

Question: How is practical theology to be conceived?

I'm increasingly inclined to say that practical theology, as much as historical theology—and in somewhat the same way—is to be conceived as "an auxiliary theological discipline" (Marxsen, speaking of exegesis).

Theology, centrally, is systematic theology, although Heidegger is right, to some extent, at least, that "theology is systematic only if it is historical-practical" (even as "theology is historical only if it is systematic-practical" and "theology is practical only if it is systematic-historical"). But if systematic theology, though central, is historical as well as practical, it is both historical and practical *in its way*, which is to say, it is historical *in a different way* from that in which historical theology is historical, and it is practical *in a different way* from that in which practical theology is practical.

Systematic theology in the broad sense is practical in its way in that it includes moral theology (or "ethics") as well as systematic theology in the strict sense (or "dogmatics, as well as "apologetics"). This means that systematic theology in the broad sense rightly concerns itself (*qua* moral theology) with the normative principles of *existence and action* as well as (*qua* systematic theology in the strict sense), with the normative principles of *existence and belief*. But whereas its concern is with such normative principles—of existence and action as well as of existence and belief—simply *as such*, practical theology is practical in its different way because its concern is with the same normative principles *as applied* in, or to, some specific situation. (Similarly, systematic theology in the broad sense is historical in its way in that it must determine what is to count in principle and in fact as normative in the historical witness of the religious community, both formally and substantially, whereas historical theology is historical in its different way in that it simply interprets this historical witness more or less critically.)

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Theology as such, or as a whole, is both historical and practical.
Systematic theology as such, or as a whole, is both historical and philosophical.

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