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Empirical Methodology in Practical Theology: Why and How?

Many times the question of the methodology in practical theology is at stake. Some argue that practical theology has no methodology at all, and even should not have one. Because practical theology, they say, is not a discipline, that makes use of procedures and techniques. Theology generally refers to truth and not to method. Truth transcends method, interrupts and even negates method. This especially applies to the truth of God's revelatory praxis in Jesus, the Christ, that is mediated by the people's praxis inside and outside the church in the context of modern society. This truth does not ask for methodology, but for openness, awe, wondering, concern, commitment, surrender. From these attitudes, the practical theologian does not strive to master God's revelatory praxis, but to open himself or herself for it, to approximate to it in a respectful and reverend way.

Others say, that methodology is not to be considered as the alpha and omega of practical theology, but at least as a necessary condition for it. Without a sound and clear methodology, practical theology can not fulfil its task: reflecting on the people's praxis from the viewpoint of God's revelatory praxis in a way that is as scientific as possible. This especially refers to developing practical theology within the context of the modern secular university.

The first conception refers to practical theology from the tradition-based perspective of theology as 'sapientia'. The second relates to practical theology from the traditionoriented viewpoint of theology as scientia".¹

The point of departure of this paper is the "scientia"-perspective. From this frame of reference, the question has to be asked, which methodology is relevant for practical theology. A multitude of methodologies, that are factually used in practical-theological studies, can be distinguished. Historical, hermeneutical and ideology-critical approaches appear to be very enriching. Linguistic methods are also successfully applied, like for instance semiotics, and metaphor-analytical and speech act-analytical techniques. Next to these methods, the empirical approach can be relevant for practical theology.

¹ W.Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie*, Ff 1973

In this paper I would like to deal with two questions: why is the empirical methodology useful for practical theology; and, how can it be used and implemented? From these two questions I would like to structure this paper by dividing it into four parts. First I will refer to a number of historical claims to practical theology and its empirical approach (1). After that I will elaborate on the models of multidisciplinary and intradisciplinary, partly connected with the recent history of practical theology in the Netherlands, especially in Nijmegen University (2). Next I will describe some principles and methods within the model of empirical intradisciplinary (3). Lastly I will complete this paper by formulating a hypothesis with regard to the relationship of complementarity between quantitative and qualitative research in practical theology (4).

1. Historical Claims

I would like to present three claims, which are implied in the history of practical theology. The first claim refers to the origin of practical theology as an academic discipline in Vienna. The second claim relates to the historical project of the Enlightenment, from which practical theology can be interpreted. The third claim has to do with the beginning of practical theology in the Netherlands thirty years ago.

A first claim

Practical theology as an academic discipline started in 1774. In that year, empress Maria Theresia of Austria, following the proposal of Stephan Rautenstrauch, ordered the so-called fifth year to be added to the four year theological curriculum in the university. She established a special chair for it, as in the faculties of medicine and law, where a fifth year was supposed to introduce the medical and the law student to the practical medical and juridical field.²

Why did she do that? Why did Stephan Rautenstrauch advise her in that direction? The reason was that the traditional theological curriculum was strongly neo-scholastically oriented. There was a wide gap with every day life, that had to be bridged in the fifth year. In this additional year the connection had to be brought about with today's world. "Today" was the key word; in German: "die Gegenwart"³

² J. Müller, Die Pastoraltheologie innerhalb des theologischen Gesamtkonzepts von Stephan Rautenstrauch, in: Praktische Theologie heute, München 1974, 42-51;

³ N. Mette, Theorie der Praxis, Düsseldorf 1978.

A second claim

There also was an other factor at work. That went deeper. Rautenstrauch was not aware of it. It emerged from a historical-theological 'looking-back' two centuries afterwards, from a kind of interpretative reconstruction in the seventies and eighties of this century. Some protestant German scholars in practical theology think — and they gave good reasons for it — that the phenomenon of the fifth year, in which the emphasis was on today's world, has to be localized within the framework of the Enlightenment⁴. Their claim is that Rautenstrauch introduced or had to introduce the fifth year because of the influence of the Enlightenment on the relation between church and society. Shortly, he established the fifth year because of the historical project of the Enlightenment⁵. The tied bond between throne and altar was becoming looser and looser, the church was losing its privileged position in the midst of society. It was just becoming a societal institution among other institutions. The people were defining their church membership more and more in terms of achievement and free choice instead of ascription by birth. There are some sociologists who suggest that this process of institutional differentiation between church and society and between church and state already had begun with the edict of Worms in 1122⁶ (Kaufmann 1989; 1992). This edict resulted in a kind of labile homeostasis between the emperor and the pope. Sometimes this homeostasis failed because of the domination of the pope by the emperor, what is called caesaropapism. Sometimes it failed because of the other way around, i.e. the domination of the emperor by the pope, what is referred to as being theocracy⁷. But, after centuries and centuries of power struggle, with the beginning of the historical project of the Enlightenment, the principle of separation of church and state really began to work effectively. The whole cultural atmosphere of religious criticism, deism, agnosticism, indifferentism, and even atheism and antitheism put the church in a totally new situa-

⁴ V.Drehse, *Neuzeitliche Konstitutionsbedingungen der Praktischen Theologie*, Bd. I-II. Gütersloh 1988; D. Rössler, *Grundriss der Praktischen Theologie*, Berlin/New York 1986

⁵ H. Peukert, *Wissenschaftstheorie, Handlungstheorie, Fundamentale Theologie*, Frankfurt 1978; H. Peukert, *Kommunikatives Handeln, Systeme der Machtsteigerung und die unvollendeten Projekte Aufklärung und Theologie*, in: E. Arends (Hrsg.), *Habermas und die Theologie*, Düsseldorf 1989, 39-64.

