method, I begin with an examination of characteristics of the presenting issue. This first step, Research, is marked by openness to all sources of data.\(^\text{13}\)

One of the sources of data gathered in the functional specialty Research is the experience of the pastoral practitioner as reflective subject; and it is with this source that we begin.\(^\text{14}\) The original material has been significantly reworked in the light of subsequent reflection.

\subsection*{6.1.1.1 My experience}

Through the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney community service agency,\(^\text{15}\) I work with couples as they prepare to get married in the Catholic Church.\(^\text{16}\) I began doing this work in 1993. In the years since then, I have worked with thousands of couples in three

\textsuperscript{13} Science that is not operating in an open-ended system, seeking to discover what is yet to be discovered, is not science but ideology masquerading as science. The human sciences have much to offer theology but before they can be used as a theological source they need to be reoriented in such a way that they examine the matter under investigation in all its complexity, rather than \textit{a priori} excluding some perennial characteristics because they do not accord with a particular philosophical position. Religion, and the search for ultimate purpose and meaning in life, is manifestly part of what it is to be a human being. One of the tasks of theology is to save the human sciences from themselves by working to reorient them so that, driven by the exigency to provide complete intelligibility, the realm of meanings and values is not only included as a legitimate area for investigation but is indeed systematically integrated into the ever more informed, but ultimately incomplete, vision of the human person. Such a task is beyond the scope of this thesis, and is properly the task of those working in the functional specialty of Foundations. However the identification of the work, yet to be completed, gives shape to the manner in which the human sciences might be employed in the production of practical theology in Systematics and the exercise of practice in Communications through the multivariate avenues of politics, economics and ministry. For an example of the beginning of work in Foundations, see Doran, \textit{Psychic Conversion}.

\textsuperscript{14} The material in this first step is, in part, informed by an unpublished paper that I prepared for a Doctorate of Ministry program that I undertook through the Sydney College of Divinity. John Francis Collins, “Method, Ministry and Post Modernity: Centacare Pre Marriage Education” (Sydney: Sydney College of Divinity, 2004).

\textsuperscript{15} In 1993 the agency was known as Centacare: Catholic Community Services; in 2008 the agency changed its name to CatholicCare. See http://www.catholiccare.org/Page.aspx?element=174&category=4.

\textsuperscript{16} The vast majority of the couples who participate in marriage preparation programs with CatholicCare plan to be married in the Catholic Church and many attend such a program at the insistence of their celebrant.
settings: (1) in large-group format,

17 with an emphasis on skills training;

18 (2) in small-group format,

19 using an inventory and a skills-based training program tailored to meet particular couples’ needs,

20 and (3) with individual couples, through the use of specialised premarriage inventories to identify areas of relationship strength and areas for growth. The report generated from the inventories in setting (3) informs the development of a couple-specific program. The tailored programs consist of a combination of facilitated discussion, skills training, and coaching in communication techniques.

21 The focus of the illustrative case study is the set of couples described in point (3), that is, work with particular couples using specialised premarriage inventories.

6.1.1.2 Premarriage and cohabitation

A component of the marriage preparation program under investigation is the identification of an inventory appropriate to the couple’s living arrangements. In 2011

22 three different inventories were completed by couples: PREPARE, an inventory for couples who self-identify as not living together; PREPARE-CC, which is designed for couples who self-identify as living together; and PREPARE-MC, which is for couples who are bringing children from previous relationships into the intended marriage. On

17 Group sizes have ranged from ten to twenty couples, depending on the venue.

18 Most of the skills training in the program has been targeted at communication and conflict resolution for couples. In 1993 the program was somewhat eclectic in approach. Over time, as more research has been done in the field, skills training has come to be informed by evidence of effectiveness and the use of techniques consistent with cognitive behavioural therapy as developed in the PREP program by Howard Markman and colleagues at the University of Denver. See www.prepinc.com/.

19 Group sizes have ranged up to eight couples.

20 In 2004 the practice in this format was that couples would complete an online inventory, with a report being generated based on responses given by the partners. The report would form the basis for discussion and for the creation of a couple-specific skills training program executed over three ninety-minute sessions.

21 In 1993 the FOCCUS premarriage inventory (as developed by Barbara Markey) was the inventory of choice. See http://www.foccusinc.com/. Later the PREPARE-ENRICH suite of inventories became the principal inventory used by educators-facilitators. See www.prepare-enrich.com/.

22 In 2012 a new system of completing the inventory online was introduced and this has produced much greater specificity with regard to cohabitation, religious background, and the presence of children as part of the relationship.
occasion, when couples had been living together for more than seven years, an inventory called ENRICH\(^{23}\) was also used. Practice however was inconsistent with regard to ENRICH as the allocation of specific inventories was dependent upon an assessment made through a telephone call and it seems that some couples, initially, were not completely candid with the assessment officer with regard to the duration of their cohabitation. For the purposes of the current exercise, data related to ENRICH are not included.

In 2011, 77.1% of couples completed PREPARE-CC, 18.3% completed PREPARE and 4.6% completed PREPARE-MC.\(^{24}\) That is, 77.1% of couples were living together, 18.3% were not living together, and for 4.6% of couples, children were part of each couple’s relationship.\(^{25}\) Because the purpose of the current exercise is restricted to illustrating an outline of the proposed method in practical theology in action, other potential sources of data that would be drawn upon in a comprehensive study are simply listed. Potential sources of data include demographic details on marriage from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and statistical data from other agencies, both Catholic and non-Catholic, throughout Australia. Further potential sources include reflection on the data couples provide with regard to contact with marriage celebrants, transcripts from interviewing celebrants in relation to their experience with regard to their role in weddings and marriage preparation, data on reported religious practice in the specific population segment that is preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church in Australia,\(^{26}\) and the policy of the Australian Government in relation to marriage preparation.\(^{27}\)

\(^{23}\) ENRICH was designed to be completed by couples who are already married for the purpose of marriage enrichment.

\(^{24}\) The actual numbers were as follows: 168 couples completed PREPARE-CC; 40, PREPARE; and 10, PREPARE-MC.

\(^{25}\) From my own experience working with these couples, the children may be the fruit of a variety of relationships, including that of the couple preparing to marry. The allocation of the PREPARE-MC inventory itself did not indicate cohabitation but, from my own experience, and the anecdotal evidence supplied by other educators, an overwhelming majority of PREPARE-MC couples were cohabiting.

\(^{26}\) These data could be sourced from the Pastoral Research Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (see http://www.pro.catholic.org.au/) and the Pastoral Research Office that works in close collaboration with the National Church Life Survey (see http://www.ncls.org.au/).
6.1.1.3 The method in action

The illustrative example examines one situation. Methodologically, however, there are two lines of investigation. The first line is identified by the label “context” and involves the use of the human sciences and an examination of textual sources relevant to establish context. The second line of investigation examines the relevant religious sources in the tradition.

In the functional specialty Research, the first line of investigation is to establish the range of empirical data and legislative and policy factors that make up the context. The second line of investigation in Research examines religious texts relevant to the issue—in this case the teaching developed by the Catholic Church on the issue of marriage and premarital cohabitation. Examples of textual sources in the religious line of investigation include conciliar documents, papal statements at various levels of authority,¹²⁸ teachings from curial offices, statements from bishops’ conferences, the writings of individual bishops, liturgical texts, and previous theological reflection on the issue.²⁹

Once the data about the context are established, the next phase of the proposed method is Interpretation: the data gathered in Research are analysed by those skilled in the art and science of interpreting data in particular disciplines. In this exemplar case, interpreters for the line of investigation into context would include statisticians, demographers, ethnographic researchers, psychologists and sociologists. In terms of texts from the

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²⁷ Funding for the Centacare/CatholicCare premarriage program, in part, is sourced from the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

²⁸ For a comprehensive study on interpreting church teaching documents, see Francis Aloysius Sullivan, Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium (New York: Paulist, 1996).

²⁹ It is worth noting in this context that, in terms of authoritative teachings, the encyclicals written by John Paul II that touch on this issue are of a completely different order from the large body of theological reflection that Karol Wojtyla produced that touch on the topic area that has collectively been named “theology of the body.” While this corpus informs the interpretation of papal documents produced by John Paul II, Wojtyla’s theology on the topic area is critically assessed in the same manner that theological reflection undertaken by others is assessed. As theology, particular texts stand or fall on their quality as theology, not on any hierarchical position that a particular theologian happens to occupy.
religious tradition relevant to the issue, once the relevant religious data have been established the task is then to interpret the textual data.

Following the methodological pattern illustrated thus far, History is the next functional specialty. The first concern in this functional specialty is to discover what has been moving forwards through time with regard to context. For the purpose of developing an appropriate pastoral response to a contemporary issue, relevant social science data would be sourced from the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century. In a comprehensive study of the single variable, “cohabitation,” historical statistics could be sought across a delimited number of years and across different agencies to ascertain historical trends. By way of illustration only, figures for the first half of 2004 in the Archdiocese of Sydney indicate that 29% of couples completed PREPARE, 67% met the criteria for PREPARE-CC, and 4% of couples completed PREPARE-MC. The statistics indicate that from the first half of 2004 until late 2011, there was a 10.1% increase in the number of couples undertaking PREPARE-CC, a 10.7% decrease in the number of couples who completed PREPARE, and a 0.6% increase in the number of couples who completed PREPARE-MC. In the functional specialty of History, relevant data are the history of the church’s teaching on marriage, and previous theological reflection on the issue.\(^3^1\)

The fruit of working through Research, Interpretation, and History is the identification of a variety of different positions on the sometimes vexed issues of sex, marriage, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. While the numerical values of the data may be difficult to challenge, the interpretation of the data is not obvious. For example, the increase in the number of cohabiting couples presenting for premarriage education may be viewed as indicative of a liberative social trend in attitudes towards sex and marriage. The same data, however, could be understood as indicating a begrudging acceptance of social decline with regard to premarital cohabitation and Catholic marriage by celebrants, the parents of the

\(^3^0\) In 2004, PREPARE-CC had not yet been developed, but PREPARE was used with extra questions in the follow-up sessions.

