THE INTEGRATION OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY[1]

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During the past generation most systematic theologians have expended their energy to make conceptual sense of the inherited faith in an increasingly uncongenial contest. Most teachers of the arts of ministry have looked for ways to help the churches meet the felt needs of their people. Even when relations between professors of theology and of the arts of ministry have been personally cordial and respectful, they have rarely resulted in vigorous intellectual interaction. An important exception on the side of theologians has been Harvey Potthoff, for whom theological reflection has always been carried out in close relation to the needs and practical life of the church in society. This essay is an effort to join him in reflection about the relation of objective studies and practical theology.

THE CRISIS OF DISINTEGRATION

It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves how far our seminaries have gone in internalizing the fragmentation of knowledge that is so characteristic of our culture. It is obvious that many seminary professors see themselves professionally more in the context of their specialized scholarly guild than as participants in a unified theological community. Research is guided more by the state of the discipline than by the needs of the church or of theological education. The relevance of the work of the several departments of the seminary faculty to one another is occasionally considered under the heading of interdisciplinary work, clearly testifying to the primacy of the integrity of the several disciplines. Theological education as such has no unifying center or principle. It has disintegrated.

Theological education which accepts this disintegration implies that what Christians believe as Christians is of little relevance to what they do in the ordering of the life of the church. If what we believe as Christians is not relevant there, we can hardly expect that the wider culture will take our beliefs seriously. But if our objective studies are not important either to the church or to the wider culture, they cease to be genuinely theological disciplines. Biblical study becomes antiquarianism, and systematic theology becomes an interesting language game for those who enjoy playing it.

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In this context of fragmentation Christian professionals turn to those disciplines which deal most directly with their practical problems. They must deal with broken marriages, the management of institutions, the education of youth. Their needs are immediate, and they do not see the objective disciplines addressing these needs. Hence they solve their problems without conscious reference to anything distinctive in the Christian tradition. The resultant operation of the churches becomes Christian, if at all, only by accident.

Churches which grow dissatisfied with this process of secularization of their activities are likely to turn to conservative patterns. Those who ignore the scholarship of the past two centuries are superficially, at least, in better position to integrate theology and practice. If the seminaries which embody this scholarship cannot relate its results to practical theology, then we can hardly expect that the churches will be able to do so. They seem condemned to fragmentation, secularization, or reaction.

The disintegration of the disciplines is not the special problem of theological schools. What happens there is but a reflection of the general disintegration of scholarship and action in the modern world. This world can be characterized as the world in which the autonomy of scholarly disciplines, professions, and other communities of people has been affirmed against the claims of a unified understanding of reality and religious life. This antonomy has made possible enormous progress in human knowledge and in the extension of personal freedom. In the process it has drawn the theological disciplines along with it. They too have gained something from their autonomy.

But the modern era seems now to have exhausted itself. The positive fruits of its creative originality in a multitude of autonomous forms are now less apparent than the chaos which it has introduced. Modernity flourished when there was an underlying confidence in basic meanings which could unify the society that concentrated on its diversity. Now that it has destroyed that underlying confidence, it seems powerless to find a new one within the framework of its own self-understanding.

During the nineteenth century, philosophy attempted to provide an overview which could express the unity within which diversity was fruitful. In the twentieth century philosophy repudiated this task. It defined itself as one discipline alongside others with no more responsibility than any other for an overview of the whole. Insofar as there have been efforts to offer an encompassing vision they have come more often from scientists, psychiatrists, and historians. But in the process of moving toward generality, most have lost credibility in relation to the disciplines from which they generalize.

Human beings cannot live by fragmented knowledge alone. When the intellectual leadership repudiates the effort to provide an encompassing wisdom, politics and religion must move in to fill the vacuum. The twentieth century has witnessed the rise of successful totalitarian ideologies on the one side and on the other, a new openness to religious life and thought coming from cultures which have not experienced the Western fragmentation.