⁶ F.X.Kaufmann, *Kirche begreifen, Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums*, Freiburg 1979; ders., *Religion und Modernität, Sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, Tübingen 1989.

⁷ M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, Grundriß der Verstehenden Soziologie*, 1. Halbband, Tübingen 1980

tion. The democratic constitutions of The Netherlands, America, France and the developing law systems eliminated the church from public law, and put it into private law. The church was treated as a private association among other private associations. Now, in Rautenstrauch's fifth additional year, practical theology was supposed to take into account this culturally and structurally new situation for the church. Systematic theology was not supposed to be able to do that, because of its rigid structure, its doctrinal thinking and its attitude of defense against the new world, i.e. the world of a-doctrinal investigation, so-called unbiased empiricism, free thought and unoppressive dialogue. From this perspective, practical theology is seen as a typical modern form of doing theology, facing the modern world, facing modernity.

A third claim

In 1964, almost 200 years later, the first chair in practical theology in the Netherlands was established in Nijmegen University. What may be seen as the characteristics of this event? Did the faculty think that systematic theology was not able to address itself to modernity? The answer is: no, not at all. In that time, the Nijmegen faculty was known worldwide, as it still is, because of its openness, tolerance, free thinking, and its endeavour to conduct its research as un-biased as possible, facing modernity as a challenge. Systematic theologians like Schillebeeckx and Schoonenberg determined theological thought at the faculty and they still do. But, interestingly, it was Schillebeeckx himself who made the official proposal for establishing a chair of practical theology (with some ecclesiastical people behind the scenes, like the former bishop of Breda, De Vet). "The dogmaticians and moral theologians", declared Schillebeeckx, "also take into account the present-day situation of the church, but they do so occasionally and certainly not scientifically, rather in a 'prescientific' and in this sense unreflexive, 'naive' manner. This prescientific awareness, however, can be scientifically reflected. The scientific-analytical description of the current state of the church as such cannot be the very task of dogmatics and moral theology, just as the study of the state of the church in the past is not the task of dogmatics but of a separate discipline, that of church history"⁸. According to Schillebeeckx the formal object of practical theology is to relate theological insights to empirical facts in a methodologically grounded and systematically structured manner.

⁸ E. Schillebeeckx, Oprichting van een pastoraaltheologische studierichting aan de Theologische Faculteit, Toegevoegd stuk aan: H. Cornelissen et al., Concept voor

The first chair-holder in practical theology, my very honoured predecessor Frans Haarsma, and the three chair-holders in psychology of religion, Willem Berger, in sociology of religion, Osmund Schreuder, and in religious education, Fons Knoers, who were appointed at the same time within the faculty of the social sciences, were supposed to collaborate very strongly with each other by setting up and developing a curriculum and a research program from scratch. Because of both the affluent economy and the large numbers of theology students in those days, they were able to surround themselves with a big staff of theologians, psychologists, sociologists and educationists⁹.

2. Multidisciplinarity and Intradisciplinarity

Looking back 30 years later, the question may be asked: What did the Nijmegen practical theologians do, in those days? They did two different things with regard to their own staff and to their students. Among their own staff, they elaborated on the model of multidisciplinarity. For their students, they developed a program along the lines of what I like to call intradisciplinarity.

Multidisciplinarity

As I said, among their own staff, the Nijmegen practical theologians implemented the model of empirical multidisciplinarity. They concretized this model with the help of the so-called two phase model, as this was described in 1964 by Karl Rahner and others in the five volume handbook of practical theology¹⁰.

In the first phase the theologian works together with the social scientist in order to get enough relevant, reliable and valid empirical information with regard to the topic concerned. In the second phase the theologian starts to reflect on those empirical research results from a theological point of view. For that reason, he analyses the material, that he got from his colleagues in the social sciences, from the presuppositions of that data set; he evaluates it from criteria, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the empirical material concerned; he synthesizes

de Oprichting van de pastoraaltheologische studierichting, Archief Theologische Faculteit, Katholieke Universiteit, Nijmegen 1963

⁹ J.A. van der Ven, *Toekomst voor de kerk? Studies voor Frans Haarsma*, Kampen 1985

¹⁰ F.X. Arnold, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L.M. Weber (Hsrg.), *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie, Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart*, I-V, Freiburg 1964.

his reflections in a theologically proper way¹¹. The theological perspectives from which the theologian reflects on the empirical information in this second phase, may vary strongly. In his inauguration lecture, Frans Haarsma, using the two phase model explicitly, started his theological reflections — among others — from the theological 'analysis fidei' and the 'hierarchy veritatum'¹². Rahner himself proposed to emphasize the 'theologoumena' of salvation history ('Heilsgeschichte'), salvation service ('Heilsangebot'), and salvation process ('Heilsprozess').