\(^3^1\) For an example of such an exercise, see Stephen Schloesser, “A Catholic History of Marriage,” Yawning Bread, April 2004, http://www.yawningbread.org/apdx_2004/imp-141.htm. While this particular article is not exactly on the issue under investigation, it does provide useful background information.
engaged couples, and the broader Catholic community. These views are just two amongst many possible positions. To discern and clarify conflicting views of the various specialist researchers, interpreters and historians, each position can be developed to its logical conclusion to identify instances of dramatic bias, egoistic bias, group and general bias. It is the task of the fourth functional specialty, Dialectic, to address apparent conflicts in Interpretation and History by reducing them to their roots, developing the positions to their logical consequences, and comparing the variant results with regard to both the context and religious sources relevant to the issue.

Consistent with the verified insights generated by the practical theologian as he or she methodically works his or her way through each position to its conclusion, the theologian is invited to change his or her stance towards particular positions. The potential change in the existential subject is reflected in a change of attitudes and values consistent with the intellectual, moral, religious and psychic spheres that constitute the subject as subject. By way of example, intellectual conversion may manifest in the realisation that the social science data on the particular issue are the fruit of empirical research undertaken in the realm of theory. This new awareness may assist in advancing a response to the issue also developed in the realm of theory. Moral conversion may assist the practical theologian to recognise in him- or herself that, as one motivated by values he or she recognises, there is a need to seriously address issues and concerns of premarital couples, rather than perhaps to deal with the issue either through the simple restatement of church teaching or by “tactfully” avoiding the issue. Another aspect of moral conversion would be the recognition that there is a normative order or scale to one’s values, as was noted in section 2.3.1, “The human good.” There we noted that Lonergan identified values hierarchically as vital, social, cultural, personal and religious. Psychic conversion may occur as the theologian is invited to become more aware of his or her spontaneous, perhaps emotionally charged, reactions to this particular instance of a gap between a hunch of “that which is” and a hunch of “that which ought to be.”

In one sense, conversion happens outside the theological process as it occurs in the theologian, since instances of change or conversion are not restricted to those who are

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32 See section 2.3.1.2, “Bias.”
informed by Lonergan’s description of functional specialties. That said, what Lonergan does provide, in identifying this set of interior dynamics as part of a functional specialty Foundations, is a heuristic structure that prepares the ground for the possibility of intellectual, moral, religious and psychic conversion, and provides a framework for identifying in oneself, particular instances of conversion.

The results of the systematic process thus far inform the converted theologian as he or she develops his or her own stance with regard to “that which is.” In this case the claim is made that a high proportion of couples who present to the archdiocesan social service agency seeking to undertake a premariage education program, and who intend to celebrate their wedding in the context of the Catholic Church, are effectively living as husband and wife before they take their marriage vows. Following the theologian’s engagement in the functional specialty of Dialectic, Foundations prompts the theologian to take a stand with regard to “that which is.” One of the fruits of the functional specialty of Foundations is the affirmation of “that which is” as true and real as an instance of intellectual conversion.

6.1.1.4 Theological foundations and “that which ought to be”

Having affirmed the truth and reality of “that which is,” the pivotal phase in the proposed theological method is taking a stand on “that which ought to be.” In terms of functional specialties, this phase occurs in Foundations. As noted earlier, whereas strictly speaking instances of conversion occur outside the theological process, this exemption does not preclude a methodically systematic approach. Grounded in the interiority of the theologian,

33 In the section on Foundations 2.4.3.5 it was noted that Robert Doran has proposed that the functional specialty Foundations be split into two specialties named “Horizons” and “Categories,” effectively creating a revised eighth functional specialty and a new, ninth functional specialty. The footnote is presented again here to ensure easy access. According to Doran: “Horizons would stand outside the other eight, since it objectifies the source of the movement from the functional specialities of the first phase to the functional specialities of the second. The place in the structure currently assigned to Foundations, the speciality that begins the second phase, I would call Categories.”. See Robert M. Doran, Essays in Systematic Theology 38: The Ninth Functional Speciality (2011), accessed March 20, 2012, http://www.lonerganresource.com/pdf/books/1/38%20-%20The%20Ninth%20Functional%20Speciality.pdf. I have not incorporated this idea of Doran’s into this thesis as I am working with Lonergan’s basic framework, not more recent suggestions.
the scale of values, as identified by Lonergan, provides a framework to establish “that which ought to be.” To sum up, according to Lonergan one of the fruits of moral conversion is the recognition that there is a hierarchical and normative scale of values, which, in ascending order, is vital, social, cultural, personal and religious.  

6.1.1.5 The scale of values

In chapter 2 of this thesis we noted that value is understood by Lonergan as a transcendent notion. As the intelligible is what is intended in questions for understanding, and as “truth” and “being” are what are intended in questions for reflection, so value is what is intended in questions for deliberation. To illustrate the systematic application of the scale of values to the issue of premarital cohabitation amongst couples presenting to marry in the Catholic Church, I will examine a chapter authored by Thea and Neil Ormerod. This chapter systematically investigates the sacrament of marriage using Lonergan’s scale of values.

6.1.1.5.1 Vital values

According to the Ormerods, sexual activity is an example of a value at the vital level: “Sexual activity brings a sense of well-being, of bodily pleasure, of tension released. There can be positive health benefits of sexual activity, contributing to our sense of vitality. Sexual activity can bring a sense of ‘groundedness,’ of the goodness of the body, a strong awareness of ourselves as physical beings.”

The authors continue, noting that procreation is also determinative of the meaning of sexual activity. The vital values of pleasure, physical well-being, and procreation are good in themselves. However, in terms of the illustrative case study, the question arises as to the relationship between a Catholic understanding of marriage as a sacrament and the prevalence

34 Lonergan, Method, 31–34.
of premarital cohabitation and sexual activity by those seeking marriage in the Catholic Church.

Included among the sources of church teaching on marriage is the liturgical text that has been prepared for the celebration of weddings. The following question is one of the three that normally precede the exchange of vows: “[Name] and [Name], have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?” While it is beyond the scope of the current illustrative example to explore the issue in depth, I suggest that it is not unreasonable to ask whether the regular exercise of sexual intercourse by a couple before making a commitment to each other may, in some measure, compromise their existential freedom with regard to making a life commitment. Indeed, according to the Ormerods, “no one can deny the physical power of sexual release and its strong ties to biological instinctive forces that are rarely fully conscious.” While the Ormerods are not professional psychologists, the notion that sexual activity has strong ties to instinctive forces that are rarely fully conscious is not an uncommon view. Hence, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the regular exercise of sexual activity outside the context of marriage may have a detrimental impact on couples’ existential freedom to commit, or indeed, not to commit, to each other for life.

6.1.1.5.2 Social values

According to the Ormerods, to ensure that the vital goods of pleasure, physical well-being, and procreation are achieved in a regular and ordered fashion, “there needs to be a higher process which orders and arranges them.” An instance of the higher process is the institution of marriage. “In marriage, sexual activity becomes sexual relationship, a partnership between two persons designed to meet a range of vital, social, and economic

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40 Thea Ormerod is a social worker who works in private practice and specialises in marriage and relationship therapy and psycho-education. Neil Ormerod is a systematic theologian who has written on a wide range of topics, including the relationship between theology and the human sciences.
41 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 211.
goals.” In time, with the birth of children, a family is formed and the “family becomes the fundamental basis for society as a whole.” One of the concerns associated with widespread premarital cohabitation is that “without clearer prospects of a stable bonded relationship, the future nurturing of the child is less well assured.”

In the current example examining a premarriage program, the systematic work of establishing the meaning of the received tradition through the first four functional specialties (Research, Interpretation, History and Dialectic) is a task that would be undertaken in a comprehensive study. In the absence of data from such a comprehensive study, we find, by way of illustration only, that the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* affirms that “the well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family.” In terms of social values, the received tradition has an unambiguous preference in regard to “that which ought to be.” While our concern is with premarital cohabitation, addressing the topic of *de facto* relationships, the Ormerods claim that “sociological data indicates that these suffer higher rates of breakdown and violence than married relationships.” Such data may also have some relevance to the relationship dynamics in those couples who cohabit for two years or longer.

### 6.1.1.5.3 Cultural values

While, statistically, the crude marriage rate in Australia has been declining over the past twenty years, it appears that the idea of marriage still has significant cultural influence.

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42 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 211.
43 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 211.
44 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 212.
45 *GS*, 47.
46 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 213.
47 Laws in many state jurisdictions in Australia recognise that those who live in a *de facto* relationship for two years or longer have a similar claim to shared assets to those who live as a legally married couple, should the relationship breakdown.
48 In 2011, the crude marriage rate was 5.4 marriages per 1,000 estimated resident population, compared with 7.6 marriages per 1,000 estimated resident population in 1991. Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed January
Photographs from celebrity weddings are highly sought after by editors of popular magazines; and the television coverage of the 2012 Royal Wedding in the United Kingdom was watched by millions of people around the world. According to the Ormerods, “marriage helps us make sense of our life by providing symbols – as partner, provider, home-maker, parent – that pertain to our sense of identity and purpose within our community.” In cultural terms, being married serves to locate the individuals who make up the partnership as a couple within the cultural matrix, with “a largely ready-made, culturally acknowledged and valued, and to some extent socially supported” cultural identity. People who marry also shape the meaning of marriage and as such they act as cultural agents. Concurrently, cultural changes such as notions of gender equality reflexively impact on the meaning of marriage and how it is concretely lived out.

In line with the pattern followed thus far, by way of example in terms of church teaching on marriage and its relationship to culture, we note the following text from the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*:

Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church and as a participation in that covenant, will manifest to all men Christ’s living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church. This the family will do by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness, their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family assist one another.