Western Christianity as expressed in most of our seminaries is not in a position to benefit from the new openness to religion precisely because it has itself been so deeply shaped by the modern world. We express the fragmentation of the modern world in our own life and thought. We cannot present Christian faith as a response to the human need for unifying vision.

Nevertheless, Christian faith has always fought against the fragmentation of life and thought. Faith is in God, and God is related as creator and redeemer to the entire world. That point is often obscured, but few Christians have been prepared to yield it altogether despite the pressures of the modern world. Accordingly seminaries have been more uncomfortable with loss of integration between objective studies and practical theology than the university has been with its even greater fragmentation. Perhaps our discomfort will finally prompt us to reflect deeply and act seriously. If we do deal with the problem in an effective way, the seminary may help the church to play an important role in the wider society. A time of crisis is a time of opportunity.

The identification of a problem is important, but we have developed the habit of identifying problems, analyzing them, and then going on to others. As a result, little is really changed. Nothing will happen unless we who teach in seminaries are willing to pay a considerable personal and professional price. But we will not be willing to pay the price, even should not, unless we can get a convincing vision of a curriculum that has the needed integrity. That vision is now lacking.

This paper does not offer the needed vision. It tries only to explore the obstacles to the vision, to consider the strengths and the inadequacies of the possibilities that lie readily at hand, and to express my own commitment to a particular way ahead toward a more distant goal.

Three Models for Integration

While we await the deeper changes apart from which, the church cannot regain integrity, we must do what we can within the present, actual context. There seem to be three ways in which a measure of integration can be attained. I shall state them and then indicate what I see as their real contributions and their inevitable inadequacies.

First, we can work harder to display the relevance of our work in the objective studies to the tasks of ministry. We can identify particular Christian doctrines which should be kept in mind in the way a church solicits funds or a pastor counsels an alcoholic. These doctrines can at least provide a basis for criticism of some of the proposals derived from other disciplines.

I do not belittle these efforts. At our seminary we have required a dissertation or a project for the professional doctorate whose function it is at some point to bring the Christian faith to bear upon some real problem in the life of the contemporary church. Nothing seems more important in the education of a pastor than learning to do this. But our success has not been overwhelming.

Very often the connections drawn between theology or Biblical studies, on the one side, and Christian education or pastoral care, on the other, are superficial or artificial. Students can provide theological justification for doing what they have really decided to do on other grounds. Or they can illustrate some theological principle in the practice of the church in a way that is not realistically grounded in the concrete situation in which faith must be lived.

Professors in the objective studies often feel that it should be the task of professors in practical theology to take the conclusions of objective studies and apply them to the life of the church. They are not entirely wrong. But professors of practical theology are right in finding this task inauthentic. They cannot develop pastoral counseling on the basis of the latest interpretation of Paul or the most recent systematic theology. If these developments in the objective studies have not themselves been sensitive to the concrete situation of marital stress in middle class American homes, it is very unlikely that what they offer will have much direct relevance to the problems in the families of parishioners. Out of concern for real people the professor will turn to those who have studied the concrete situation in which pastors must operate and who have developed strategies for alleviating the suffering there. These will be chiefly sociologists, psychologists, and psychotherapists. They will not be Biblical scholars, church historians, systematic theologians or Christian ethicists.

The severe limitations which are built into the model of application of Christian faith to practice lead to consideration of a second model. Instead of deriving guidelines for practice from theory, Christians should do their thinking in the context of practice. We should engage in Christian action and deal with the issues and problems as they arise there. This leads back to Biblical study and to seeking help in what past theologians have written. But it insures that what is learned from the past is what is relevant now. Also, beliefs that authenticate themselves as guides to action carry a conviction that is usually lacking to beliefs that are adopted on traditional authority or even on rational and empirical grounds.

Our experience with dissertations and projects has given some support to the claims of this praxis mode. Theological reflection done as a way of resolving a truly difficult question of practice has greater intensity and significance as well as relevance. The more the problem is personally real for the writer, the more authentic the theological wrestling is likely to be so.