Intradisciplinarity

But, the 'founding fathers' of practical theology in Nijmegen did something different with regard to their students. In that time, I myself did a master's in dogmatic theology with Schillebeeckx and afterwards, in 1968, I became a half time PhD Student in practical theology and joined, half time, in the same period, the staff for teaching some courses in catechetics. In those years, the PhD-program, that was established for me, was aiming at developing a profile of a practical theologian according to what I later called the model of empirical intradisciplinarity, not multidisciplinarity. From the beginning, all dissertations in practical theology were characterized by that model of empirical intradisciplinarity.

What does intradisciplinarity mean? In the general epistemological sense, it refers to the borrowing of concepts, methods and techniques of one science by another and the integration of these elements into the other science¹³. Such intradisciplinary processes occur in all scientific fields: in the natural sciences, in the linguistic, historical and social sciences, in the philosophical and theological sciences. Intradisciplinarity encourages innovation in these sciences. By way of example, one need only look at the relationship between biology and chemistry (biochemistry), physiology and psychology (physiological psychology), linguistics and sociology (sociolinguistics), linguistics and psychology (psycholinguistics), history and psychology (psychohis-

¹¹ J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology: From Applied to Empirical Theology*, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1 (1988) 1,7 - 28; J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology. An Empirical Approach*. Kampen 1993. 93-97.

¹² F. Haarsma, *De Leer van de kerk en het geloof van haar leden*, Bilthoven 1968; *Kirchliche Lehre und Skepsis der Gläubigen*, Freiburg 1970; F. Haarsma, *Morren tegen Mozes*, *Pastoraaltheologische besouwingen over het kerkelijk leven*, Kampen 1981.

¹³ W. Ruegg, *Der interdisziplinäre Charakter der Soziologie*, in: *Internationales Jahrbuch für interdisziplinäre Forschung II*, München 1975.

tory), the linguistic sciences and philosophy (philosophy of language), and so on.

The history of theology is an example par excellence of intradisciplinary borrowing, adaptation and integration. To name just a few arbitrarily chosen but striking examples: The moral theology of Thomas Aquinas is unthinkable without Aristotelian ethics; the Tübingen school of the first half of the 19th century could not have existed in the absence of philosophical idealism; Tillich's systematic theology is inconceivable without depth psychology and existential philosophy; Rahner's fundamental theology would be impossible without Hegel, and Metz's political theology incomprehensible without the Frankfurt school. Omnipresent is the critical question about the legitimacy of this kind of intradisciplinary innovation: Is theology putting its (traditional) identity at risk by such a venture? Will theology remain theology?

Not only are intradisciplinary developments in the field of paradigms, theories and concepts readily illustrated by looking at the history of theology, but the same applies also to developments in the area of methods and techniques. The introduction of literary criticism, a profane science, into exegesis was accepted only after great controversy. Many conflicts preceded the acceptance of *Formgeschichte*, *Redaktionsgeschichte* and *Traditionsgeschichte* in Biblical interpretation. In the meantime the barriers to structural analysis and semiotics have also been cleared away¹⁴, and the methodology of speech acts is gradually being introduced¹⁵.

What does empirical intradisciplinarity mean within practical theology? It means conducting practical-theological research with the help of empirical methodology, concepts, methods and means in order to build-up relevant and adequate practical-theological theory for achieving practical-theological aims. The empirical intradisciplinary model requires that practical theology itself becomes empirical, that is, that it expands the traditional-theological range of instruments, consisting of literary, historical and systematic methods and techniques, in the direction of an empirical methodology.

This does not mean that the use of literary, historical and systematic procedures are of no relevance or use for practical theology any more. Their value maintains, they have significance¹⁶. But, the focus is on

¹⁴ E.J. van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2-3. A Semiotic Theory and Method of Analysis Applied to the Story of the Garden of Eden*, Assen 1989

¹⁵ F.-L. Hossfeld, *Geprägte Sprachformen im Leben der Glaubensgemeinde*, in: *Theorie der Sprachhandlungen und heutige Ekklesiologie*, Freiburg 1987, 75-97

¹⁶ See footnote 1.

broadening the perspective, enlarging the scope, enriching the methodological apparatus, expanding the instrumentarium into the direction of empirical methodology.