Family, as the fruit of the mutual love and solidarity of spouses, gives witness to the presence of Christ in the world and illustrates a normative role with regard to patterns of relationships in the church and society.

30th, 2013,

49 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 211.
50 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 213.
51 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 213.
52 GS, 4.
6.1.1.5.4 Personal values

We have noted that there can be positive health benefits of sexual activity as it contributes to our sense of vitality and has the potential to instil a strong awareness of ourselves as physical beings.\textsuperscript{53} We have also noted that the vital goods of pleasure, physical well-being, and the nurturing of potential fruit of such procreative activity are most fully realised in an institutional context that appropriately orders and arranges these goods. Marriage, as a social institution, is in a dynamic relationship with culture. Moving up the scale of values identified by Lonergan, it is in the realm of personal values that we begin to realise who we are called to be as attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible adults. It is “through our freedom [that] we give of our very self: through the commitments we undertake; the decisions we make; and the values we uphold.”\textsuperscript{54} The very notion of premarital cohabitation indicates that, at a certain point in the relationship, the possibility of marriage entered into the imaginative horizon of the couple as they contemplated their life together. From my own pastoral experience, the vast majority of cohabiting couples make the decision to get married in the context of cohabiting. Couples who engage in marriage preparation in order to be married in the Catholic Church in Sydney rarely move from living apart to cohabiting after making the decision to marry each other. According to the Ormerods: “It is at this level of personal commitment that the permanence and exclusivity of marriage is most evident. One’s act of commitment does not give the other person a value, the person has an existing value that you recognise, accept, and commit to. Only a permanent and exclusive commitment is equal to the value that the partner has.”\textsuperscript{55}

In terms of an illustrative example from church teaching, the words of the marriage vows from the \textit{Rite of Marriage} illustrate the church’s view of personal value. In a Catholic wedding, the groom and bride administer the sacrament of marriage to each other as they promise to each other in the presence of witnesses to be husband and wife: “to be true to you

\textsuperscript{53} Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 210.
\textsuperscript{54} Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 215.
\textsuperscript{55} Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 216.
in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.”

6.1.1.5.5 Religious values

The Catholic Church recognises seven sacraments: three sacraments of initiation; two of healing; and two of service, of which marriage is one and holy orders the other. The Ormerods write that “the sacramental view of marriage involves a realistic assessment that all marriages will face difficulties.” With a keen sense of practicality the church recognises that, left to their own resources, “the partners to the marriage will be incapable of negotiating such difficulties in a way that preserves the dignity and self-esteem of the couple” without a source of love, compassion and forgiveness that is beyond them individually and beyond what they make together as a couple. This source of love is not restricted to Christians as the offer is universal. However, I contend that a conscious awareness of the source and the manner in which love, compassion and forgiveness operate concretely in the life of a couple increases the probability of the couple being able to negotiate difficulties and preserve dignity and self-esteem. Viewed as a special vocation, to which not all are called, marriage as a religious phenomenon begins at the wedding but does not cease until the death of one of the spouses.

In terms of an illustrative example from church teaching, consistent with an understanding of religious values, we turn once more to the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: “Thus, Christ who is the principle of life, by the sacrifices and joys of their vocation and through their faithful love, married people can become witnesses of the mystery of love which the Lord revealed to the world by His dying and His rising up to life again.”

In summary, as the theologian is enlightened by the larger horizon of religious conversion and supported by the fruit of intellectual conversion (in that “that which is” is affirmed as

56 Our Sunday Visitor, “Catholic Wedding Help.”
57 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 218.
58 Ormerod and Ormerod, “Marriage,” 218.
59 GS, 52.
true and real), he or she is confronted with a stark awareness of the gap between “that which is” and “that which ought to be” in relation to any particular situation or issue. The key to the method in practical theology that I propose is that the foundation of practical theology is the authentic, morally converted, practical theologian. Objectivity in naming both “that which is” and “that which ought to be” is achieved in the theologian as he or she strives for authentic subjectivity through constant withdrawal from unauthenticity.  

6.1.1.6 Doctrines

To sum up progress on illustrating the proposed method of practical theology thus far: “that which is” has been established as a theological source through examining both the contextual and the ecclesial data available through the functional specialties of Research, Interpretation, History and Dialectic. The next movement was to use the scale of values to promote the possibility of moral conversion occurring in Foundations. The affirmation of “that which ought to be” occurs in the functional specialty Doctrines. It is in Foundations that the theologian is invited to undergo conversion morally, intellectually and religiously as insights are tested for validity, judgments are affirmed, and decisions are made, giving rise to a stance that is articulated in Doctrines.

As articulated in Lonergan’s specialty Doctrines, there may be confluence within the meaning and intent of the received tradition. In this case, the tradition includes the three ecclesial doctrines of marriage as a sacrament, marriage as permanent and exclusive relationship between a man and a woman, and marriage as the only legitimate context for the exercise of sexual intercourse. It may, however, be the case that there is dissonance between the tradition as received (ecclesial doctrines) and Doctrines as identified. When there is dissonance, the theologian is invited to exercise his or her ecclesial vocation by contributing to a progressing of the teaching tradition.

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60 See section 2.3.1.2, “Bias,” for an explanation of the meaning of “unauthenticity.”

61 A clear example of a theologian exercising his ecclesial vocation in this manner is John Courtney Murray and his theological reflection on the issue of religious freedom, which bore fruit in the Vatican II document, *Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)*, promulgated in 1965.
6.1.1.7 Systematics

In this phase the various aspects of “that which ought to be” as articulated in Doctrines are systematically related to each other. We noted in chapter 2 of this thesis that the aim of Systematics is to gain an understanding of the religious realities that have been affirmed by Doctrines.\footnote{Lonergan, Method, 349.} We also noted in that chapter that the intent of Systematics is not to bring an increase in certitude but to seek and promote an understanding of what one has affirmed as true in Doctrines.\footnote{Lonergan, Method, 336.} It is beyond the scope of the current example to illustrate a particular instance of Systematics fully. However, by definition, in the absence of a real engagement with the theological sources in Foundations, it is not possible to provide specific developed concrete instances of Doctrines. As noted in the previous section with reference to ecclesial doctrines, it is possible, nonetheless, to provide illustrative examples of Doctrines. For illustrative purposes only, broad lines of enquiry that might be undertaken in Systematics may now be identified.

Among the possible lines of investigation that may be addressed in Systematics is the development of the understanding of marriage in the Christian community in relation to the development of the understanding of sacrament in the Christian community. Another possible line of investigation is the development of notions of existential freedom and psychological maturity in relation to personal capacities to commit to marriage as a permanent and exclusive relationship. Emerging issues that may also be systematically related to each other (in line with the two lines of investigation already identified) include the notion that marriage must be between a man and a woman, and that marriage is the only legitimate context for the exercise of sexual intercourse.

6.1.1.8 Communications

We have previously noted that the theologian operating within a particular tradition exercises an ecclesial vocation.\footnote{See section 1.3.4, “Theology as an ecclesial discipline.”} It is in the functional specialty of Communications that the implications of the ecclesial nature of the vocation becomes further evident. As a servant of
an ecclesial tradition, the theologian operates in two distinct ways in the functional specialty of Communications. In communicating systematic developments of theological doctrines that are consistent with the teaching of the tradition, the task of the practical theologian is to make theological resources available for use by practitioners. This involves a process of translation from the language and conceptual framework of practical theology, as presented in Systematics, into the language and conceptual framework of particular bodies of practitioners. These practitioners may be pastoral ministers, teachers, social workers, economists or politicians, to name a few.

If, on the other hand, the fruit of Foundations as articulated in Doctrines is inconsistent with the teaching of the tradition as understood at a particular time, then the task of the practical theologian is to enter into respectful dialogue with the larger theological community and those in positions of ecclesial authority by offering the fruits of their methodological process as a theological resource in the ongoing progressive development of the meaning of message of Jesus Christ, as understood within a particular religious tradition. In short, the appropriate forum for the practical theologian to engage in discussion on theological positions intended to progress the teaching tradition is conducted in the context of the theological community. The appropriate forum for the practical theologian to provide theological resources for practitioners is within and beyond the broader ecclesial community of which the theologian is a member.

6.1.1.9 Communications and practical theology

A consistent line of thought in this thesis is the notion that practice, as distinct from practical theology per se, is properly understood as an instance of the functional specialty Communications. According to Lonergan it is “the conjunction of both the constitutive and communicative functions of meaning [that] yield the three notions of community, existence and history.” As an instance of constitutive meaning in expressing the message of Jesus Christ, Systematics presents the fruit of the previous six functional specialties to Communications, the specialty Lonergan identifies with practical (pastoral) theology. It

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could be argued, however, that Lonergan is restricted in his understanding of theological sources. Lonergan seems to view the task of Systematics as principally to explain that which is affirmed in Doctrines, which, for him, for the most part, is material consistent with ecclesial teaching. In the method proposed context is included as a theological source. The inclusion of context does not negate the integrity of Lonergan’s theological method it simply draws on theological sources that were not part of Lonergan’s theological horizon. For Lonergan the task undertaken in Communications is to communicate the fruits of the previous seven functional specialties intersubjectively, artistically, symbolically, linguistically and incarnately. It could be argued, however, that this is not the only task undertaken by theologians who principally operate in the functional specialty of Communications. Another vital task undertaken by the practical theologian is the identification of relevant new questions that have not yet been adequately treated in Christian theology.  

In the proposed method devising effective means of communicating an understanding of ecclesial doctrine remains one of the tasks undertaken by the practical theologian. Examples of this task in action include the development of religious education curricula, adult faith formation programs, and strategies for evangelisation, and the like. In these endeavours, context is salient at the level of developing strategies for communication, and serious thought is given to communicating effectively to particular audiences.

