

WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION?

ROBERT L KINAST

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[see also Kinast 'Let Ministry Teach' in 1996

Here he outlines five styles of Contextual Reflective Theology]

1 THE MINISTERIAL STYLE

Method in Ministry, James & Evelyn Whitehead 1980 & 1995

the three sources of information

tradition

experience data and feelings about concrete local events

culture

the threefold method

attentive listening

conversation of sources first free then checked

pastoral response

a corporate parochial style ~ a believing people.

2 SPIRITUAL WISDOM STYLE

The Art of Theological Reflection, Killen & de Beer 1994

Self-identity Engages people's socio-cultural setting with tradition.

Style based on a natural process of reflecting.

Five Movements: (after Thomas Groome – *Sharing Faith* 1991)

- **Name the experience**
- **Critically reflect on the experience – 'your visions'**
- **Christian story and vision is explored – 'our visions'** (this is where the Christian tradition is accessed for Groome)
- **Dialectic between visions**
- **How to live our christian lives.**

AND SO:

Movement towards insight: (Killen & de Beer ~ after Bernard Lonergan)

[the conceptual structure]

- **Re-enter the Experience, through narration, tradition, culture, assumption.**
- **Find the image that symbolises The Heart of the Matter** (this is where the faith tradition can also be accessed)
- **Correlate the Heart of the Matter with Wisdom of Christian Tradition** (compare, contrast, test, extend)
- **Translate insight into action – use prayer, planning, support.**
(stymied by standpoints of certitude or self-assurance)

It all becomes theological potentially (God always in it) and explicitly theological (believers affirm that presence)

3. FEMINIST STYLE [Power Analysis Style?]

(Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elis Schussler Fiorenza)

- **critical consciousness** sees the distortions from experiences
- **critique of Christian traditions** hermeneutics of suspicion
- **uncovers/revalues suppressed examples of women & insights**
- **new understandings and praxis** participative power

Concern for *all* theology from this perspective

Looking for alternative world view;

Saving world from exploitative behaviour.

4 INCULTURATION STYLE

(Robert Schreiter – Constructing Local Theologies 1985)

Aims to affirm local Christian identity in relation to local culture.

1. Translation Model – finding equivalent categories in another culture.
2. Adaptation Model - one cultural expression is substituted for another
3. Contextual Construction Model – formation of cultural identity

Globalisation: Euro-American Modernity rolled out, compressing space and time, and local cultures hit back.

Schreier offers a map not a method.

- **Attentive** Listening because Tradition is diverse and developmental.
- **Correlate** local 'theologies' from within the Culture from Tradition.

Listening assumptions:

Functionalist – fit together

Ecological – relates to environment

Materialist – physical effect on zeitgeist

Structuralist – unconscious patterns shape the culture

Semiotic – cultural signs

Is same message communicated – same God, same values?

Theology is expressed in cultural ways: local traditions

1. sacred text – bible, sermons, footnotes, hagiography
2. wisdom – psychic, analogy
3. knowledge – dogmatics
4. praxis – conscientisation

yet an overall **“theological flow”** when all taken together.

ask: *“who benefits from this culture?”*

5 PRACTICAL STYLE (Practical theology)

1. Not theory to practice but praxis
2. People of God not clerical paradigm

(Don Browning and David Tracy)

1. Descriptive Theology

Thick description of experience using all disciplines – values, morals, needs, constraints, rules.

2. Historical Theology

Looking at the Texts with thick description of issues in mind until a consensus in group is reached about the tradition.

3. Systematic Theology

Puts 1 & 2 together in creative dialogue. By seeing what themes they both take and then reinterpreting each accordingly.

4. Strategic Practical Theology

involves education, pastoral care, transformation.

– within church & outward. **The goal is discipleship & citizenship**

(Ch7). Conclusions

since 1975 theologians stress 1) from experience 2) every believer

Types are distinguished

- a) Obviously by type of experience they start from
- b) Importantly by way they correlate.

Warnings:

Not everything that theology has to say is relevant to particular experience.

Each experience is limited.

New 'learning' does need to decide on criteria by which to judge its veracity.