The only restrictive aspect, that I have to mention, is not a matter of principle, but of contingency, of circumstances of time and space. It refers more concretely to having enough personnel and time to your disposal for being able to implement all literary, all historical, all systematic methods and means besides all empirical methods and techniques. But that is nonsense. From my own experience, I know for sure that it is impossible to develop enough skills in empirical methodology to feel at home in that field and at the same time be a professional researcher in the field of literary, historical and systematic methods. It is really impossible. Therefore, each practical-theological department has to make a choice, not a principal one, but a pragmatic one, based upon the contingency of restricted resources. One can not do everything at the same time in a professional-scientific way. Such a choice does imply concentration, but not necessarily onesidedness. Onesidedness, though, is not only a speculative danger, but a real one. Such a choice does imply focusing, but not necessarily narrow-mindedness. Narrowmindedness, though, is not only a speculative risk, but a real one. Once one chooses for an empirical approach within practical theology, one has to specialize himself or herself in empirical methodology — both qualitative and quantitative-, but at the same time stay in touch with other approaches within theology in general and within practical theology more specifically. But, keeping contact with other approaches and other disciplines does not only apply to empirical researchers in practical theology, it does apply to any approach and any discipline in practical theology and in theology in general.

Intradisciplinarity and the three claims

One may ask the question: in which sense does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity fit into the three claims for practical theology which I mentioned earlier.

Does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity fit into Stephan Rautenstrauch's claim that practical theology has to develop itself in front of today's world, 'die Gegenwart'? My answer is conditional in nature. Yes, practical theology does so, if and only if it is really aiming at methodically and systematically investigating the hearts, the minds, the praxis of today's people in today's society in reference to today's Christianity.

Does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity correspond to the claim of the Enlightenment's historical project, in the frame of reference of which practical theology emerged, as we saw from the reconstruction, that was made over the last two centuries? Again, my answer is conditional in character. Yes, practical theology does so, if and only if it does take seriously into account the attitudes of people, who distanced themselves from the church, from the christian faith or even from religion. Practical theology has to interpret the multidimensional modernization and the multidimensional secularization process as a stimulus, as a challenge, as a invitation to advance the enculturation process of the christian religion in the modern world¹⁷.

However, I have something to add to that. Because, the question at stake is not so much, whether and how far christianity today engages itself with the modernization process and how it handles the process of secularization. However important that may be, the quintessence lies in the question whether and how far christianity participates in the Enlightenment's historical project of society's transformation towards liberty, justice and solidarity. This participation implies a continuous criticism from Enlightenment against Enlightenment. That means that practical theology has to participate in the self-critical reflection on modernity. That is what postmodernity is all about: modernity in the mode of its self-criticism¹⁸. Practical theology can do so from its own sources, especially from its prophetic traditions in the first testament, and from Jesus, the eschatological prophet, in the second testament.

Does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity satisfy Schillebeeckx' claim with regard to truly scientific standards? Lastly, my answer is in the conditional mode, now even more so. Practical theology does correspond to truly scientific standards, if and only if it meets the research criteria that are applied by our colleagues, working with the same or parallel empirical methods in the other faculties in the university. The presupposition of modernity is at stake here: the relation between faith and human rationality, or at the level of academic research, the relation between theology and scientific rationality. The question is no longer, what rationality's role might be in the christian faith, as the traditional apologeticians thought, but rather the other way around, what role the christian faith might play within rationality.

¹⁷ D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York 1991

¹⁸ F.X. Kaufmann, *Das janusköpfige Publikum von Kirche und Theologie, Zur kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Physiognomie Europas, Referat auf dem Ersten Kongreß der Europäischen Gesellschaft für katholische Theologie, Stuttgart/Hohenheim 1992*

Methodological dilettantism in practical theology, how ever it may be legitimized by making an appeal to the specific nature of faith, puts the scientific status of practical theology at risk. The scientific prestige of practical theology within the theological faculty and, even worse, in the university in general, is not always high enough to be taken as seriously as it should be in the academic community. Practical theologians have to take this situation as a serious challenge. Because of this reason, none of the PhD-theses in practical theology leaves my Nijmegen department without a written consent of an outstanding colleague in one of the social sciences concerned. Because the very nature of the practical-theological discipline is at stake, and by that, the very nature of our discipline's task: to bridge truly scientifically the gap between the christian religion and today's world, 'die Gegenwart'.

3. Principles and Methods

Let me try to describe in global terms what the empirical intradisciplinarity in practical theology is all about. For that, I would like to refer to some hermeneutical principles and after that to the phases of the so-called empirical cycle.

3.1. *Hermeneutical Principles*

To begin with the hermeneutic principles, I do not see any conflict between a hermeneutic and an empirical approach in practical theology. For me, the hermeneutic approach comes first. It establishes the framework within which the empirical research has to be conducted. Without saying that, the empirical interdisciplinarity model would lead us to brute positivism, naked empiricism, stupid objectivism¹⁹. At a conference of american, german and dutch practical theologians, I was asked whether I was developing either an empirical-hermeneutical or a hermeneutical-empirical approach. My answer was without doubt: the last one, a hermeneutical-empirical approach. That means that the empirical approach has to take into account the main principles, which from my point of view are implied in any hermeneutic perspective.

