

**Hospitality and the Other**  
**CHAPTER 2 PERFORMING THEOLOGY**

The Interrelationship between Christian Beliefs and Practices

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**Overview**

Yong's proposal depends on making the case for seeing an intimate relationship between beliefs and practices

Claim- The prior chapter made the case for empirical data informing theology of practices

Chapter 2 focuses on theoretical connections between theology and practices

It is important to have reasons for a tight relationship between Christian beliefs and practices

**Proposed three step argument**

Maxim: many tongues equals many practices

**Four lines of approach**

**Three levels of interconnections between beliefs and practices**

**Christology and soteriology: orthodoxy (right beliefs) and orthopraxis (right living)**

Athanasius Council of Nicea 325.

**Pneumatology, Trinitarian theology, liturgical practices**

Worship of God and the practice of baptism in father, son, & spirit

**Theology and/ as performance**

Use of speech-act theory to understand theology as performance and that beliefs and practices are not distinct

**Speech Act Theory**

**Application of Speech Act Theory (SAT) to theology**

Thiselton and using SAT to understand different genres of scripture

Wolterstorff on understanding scripture as double agency discourse e.g., officials of state representing an official position thus a biblical prophet represents God like a Secretary of State

### **My comments on Speech-Act Theory**

Speech-act theory does not exist as a guiding theory in any scientific sense. There are ideas about how speech acts might be described but we lack empirical evidence of various proposed connections between a speech act and another variable or construct such as a behavior or a feeling.

### **My comments on fit and speech acts**

We may think of fit in two directions. First, a world-to-Word qua Bible fit ask us to look at the world and see how the elements fit the text. In the other direction we may consider a Bible qua Word-to-world direction of fit. That is, we expect the Word to fit the way things are.

### **My comments on speech acts and context**

A series of behaviors along with some or no words may constitute a speech act in the sense of intending to communicate something and influence the behavior of another (some notion of force). In addition, the context of one's culture adds meaning (and force) to the act. (Example: A U.S. ball player kneeling when the national anthem is played.) We may add tone of voice and volume to speech. And we can add facial expression– all of which may influence mood.

### **Christian doctrine as ecclesial grammar**

Lindbeck and an analogy: Doctrines: Religions:: Grammars: Language

Lindbeck proposes a cultural-linguistic alternative. Doctrines are illocutionary rules connected by bidirectional influence to the practices of a religious community. Five points:

1. Cultural-linguistic approach does not presume a common framework
2. Religious traditions are incommensurable so be careful in making claims of superiority
3. Claims of superiority should be understood in terms of final outcomes
4. Salvation is the process of being shaped, formed, transformed by religious doctrines
5. Many modes of interreligious engagement

### **Implications of Lindbeck for interreligious relations**

#### **Theology as Dramatic Performance**

Vanhoozer: gospel is a drama directed by God.

#### **Performing Pneumatology in a Pluralistic World**

Spirit and Theology – Post Christian Era

Two developments

1. Pneumatology revived

## 2. Postmodern theology

Welker and Dabney

### **Spirit and Practices of the Church**

Hutter: theology and doctrine should be understood as practices of HS in and through church

Yong considers how this works for non-Lutherans. Yong concludes ...

### **Pneumatological performance: Many tongues and practices**

How does the church/HS work?

## **Chapter 2 Questions**

### **1.0 The nature of the relationship between belief and practice**

1.1 Yong claims chapter one provides an adequate empirical basis for the connections between theology and practice important to chapter two. Evaluate this claim. For example, to what extent do his perceptions of what occurred in the three locales constitute sufficient empirical evidence?

1.2 What might be the criteria for sufficient evidence to establish a close connection between belief and practice? What type of connection exists? For example, do we have evidence to suggest that beliefs cause changes in practice? Do we have evidence that the way people practice their faith influences their beliefs or even their doctrines?

1.3 If the connection between belief and practice is bidirectional, how might that influence theology? If the connection is more like that illustrated in a Venn diagram where there are overlapping features for the concepts, then how might we speak about the section where the concepts overlap?

1.4 If the connection between belief and practice is merely correlational then what might be a candidate for one or more primary constructs that have an etiological role in changing both belief (B) and practice (P) differentially or simultaneously? For example, if B and P are correlates, then what produces change in B or P? And is it possible to change either B or P without changing the other? Consider, is it satisfactory to say that B and P are interconnected and that each influences the other in some sort of closed dynamic belief-practice system?

## **2.0 History of Belief and Practice**

2.1 What scriptural evidence is there to support a close or loose connection between belief and practice in the early church? For example, do we know that the inspired letters of the NT were critical in transforming the lives of early Christians?

2.2 Considering your understanding of the extant gospels, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the positions held about Jesus' divinity by Athanasius and Arian?

## **3.0 Speech-Act Theory (SAT)**

Yong provides an introduction to SAT. After describing different approaches, he seems to focus on a concept that verbal or written communication can effect change in people other than the speaker. If this effect is true, then the communication evident in the Bible, preaching, and Christian doctrines may be part of God's work in transforming people. This belief suggests a close connection between spoken beliefs and behavioral acts (qua the way people practice their faith). But we should challenge this argument with a few questions.

3.1 What evidence is there that large percentages of people make durable changes in their lives in response to inspired communication?

3.2 Also, are there other factors at play that might be more important, or at least relevant to, effecting change than are speech-acts?

## **4.0 Pneumatology**

It seems to me the concept of pneumatology applied in this chapter is an unnecessary construction when considering how God would have Christians show hospitality toward others. However, using the language of Pentecostals may afford a greater opportunity to connect with Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians (PCC) that would be the case if he were to simply write about God at work.

4.1 Consider, in what sense does Yong's use of the word *Spirit* suggest anything unique in theology? Couldn't he simply refer to God at work in people's lives since God is understood to be Spirit?

4.2 Yong refers to various gifts of the Spirit. He often uses the word "tongues" but his use of the term *tongues* of Pentecost seems rather different than the concept of tongues used by most Pentecostal clergy who refer to unintelligible speech-like utterances aka glossolalia. In what ways are Yong's views of gifts and tongues similar to or different from AG doctrinal statements or commonly held views of pentecostal clergy?

4.3 If we were to catalog the biblical gift list, would such a list exhaust what it means to have a spiritual gift?

4.4 Does a Pneumatological framework help or hinder the ultimate goal of increasing hospitable interactions between people of different faiths? In other words, is it enough to understand and respect the core elements of Christianity, Islam, and so forth in order to foster better interfaith relationships without the added burden of considering the pneumatological language and varied meaning of PCCs, which have often been barriers to Christian intrafaith dialogue and even hospitality?

### **5.0 Soteriology**

My understanding of the traditional pentecostal doctrine of salvation is a view that salvation is a dramatic and highly personal distinct event. And that the converted one is like a vulnerable infant who must be nurtured to ensure survival. Yong speaks in broad terms about salvation as a multidimensional construct. What seems to be the essential components of Yong's soteriology? And how does one's view of soteriology influence hospitality?

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