### 6.2 Method in practical theology

For Lonergan, theological method is a “framework for collaborative creativity.” In this framework, each functional specialty is of equal importance and each relies upon the others. In terms of the mission and message of Jesus Christ bearing fruit in the form of existence, community, and history, then an understanding of the relationship between Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics and Communications is of utmost importance. In Lonergan’s framework for creativity, the fruits of the preceding six functional specialties are reflected upon in the functional specialty of Systematics. However, Systematics fails to bear fruit in

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67 See section 2.4.3.8.4, “Communication: Theology learning from culture.”

terms of the formation of community, existence, and history if, as a functional specialty, it is cut off from Communications and views its own achievements as the apex of theology. By the same token, if those working in the functional specialty of Communications (in the proposed model, practitioners) fail in their task of effectively communicating the fruits of the first seven functional specialties because they draw upon the results of other functional specialties idiosyncratically, then all of the rigorous systematic work undertaken in the preceding functional specialties fails to bear fruit.

The theological method proposed, then, recognises that particular instances of theology are undertaken in the context of particular ecclesial communities. At the same time, it is acknowledged that, in effect, theologians operate in a collaborative and ecumenical manner as they draw on each other’s insights in the process of doing their own theological reflection. Pastoral practitioners also draw on a variety of resources to assist them in their practice. From my experience as a practical theologian, pastoral practitioner, and theological educator, it appears that many practitioners are principally concerned to ascertain the pastoral effectiveness of a resource while having little or no regard for the ecclesial and philosophical framework in which the resource was developed.

In developing his “fundamental practical theology,” the Protestant, Browning, draws upon and develops the methodological framework proposed by the Catholic, Tracy. As a theologian who identifies with the Catholic tradition, Veling heavily utilises the work of the Jewish philosopher and rabbinic scholar, Levinas. I have previously argued that theology is an ecclesial discipline undertaken by theologians who are members of particular ecclesial communities. Indeed, it was also noted that doing theology may be viewed as an ecclesial vocation. In proposing a method in practical theology, I echo Lonergan’s sentiment:

I am writing not theology but method in theology. I am concerned not with the objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform.

The method I indicate is, I think, relevant to more than Roman Catholic theologians. But I must leave it to members of other communions to decide upon the extent to which they may employ the present method.

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69 See section 1.3.4, “Theology as an ecclesial discipline.”
70 Lonergan, Method, xii.
I acknowledge that, in developing and proposing a method in practical theology, I am a Catholic theologian who has been significantly influenced by the methodological approach proposed by the Catholic philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan; and I believe, moreover, that the method that I am proposing is relevant to more than Catholic theologians. But, like Lonergan, I leave the judgement about whether that is the case to members of other ecclesial communions.

In chapter 1 of this thesis I introduced the eight theological functional specialties identified by Lonergan. In chapter 2, we explored the theory that underpins Lonergan’s methodological approach to doing theology, with a particular emphasis on the eighth functional specialty, Communications. We noted also in that chapter that, in *Method*, Lonergan writes: “a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix.” After significant scholarly reflection on the whole of Lonergan’s corpus, and consistent with Lonergan’s methodological exigence, Doran defines theology in part as the “disciplined, methodologically tutored reflection on . . . the supernatural self-communication of God in grace to historically emergent humankind, a self-communication that reaches its irreversible climax in Jesus Christ,” but then Doran goes on in his definition of theology to describe the context in which particular instances of theological reflection are undertaken. In his view, the context is specifically identified through a “disciplined, methodologically tutored reflection on . . . the existential relationship of persons to God, to one another in culture and community, to their very selves, to the created universe and the forces of decline and progress at work in human history.”

In the method proposed here, there are two distinct movements. The first movement consists of an attempt to establish “that which is” as a theological source through the use of the first four of Lonergan’s eight interlocking, functional specialties, following two lines of investigation: context and religious texts. The second movement begins in the functional specialty Foundations. The first movement may be compared to what Browning calls “descriptive theology,” as outlined in chapter 3 of this thesis. Browning uses the human

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72 Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 446.
73 Doran, *Dialectics of History*, 446.
sciences, hermeneutics and practical moral thinking while employing his five validity claims\textsuperscript{74} as controlling mechanisms to do a “thick” description of particular ecclesial communities.

Browning offers two reasons why he believes such an exercise is theological. First, the subject matter is an ecclesial entity, and secondly the person doing the description is a Christian. According to Browning, “hermeneutic sociology, when properly conceived [undertaken by a Christian], fades into descriptive theology.”\textsuperscript{75} For Browning, drawing on the work of Tracy, “fundamental theology determines the conditions for the possibility of the theological enterprise”;\textsuperscript{76} and descriptive theology, as context, acts as a ground for theological mutual correlation. By contrast, in the theological method I propose, the meaning of “that which is” is gained by interrogating both the contextual and textual data through the use of the first four of Lonergan’s eight interlocking, functional specialties. This process yields an understanding of “that which is” and the ground for theological reflection is the authentic (in the sense of ever working towards self-appropriation) theologian.

In summary, for Browning, “that which is” acts as the ground for theological mutual correlation; whereas, in my proposed method, “that which is” is a theological source, and the authentic theologian is the ground for theological reflection.

One of the fruits of intellectual conversion in the proposed method is that a particular understanding of “that which is” is judged to be true and real. In making this judgement, that which was previously viewed as one among many viewpoints is now affirmed as true or

\textsuperscript{74} The five validity claims are: (1) the visional, which inevitably raises metaphysical validity claims; (2) the obligational, which raises normative ethical claims; (3) the anthropological, which raises claims about human nature, its basic human needs, and the kinds of pre-moral goods required to meet these needs; (4) the environmental-social, which raises claims that deal primarily with social-systemic and ecological constraints on our tendencies and needs; and (5) the rule-role, which raises claims about the concrete patterns we should enlist in our actual praxis in the everyday world. See Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology}, 71, and section 3.2.2 of this thesis, “Descriptive and strategic proposals.”

\textsuperscript{75} See Don S. Browning, \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology : Descriptive and Strategic Proposals} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 48.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 47.
real. The judgement may then be fully articulated in the functional specialty of Doctrines. This way of working is evident in the critical realist approach to scriptural exegesis, as outlined in chapter 4 of this thesis. Applying a critical realist approach to Scripture, the provisional affirmation of intended meaning of a particular scriptural text gains its motivation from the naturally inherent, and supernaturally supported, exigency for self-transcendence. The approach is controlled by the scholar’s naturally inherent and supernaturally supported exigency for authenticity (with authenticity understood as an ever precarious retreat from unauthenticity).

Applying this method to “that which is,” the affirmation of the meaning of “that which is” is motivated by the naturally inherent and supernaturally supported exigency for self-transcendence, and it is controlled by the naturally inherent and supernaturally supported exigency for authenticity, understood as an ever precarious retreat from unauthenticity. In investigating “that which is,” the application of the first four of Lonergan’s functional specialties works to eliminate arbitrariness and bias in the choice of elements from the concrete situation. The process of authentically engaging the functional specialties by the theologian acts as a self-correcting process.

As noted in the illustrative example presented earlier in this chapter (that is, section 6.1.1 and its dependent subsections), there are two main tasks to be undertaken in Communications, each task of which is dependent upon the nature of the fruit of Systematics. When the fruit of Systematics is consistent with the teaching tradition as received, one of the tasks undertaken in the functional specialty Communications is to translate the fruits of Systematics into a language and conceptual framework that is suitable for a range of

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77 In one sense, “that which is” has a provisional character as new data (or an expanded horizon) may lead to a reassessment of the meaning of “that which is.” However, when a judgement is made, the particular viewpoint moves out from the level of “one among many viewpoints” to the status of “doctrine.”

78 See section 4.6.1, “Critical realism and the interpretation of Scripture.”

audiences, simple and intelligent alike. What is common to such audiences is that their members do not normally operate in the realm of theory when it comes to issues of faith and religion. As such, one important role taken up by the practitioner operating in the functional specialty of Communications is that of translator or interpreter. As a practitioner he or she may be translating the findings he or she has developed as a practical theologian in his or her own work in Systematics, or it may be the work of another that needs interpretation. Effective communication of the meaning articulated in Systematics relies on the skill and creativity of the practitioner. It is his or her task to develop effective educational programs and other communication techniques that transmit the meaning of the message, as developed in Systematics, in a manner that can be received by the intended audience.

However, when the fruit of Systematics, taking context as a source, appears to be inconsistent with the teaching tradition, then the task undertaken by the practical theologian in the functional specialty of Communications is to communicate the particular fruits of Systematics to those theologians who normally operate in Systematics Doctrines, and Foundations —sometimes referred to as systematic, dogmatic, or fundamental theologians. This would be a good time to mention liberation theology as something which has forced a rethink at the level of doctrines and foundations through it systematic work including context within its horizon.

In Foundations, moral conversion grounds the development of categories (primarily the scale of values) that can be used in Doctrines to formulate judgements of value about “that which ought to be.” The methodical unfolding of the implications of particular instances of completed judgements of value in relationship to each other is undertaken by the practical theologian in the functional specialty of Systematics. The practical implementation of “that which ought to be” as developed in Systematics is ministry, and ministry is undertaken by pastoral practitioners as an instance of Communications. The task of working towards progressing ecclesial teaching (so that it may more closely align with particular instances of

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80 In my work responding to enquiries from the general public on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, I have observed in many instances that enquirers who are highly qualified and competent in their professional discipline or field of expertise have a far less developed theoretical understanding of matters related to faith, religion and theology.
“that which ought to be” as affirmed in Doctrines) is also an instance of the practical theologian operating in the functional specialty of Systematics.