The first principle says that the researcher meets his or her topic of study from his or her own prejudices. The term prejudice does not necessarily have a pejorative meaning. Gadamer distinguishes between

¹⁹ H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tuebingen 1960, 257

'prejuges legitimes et illegitimes'²⁰. The idea that prejudices are intrinsically to be evaluated in a negative way, stems from the Enlightenment. It is a prejudice of the Enlightenment itself²¹. However, it is important to become conscious of one's own prejudices, because only in that case the topic under study can communicate itself to the researcher in a proper way. The process of becoming aware of one's own prejudices does not take place before one meets one's research topic. It happens in and through that meeting. Exactly in the confrontation between one's own prejudices and the 'otherness' of the text, of the human actions or of the data under investigation, really hermeneutic understanding takes place.²²

The second principle refers to the fact that the empirical researcher participates in the life world of his or her fellow human beings whose praxis he or she is studying. This, though, does not exclude that the results of researcher's study also influence the life world of all humans, for which sake the term 'double hermeneutics'²³ is coined by the sociologist Giddens.²⁴

The third principle relates to the fact that the history of the texts or of the persons under study has carefully to be investigated. This has to be done from the perspective of the fact that this history influences today's life of the researcher and his or her fellow human beings. The reason is that this history functions as the tradition, in which its 'Wirkungsgeschichte', as Gadamer puts it, bridges the gap between past and present. From there it anticipates the future. In other words, the time perspective guides every truly hermeneutic investigation.

The fourth principle implies that one has to take into account the context of the life, in which the person or persons under study live. With that, all kinds of ecological, economic, political, social and cultural factors of that context have to be studied. Because otherwise, one

²⁰ H.-G. Gadamer, o.c., 255

²¹ H.-G. Gadamer o.c., 260

²² H.-G. Gadamer, o.c., 279

²³ Dilthey already spoke of 'double hermeneutics', but he understood it referring to the fact that the historian studies history, which he himself participates in: "that he who researches into history is the same as he who makes it" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 1964, VII, 278). This is remarkably so, because, in general, Dilthey had an objectivistic view on history (cf. J. Bleicher, *The Hermeneutic Imagination, Outline of a Positive Critique of Scientism and Sociology*, London 1982, 80ff).

²⁴ A. Giddens, *Hermeneutics and Social Theory*, in: G. Shapiro and A. Sica, *Hermeneutics*, London 1983, 215 - 230.

studies people's life, as if it were an island, in a vacuum. Bernstein is of the opinion that Gadamer did not sufficiently take into account this multi-dimensional context. Gadamer was not aware of the power struggles and the conflicts that condition and influence this context. He was not conscious of the conflicts of interpretations that arise from that²⁵.

The fifth principle is that the thoughts, feelings and praxis of the subjects under investigation, have to be explored and analyzed from an ideological-critical point of view. One has to take into account the possible influences of psychic and social repression, which the subjects may not be aware of. This repression may be read from the expressions the subjects create and the statements they make. For that, the term hermeneutics of suspicion is coined²⁶.

Any empirical research project, any empirical research activity has to start from the hermeneutical frame of reference of which these hermeneutic principles are the core.

3.2. *The empirical cycle*

I would like to present the empirical cycle as one of the methodologies that might be of use within practical theology. Some aspects of it trace back to the rich history of the so-called empirical theology at the Chicago School in the beginning of this century²⁷. The cycle consists of five phases and fifteen subphases. Here, I restrict myself to globally listing the five phases. In doing that, I will give some illustrations from my theodicy research project, of which I published the results in a number of articles and in the last chapter of my "Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach"²⁸. For reasons of clarity I will present the five phases in a linear way, although the cycle has to be interpreted as a spiral, in which the phases have to be gone through in an iterative way. The term 'spiral' means that the last phase leads, as it were

²⁵ R.J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, Philadelphia 1986, 156ff.; R.J. Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles, Essays in a Pragmatic Mode*, Philadelphia 1986, 68ff.

²⁶ Ricoeur P. (1987). *Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences*. Cambridge/Paris; P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics II*, Evanston 1991, 270ff.

²⁷ J. A. van der Ven, *L'avenir de la theologie empirique*, I.D'aujourd'hui a hier. In: *Laval Theologique et Philosophique* 2, 231-240.

²⁸ J.A. van der Ven, *Toward an Empirical Theodicy*, in: *Teodicea Oggi? Archivio di Filosofia* 56 (1988) 1-3, 359 - 380; J.A. van der Ven, *Theodicy or Cosmodicy: A False*

spontaneously, into the first one. The term 'iterative' means the cycle has to be run through several times after each other. In describing the five phases I will use the present tense, because they apply, from my perspective, up until now. For the theodicy illustrations I will use the past tense, because the project has been completed; it belongs to the past.