Nevertheless, the praxis model also has severe limitations. It almost inevitably encourages pragmatism in a cheap sense. One seeks in the Bible and in theology "resources" and "insights" for dealing with current problems. One is not led to ask whether one is dealing with the right problems. The assumption of the praxis model is that one knows basically what the goals are and is engaged in a more or less appropriate effort to attain them. Reflection is generated by problems arising in this context. That reflection usually does not challenge the goals.

There is no necessary limit to the thinking done in the context of the praxis model. It *might* challenge the whole definition of the problematic. My point is only that it is not likely to do so, just as work done in objective studies with no practical implications in mind is not likely to be very relevant to practical theology. Psychiatrists worked with women for a long time with the goal of helping them to fit into the patterns provided by society without being led to question whether women should in fact accept this social definition of their role. This question was seriously considered by psychiatrists only as women who had done their thinking in a quite different context forced the issue upon them. In the life of the church the acceptability of programs and methods which succeed in building up the numerical and fiscal health of the community are not likely to be challenged seriously by thinking that adopts the praxis model.

To put the matter in another way, scripture and tradition are not for the Christian adequately understood as resources and sources of insight. The praxis mode wrongly leaves the source of the judgment as to what is valid and appropriate entirely with those who are immersed in practice today. They are not confronted by a wisdom and truth which calls them radically into question. But when the possibility of such a radical challenge is lost, a deep and important connection to our past is broken.

If the praxis model had no inherent limitations, its strengths would call on us to make radical changes in our whole style of theological education. We should shift the locus from the academic institution to the parish and bureaucratic offices of the church. The classroom would function only as a secondary place for reflection on what is taking place in the church. Whatever the price many of us would have to pay for such a change, there would be no moral grounds for resisting it.

But since the praxis model does have inherent limitations, the practical problems entailed in shifting to it are also relevant. And as long as seminaries exist as academic institutions, the shared discussion between students and faculty cannot presuppose common experiences in practice. An adaption to this pedagogical problem is the case study method, which functions as a third model. In this method a problem in practice is presented briefly for the whole group along with comments by theologians as to the appropriate response. Students can become engaged to a degree that is less common when theology is taught in greater abstraction from practical problems.

As embodied in *Christian Theology: A Case Study Approach,* this model has the merit of drawing out from theologians explicit statements about the relevance of their thought to practice. Students are then given examples, often lacking in systematic theologies, of the difference one's theological choices make in church life. On the other hand, since many of the theologians in question have fully developed positions, the narrower parameters of theological thought likely to be encouraged by the praxis model are in principle transcend-

ed. The comments by theologians in this book mediate between issues in the practice of the church and developed systems in the sphere of objective studies.

Nevertheless, there are limitations with this method as well. The praxis model has the advantage that the situation which prompts theoretical reflection is quite concrete. If there are different interpretations of the situation, discussion of those differences is essential and authentic. The case studies, on the other hand, leave much to the imagination. Those who respond to the stories fill in what is left out quite variously. Hence the theological comments are not directed to the same issues. Often the reasons for diverse conclusions are diverse speculations about what the situation was really like. These distract from the theological focus.

Even where the response is really to the same story, the reasons for differences in response are only partly theological. They derive from social and political attitudes, as well, whose relation to theology is often poorly developed. The relevance to the response of different understandings of the Christian faith does not come through clearly. In class discussion it is even more likely that most of the comments avoid the theological issues.

All three of these models can guide reforms in theological education. In part the limitations of each can be compensated by strengths in the others. A balanced use of all of them is probably the way we can go to reduce fragmentation in the immediate future. Nevertheless, they all suffer from a common weakness. All are adaptations of a model of theory and practice which does not fit our current situation in theological education.

