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The limitation of the salvation model: A Malawian experience.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to emphasise the importance of understanding and implementing Practical Theology as a ministry that views the Word and context as inseparable elements of doing theology. In her efforts to contextualise ministry in central Malawi, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Nkhoma Synod blended the missionary approach into the salvation model. In the rural areas, this model made a significant contribution. With the emergence of cities such a model fails drastically to make an impact on the lives of people, because it does not take adequate consideration of the traditional moral and religious thinking and practices. As a result, a superficial Christian faith struck root in the hearts of the majority of Malawians while, deep down, the old beliefs still lingered on. Furthermore, the quest for modernity and all the concomitant effects of urbanisation have rendered the salvation model inadequate to address present challenges. Practical Theology should be a hermeneutical concern that does exegesis of both the Word and the context in order to make a difference in cities and communities at large.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article begins by describing some central elements of Chewa culture. These have caused problems to foreign missionaries and the first generation of local Church leaders. It then traces the origin of the “Reformed salvation model” of doing theology to the leadership of Rev J S Mwale, the first Malawian Moderator of the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. He exerted a profound influence on the Church. This salvation model thus became deeply entrenched in the culture of the Malawian Church. It is therefore necessary to take a critical look at the salvation model.

An early result of the model was the CCAP Nkhoma Synod’s inability to deal with political injustices that developed after independence under President H Banda. The Bishops of the Catholic Church, in contrast, took responsibility for addressing the political situation.

This article makes the point that a practical theological approach to doing theology could have prevented the problems that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod experienced. Currently, many Chewa

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cultural issues are not yet adequately addressed in the theology of Churches with a Western origin. The African Independent Churches deal with cultural issues in their own way. However, the salvation model evades most of the difficult issues, such as those presented by the *Gulewamkulu* cult.

The article concludes that the methodological problem that developed since the very inception of the Church also led to its inability both to address local cultural and political issues, and to deal with urbanisation and poverty. The CCAP should pay attention to its theological methodology.

2. ANCESTOR VENERATION

Ancestor worship, known as *Gulewamkulu*, as well as several rites of passage integral to the Chewa culture, challenged the Malawian Church from its very inception. In the Chewa culture, as in many African societies, ancestors are deemed to be concerned with the fertility of their descendants, the fertility of the soil, and good weather, upon which the first two depend. Because of the ancestral spirits' close association with the living and their proximity to God, they are deemed to be intermediaries between God and humans. In commenting about the way Tswana people (in Botswana) venerated their ancestors, Amanze states (1996/7:64):

“The Biblical image of Christ as Mediator and Intercessor (Heb 7:25; I Tim 2:5) finds its strongest support in the African concept of ancestors among Tswana. The ancestors (*badimo*) have always assumed the role of mediators, intermediaries, intercessors and go-between God in heaven and people here below. No one can approach *Modimo* except through the *badimo*.”

Churches in the Tswana society therefore make offerings to the ancestor's spirits asking them to take people's prayers to God. Amanze (1996/7:73) further says:

“Before the Church came to Botswana, Tswana had a strong belief in their ancestor spirits who acted as intermediaries between them and God. The arrival of the Bible did not abrogate the role of the ancestors as intermediaries but provided an additional channel of communication with God.”

Malawi's Chewa culture differed somewhat from that of the Botswana. Kawale (1998:22) states: “Most of the Chewa religious traditions show that the Chewa believe in the existence of a High God *Mulungu* or *Chiuta* and in the rain god *Chisumphu* and his consort the goddess *Chauta*.” Christianising the Chewa culture was a problem that faced the foreign missionaries as well as the local Church leaders.

3. THE REFORMED SALVATION MODEL

Rev Mwale took over the leadership of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod from the missionaries as early as 1960 as the first Malawian Moderator. He served in that capacity until 1972. Rev Mwale learned his approach to ministry from the missionaries. It had a profound impact on the Church in which he served. Kamwana (1997:59) observes:

“God has used him to influence the Church of Nkhoma Synod in terms of evangelical-puritan and pietistic thinking. He is a Puritan, inclined to the legalism typical of both the missionary counterparts and African Chewa religious practice and belief. His emphasis on Bible reading and prayer distinguishes him greatly.”