Phase 1

The first phase is called "the development of the theological problem and goal". In this phase, the researcher participates as a human being in the field of the subjects, whose life he or she investigates. In this field, all kinds of problems emerge, which may have a religious dimension and may be of theological interest. At the moment, a certain problem attracts people's and researcher's attention in such a way that they decide to develop a research project on it, the first phase starts. It is the task of the researcher in dialogue with the subjects concerned to specify the problem in such a way that it becomes a scientific-theological question: being well formulated, distinguished into certain dimensions and aspects and implying a perspective on the way to deal with it. In connection with this developing problem, the goal of the research has to be clarified and eventually stated. In the research project on theodicy, one of the questions was: what is going on in people's hearts and minds with regard to the relation between suffering and religion; the goal was among others advancing and contributing to theodicy poimenics and church development in the perspective of theodicy²⁹.

Phase 2

The second phase is called theological induction. In this phase, the researcher dives into the water in order to see what kind of people and what kind of cognitions, affections, actions, processes, structures he or she may meet, which might be of interest to his or her research project. The researcher walks around, he or she experiences, he or she observes, he or she talks continuously with all kinds of people in order to get informed about the topic concerned. The researcher also undertakes some systematic interviewing, some systematic observation, some systematic experimenting, some systematic reading of letters, diaries, protocols, minutes, eyewitnesses' reports, and newspa-

Dilemma? *Journal of Empirical Theology* 2 (1989) 2, 5 - 27; J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, Kampen 1993, 157-224.

²⁹ J. A. van der Ven, *Explorations on Church Development from a Theodicy Program*. In: *Pastoral Sciences* 9 (1990) 75-108.

pers. The researcher also goes to key persons, following the snowball procedure, in order to ask them specific questions and to tape the answers. In connection with that the researcher reflects on the experiences and impressions that he or she is gaining, the information that he or she is getting, the processes that he or she is going through. The researcher constantly compares the impressions, the experiences, the information with each other. He or she also analyses them from the scientific literature that he or she consults, reads, summarizes. There is a continuous to and from between perception and reflection. The researcher, as it were, lives with his or her research topic, wakes up with it, spends the day with it, goes to the bed with it, and sleeps with it. From this process of induction, the researcher is able to formulate his or her practical-theological question into a real research question. He or she determines the relevance of it, delineates the scope of it, specifies the hard core of it, lists the researchable dimensions and aspects of it. In the theodicy project, my colleagues, my students and I, did all kinds of individual and group conversations and interviews, we undertook all kinds of individual and group observations, we conducted all kinds of pilot quasi-experiments. We reached and met all kinds of people: youngsters in schools, students in the university, participants in adult education, lay people in parishes, patients in hospitals, lay ministers, professional pastoral workers, ordained and not-ordained. We asked them to tell something about their relationship with suffering and religion, how ever it might be, positive, negative or indifferent. We asked them to express their feelings or we experienced their emotions, like sorrow, grief, anger, frustration, resignation, acceptance, happiness, thankfulness, even joy. We came across a rich variety of convictions, attitudes, and emotions among a rich variety of people.

Phase 3

After that, the third phase takes place. It is called theological deduction. This implies hard bureau desk work. Now systematic thinking starts, hard studying begins, library work and theoretical construction activities come into being. The experiences and reflections of the previous phase become the object of conceptualization now. This means, the terms, which are implied in the research question and which are supposed to play a core role in this phase, are listed. Then, these terms are defined with the help of theological-scientific literature as sharp as possible, however without loosing its complexity, but exactly including it. Further, the defined concepts are connected with each other in order to build-up a theological theory. A theory is to be seen as consisting of concepts and the relations between concepts. It is

network of concepts. After that, a so-called conceptual model is developed. In such a model, the theoretical relations between the concepts concerned are translated in terms of hypotheses. From my perspective, those hypotheses are not becoming the object of verification, but of falsification. If the hypotheses emerge undamaged from the testing process, they do not become theses, but maintain the status of hypotheses, corroborated hypotheses though. Lastly, the difficult process of operationalization takes place. Operationalization does not mean any arbitrary concretization of the concepts, but the translation of them in terms of operations — hence the term 'operationalization' —. Operationalization implies the transformation of the concepts concerned in terms of observable, measurable and testable behaviour. In the theodicy project, we formulated a theodicy theory, consisting of a number of theodicy concepts, which were connected with specific demographic characteristics of people and their attitudes. We derived ten hypotheses from that. We operationalized the theodicy concepts into twenty eight items, forming the theodicy measuring instrument.

Phase 4

Then, the fourth phase takes place, which is called empirical-theological testing. Now, the researcher dives for the second time into the water, although it is different water from the first, because otherwise he could not test his or her hypotheses. So, the researcher gets in contact with the people concerned, after having drawn an appropriate sample from them. The researcher interviews them, observes them after informed consent, asks them to fill in the questionnaires concerned and so on. By that, the researcher collects step by step the data required. After that, the researcher is going to inspect the data. The reliability of the data is a matter of principle, because eventually the rejection or corroboration of the hypotheses concerned rely on that. After data inspection and occasionally data cleaning, the researcher starts the data analysis. He or she conducts analyses with the help of descriptive statistics, like frequency tables and crosstables. After that, the researcher decides whether, and if so, which analyses from the inferential statistics are to be used, like factor analysis, reliability analysis, association analysis, variance analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, path analysis and so on. It is very important not to give the computer the statistical initiative, but to guide the statistical analyses from the theological theory concerned. In the theodicy project, I used all analyses mentioned, because they were required to test the hypotheses concerned, and by that to answer the research question with an eye on the research goal. For that I used the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Phase 5