The proposed approach has profound implications with regard to theological method and practical theology. Informed by this approach, practical theologians would not be free to simply select one, or a handful, of apparently appropriate scriptural, theological or doctrinal pericopes based on their own idiosyncratic criteria for inclusion, and then use these pericopes (or the fruit of common-sense “wrestling” with the text) as one side in a correlation exercise, with the other element consisting of their own (common-sense) understanding of the issue at hand. Rather they must address the issue at hand, in all its historical complexity, through a rigorous and methodological investigation in which both general categories, in the form of insights gained from reoriented human sciences, and the special categories that are unique to theology are addressed sequentially in Research, Interpretation, History and Dialectics to give rise to an explanatory portrayal of “that which is”. In terms of "what ought to be", this might be imagined as the concrete state of affairs that is more closely aligned to an eschatological vision of the Reign of God. As the vision of "what ought to be" is of an imagined concrete reality, this vision also draws on general categories provided by re orientated human sciences and the special categories unique to theology, including that which we only know because God have revealed it to humankind. In terms of a plan for action, the practical theologian, operating in the functional specialty Foundations is confronted with the gap between that "which is" and "that which ought". This gap potentially gives rise to moral conversion in the practical theologian and spurs her to develop principles for action in Doctrines, and progressively, policies in Systematics and strategies in Communications. As a vision of the Reign of God is central to this method of practical theology with this vision shaping the idea of "that which ought to be" it is of utmost importance that the this vision as articulated in the functional specialty Doctrines is critically and rigorously ascertained in the light of the theologians received religious tradition.

6.3 Contextual theology, common sense and intuition

There has been a rapid increase in the number of prefixes used with the term “theology.” Each prefix refers to the context in which theological reflection is undertaken and illustrates
the pervasiveness of the notion of context as the ground of reflection. In each context the theologian self-selects the scriptural-doctrinal elements to be correlated with self-selected elements from the context. Under the broad rubric of “contextual theology,” theological types are categorised by the crisis or situation under investigation. If the issue is environmental destruction, the product of theological reflection is ecotheology; if the issue is the historical and current oppression of women, the product is feminist theology; if the issue is how to live the gospel in a particular time and place, the product is local theology; if the issue is the historical and current oppression of minorities, the product is variously called black theology, gay theology, etc.; if the issue has to do with political and economic structures, the product is liberation theology. It would be churlish to simply dismiss the fruits of work undertaken by theologians who are working in this manner. Methodologically, however, for the most part, many of these works are grounded in either a common-sense experience of “something being wrong” described as “that which is” or an “intuitive sense” of “that which ought to be.” For many scholars working according to this model, the first task is the construction of a theoretical framework that can account for the “experience” of “that which is.” The second task is the construction of a theological framework that can justify the “intuitive knowledge” of “that which ought to be.”

In many of these scholarly exercises, the fruits of experience have been captured, articulated and interpreted through skilful analysis and placed in historical context. Some theologians also enter into dialectical dialogue with the fruit of research, interpretation, and history done by others in order to further clarify and develop an understanding of “that which is.” Where such exercises in correlation are lacking, however, is in the realm of “that which ought to be.” Hence for Browning, Veling and Chopp, “that which ought to be” is imagined as an ideal consistent with self-selected criteria. Specifically, for Browning, it is the intuition of faith that forms the basis of “that which ought to be”; for Veling, “that which ought to be” is the fruit of a rabbincic method of scriptural interpretation as practised by Levinas; and for Chopp, the criterion for selection of elements that contribute to a vision of “that which ought to be” is those things that contribute to the full flourishing of women.

When self-selected criteria are used by theologians to name “that which ought to be,” all the meticulous work undertaken in the functional specialties of Research, Interpretation, History,
Dialectic, Foundations, and Doctrines is effectively viewed as not necessary for consideration: the theologian sees him- or herself as operating in a “new” type of theology and as being, therefore, free to choose his or her own method. There are many other examples of such exercises in articles and books under the titles of constructive theology,\textsuperscript{81} local theology,\textsuperscript{82} and contextual theology,\textsuperscript{83} or, in Veling’s case, “practical” theology.

In the proposed method, the practical theologian is purposive in his or her dialectical dialogue. The purpose is to bring the vision of the reign of God to the practical concern under investigation, ever open to authentic insights from the fruit of Research, Interpretation and History. As a practical theologian his or her intention is not simply to describe and analyse a particular issue. The task undertaken by the practical theologian is to work in such a way that the practical concern, issue or situation is transformed through reversing decline and promoting progress. Progress in this instance is understood to mean a closer approximation of the reign of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, as affirmed in the functional specialty Doctrines.

One example of a closer approximation of the reign of God as revealed in Jesus Christ comes from Robert Doran, who writes of the manner through which the gift of the Holy Spirit might impact on the equitable distribution of vital values to the human community.

The gift of God’s love, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit (religious values) is the condition of the possibility of sustained personal integrity (personal value); persons of integrity represent the condition of possibility of genuine meanings and values informing ways of living (cultural values); the pursuit of genuine cultural values is a constitutive dimension in the establishment of social structures and intersubjective habits (social values) that would render more probable something approaching an equitable distribution of vital values to the human community (vital values).\textsuperscript{84}


\textsuperscript{83} See Bevans.

Doran’s sequential, multi-mediated unfolding of the gift of the Holy Spirit from religious values to vital values requires a critical understanding of the meaning “the gift of God’s love”. This understanding clearly illustrates the inadequacy of the position that places orthodoxy and orthopraxy in a dialectic relationship rather than in a genetic relationship, as is suggested by Doran.

The choice of the particular topic area of premarital cohabitation to demonstrate the method in action is based on my familiarity with the field. While the issue is important, there are far more pressing issues of concern that could benefit from such a comprehensive methodological approach. For example, the position of the Catholic Church with regard to the use of condoms as a preventive public health measure in Africa and Papua New Guinea; and state funding of charitable work undertaken by churches. Among specifically ecclesial issues that would benefit from such a structured approach would be the rapid decline in church attendance in Australia, and the role of Catholic schools as instruments of evangelisation for the Catholic Church in Australia.

There are many very serious issues that would benefit from insights gained from this methodological approach to practical theology. Many issues are complex and it is a fantasy to believe that an appropriate response to complex human issues will not include a disciplined, methodologically sound theological response. One wonders if one of the reasons that a religious point of view is often not included in responses to complex human issues developed in the public sphere is because practical theology has yet to develop as a discipline.

For theology to be taken seriously by those who have little theological background, but who are responsible for developing responses to complex human issues, theology needs to be seen to have a method that, at the very least, can be identified as credible. This ambition is reflected in Browning’s desire for his discipline to be taken seriously by his fellow academics.\textsuperscript{85}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{85} See Browning, 3. and section 1.3.2 of this thesis, “Theology as a science.”}
6.4 Possible objections

In chapter 1 of this thesis we noted that, for Woodward and Pattison:

Practical theology is unsystematic. Because it continuously has to re-engage with fragmented realities and changes of the contemporary world and the issues it presents, much practical theology is not systematic or complete. It provides shafts of light into situations and issues rather than final answers or durable solutions. It is, in a way “throwaway” theology that has always to reinvent its tasks and methods.\(^{86}\)

Woodward and Pattison are correct in their assessment that practical theology “continuously has to re-engage with fragmented realities and changes of the contemporary world and the issues it presents.”\(^{87}\) They are also correct in their insight that practical theology “provides shafts of light into situations and issues rather than final answers or durable solutions.”\(^{88}\) In light of the ideas outlined above, I suggest, however, that they are mistaken in their view that “practical theology is unsystematic”\(^{89}\) and an exercise in “throwaway’ theology.”\(^{90}\) That is, as a discipline, practical theology “has always to reinvent its tasks and methods,”\(^{91}\) specific to the particular situation. I am suggesting that while each situation is \textit{sui generis}, both the task of practical theology and its method are constant.

With regard to the task of practical theology, reversing the order given by Doran in his definition of theology, \(^{92}\) the task of practical theology is to be engaged in a disciplined, methodologically tutored reflection on the forces of decline and progress at work in human history as they concretely work their way through the created universe in culture, community and individuals in their existential relationship to one another and to God. Following Doran, this reflection can be undertaken in the light of a disciplined, methodologically tutored

\(^{92}\) See Robert M. Doran, \textit{Theology and the Dialectics of History} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 446.“Method in practical theology.”
reflection on the supernatural self-communication of God in grace to historically emergent humankind, a self-communication that reaches its irreversible climax in Jesus Christ. The proposed method of practical theology is also constant as it is a reflection of the generalised empirical method developed by Lonergan. As noted in chapter 2, the generalised empirical method is not reliant upon any particular philosophical or hermeneutical tradition but is simply grounded in the transcendental precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable and be responsible.

In terms of the relationship between theory and practice, when an entomologist observes an insect walking across a table or a zoologist observes a giraffe galloping in a paddock, each of these specialists actually sees more things than their companions who are not trained in these disciplines. The more the specialist practical theologian knows about the meaning and message of the particular Christian tradition of which he or she is a member, the more particular concrete situations will appear to him or her as being either consistent or inconsistent with the supernatural self-communication of God in grace as it has historically been realised in emergent humankind. That is to say, one’s sensitivity to the movements of sin and grace is heightened through one’s ongoing religious, moral and intellectual conversion. As an individual gains more insight into the role of his or her sensitive psyche in his or her actions, attitudes and motivations, his or her perception of him- or herself in relationship to situations becomes more acute. In terms of increased attentiveness, this may be what Browning means when he claims that “hermeneutic sociology, when properly conceived, fades into descriptive theology.” That is, what Browning labels as descriptive theology I suggest might be better labelled as a description of a situation undertaken by one who is trained as a specialist observer – that is, a description made by an observer whose sensitivity in observing the consistency, or otherwise, of “the supernatural self-communication of God in grace to historically emergent humankind” relies upon an ongoing but ever-incomplete religious, intellectual, moral and psychic conversion. In the model proposed, that which Browning labels “descriptive theology” is the outcome of the first four functional specialties, with context understood as a theological source.

