

We act toward the future and are, within limits, responsible for it, even as the only meaning of our action and its only justification is its contribution to the future.

But we act in the present.

Consequently, it is misleading to say, as I have sometimes said, that practical studies generally, and, therefore, practical theology in particular, have to do with the future, even as historical studies have to do with the past, and systematic studies have to do with the (i.e., every) present.

Practical studies no more have to do with the future than systematic studies, and systematic studies no more have to do with the present than practical studies. Both studies have to do with the present, albeit with different aspects of the present—systematic, with its relatively more constant and unchanging aspect, which it shares in common with every other present, and practical with its relatively more variable and changing aspect, which is peculiar to this or that present as distinct from all others. At the same time, both studies also have to do with the future, albeit in different ways corresponding to their difference in having to do with the present.

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