Then, the last phase completes the cycle. It is called theological evaluation. First, the testing results are summarized and interpreted in terms of the hypotheses. If one thinks that the hypotheses are always confirmed, because the researcher is supposed to get from the computer what he or she puts into it, one makes a crucial mistake. The question is exactly whether the theological theory developed fits into the empirical data. Does theological theory fit into the empirical reality? That is the question! In the theodicy project, I found that about 50% of the hypotheses, grounded in solid theodicy theory, as I professionally and scientifically thought, were falsified³⁰.

For example, from political-theological insights, I formulated the hypothesis that the concept of solidarity theodicy would strongly correlate with family-critical and economy-critical attitudes. It did not appear to be so. That hypothesis was falsified. Then starts the process of reflection on the results concerned and on the methods and means applied. That leads the researcher to new guesses, estimations, distinctions, interpretations, ideas, inventions, and imaginative thinking. Negative results do not damage the relevance of the research project concerned. They may have positive scientific meaning in terms of future research. For that reason, an empirical-theological project always ends with proposals for future research. With that the empirical cycle transforms itself into an empirical spiral.

4. A Hypothesis: The Complementarity of Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Before ending, I wish to make a remark in order not to be misunderstood. The five phases of the empirical cycle mentioned may be said to be representative for the quantitative survey design in practical theology.

For me, choosing the quantitative survey design is not a matter of principle. I only used it in this paper as an example. In the Nijmegen department of practical theology, we are using not only the survey design³¹, but also the experimentation design³² and the content analysis design³³.

³⁰ J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*. Kok 1993. 210-215.

³¹ Interesting examples of using the survey design for topics, that are different from the theodicy theme, are: H.-G. Ziebertz, *Moralerziehung im Wertpluralismus*, Kampen/Weinheim, 1990. R. Jeurissen, *Peace and Religion*, Kampen/Weinheim 1993.

As far as the quantitative approach is concerned, in the Nijmegen department of practical theology, we are focusing on the relation of complementarity between the quantitative and qualitative approach. Our hypothesis is that they are not each other's opposites, but that they complement each other. I like to emphasize this being a hypothesis. The reason is that complementarity is only one alternative next to other alternatives. Methodological approaches can show genuine complementarity, but they can also be totally unrelated, related but only supplementarily, or related but flatly contradictory³². From advancing theoretical reflection and empirical research this hypothesis is to be corroborated or falsified. A main point is to clarify the concept of complementarity further. Two basic forms can be distinguished: parallel and circular complementarity. The difference of the former with the latter is that it implies different approaches repeatedly coming after each other in a kind of spiral process³³. Sometimes, it is called ladder complementarity³⁴.

In concluding this paper I would like to present an example of this complementarity between the quantitative and the qualitative approach. It is about the analysis of a pastoral transcript, drawn from a forty five minutes pastoral counselling, which was held by a hospital chaplain with a cancer patient in a teaching hospital. First, I conducted a quantitative content analysis of this transcript. I coded each of the more than 800 lines from three category systems, which refer to the thematic topics of the counselling, the emotions in the counselling process and the interaction styles between the pastor and the patient. From the frequencies of the codes concerned, I conducted some statistical association analyses. One of the most striking results was that the patient found himself in a helpless situation, that raised all kinds of severely ambivalent feelings in him, which were not really met by the

³² Interesting examples are: M. van Knippenberg, Communicative Self-Investigation in Pastoral Group Work, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1 (1988) 2, 64 - 88; C. Hermans, Understanding Parables and Similes qua Metaphors, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1 (1988) 2, 21 - 51; J. Siemerink, Prayer and Our Image of God, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 2 (1989) 1, 27 - 44; C. Hermans, Wie werdet ihr die Gleichnisse verstehen? Kampen/Weinheim 1990.

³³ See: J.A. van der Ven, Die quantitative Inhaltsanalyse, in: J.A. van der Ven, H.-G. Ziebertz, *Paradigmen der Praktischen Theologie*, Kampen/Weinheim 1993.

³⁴ D.M. MacKay, 'Complementarity' in Scientific and Theological Thinking, in: *Zygon* 9 (1974) 3, 225 - 244.