93 See Browning, 48.
What Browning calls descriptive theology I suggest is simply the fruit of astute observation by an observer whose sensibility is shaped by the personal appropriation of the meaning and message of Jesus Christ. In the method of practical theology that I am proposing, the fruit of such observation is not theology *per se* but simply a potential source of data to be used in theological reflection. The fact that the descriptive data are presented by a Christian does not make it theology – descriptive, practical, or otherwise.

Chopp, however, is correct in identifying the stories of her theological students as a source of data for theological reflection. I also propose that Veling’s creative interweaving of many sources of data drawn from an eclectic mix of historical periods and spiritual traditions presented in an engaging narrative format is also potentially a rich source for theological reflection. There is a difference, however, between doing theology and interweaving sources of data drawn from an eclectic mix of historical periods and spiritual traditions. In the realm of literature, the celebrated Italian novelist and semiotician, Umberto Eco, is also one who creatively interweaves many sources of data from an eclectic mix of historical periods and spiritual traditions into an engaging narrative format. In his novel, *The Name of the Rose,* Eco draws on history, Scripture, legends, philosophy and esoteric texts as he tells a story set in the fourteenth century of a Franciscan friar who is portrayed as a detective in the context of a series of mysterious deaths that have occurred in a fictional Benedictine monastery. The fact that Eco draws upon potentially theological sources, however, does not make Eco a theologian or the *The Name of the Rose* a work of theology.

It is not easy to state one’s disagreement with the chorus of significant theologians who have lavished praise on Veling’s book, *Practical Theology.* As noted in chapter 4 of this thesis, Lee writes of *Practical Theology:* “the book actually engages in practical theology while simultaneously developing the genre.” Against this tide of opinion I contend that *Practical Theology* is not a work of practical theology but a well-written and engaging creative work of religious writing. I agree with Lee, though, in noting that it may well be correctly described

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95 These theologians are Thomas Groome, Maureen R. O’Brien and Robert Schreiter. See section 4.2, “The purpose of *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven.*”
96 See Veling, xiii.
as “a conversation book”\textsuperscript{97} as “it is so personal from the author’s side, and evokes responses from our side.”\textsuperscript{98} Similarly to the way Lonergan differentiates the role of the methodologist from that of the theologian,\textsuperscript{99} however, I suggest that, as engaging pieces of religious writing in the Christian tradition, Veling’s Practical Theology and the material that Browning labels “descriptive theology” are sources of data for theology. I suggest that, in the absence of a clear definition of what practical theology is in Practical Theology, Veling claims that his form of religious writing is a new type of theology called “practical theology.”

For Browning, as a theologian operating from a late modern position, practical theology is an academic discipline. Indeed it is a discipline that he strives to make credible for his academic colleagues.\textsuperscript{100} Chopp describes herself as a systematic theologian,\textsuperscript{101} and in Saving Work she systematically explores theological education within the framework of a radical postmodern position. Chopp’s clear intention is to empower women undertaking theological education in a context such that “the faith has itself been faulted and corrupted by patriarchy.”\textsuperscript{102} Veling is also influenced by postmodern thought. His response to postmodernity, however, harks back to an idealised imagined premodern past. For Veling, practical theology is the means of healing the split between theory and practice. His proposed solution is the promoting of a return to an imagined past, a return to the practices of a time of integrated spiritual simplicity, a time supposedly before the differentiation of systematic and pastoral theology. We noted in chapter 4 of this thesis that Veling writes that practical theology is “suspicious of any theology that is too solid, too well-built, too built-up.”\textsuperscript{103} It is in this context that Veling feels free to call the collection of religiously inspired personal anecdotes, stories, reflections, questions and collected quotes a work of “theology.”

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., xii-xiii.
\item Ibid.
\item See Lonergan, Method in Theology 355.
\item On this point, Browning writes: “To some of my colleagues at the university where I teach, theology is a mysterious and arcane discipline that one clever phrasemaker called ‘systematically articulated superstition.’ ” A Browning, 4.
\item Chopp, xi.
\item Ibid., 82.
\item Veling, 7 (Emphasis added).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In chapter 2 of this thesis, the importance of differentiating art, art criticism and art history was discussed. Lonergan writes that “the proper expression of the elemental meaning is the work of art itself”\(^{104}\) and “the proper apprehension and appreciation of the work of art is not any conceptual clarification or judicial weighing of conceptualized evidence.”\(^{105}\) The work of art as “a work of art” is “an invitation to participate, to try it, to see for oneself, to encounter the work of art and be transformed by it.”\(^{106}\) I suggest that, as a work of creative religious literature, *Practical Theology* is akin to a work of art in that its purpose, as identified by Lee, is to engage the reader in a conversation. Students have reported to me that reading *Practical Theology* has been transformative and it has invited them to explore both their own spirituality and to follow up some of the themes and authors Veling cites. Through *Practical Theology* Veling is performing an important ministerial function. However, just as Lonergan is careful to differentiate art and art criticism, noting that art criticism consists in the art critic bringing conceptual clarification to the experience of elemental meaning induced by the work of art, in a similar way reading *Practical Theology* has the potential to be an experience of elemental meaning for the reader. *Practical Theology* is an example of ministry in practice. To collapse and confuse the practice of ministry with the practice of theology, however, is to misunderstand the proper realm of each activity. Art is not art criticism, and the practice of ministry is not theology. Exercises in practical theology may have some impact in terms of ministry, but I contend that the process of systematic reflection on the experience of ministry in the light of the sponsoring tradition is different from the exercise of ministry *per se* (within or outside an explicit ecclesial tradition).

Lest it be argued that such a degree of differentiation overcomplicates things, I suggest that if practical theology is to be taken seriously as a theological discipline, and to be of use to the Body of Christ, the church, in its role of continuing the mission of Jesus Christ, it is important that, as a discipline, it knows what it is and what it is not, and the manner through which it relates to other theological disciplines. It is also important that, as a discipline, practical theology be clear in its relationship to the human sciences and that there be clarity

\(^{104}\) Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 64.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
with regard to the role of the theologian in the practice of practical theology. I suggest that if there is a lack of clarity around these issues, then, as a field of interest emerging into a discipline, practical theology runs the risk of being appropriated and colonised by theologians who are seeking a place to hang their proverbial hat.

6.5 Towards a definition of practical theology

In chapter 1 of this thesis we noted that practical theology is a relatively immature, emerging discipline. Specifically we noted Rahner’s observation in the 1960s: “there is no really clear and generally accepted agreement on the Catholic side as to what practical theology is and should be, and consequently there is amongst us no general consensus as to its relationship with the other departments of theological study and as to what demands it can and must make on the latter.”

In the light of a perceived lack of consensus, as previously noted, Rahner makes his own attempt to define practical theology as “that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualisation here and now – both that which is and that which ought to be.” We also noted in chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis that, as a discipline that is yet to be fully formed, practical theology is open to being appropriated by those who are searching for a theological identity and thus redefined to suit their own distinctive purpose. In chapter 3 I outlined Browning’s attempt to recast all of theology as fundamental practical theology, and in chapter 4 we noted Veling’s identification of what he is doing with what practical theology “is.” In the light of these factors I suggest that it is perhaps premature to define what practical theology “is.” That said, I think we can tentatively identify the purpose of practical theology. It is to this task that we now turn.

In working to articulate my own definition of practical theology, I am informed by Doran’s exact definition of systematic theology, noted earlier in this chapter, as a “disciplined,

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108 Ibid.
I am, however, also sympathetic to Veling’s notion that “practical theology is more ‘verb-like’ than ‘noun-like’”;\(^{109}\) and I am influenced by Chopp’s notion that the practice of theology “can be defined as ways of naming God.”\(^{111}\) I propose neither an exact theoretical definition nor an illustrative, imaginative description. In contrast to both a description and a definition and in a manner that is consistent with Browning’s attempt to define practical theology as the “mutually critical correlation of interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation,”\(^{112}\) I propose the following:

Informed and inspired by his or her existential relationship to God, to others and to the created universe, the practical theologian works to identify and understand the forces of decline and progress in culture, community and individuals (“that which is”) so as to provide resources to assist in reversing decline, and prompting progress, consistent with a methodologically tutored reflection on the historically emergent supernatural self-communication of God in grace, to humankind, a self-communication that reaches its irreversible climax in Jesus Christ (“that which ought to be”).

This proposal is consistent with Lonergan’s understanding that the converted theologian’s constant withdrawal from unauthenticity is central to the discipline of theology. This understanding is combined with an epistemological understanding in which the task of observing oneself in one’s existential relationship to God, to others and to the created universe is the fruit of heightened self-awareness.

We also noted that such an understanding stands in opposition to the modern, romantically inspired, “true” self as an entity that self-reflectively observes itself in action; and we noted too that such a romantically inspired view is rightly subject to postmodern criticism and, in the light of such criticism, to be found wanting. Lonergan’s notion of heightened self-awareness, born as it is from an ever greater withdrawal from unauthenticity through a self-

\(^{109}\) Doran, 446.
\(^{110}\) Veling, 4.
\(^{111}\) Chopp, 18.
\(^{112}\) Browning, 47.
transcendent orientation, however, is not open to such postmodern criticism. Lonergan’s understanding of understanding is not grounded in anything other than the inherent human aptitude for wonder. One comes to understand by, first, being attentive to experience, and secondly through seeking insight into such experience. In the third movement the insight is then tested against other experiences, including other instances of insight, so that, fourthly, the point is reached where a judgement can be made based on the experience of overwhelming probability, or what Newman names the illative sense. In this movement one makes a judgement that one’s insight is congruent with one’s experience. It is in making this judgement that that which was previously overwhelmingly probable is affirmed as being true. This experience then prompts the question as to what one should decide to do in the light of this new knowledge. In chapters 2 and 5 we noted that, in terms of theology, this process does not take place “in some private gnostic realm.” It is the particular religious tradition itself that “promotes such conversions as part of its religious, moral, intellectual, and affective impact on human culture and society to promote progress and reverse decline.”