Rev. Mwale’s Puritanism occasionally made him lose sight of people’s physical needs, which are intrinsically equal to their spiritual needs. According to Kamwana (1998:58): “Mwale is in life-style a conservative Puritan as only an African, a Malawian, can be. For example, he is strictly against alcoholic drinks. Anything from a bottle he regards as alcoholic! He does not even drink Fanta or Coca Cola.” This one-sided approach to ministry led to him seeking to win people for Christ with no regard for their physical needs. He also showed scant regard for his own physical needs. It is reported that he refused to accept the gift of a car to assist his mobility. Kamwana (1998:113) relates:

“The former Youth Minister of Nkhoma Synod, Rev. AE Mndala tells how the missionaries seeing Mwale’s responsibility decided to give him a car. Mwale upon hearing such thanked them for their kind gesture but observed in Chichewa ‘Pa zimene Mulungu afuna kundipatsa galimoto palibe,’ meaning, ‘Among the things that God wants to give me there is no car’. Humble as he is, there is no sign that he wants to possess a car or condemns those who have cars.”

Although Mwale did not regard the physical needs of people as important as their spiritual needs, he is a man dedicated to God. Kamwana (1998:125) again:

“Mwale humbled himself, witnessing that he is nothing before men and God, except a slave of God. A very faithful and obedient slave. He showed his faith and dedication as having no home of his own. Having nowhere to go except to rely on the providence of God, and to do the will of the master”

The Church in Malawi, Nkhoma Synod CCAP, continues to place considerable emphasis on this salvation model by urging all believers to take Bible study seriously. Kamwana (1998:75) relates:

“The Church in Malawi, in order to encourage its members to read Scripture for themselves, made available to them the Bible study book known as *Buku la Mlozo*.”

It certainly is not wrong for the Church to provide a book to encourage Bible study. However, the distribution of the book is typical of the Reformed salvation model of soul care, a model that, in its de-emphasis of material needs, leads to shortcomings when applied in an African context. Such an approach lacks hermeneutical sensitivity, since the exegesis of neither the Word nor the context is acceptable.

The focus of the salvation model is on soul care, while neglecting people’s physical needs. “Thurneysen emphasizes the dimension of proclamation in pastoral care. His standpoint implies that soul care should be viewed as an extension of the proclamation of the Word, which is focused on the sanctification of human life” (Louw 1998:25-26). This approach focuses on a person’s spiritual needs by means of Gospel proclamation. However, a human being also has physical needs that require the Church’s attention. In this the example of Jesus Christ should be followed, who holistically addressed people’s spiritual and physical needs.

“It implies the proclamation and realization of a total salvation, one which covers the whole range of human needs ... setting a person free as far as possible from every evil and grief, spiritual, mental, social, physical suffering, hunger, poverty, economic exploitation and political injustice (Mwakanandi 1990:149).”

Such an approach is important because it seeks to address the challenge of poverty through the involvement and participation of the people themselves.

In addition to maturity of faith, people should also be empowered meaningfully to resolve the human suffering, which surface due to injustice and greed. This approach further argues that to proclaim only the Gospel, without empowering the people to defend themselves from exploitation and other oppressive measures, is to turn people into targets for evil systems. Such a model is inadequate. If practical theology is to help Churches unmask the pretences of secular value structures and the seductive injustices of capitalist and market economics, then it must work in two languages: the language behind the wall and the language for use on the wall (2 Kings 18, Fowler 1995:9).

4. THE LEGITIMISATION OF THE POLITICAL ORDER

The Church in Malawi was deeply involved in the independence movement; many Malawian leaders had been educated at mission schools and thus were products of Christian schooling and influence. Because of this close link, the Church supported political activists of the independence struggle. Christians in the Church remained linked to the new political order and, when independence was achieved, the Church remained loyal to the political party and leaders that it supported, turning a blind eye to evils in the government and country at large.

“Every Sunday in Churches all denomination leaders prayed for the long life and prosperity of the dictator, Kamuzu Banda, who was ruthlessly exploiting and brutally oppressing the people. At every national occasion Church leaders were present to provide religious legitimization for the actions of President Banda (Priggis 1998:12).”