³⁵ K.H. Reich, The Relation between Science and Theology: The Case for Complementarity Revisited, in: *Zygon* 25 (1990) 4, 369 - 390; cf. K.J. Sharpe, Relating Science and Theology with Complementarity: A Caution, in: *Zygon* 26 (1991) 2, 309 - 315.

pastor. The patient was the more in despair, because, from my analysis, he appeared to have no significant others at all. After that I analyzed the same transcript from a qualitative approach. In order to conduct this analysis properly, I listed the computer software programs, that are available for qualitative analysis³⁷. I chose a program that was developed on the basis of the phenomenological and symbolic interactional principles of Glaser and Strauss' methodology³⁸. It was created by a group of Nijmegen sociologists. It is called in dutch: Kwalitan (Qualitative Analysis)³⁹. The results of this analysis went deeper than that of the quantitative analysis. The emotional ambivalences that emerged from the statistical study, were to be understood as signals of the tragic drama in which the patient found himself: the drama of life and death. The lack of significant others led him into a severe degree of rationalization, that appeared to function as a defense mechanism in order to unconsciously prevent the patient from becoming fully aware of the terminal situation he was in⁴⁰.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have advantages and disadvantages. The first ones allow for developing a 'hard core of knowledge', intersubjective testing of the results' reliability and validity, replication and generalization. The second ones give the opportunity to take the subjects' uniqueness into account, the dynamics and the drama of their interactions and communications, the depth of their emotional engagement, the specificity of the images, symbols and rituals which are implied in that⁴¹. The quantitative and qualitative content analyses which I conducted with regard to one and the same pastoral transcript appeared to complement the weak sides of the one from the strong sides of the other and vice versa. Evidently, I am convinced of the fact that the corroboration of the complementarity hypo-

³⁶ S. Strasser, *Understanding and Explanation*, Pittsburgh 1985, 31

³⁷ R. Tesch, *Qualitative Research, Analysis Types and Software Tools*, New York 1992

³⁸ B. Glaser, A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, New York 1967; B. Glaser, A. Strauss, *Awareness of Dying*, New York 1980; A. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge 1991.

³⁹ F. Wester, *De gefundeerde theorie-benadering*, dissertatie Universiteit Nijmegen 1984; F. Wester, *Strategieën voor kwalitatief onderzoek*, Muiderberg 1987; V. Peters, F. Wester, R. Richardson, *Kwalitatieve analyse in de praktijk en handleiding bij Kwalitan*, versie 2, Universiteit Nijmegen 1989.

⁴⁰ J.A. van der Ven, *Die qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, in: J.A. van der Ven, H.-G. Ziebertz, o.c. .

⁴¹ J.-G. Nadeau, *Pour l'observation praxeologique d'une pratique pastorale en milieu marginal*, in: *La praxeologie pastorale, Orientations et parcours*, Cahiers d'Etudes Pastorales, Montreal 1987

thesis can not be based on only one example. But, it gives some indication, or at least some hope of probably not totally going the wrong track.

Ökumenische Theologie und die ökumenische Frage. Sieben Thesen

1. Die ökumenische Bewegung hat in den letzten achtzig Jahren Erfolge aufzuweisen

Spätestens im Jahre 1054 ging der Kirche Jesu Christi eine ihrer "notiae ecclesiae", eines ihrer Wesensmerkmale, verloren: die Einheit. Durch das "morgesländische Schisma" trennte sich die lateinisch-abendländische Kirche von den vier ostkirchlichen Patriarchaten Konstantinopel, Alexandrien, Antiochien und Jerusalem. 1521 erfolgt die zweite schwerwiegende Spaltung durch die Bannbulle Roms gegen Martin Luther. Auch die weitere Geschichte der Christenheit wurde bis in unser Jahrhundert hinein primär durch Spaltungen denn durch Wiederannäherung geprägt. Die Zahl der im ökumenischen Rat der Kirchen verbundenen selbständigen Kirchen umfaßte 1961 317 Mitgliedskirchen, wobei bekanntlich die Römisch-katholische Kirche nicht Mitglied ist.

Nachdem die letzten Jahrzehnte des 19. und das erste des 20. Jahrhunderts von einem weltweiten innerkonfessionellen Zusammenrücken geprägt war — Anglikaner, Presbyteraner, Methodisten, Arianer, Baptisten u.a. gründeten ihre Weltbünde —, wurde mit der Weltmissionskonferenz in Edinburgh von 1910 die interkonfessionelle Ökumene zu einem wichtigen Thema. 1919 regte der protestantische Erzbischof Nathan Söderblom von Uppsala die Einberufung eines ökumenischen Konzils an im Sinne einer beschlußfähigen Versammlung aller christlichen Kirchen mit dem Ziel der Einheit; ein Vorschlag, der seitdem regelmäßig aufgenommen worden ist, aber bis heute auf seine Verwirklichung wartet. Söderblom war es auch, der als erster den Begriff "Ökumene" als das "Werk der Versöhnung und Einigung bisher getrennter Kirchen" verwandte.

Hier kann nun nicht detailliert die Geschichte der ökumenischen Bewegung nachgezeichnet werden. Hingewiesen sei aber noch auf zwei zentrale Ereignisse: die Gründung des "internationalen Missionarates" 1921 und die "Erste Vollversammlung des ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen" 1948 in Amsterdam.

Die innerkonfessionelle und die interkonfessionelle Ökumene ist aber auch nicht nur eine Angelegenheit der Kirchenleitungen und der kirchlichen Amtsträgerinnen und Amtsträger geblieben. Gegenseitige Vorurteile und Ressentiments wurden bei den Kirchenmitgliedern abge-