

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

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

Is it specialist field with own special practices or

Is all theol practical in its focus?

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

**Signs that it has moved into centre stage.**

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

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

1993 International Academy for Practical Theology (Princeton)

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

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

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

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

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

**Definition of Terms**

Practical Theology – the whole ambit

Pastoral Studies – social sciences, pastoral care by ministers

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

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

## **MODELS OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

### **1. Applied Theory**

From the Enlightenment.

A: Applies results of social sciences (Rogerian Counselling)

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

Schleiermacher: professional practice from good theory

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

### **2. Critical Correlation**

Dialogue between social question and theological answer. (Tillich)

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

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

Story is key mode for Critical Correlation

### **3. Praxis Model**

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

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

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

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

#### **4. Habitus Model – (Edward Farley)**

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

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

### **Chapter 6: Pastoral Cycle & Tools**

Common ground.

Cardijn’s Catholic Association – see judge act.

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

#### **Types of Change Outputs:**

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

#### **Spiritual Change:**

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

How should practical theology balance between an emphasis on theological education for Christian ministry and the wider interdisciplinary investigation of religious practice? What is cutting-edge research in practical theology? In this panel emerging scholars from various contexts and backgrounds give a brief presentation on what they see as possibilities, challenges, and a way forward in the field of practical theology for the next 5-10 years, and how their work relates to or responds to these.