I acknowledge that the selection of all sources used in theological reflection is influenced by the experience of the one choosing the text and I affirm Rahner’s recommendation that “the practical theologian should recognize the relevant new questions emerging within a culture that have not yet been adequately treated in Christian theology and should carry them to the other specialist theologians so that they reflect upon them.” As a practical theologian one is limited in one’s perspective yet one does not have to do everything. It is important however that one does well what one does.

113 The illative sense is the faculty of the human mind that closes the logic gap in concrete situations, thus allowing for assent.
115 Ibid. 713.
116 See section 2.4.3.8.4, “Communication: Theology learning from culture.”
An indispensable theological element for the practical theologian and, consequently, for the
discipline of practical theology, is the theologian’s existential relationship to God, to others
and to the created universe. That is, in the discipline of practical theology, the theologian’s
existential relationship to God, to others and to the created universe not only influences the
choice of data to be investigated, but it is in its own right also an indispensable element in
theological reflection. The authentic, morally converted, practical theologian in his or her
existential relationship to God, to others and to the created universe is the foundation of
practical theology.

6.6 Conclusion

The principal task of practical theology is to take the whole of theology and apply it to some
concrete issue. The concrete issue may be identified through “a disciplined,
methodologically tutored reflection on ‘the existential relationship of persons to God, to one
another in culture and community, to their very selves, to the created universe’ and the forces
of decline and progress at work in human history.” Having first identified “that which is,”
practical theology brings the fruits of all of the theological work that has been achieved in the
theological specialties of Research, Interpretation, History, Dialectic, Foundations and
Doctrines. It does this to work towards “that which ought to be,” understood as a cosmos that
reflects the supernatural self-communication of God in grace that has occurred to historically
emergent humankind in the person and actions of Jesus Christ. The supernatural self-
communication of God in grace is in turn made concrete in intrapersonal dynamics,
interpersonal and communal relationships, social institutions, cultural milieus, environmental
ecosystems, and in personal and communal systematic reflection on transcendental realities
of religion. In this last aspect, echoing Browning’s notion of “fundamental practical
theology,” practical theology works to create the social and cultural environment in which all
other theological reflection might take place more fruitfully.

All three authors whose work we have examined in this thesis – Browning, Veling and
Chopp – in their own way contribute to the development of the emerging discipline of

118 Lonergan, “Workshop.”
119 Doran, 446.
practical theology. Browning takes social science research seriously and, as a practitioner, theological educator and theorist, he is rightly regarded as a “giant” in the world of practical theology, particularly among those who share the basic tenets of the ecclesial community of which he was an ordained minister. As we noted earlier, Veling’s real strength is his ability to engage the readers of his text in serious self-reflection and to invite them to instances of conversion. The importance of such work cannot be underestimated, and much is to be gained from a close study of Veling’s text in terms of communication. Chopp’s identification of her students as the subjects of theological education transforms theological education from a purely cognitive exercise to a project that is intentionally formative in terms of students’ self-awareness and existential relationships to others and their religious tradition.

As noted in chapter 1, the discipline of practical theology is unsure of its identity and how it fits in amongst other theological disciplines. If the Christian Church is the continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ, and if theology is indeed an ecclesial discipline, then the task for practical theology is to address concrete contemporary problems with a view to impacting on the created universe by reversing forces of decline and promoting forces of progress at work in human history. Practical theology works to achieve this end by communicating the supernatural self-communication of God in grace to historically emergent humankind in the existential relationships of persons to God, to one another in culture and community, and to their very selves.

The challenge laid down by the fathers at the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* is for the Christian community to work to transform the world, understood as the theatre of human history replete with humankind’s energies, tragedies and triumphs, into a world that is “created and sustained by its Maker’s love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ.”120 Unaided, however, this challenge is beyond human capacity. If the Christian community is to take up the challenge of continuing the mission of Jesus Christ, “the one who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified

120 Documents of Vatican II. n.2.
evil,”¹²¹ it needs to do so by working to fashion the world anew “according to God’s design to reach its fulfilment.”¹²²

Among the members of the Christian community there are fundamental and systematic theologians whose particular role is to assist the Christian community in its understanding of the faith as received. Also, as members of the Christian community, there are practical theologians whose role is both to mediate the faith in particular concrete historical contexts, and to communicate an understanding of particular concrete historical contexts to those who work in other areas of theology, for the purposes of advancing the body of ecclesial teaching.

Many and varied are the proposed ways of making this vision a reality, but it is difficult to imagine how this task might be achieved in the absence of cooperation between theologians and a shared recognition that, in doing theology: “There are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not repetitious but cumulative and progressive.”¹²³

In the absence of such a methodological approach I suggest that it is very difficult for the Christian community to respond appropriately and effectively to “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid. n.2.
¹²² Ibid. n.2.
¹²³ Lonergan, Method in Theology 4.
¹²⁴ Documents of Vatican II. n.1-3
Bibliography


“Web MD” Accessed 23 July 2013


Appendix A
The Society for Pastoral Theology

Our Mission Statement, Identity and Purpose

The Society for Pastoral Theology (SPT) is a community of scholars, teachers and practitioners of care committed to enriching the discipline of pastoral theology and advancing its role in equipping people for ministry.

Membership is open to others sharing these concerns. SPT began in 1985 in order to create a forum for conversation among theological educators and others interested in critical reflection on the theology, theory and practice of care in ministry.

We understand pastoral theology as a constructive practical theological enterprise focused on the religious care of persons, families and communities. As such, it draws on interdisciplinary methods growing out of classical and contemporary theological traditions. Our intention is to inform and learn from theological conversation throughout the academy and to enhance the practice of ministry in congregational and specialized settings. Our membership is composed of pastoral theologians and practitioners who broadly identify themselves with Christian religious traditions. We seek to honor, understand and critically develop our own traditions of care. We also engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. Finally, we strive to be open to multiple practices of care from a variety of religious and secular traditions.

We meet annually to engage presentations and workshops by various members of the Society and to work collaboratively in study groups. In addition, we also publish annually “The Journal of Pastoral Theology” in which substantive articles relating to these concerns appear.

Our Core Commitments

1. We are a community dedicated to collaborative reflection that revises, refines and extends the conceptual base and methodological resources of pastoral theology. In our meetings and study groups we pursue a critical engagement of behavioral and social sciences with theological and biblical resources. We are committed to intellectual rigor within a praxis orientation. Our gatherings regularly include attention to works in progress which invite shared, critical conversation to extend and enrich emerging ideas.

2. We value and employ methodological and theological diversity in the enterprise of pastoral theology. This includes a common concern for developing and implementing liberative and transformative strategies of care in ecclesial and social structures, public policy, and interpersonal relationships.
3. **We seek to increase our skill and range of resources as teachers, supervisors and practitioners of care.** Our meetings and workshops regularly include attention to educational and professional issues. We share resources and ideas to advance our effectiveness in academic and other specialized settings.

4. **In our life and work together we model a mutually respectful, inclusive community in which we strive to engage conversations that overcome historic barriers such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and able bodiedness.** We give particular attention to those among us who represent groups often marginalized in the academy and culture. We also deliberately seek to bring to our field the conceptual gains that listening to this diversity of experience among us affords. We actively seek diverse representation on the Steering Committee of the Society and rotate meeting sites to facilitate attendance of persons from various ethnic populations in our country.

5. **We have committed ourselves to regular reflections on our programs and procedures.** Careful attention is given to evaluation of each annual meeting to improve subsequent meetings, to increase the participation of members in the program and to ensure fidelity to our commitments.
Appendix B
The Association of Practical Theology

About APT

The purpose of the Association of Practical Theology (APT) is to promote critical discourse that integrates theological reflection and practice…. Reconstituted from its predecessor organizations 1984, the APT was sparked by the investigation of practical theology as an integrative hermeneutical endeavor at the heart of theological education, characterizing not only the ministerial sub-disciplines but also a manner and method of engaged reflection. The APT meets annually in conjunction with the AAR as an Additional Meeting for a two and half hour session and biennially for a three day meeting. APT meetings at the AAR draw national and international scholars from a variety of disciplines (members of APT and non-members) for sessions on different topics, such as future research and scholarship in the field (2003), interreligious dialogue and practical theology (2004), and the turn to the “practical” across the theological curriculum (2005). The biennial meeting allows the membership to study issues in greater depth and conduct its formal business. The APT welcomes new members from all areas of religious and theological study who have an interest in the critical examination of religious traditions and practices. Membership dues of $50 (or $25 for students) are paid annually.

http://practicaltheology.org/about/ Accessed 10th October 2013
Appendix C

The International Academy of Practical Theology, 1

Organization

The main purposes of IAPT are of an academic nature. Therefore one can come to know IAPT by reading publications, conversation with members, and attending conferences (upon invitation). There is however also an organizational dimension to it. The executive committee and by-laws provide insight into IAPT as an organization.

Executive Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Claire E. Wolleich, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Jaco S. Dreyer, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Heather Walton, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Neil Pembroke, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Committee Chair</td>
<td>Pamela Couture, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members at Large</td>
<td>Stephanie Klein, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Mager, Canada</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

By-Laws

By-Laws of the International Academy of Practical Theology

Adopted by the Academy April 26, 1997

Revised April 11, 2001 and April 4, 2007

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I. Purpose of the Academy

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X. Theme and Schedule of Official Meetings

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XII. Amendment of By-Laws

XIII. Attestation and Date of Effectiveness of By-Laws

I. Purpose of the Academy

The purpose of the International Academy of Practical Theology is the study of and critical reflection on practical theological thought and action. This critical reflection should be pursued with attention to the various historical and cultural contexts in which practical theology is done. Out of respect for the diversity of these contexts, the Academy seeks to promote international, interracial, and ecumenical dialogue and understanding.

