

**EDITORIAL:**

**THEOLOGY AND PRACTICAL ACTION**

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‘Theology’ as a word is basically about *knowing* God. After all, that is the etymological meaning of *Theologos*, ‘the study of God’. But one would completely get it wrong when one thinks of this kind of *knowing* in purely cognitive terms, as though *knowing* God could be restricted to some set of correct statements one makes about God. Studying and knowing God more profoundly inescapably leads to both love and worship. Knowledge, love, and worship are the inseparable triad of good theology. Thus, if theology deepens worship, then theology is inherently *practical*, that is, relevant to the everyday reality of being human.

Theology is also an instrument of transformation. There are some kinds of knowing that leave one somewhat unchanged. For instance, one could look up the name of some random stars on the internet and accumulate an additional fact about the universe without impacting one’s life in any significant way. Other kinds of knowing, however, are much more transformative. Theological study and knowledge is one such endeavor that can lead to transformation of one’s life. If one truly knows God and is known by God, one cannot remain unchanged. One *will* be shaped by that experience. Hence, theology is inherently practical and action-oriented in the sense that it affects *who* one is and therefore *how* one lives in the world.

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Theology is also a tool for service. At their best, questions about the practical relevance of theology press us to remember that theology plays the role of servant in the life of the Church. One of its fundamental roles is to help the Church think carefully about how best to understand, articulate, and live out what it believes. Theology does not exist for *itself*; it is at the service of the Church. And in that sense, theology, as long as it remains faithful to its calling, must always be practical, that is, inseparably related to the practice of the Church. Therefore, theology as servant will always be an eminently practical theology.

Theology is equally an inquiry. In the Anselmian terms, it is ‘faith seeking understanding’ (*fides querens intellectum*). The *querens* is actually an enquiry, an investigation. If theology is an inquiry into *who* God is, and if God is as transcendent and mysterious as we believe him to be, we should not be surprised by the fact that theology grapples, at times, with questions that do not clearly relate to specific practices. But they are still part of the broader process of knowing God, which is eminently practical in the word's best sense. However, Theology speaks to inquiries as wide-ranging as the meaning of life and as specific as particular events in life.

If theology is the attempt to know God more deeply, and if this means that theology at its best leads to deeper worship, greater personal transformation, and more effective ministry in the Church, then theology is deeply practical even when brawling with questions where it is not entirely obvious how they connect to everyday experience. Theology helps one to understand, reflect and often reevaluate how one is relating with God. Surely, being able to improve on one's relationship with God and with human beings is the best outcome that one could hope for as a result of doing Theology.