The Church concerned herself only with Gospel proclamation, neglecting the defenceless and poverty-stricken. The Church had forgotten her task of acting as a check and balance to the political administration, of being accountable to God, rather than to a government. The Church must be prophetic, both in the proclamation of the Gospel and in addressing life's issues.

Today the Malawian urban Church is in the process of developing a prophetic voice; a process with its roots in Malawi's struggle for independence. In 1992, the Catholic Bishops wrote a pastoral letter to President Hastings Banda, denouncing the ills and evils that the political order afflicted on people. The pastoral letter, entitled “Living our Faith,” proved to be a turning point in Malawi's history, and led to events that eventually brought down the 30-year rule.

The ruling Congress Party was furious. It responded with a vicious attack on the Catholic Church in an article in the *Malawi News*, which stated flatly, “We shall not tolerate any Church to meddle in Malawi politics. The pulpit should be distinct from the political platform.” Catholic Archbishop Theunissen responded:

“If the peaceful appearance of a new democratic party based on natural human rights and Christian principles has enraged so much the Malawi Congress Party, it can but be because human rights and Christian principles, justice and charity, are most inconvenient to them.”

5. THE PASTORAL LETTER AND THE AFTERMATH

In 1992, the Catholic Bishops voiced a concerned and critical voice:

“Many people still live in circumstances which are hardly compatible with their dignity as sons and daughters of God. Their life is a struggle for survival. At the same time a minority enjoys the fruits of development and can live in luxury and wealth ... Nobody should ever have to suffer reprisals for honestly expressing and living up to their convictions: intellectual, religious or political.”

“We can only regret that this is not always the case in our country ... Academic freedom is seriously restricted; exposing injustices can be considered a betrayal; revealing some evils of our society is seen as slandering the country; monopoly of mass media and censorship prevent the expression of dissenting views; some people have paid dearly for their political opinions; access to public places like markets and hospitals, bus depots etc, is frequently denied to those who cannot produce a party card; forced donations have become a way of life (Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter to President HK Banda, 1992).”

By means of this pastoral letter, the Catholic Church in Malawi accepted its prophetic responsibility to comment on the political situation. Priggis (1998:13) comments: “The Churches have made a point of serving as ‘watch dogs’ both cautioning principal political actors and contributing to the national political discourse.”

It should be noted that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod did not take part openly in the democratisation process; many in the Synod were close to the MCP and, therefore, struggled to develop the necessary objectivity to offer the new Malawi a prophetic critique. Although individual Christians from the Synod participated profoundly in the process of change, being critical of the Banda regime, the Synod did not encourage the move. Nkhoma Synod remained loyal to the political party and leaders it had supported since independence. The Synod went so far as to resign from the Malawi Council of Churches because the Council was fully involved in the political change. This relationship made it difficult for Nkhoma Synod to deal with the conflict between personal loyalties and a prophetic ministry.

However, since democratisation, the Church has undertaken its responsibility to hold the government accountable. To enhance its role as a watchdog on the political order, the Church established a Public Affairs Committee (PAC). A key function of the PAC is to enable Churches to address issues of national interest with a common voice (Priggis 1998:12-13). In this way, the Church now seeks to deliver its Christian witness holistically. The Church can now proclaim the Gospel and, at the same time, ask for its implementation through the physical liberation of its people. That the Church is now interested in the people’s day-to-day realities by holding the principal political actors accountable in addition to proclaiming the Gospel, is a significant contribution to the discipleship commission.

6. DOING THEOLOGY AS A HERMENEUTICALLY SENSITIVE EXEGESIS OF WORD AND CONTEXT

In its effort to encourage and address, meaningfully, the people’s potential and challenges, practical theology must adapt hermeneutically to their ever-changing environment. Hendriks (2002:8) wrote:

“Practical theology is a continuing hermeneutical concern that does exegesis of both the Word and the world and discerns how the Word should be proclaimed in word and deed in the world.”

This process requires the continuous reflection on Scripture and tradition, stimulated by the actual situations and challenges they faced, which then call for the transformation of the methods of witness (Fowler 1995:4). Browning (1991:8) described what such a process entails:

“I argue that theology as a whole is fundamental practical theology and that it has within it four sub-movements of descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology”.

Musopole (1996/1997:3) also demands a holistic approach to theology:

“Such a model, is a typically African epistemology that connects the human being, not only to God, but to other human beings as well as the whole cosmos”.

It is this unique hermeneutical concern, which practical theology brings to the ministry, that can be of most significant benefit if the CCAP is to address the challenges of urban poverty in Malawi.

Browning’s (1991:2) point of departure is the opening of a dialogue between the past and the present by asking: “How can communities of memory and tradition also be communities of practical reason and practical wisdom?” He points out that communities of faith come to theology with operational religious practices; the task of theologians is to re-direct them. Browning (1991:6) further argues:

“We are so embedded in our practices, take them so much for granted, and view them as so natural and self-evident that we never take time to abstract the theory from practice and look at it as something in itself” .

Theory-laden practices assist communities of faith to reflect upon their practices whenever they strike a crisis; this is a continuing process as the communities try to address the disruptions that they encounter.

According to Browning (1991:6): “Religious communities go from moments of consolidated practice to moments of deconstruction to new, tentative reconstructions and consolidations. Then a new crisis emerges and the community must launch into the entire process once more.” Browning says that practical theology is a movement that goes from practice to theory, then back to practice. This way of doing theology differs from the classical view of movement only from theory to practice. Browning (1991:7) then concludes:

“Theology goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices”.

This approach to ministry takes into consideration not only that Christianity is a historical faith, but also that the message of Scripture is “incarnation”, the reality of God entering into human affairs. The presupposition is that theology is intrinsically contextual; abstract theology does not exist, and knowledge of the context is part of theology. Ammerman *et al.* (1998:26) remark:

“The frames through which the congregation and its environment are observed ... are not preludes to taking up the questions of theology, but are integral to that process”.

Applied to Malawi, practical theology seeks to understand people’s real issues of their daily experience in the townships. For the Church in Malawi to be relevant, it must consider the context of the people as an integral part of its theology.

7. THE MALAWIAN VIEW OF REALITY

For many years, Malawian (African) Churches have been doing European theology. European missionaries brought Christianity, as well as their culture, to Africa.

“When Christianity arrived in Africa ... it came with a western wrapping. Christianity went into the pot without being unwrapped. There was no period of observation first. But the pot ... was not quite empty. Some of what was there was pushed out, some remained and was included in the stew Africans want the meal, but not the indigestible wrapping which should not have been included. To some extent, the meat has not been cooked properly because it is still sealed in the wrapping (Parratt 1996/1997:142).”

This metaphor is particularly apt for the African context. African food is still cooked on the traditional three stones, and the dynamics of the process are distinctly non-European. There is a synergy between the cook, the maker of the fire, and those enjoying its warmth; it is a place for hermeneutic inquiry and participation. This is the reality that the Western approach has missed, and continues to miss.

Ministry in Africa and Malawi, in particular, cannot dichotomise spirit and body. To the African, body and soul are indivisible. This indivisibility is also biblical. Describing historical dualism, Newbiggin (1995:37) writes:

“The early Church had to overcome this dualism It could do so because the starting point of its thinking was in the Bible, where this dualism is absent. It formulated its rejection of the dualism in the statement that the one God was the creator of both the visible and invisible realities. So long as this dualism remains part of popular thought, it is impossible for the gospel to be accepted as public truth; it can only be private opinion.”

Spirit and body form a unity of their diversity and, as such, a person’s spiritual and physical needs are inseparable.

The Malawian holistic worldview can best be understood in the concept of *uMunthu*. For the African, *uMunthu* underlies human responsibilities. *uMunthu* demonstrates clearly the inherent link between life and nature for the traditional Chewa people, among others.

“The aChewa meaning of creation is life and people are the only meaning discerning creatures ... People and nature form one texture of life. In other words, human life is nature life ... The notion of respect for nature seeks to emphasize the concept of persons as living-in-plenitude, i.e. people have a fellow-feeling with each other and nature; consequently people pattern their life to cosmic rhythms (Musopole 1996/1997:22, quoting Harvey Sindima).”

Musopole (1996/1997:3) further notes:

“Such a model, is a typically African epistemology that connects the human being, not only to God, but to other human beings as well as the whole cosmos. The fruit of the *uMunthu* epistemology is an authentic theology that fulfils the human spirit”.