Absence of the Needed Theory

When we think of theory and practice we think of the theory that is appropriate to the range of practice in question. Whether we try to apply the findings of objective studies to practice or reflect on the content of objective studies in the context of practice or in relation to case studies, we are treating these objective studies as the theory relevant to the practice. But in fact they jointly constitute just one ingredient in the requisite theory. Biblical studies, church history, theology and ethics are four disciplines that exist alongside of many other disciplines which have a bearing on church practice. The theory relevant to church practice is neither developed in nor derivable from these disciplines alone.

Although this point seems obvious, an illustration may make it clearer. The education of children is one of the important aspects of church practice. What is learned in objective studies of the Bible, the history of the church, systematic theology and Christian ethics is relevant to how the practice should be carried out. But there is no way to derive an adequate theory to guide such practice from these disciplines alone. Such a theory must be informed by sociology, psychology, and learning theory, as well, to mention only the most important. But that means that the theory needed to guide Christian education

does not exist in any extant discipline. If there is to be such a theory it must be created by church educators.

Secular educators have an analogous problem. They cannot find in any of the extant academic disciplines the theory they require. Their task may be simpler, in that they do not feel the need to be guided by Biblical studies, church history, theology and Christian ethics, but they too have to produce their own theory to guide their practice.

Characteristically the theories produced by educators, church or other, do not appear to persons in the several disciplines from which they draw to have the rigor and coherence desirable in a good theory. The theories seem syncretistic and ad hoc. This is inevitable, since the disciplines from which they draw lack coherence with one another. They operate on divergent assumptions and with incompatible conceptualities.

This fragmentation of the several academic disciplines can be tolerated within each. Each has enough scope for work within its own self-definition and has evolved methods and conceptualities that are remarkably successful. The problem arises acutely and obviously only when society seeks to meet a need which is not directly in view in any of these "pure" sciences. It then turns out that no appropriate theory exists and that no discipline exists capable of providing such a theory. The church is caught in this general cultural situation with special problems as well as with special reasons to struggle against it.

The praxis model appears here to be the only possibility. Since no theoretical discipline exists which supplies the theory for the practice, theoretical reflection must be guided by practical need and be free to draw on whatever theories are relevant. Yet the limitations of the praxis model still apply. Indeed, the difficulty of generating an adequate comprehensive theory out of reflection in the midst of practice is glaringly apparent to all who undertake to do so. They cannot do their own original work in all the relevant disciplines. Yet what these disciplines supply are largely disconnected types of information.

These problems were much less acute as long as philosophy undertook to provide a comprehensive overview within which the roles of the several sciences could be seen as complementary. Practice could be informed by theory that followed largely from the overview and could assimilate knowledge from the sciences as this was needed. But when there is no overview, and there are only incoherent sciences and objective studies, then the task of the educator becomes superhuman.

I have taken the Christian educator as my example. The problem of the pastoral counselor or church administrator is similar. The pastoral counselor may deal with the problem by adopting methods from secular counseling and a thin overlay of theological rhetoric. But the secular counseling theory is hardly in better situation than secular educational theory, and the thin overlay of theological rhetoric satisfies no one. The problem of church management is

perhaps less obvious, but only because fewer have raised the question about whether our methods of administration are Christian.

The problem for the church would not be solved with just any overview. If the overview were independent of Christian faith, then Christian faith would have to be subordinated to it. Christian theology would have to formulate its message within the parameters that the overview allowed. Much that Christians have historically believed would be excluded.

This is in fact not a hypothetical problem. Since the time of Descartes and Newton such overview as has been operative in the Western mind has been largely dictated by generalizations from the science of mechanics. The world in general has been envisaged on the model of the machine. Usually the human mind has been exempted from this characterization, leading to a dualism of mind and matter. God has been pushed out of the world of mind and matter and conceived as acting upon it only externally.