II. Description of the Academy

A. While affirming the practical nature of all theology, the Academy is primarily interested in practical theology as a distinct academic discipline. The Academy assumes that practical theology serves the
practice of the Christian church in society. However, as a scholarly organization, it is dedicated primarily to study and analysis of the theory of theologically informed practice. It is oriented toward the historic subdisciplines of practical theology such as pastoral care, homiletics, religious education, liturgics, and social service in both their ecclesial and public forms. It is also interested in new areas of inquiry such as congregational studies and church development. It is even more concerned with the development of models accounting for the theoretical coherence and unity of these disciplines. This means that the Academy is interested in investigating and developing comprehensive frameworks for ordering practical theology itself. In addition, it is interested in the relation of practical theology to the other theological disciplines and the modern human sciences.

B. The Academy understands practical theology as a theological discipline that stands in a unique relationship with modernity. It recognizes that practical theology emerged primarily in response to the forces of modernity and is relevant to addressing the trends of modernity, in both their positive and negative forms. This includes, for example, the cultural influences of the Enlightenment, institutional and ideological differentiation with their ensuing forms of pluralism and individualism, new forms of injustice and abuse of power, and the various modern and post-modern reactions to these trends. The Academy also is interested in practical theological reflection on the inner dynamics of the church and on the church’s interaction with secular value systems, unchurched Christians, other religions, and new religious movements.

C. The Academy intends to stimulate various models of research on practical theology, including methodological reflection on hermeneutical, historical, empirical, systematic and other constructive methods. It also hopes to foster critical, interdisciplinary dialogue, engaging the social sciences, ethics, and other relevant disciplines.

III. Membership and Guests

A. There are two categories of full membership in the Academy. Full members are referred to as Active or Retired, but only for purposes of setting the size of the Academy. Active membership in the Academy shall not exceed a number set by the members from time to time at their stated business meetings. At each conference the membership shall approve the maximum size and growth of the Academy for the period running through the next conference.

B. Active Members maintain active status by payment of dues and regular attendance at Academy conferences, as defined in the Membership Rules and Procedures of these By-Laws. Active Members may forfeit membership by failing in these responsibilities, as determined by the Executive Committee according to the Membership Rules and Procedures.

C. Retired Members are former Active Members who upon retirement choose to remain members of the Academy by participating as much as they wish in the Academy and by payment of dues. Retired Members
are welcome to attend Academy conferences but are not required to do so. They may participate in business meetings with voice and vote.

D. Guests are welcome to attend official conferences of the Academy at the invitation of the Executive Committee, upon recommendation of a member of the Academy and the Host Committee. Guests may participate fully in the conference with the exception of voting at business meetings. The number of guests accepted for attendance shall be determined by the availability of accommodations, capacity of the facilities, and practical feasibility.

IV. Eligibility for Membership

Membership is by invitation of the Executive Committee according to the rules of eligibility and procedures for election of members established in these By-Laws. It is limited to persons with the following qualifications:

A. Individuals who subscribe to the purposes of the Academy as stated in its By-Laws.

B. Individuals who are researchers and scholars in the practical theological fields and related disciplines.

C. Individuals who have a distinguished record of publications with regard to the foundational issues of practical theology and its subdisciplines or who have made other recognized significant contributions to practical theology.

D. Individuals with a Ph.D., Th.D., or comparable research and scholarly degree or a certifiable demonstration of serious research and scholarly accomplishments.

V. Membership Rules and Procedures

A. The Executive Committee shall constitute the Membership Committee.

B. The Membership Committee shall accept members, within the size limits set in the preceding business meeting, on the basis of academic qualifications, but with an additional concern to maintain international, ecumenical, and gender balance.

C. The Membership Committee shall bring a recommendation to the business meeting for establishing the size of the Academy for the ensuing period. It shall formulate its recommendation with a concern to keep the size of the Academy at a level conducive to a high quality of academic and personal communication.

D. Members may nominate one or more persons for membership in the Academy by letters of nomination,
supported and signed by two members, and forwarded to the current President of the Academy. Nominations should be made no later than one year prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Academy. The President shall refer them in a timely manner to the Executive Committee for review and final decision.

E. Letters of nomination should summarize the academic and other contributions to practical theology of the nominee. Letters of nomination shall attach a brief curriculum vitae of the nominee, a list of major publications, and current contact information, including the nominee's mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address (if any).

F. New membership becomes effective upon attending the first or second conference following the nomination.

G. The Executive Committee shall notify Active Members who do not attend two consecutive conferences (unless there are extenuating circumstances) that they will be removed from membership if they miss three consecutive conferences. Members who do not attend three consecutive conferences, without submitting a written request to be absent to the Executive Committee, shall be removed from the Academy.

H. Financial assessments of members are due at the time of the Academy's regularly scheduled conferences, whether or not members are able to attend a particular conference. The Executive Committee shall notify members who do not pay their assessments during two consecutive conferences (unless there are extenuating circumstances) that they will be removed from membership if they miss three consecutive assessments. Members who do not pay their assessments for three consecutive conferences, without submitting a written request for waiver to the Executive Committee on grounds of extenuating circumstances, shall be removed from the Academy.

VI. Executive Committee

A. The Executive Committee of the Academy shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, the chairs of the Program Committee and Host Committee (if not the same person), plus two members at large.

B. The members of the Executive Committee are elected by the membership at the regular stated business meeting. Their term of office commences immediately upon election and runs through the Academy's next conference and business meeting.

C. The Executive Committee has responsibility for the affairs of the Academy between business meetings, including final decisions on the program, place, time, cost, and other practical arrangements for the next conference and all matters related to membership, dues, finances, and official communications on behalf of the Academy.
VII. Election of Officers

A. Officers shall be elected at the official business meetings of the Academy.

B. The Executive Committee of the Academy shall serve as a committee to nominate its successors. It shall submit a roster of officers to the membership at each of the stated business meetings of the general membership of the Academy. It shall not be assumed that the holder of any office will be nominated for another office.

C. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office, with the possible exception of the Treasurer. The President and Vice-President shall serve for one term only.

D. The Nominating Committee (Executive Committee) shall submit its nominations of officers in writing to the membership of the Academy at least six months prior to the stated meeting of the Academy.

E. Alternative candidates for one or all of the offices may be nominated by a petition containing ten signatures of current members. Petitioners shall ascertain, and indicate in their petition, that their nominee is willing to serve if elected. Petitions must be received by the President of the Academy three months prior to the next scheduled official conference of the Academy. The Nominating Committee (Executive Committee) shall present to the membership at the time of election (and earlier if it wishes), along with its own slate of nominees, the names of all persons properly nominated by petition.

F. Officers shall be elected by a majority of the members of the Academy attending the business meetings of its official conferences.

VIII. Committees and Conference Planning Procedures

A. The Program Committee shall consist of twelve persons, elected by the membership of the Academy in an early business meeting of each conference. The Executive Committee makes eight nominations and the general membership four. In the full process of nominations and elections, attention shall be given to regional, national, racial and gender representation.

B. At each conference, the Program Committee shall present a theme for the next conference to the Academy membership for their approval.

C. The Program Committee, through its Chair, shall consult with the President and Executive Committee about the content and structure of the program and shall submit a proposal for the program to the Executive Committee for its review and approval in a timely manner.
D. Such sub-committees, working parties, or other groups set up from time to time by the Academy or the Executive Committee shall be responsible to the Academy through the Executive Committee with whom they shall consult and to whom they shall submit proposals for its review in a timely manner.

IX. Finances and Membership Fees

A. Financial assessments shall be determined from time to time by a majority vote of the members attending the stated business meeting, upon recommendation of the President and the Executive Committee.

B. The Treasurer shall create orderly procedures for receiving, dispersing, and transferring funds from meeting to meeting and country to country, and for insuring that accounts are properly reviewed and published.

X. Theme and Schedule of Official Meetings

A. Official conferences of the Academy normally will be held once every two years at a time of maximum convenience for its members.

B. The theme, place and schedule of official conferences shall be determined by a majority vote of members attending the preceding business meeting of the Academy.

C. It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to make recommendations as to the time and place of official conferences of the Academy. The place of conferences should be chosen with consideration given to international distribution and accessibility of sites. Nominations of places for future conferences should be forwarded to the President of the academy in a timely manner.

XI. Working Language of the Academy

English shall be the working language of the Academy.

XII. Amendment of By-Laws

These By-Laws may be amended by two-thirds of members attending stated business meetings of the Academy.

XIII. Attestation and Date of Effectiveness of By-Laws

The above By-Laws, as approved at the business meeting in Seoul, Korea, Saturday, April 26, 1997, and
APPENDIX D

The International Academy of Practical Theology 2

History

You will find here photos and recollections about the history of the International Academy of Practical Theology.

We mention with gratitude the names of the founding fathers / mothers: Riet Bons-Storm; Don S. Browning; Canil Menard; Karl Ernst Nipkow; Rick Ossen; Dietrich Rössler; Friedrich Schweitzer; and Hans van der Ven.
Recollections

"The birth of the IAPT, a personal impression", by Riet Boes Storm

It was in 1991, in Princeton, after a meeting of seven men and one woman - I am very honored I was woman - that the IAPT was born. But like all births, this birth was not an unexpected event. There was a gestation period, a period of bilateral international meetings between practical theologians. For instance, in July 1990 about ten practical theologians from the Netherlands and the USA met in the Monsonite Center in Elspeet, in the Netherlands. The theme was: "Transformation of the Local Church". Although these bilateral conferences were interesting and fruitful, the need was felt for a broader organization, where practical theologians from all over the world could communicate. Other disciplines had such organizations. It was time for practical theology to become an adult discipline on the horizon of theology.

So in 1991, August, 14, the seven founding fathers and the one founding mother came together in Princeton, where Riek Coenra was our host. The first evening we met each other for dinner at Riek's house. It was clear that we had one purpose and were eager to work together. But still, there were differences of opinion that would have a long life in the IAPT, once founded. [Read Full Text Here]
A group of the founders of the International Academy of Practical Theology, Gathered in Manchester 2004, Copyright Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner