

Practical Theology: "On Earth as It Is in Heaven." Terry A Veling. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005. 280 pages. ISBN 1570756147

Terry A. Veling's *Practical Theology* is neither a practical guide to doing ministry nor a primer on method that could easily serve as an introductory text for a field education class. Rather, it is an example of Veling's own practical theology combining philosophical thought, theological reflection, and biblical interpretation. Veling locates the task of theology in human relatedness, encounter and understanding. He explains: "Along with the 'tools' and methods of practical theology we must develop an essential 'relatedness' to theology, whereby theological practice becomes a way of life, where it enters our dwelling in the world and reveals 'all the hidden riches of its nature.'" (pp. 15-16, citing Martin Heidegger, "What Calls for Thinking?" in *Basic Writings*, 355-56) In particular, Veling's practical theology is deeply linked with his understanding of hermeneutics and is informed by his reading of thinkers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur, and Mikhail Bakhtin. He also integrates his understanding of practical theology with liberation theology, existentialist thought, and rabbinic interpretation. The "text" features prominently in this practical theology, though the text is broadly understood to encompass multiple forms of communication and even, apparently, life itself. The text encounters us. As Veling puts it, "when the text asks us to interpret what it is saying, it is *at the same time interpreting our own lives*—placing our own lives in question—as if the text were raising interpretive questions of us. . ." (p. 43). It asks us to respond to it. Following Gadamer [*Totality and Infinity*, 78-79], Veling affirms "life is *vocational*. It calls out to me. It asks after me. It asks me to respond, to answer, . . ." (p. 10).

Reflecting on Exodus 24:7, Veling ponders what it might mean to "do" as a precondition for being able to "hear." In this book, Veling invites the reader to "dwell poetically in the world." (p. 194)

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