While this unifying vision lasted, it had many positive consequences, but its effects upon Christian theology were largely negative. To think of God's activity in the world in Biblical terms became impossible. Either events followed immutable natural laws or else they had to be viewed as unilaterally caused by God through the suspension of natural laws. Biblical signs and wonders became divine interventions contravening God's own eternal decrees. Only German idealism freed theology from this Newtonian straight-jacket, and the liberation was in fact very limited. Theology had to assume one small role in the whole range of acceptable disciplines taking care not to infringe upon the provinces of others. Theology could only affirm what the idealist worldview allowed it to affirm. The natural world as a whole almost disappeared from its province.

In this context the decay of unifying vision could be experienced as a gain. It meant that there were no longer any restrictions on what could be affirmed within the discipline of theology. Christians could allow their views to be shaped much more directly by the Biblical witness, as long as they did not encroach upon the territories staked out by other disciplines. But despite the apparent liberation involved in this arrangement, the result for the relation of theology and church practice is the chaos of which I have spoken. The less theology and psychology can be subsumed within a single overarching vision, the more difficult it is to draw upon both in the development of theory for practice.

The Possibility of a Christian Unifying Vision

There is another possible solution to the problem. This solution would be to develop an inclusive vision which is Christian. From such a vision there could be drawn the theory needed for church life. This was the church's solu-

tion down through the Middle Ages. Indeed, it has been the Catholic solution down to the present time. It too has had its limitations.

It has not been possible to develop a unifying vision purely out of Biblical sources. There is too much to incorporate that comes from elsewhere: Greek philosophy, for example, and modern science. Hence the unifying vision that triumphed in the early church was a synthesis of Biblical and Platonic elements, whereas in the Middle Ages the synthesis was with Aristotle's philosophy. When this synthesis was represented as Christian, there was the suggestion that it was so bound up with revelation that it was not revisable. The church's resistance to the Copernican revolution came not so much from the Biblical side of its synthesis as from the Greek science which had been incorporated through Aristotle's influence.

While Protestants sought to purify theology from this admixture of scientific and philosophical elements and to allow relative autonomy to the several disciplines, Catholicism retained the older unifying vision at the cost of increasing distance from the scientific progress of the modern world. Only in the twentieth century has it shown real openness to being transformed by the new knowledge which the sciences have brought us. At that point it faces the alternatives of retaining and transforming a unifying vision or following the Protestant course of abandoning the aim. Thus far there is little sign or realization of the full meaning of the transformation of vision that will be required for the Catholic church to become once again truly catholic. There are discouraging signs that the unifying vision will be sought at the price of excluding much that is badly in need of being included. But the situation is still fluid and, from my point of view, encouraging.

Even in this confusing period, Catholic thought and practice are in closer relationship with each other than Protestant thought and practice. Changes in theory in Vatican II rapidly became changes in ecclesiastical practice across a wide range of church life. This is because those who are accustomed to deriving practice from an overarching vision will change that practice when the vision changes. It is not an accident that political theology and liberation theology have their major leadership in Catholic circles. When the Christian understanding of reality changes, the nature and meaning of being a Christian also change.

This illustrates a point deserving of extensive consideration. When Christians are accustomed to living from an encompassing vision, and when this vision changes, then everything changes. One cannot simply proceed with the existing structure of disciplines, only seeking integration among them. Every discipline must justify itself anew or else be replaced. Indeed, the existing structure of the seminary, which reflects existing patterns of church life, might become radically outdated.

Alfred North Whitehead has made the greatest attempt of this century to generate an inclusive vision. He drew upon mathematics, science, and religious

experience to develop a mode of understanding that is continuous with them and does justice to them. The task is far from finished, but his fundamental conceptuality offers the possibility of seeing the many disciplines in their interconnectedness. Process theologians believe that this conceptuality is fruitful for Christian reflection as well.

Whitehead depicts all actual things as synthesizing events. The most important of these events are the occurrences of human experience. What is synthesized in each event are aspects of all the other events that constitute its world as well as potentialities for its own actualization that transcend that world. These potentialities it derives from God who is the everlasting and all inclusive source of freedom, novelty, order, and direction. As scholars we may approach these events with many different questions and methods and thus illumine aspects of them. But unless the resultant sciences recognize their fragmentariness and their need for completion through one another, the limited truth achieved by each becomes falsified. For example, a psychology that ignores God's effective grace in human life may still illumine and contribute much. But if it supposes that it provides an adequate and inclusive approach to human experience and behavior, it deludes itself and falsifies reality.

Process theology is criticized for allowing Whitehead's philosophy to become a new straightjacket which controls what can and cannot be said theologically. This is a serious problem; for it is true that acceptance of Whitehead's vision precludes affirmations which some people regard as important to Christian faith. Those who protested against the influence of Plato and Aristotle on Medieval theology will have reason to be suspicious of the influence of Whitehead's thought today.

However, there are two differences. First, Whitehead was himself a Christian thinker. He might not have appreciated this statement, and others also may rightly object: Whitehead was not a faithful churchman; he was critical of much in traditional Christianity; and he did not take it as his task to justify or defend Christian teaching. Nevertheless, his personal perceptions and sense of importance were deeply shaped by his Christian upbringing, he took Jesus as being uniquely revelatory, he intended in his philosophy to do justice to what was revealed in Jesus, and he found fundamental metaphysical clues in later Christian theology. To include such elements centrally in one's thought is surely to be a Christian in a sense in which Plato and Aristotle could not be. To adopt Whitehead's basic vision does not restrict the articulation of Christian faith in the way Plato's, or the mechanistic vision does. It does involve agreement with Whitehead at some important points as to what the Christian vision most fundamentally is.

Second, Whitehead's philosophy is inherently self-relativizing. It is not put forward as a final statement. It calls for futher thinking that will include its achievements but transcend them in a more inclusive synthesis. It does not discourage the further development of scientific knowledge even when it is

pursued on the basis of quite different notions. On the contrary, it regards empirical evidence as requiring the continuous adjustment of theory. Further, that evidence may come from Christian experience as well as from the natural sciences. Whatever theologians are truly warranted in saying based on the experience of the Christian community must be included in the encompassing vision, even if the data require revision of the theory. A vision always in process of reformation through the encounter with fresh evidence cannot be a straightjacket.

I have spoken as if the Christian vision were one thing and Christian theology another. That distinction is faithful to the characteristic Protestant mode of conceiving theology. In this way of thinking theology is by definition one approach to truth alongside others. It repudiates the role of queen of the sciences. This modesty is commendable, but the price is high. It means that theology eschews the role of aiding religion to perform its age-old task of binding things together. As reflected in its theology Christianity defines itself as dealing with one aspect of life and thought alongside others rather than as being a way of dealing with the totality.

My own judgment is that this price is much too high. Christian faith cannot abandon its task of dealing with all things. To be a Christian in the fullest sense must be to act and think as a Christian in every area of life. That requires Christian reflection of an encompassing sort. If theology defines itself as having a much more restricted province, then we need some other name for the more inclusive form of Christian reflection. But my own preference is to renew the older understanding of theology rather than to accept its modern limitations and invent a new discipline.

Whether this is properly seen as a proposal to restore theology to the role of monarch depends on what is meant. What we should not and cannot do is to take the theology that is developed within its narrow province and attempt to subordinate other disciplines to that. We have already seen that theology in this sense cannot even guide the practice of the church. It can be only one ingredient in the whole. But if theology is understood to be the way the Christian, who is committed to openness to all truth, thinks about the totality of things, then, for the Christian, theology will be the encompassing and, in that sense, the ruling discipline. It can rule in a Christian way, however, only as long as its rule is a service to what is ruled. If the queen of the sciences is the servant of all the sciences, then theology should strive to regain its status as queen.

Theology in this sense can provide or guide the theory that is determinative of church practice. It will not be simply one of the disciplines that offers resources for the development of the needed theory, since it will already be informed by what can be learned from all the relevant disciplines. Among those disciplines the specialized work that has in recent times been defined as theology will play a distinctive and crucial role.