Ministry in Malawi must take into consideration the Malawian cultural context, its languages, hymns and songs (musical sermons). Africans themselves must be advocates of ministry cooked in an African pot. This aims to serve God through meeting the needs of, in particular, the underprivileged in both rural and urban centres. Doing theology thus adds meaning to the lives of African Christians as their spirituality gets in touch with on-the-ground reality. Chuba (1996/1997:60) concludes his paper, “Theology cooked in an African pot,” thus:

“Africans need a theology that will redeem them from the give me, teach me, and lead me mentality, especially at this stage of an independent Africa. That theology which is not cooked or at least not boiling in an African pot has its abode in an African pit”.

Not all Africans, however, were content with the cultural context of the form of Christianity introduced by colonial-era missionaries. Amanze (1996/1997:62) affirms:

“There is a general agreement among African theologians that African Independent Churches have taken a daring step of contextualizing or indigenizing the Church in Africa ... Consequently, they have produced a relevant theology for Africa. They have also succeeded in producing a ritual-oriented Church which appeals to the deep-seated emotions of African peoples and thus satisfying their spirituality.”

The African Independent Churches incorporate belief systems and Christian living without necessarily compromising the Gospel. On the other hand, because the missionaries did not take into consideration the African beliefs and context, the theology that arose may not be entirely reliable. Much of the African way of doing things was considered unChristian. To that degree, the missionaries did not succeed in proclaiming the Gospel.

Writing about the first Malawian Moderator of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, Kamwana (1998:49) accounts:

“Mwale takes a strong stand against certain religious ideas and practices of the Chewa, especially as they are related to ancestors and their worship. Explaining the Christian faith, he starts with the Chewa beliefs. His exposition is that of an evangelist”.

Rev Mwale managed to override the ancestor worship, because he made it clear that such worship had no saving power. His concern in this respect was to bring the Gospel to his people so that they might believe and be saved from their sinful ways by the blood of Jesus (1998:47).

The *Gulewamkulu* (*Nyau*) cult presents the greatest challenge to the Church. It is a traditionally secret institution associated with the Chewa traditional religion and is closed to all females and non-initiated males. Kamwana (1998:53) explains:

“It is a cult which is detrimental to Christianity and education. Members who belong to the society do not bother to educate their children nor send them to Church”.

Pauw (1980:168) affirms:

“One of the largest problems affecting education was the *Nyau* cult which was still very strong in many parts of the country. A growing tension developing between Church and Mission on one hand, the *Nyau* cult and its supporters on the other hand

Gulewamkulu continues to be problematic. In an article in *Afro Christianity at the grassroots*, Pauw (1994:74-75) comments:

“*Nyau* remains very much alive even to this day. The conflict between *Nyau* and Christianity created such a degree of polarisation that there was little scope for something inbetween. A person was either a committed Church member or entirely on the side of *Nyau* and traditional religion”.

This was the environment in which Nkhoma Synod developed its ministry theory. As it developed a ministry ethos and approach to the Chewa people, three factors influenced the Nkhoma Synod:

Firstly, the Chewa cultural beliefs and dynamics (ancestor worship, *Gulewamkulu*, and rites of passage) required a clear-cut distinction between Christianity and cultural beliefs. The benefit is an opportunity for people to be saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, distinct from worshipping ancestors and other beliefs (*Gulewamkulu*), which have no power to transform human minds.

Secondly, the Gospel proclamation is a biblical mandate according to which the Church makes disciples throughout the world. With this in mind, it was inevitable that the Church would

emphasise the proclamation of the Gospel as a ministry model. Paul says “... if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

Thirdly, in rural areas, poverty was not a particularly serious concern; people farmed and were generally self-sufficient. However, urban centres presented different challenges as a result of the effects of urbanisation.

It is therefore clear that the methodological problem that developed from the very inception of the Church led to its inability to deal with local and cultural realities, because of its unilateral model of doing theology. It also led to its inability to address local cultural, as well as political, issues, as well as its inability to deal with urbanisation and poverty.