Conclusions

In conclusion I want to summarize my argument and draw together its practical implications. I dealt first with the more prominent models now being employed for integration of objective studies and practical theology: application of theory to practice, thinking directed by the needs of practice, and the case study method. All three have real usefulness and can be employed more than they now are in seminary education to the benefit of preparation for ministry. But each has severe limitations, and no combination of them overcomes these limitations.

The central limitation is that objective studies in the seminary do not individually or collectively constitute the theory that the church requires to direct its practice. Practice must be illumined by other objective studies as well. The theory required for practice must be an integrated mode of understanding, derived from a wide range of now disparate disciplines. Hence, the present situation places on the disciplines of practical theology the task of developing a unifying theory for which none of the objective studies takes responsibility. This is an utterly unreasonable expectation, and we should not be surprised that the theoretical constructions of those in practical theology fail to satisfy the norms of scholars in the several objective studies.

As long as we accept the fragmentation of knowledge as a given and view theology as one of the fragments, there is in principle no escape from this unsatisfactory situation. The alternative is to develop a comprehensive and unifying vision from which practice can derive its direction and principles. But, if this vision is not itself Christian, then the practice that follows will not be Christian either. If there is to be Christian direction of practice, the comprehensive and unifying vision must be Christian.

This argument by a Protestant is in favor of Catholic theology. But to say that only indicates the magnitude of the task. It does not imply that Catholics now possess the solution to our problems. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church maintained a comprehensive and unifying vision at the price of distancing itself from much of the most creative thought of the time. The vision was comprehensive only of what the church felt it safe to comprehend. The insistence that the comprehensive and unifying vision be Christian can easily lead to this strategy or, in sectarian contexts, to much more severe limitations than those imposed by the Catholic tradition.

If, however, as I believe, to be Christian must always be to reject every restriction upon the truth and every refusal to be attentive to evidence, then precisely in order to be Christian the vision must be truly comprehensive and unifying. Vatican II symbolizes the acceptance of this point in the Roman Catholic Church. It does not represent the actual achievement of a new, truly comprehensive and unifying vision. As a process theologian it is my conviction that Alfred North Whitehead has contributed more than anyone else in our century to making possible a truly comprehensive and unifying vision capable

of guiding practice. It is also my conviction that his vision is fundamentally Christian.

Now what follows from these theses about what is needed in order that objective studies and practical theology be integrated? First, I repeat my conviction that there are few obstacles except inertia which prevent us from doing more of our theological education in the patterns suggested by the three models of integration discussed above. But improvements along these lines will not solve the problem of providing an appropriate theory for Christian practice.

We are called also to engage in very fundamental reflection, a type of reflection to which few of us are accustomed. Assuming that church practice will continue to include church management, pastoral counseling, and Christian education, we have before us the task of developing theory appropriate to these disciplines. That is not a theoretically easier task than those involved in objective studies. It is more difficult. We cannot ask persons charged with responsibility for practical theology to undertake it alone. On the contrary, only as persons with highly developed theoretical interest and skills work together with practical theologians in interdisciplinary teams can we hope to make progress.

Although much is hoped for from interdisciplinary collaboration, little is usually achieved. The reason is that the several disciplines are divided from each other, not only by the information they gather, but also at much deeper conceptual and methodological levels. To develop theory for practice from such diverse disciplines is possible only if the most fundamental assumptions of these disciplines are brought into question. In a world which rewards scholars for progress made within existing disciplinary lines, it may be too much to ask that this more fundamental kind of reflection be developed. Yet without it practical theology can only remain *ad hoc.*

If the kind of reflection that is needed is successfully pursued it will lead inevitably toward a vision that is more comprehensive and unifying than those of the disciplines from which the reflection begins. The elusive, always unattainable, goal is a vision that relates in this way to all branches of human knowledge. But even if such a goal is eschatological rather than historical, nevertheless within history there have been approximations in the past and there can be approximations in the future. Objective studies and practical theology can be integrated only as we move in that direction.