8. THE EXTENT OF POVERTY IN MALAWI

The Malawian situation of poverty is a worrisome concern and a challenge to the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Recent studies on poverty in Malawi (Government of Malawi 1995) indicated that poverty in Malawi is a pervasive problem affecting about 60% of the population. In particular, urban poverty is at 65%. The pervasiveness of poverty is best seen as reflected in the country's social indicators:

- i. *High mortality rate:* Infant mortality is estimated at 135 per 1000 live births. Life expectancy at birth is estimated at 48 years.
- ii. *High unemployment rate:* The rapid population growth combined with stagnant growth in formal employment and its small absorption of the labour force has resulted in high unemployment.
- iii. *High HIV/AIDS rate of prevalence:* The HIV/AIDS pandemic is spreading very rapidly. Data indicates (UNICEF 2003) that in 2001, 850,000 adults and children (0-49) were living with AIDS of which 65,000 were children (0-14 years). The HIV prevalence among pregnant women, aged 15-24, in major urban areas was: 13.6% (15-19 years); 25.7% (20-24 years). Malawi had an estimated 470,000 AIDS orphaned children aged 0-14 in 2001.

The country's social indicators include: a high population density, household food insecurity, environment degradation, high illiteracy rate, low education coverage, declining incomes, and a high gender imbalance (Government of Malawi 1995:2-5).

In order to address the poverty situation, the Malawi government developed a policy framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) in 1995. It comprises both a policy and strategy to guide all development activities in the short, medium and long-term perspectives. As a result, no public projects, whose impact on poverty has not been justified, will be implemented. The PAP document, vision and mission statement states: To transform the economic structures to ensure that they contribute meaningfully towards the raising of the standards of living where the people:

- Have adequate food.
- Have good shelter/housing.
- Have access to good health, and social facilities, are able to read and write.
- Have equal access to income opportunities.
- Are gainfully employed.
- Have access to credit facilities.
- Have access to and ownership of land.

- Have access to safe water.
- Have access to good roads, transport and communication networks, and participate effectively in their own development.

An important aspect that PAP has managed to articulate well is the importance of community participation. The previous government emphasised community participation in development. This helped community members to own development activities. But the situation changed during the process of political democratisation. The present leadership denounced community participation as “Thangata” (a form of slavery) and promised to stop the practice as soon as they came into power. The mere fact of calling self-development a *thangata* destroyed the community’s morale of participation in development implementation. As a result, people no longer participated in development activities.

This scenario counteracts the government’s efforts, since it is expected to do everything for the people. The drawback is that the impact of development in the communities is inadequate. Of late, the government has realised the importance of involving people in all development endeavours, which is well captured in the PAP document (Government of Malawi 1995:13), which states:

“Community participation in the development process has been hampered by a top-down system that crippled the potential capacities of ordinary citizens to mobilize and organize for self-managed development. Therefore, the PAP is designed to set up a responsive institutional framework that promotes community development.”

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The CCAP Nkhoma Synod, indeed, has been challenged to have a prophetic witness and a physical presence with regard to the cultural, political and economic realities of their country. The key to all of this is to address the methodological issue of doing theology. The ministry can make a unique contribution if it organises its ministry preparation and education around educational courses of shared praxis (Browning 1991 and Groome 1980), in which all the settings should follow a practice-theory-practice model:

- i. Describe the situation in which a congregation finds itself. The importance of this is that the congregation becomes aware of its present reality and can implement decisions.
- ii. Examine the creeds, stories, doctrines and Scriptures that are part of one’s tradition. This is necessary to remind people of parallels to present reality, and instances in the tradition that illuminate and challenge the present reality.
- iii. Create a discourse (dialogue). The current and old stories must relate to each other in a dialogical hermeneutic. In this event, the sources should provide direction for a way forward in the new situation.
- iv. Formulate a new vision and strategy of how to implement the solution. This calls for a continued process of “action-reflection” by revisiting the steps, as though a spiral. This is the time to take concrete action, in order to ensure that change is effected.

This approach regards a human being as both soul and body. It also assumes that any effort aimed toward building a congregation’s maturity of faith takes into consideration the parishioners’ physical and spiritual needs. As such, the task of practical theology is hermeneutical. Then, faith, seeking understanding, is about: discernment, worship, making sense of our lives, and

transformative action. This process involves finding an interaction between the Scriptures and the people's existential cultural situation, edifying the Church and reflecting, through communities of faith, on how to transform their world and impart meaning to life.

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