

# CONTENTS

## **Introductory Sections**

Editor's Note

Preface

Acknowledgements

Introduction

## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

When George Lovell began this work, which he called 'NFR' (Notes from Retirement), he wrestled with considerable uncertainty about the nature and purpose of the work. Parts 1 and 2 and the first Appendix show his vacillation. He had no doubt about the value of writing these reflections upon his life, work and experience for his own benefit. He enjoyed the physical act of writing with his fountain pen, organising his thoughts by giving them expression on manuscript. He enjoyed the daily discipline of sitting at his desk doing this work for 35 hours a week in his retirement up until the last few years of his life when ill health broke his routine and concentration. Even if the Notes had never been published in any form, he felt it had been worthwhile writing them for personal reasons.

But what about a wider audience? There was a part of him that wanted to write an autobiography to be published as a book, yet that seemed to him too arrogant a thing to do. He never quite resolved what his purpose was during the process of writing or who else might wish to read it. Yet by the time he had completed the work he had discovered a great deal about himself through his analysis of his own processes of thought and had perceived that there could be a range of uses for what he had written. He sets these out in Part 12.

Readers may be puzzled by his insistence in Part 12 that the Notes were not intended for publication when the Preface clearly envisages publication. The explanation lies in the fact that he changed his mind after writing Chapter 12 and before writing the Preface. He did little revision of the work after he had completed the draft in 2015. At that point he realised that the work was too bulky to be a published book. However, after showing it to several people whose opinion he valued, he was reassured by them that it deserved to be made public in a digital form and to that end he employed professional typists to turn his manuscript into Microsoft Word files and scan the images.

It was at this stage that he involved me, first to check that everything had

been typed and then to advise on how it could be made available digitally. I had already worked with him in creating the Preacher Development website and the Avec Resources website. I undertook to create a website version of the Notes and we agreed that we would put it on the Avec website if the Trustees agreed.

It took until the summer of 2018 before the work was ready for publication, and, in sense, it was not really ready even then. Dr Lovell's poor health in the last year or two of his life prevented him from doing the proof-checking that only he could do to correct the words in his manuscript that neither I nor the typist could read. We were both aware that there was more polishing that ought to have been done. He was resigned at this stage to letting it go forward warts and all. Readers will therefore find discrepancies and contradictions that might have been smoothed away had the author been able to address them.

The website was ready to go live in August 2018 but final approval from Avec was delayed and it was not published until the day after Dr Lovell's death in October. The press release that he had prepared for it in July was sent out in October.

Subsequently some small deletions have been. That apart, the work is nearly entirely as Dr Lovell left it, and the complete original manuscript can be found with Dr Lovell's other papers in the West Yorkshire Archives.

*John S. Summerwill*

## **PREFACE TO THE ELECTRONIC VERSION**

Early in 2015 I completed writing this work, which had up to then been called *Notes From Retirement*. Subsequently I have discussed with several colleagues the text, what I feel about it, its potential and what to do about and with it. It was generally agreed that the Notes are a completed work in their own right and that it is highly desirable to digitalise them in order to make them more accessible and available.

My basic purpose in writing them was to help me to give order and shape to my perspectives on my vocational life and work and to critically examine and resolve some unresolved personal and vocational issues. From the outset and throughout the writing I did not think of publishing them. (See, for example, parts 1 and 12). I concentrated on getting the material on paper without attempting to make it publishable. This approach freed me to examine my vocational life and work as honestly and thoroughly as possible without the distracting constraints of writing for publication.

Nonetheless, I discipline myself to produce a carefully structured and indexed text as clear and readable as possible. Essentially, I was writing for myself – to straighten out some of the crooked lines of my retrospective you of my life – and consciously to make material I considered could be of some importance readily available for posterity. Some of the text I wrote straight off; other parts I edited thoroughly to get at the best possible statements that I could have of the insights that I was grappling to express. As a result, I believe that much if not most the text has the sharpness and accuracy that normally attends writing for publication even though I was not writing to the discipline of a given number of words. But some of the the text is more expansive than is necessary and would be improved by being more concise. Notwithstanding, some parts of the Notes require only slight some editing to prepare them for publication.

This is a digitalised/electronic version of the Notes themselves. The need to respect confidentiality has meant that I have had to embargo some of the sensitive material. Whilst organising this version of the Notes another possibility occurred to me: the idea that I should write a book based on the Notes, under the title, *My Vocational Life and Work: Autoethnographical Reflections in Retirement*. I have made a start on this project.

The original text and possibly a copy of the Notes will be deposited in my archives in the West Yorkshire Archives.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A large number of people over a long period of time have contributed to making my vocational life what it has been and has become and therefore to the making of this book. They know who they are and my indebtedness and gratitude to them but, they are simply too many to be named here. However, whilst it is invidious and risky to mention some, I must. Molly, my wife, was an active partner in my vocational work for 60 years. Generously and willingly she typed and retyped most of the things that I published as well as correspondence, papers, memos... until her eyesight failed a few years before she died. But, sadly, Molly has not lived to see these Notes completed and published. Dorothy Household made outstanding contributions as a voluntary colleague and soul mate until her untimely death at the hands of terrorists in 1974. Amongst other things, she helped me to improve my writing style as did Margaret O'Connor at a much later stage but sadly she too did not live to see these Notes published. Catherine Widdicombe has made enormous contributions as my deeply committed vocational partner and colleague over a period of 50 years. John Summerwill has made extensive and invaluable contributions to this document and to my work

in general for many years now as colleague and soul friend. I am greatly indebted to him for many things, not least for formatting and digitalising my Notes From Retirement. Tirelessly and willingly, Val Faint photocopied various editions of these Notes. David Read obtained the permission of the Avec Trustees to put the Notes on their website. Over a very long period of time Charles New, David Copley and Ian Johnson have been and remain greatly valued colleagues and co-consultants. TR Batten taught me about the non-directive approach to community development, how to write and so much more and acted as a consultant to me on my work for over 25 years until his health failed.

My debt and gratitude to these and to so many others is far beyond my ability to describe and adequately acknowledge here. Howbeit, with humility and love I put on record my heartfelt gratitude for what I have received from you all; thank you from the bottom of my heart.

## INTRODUCTION

[Note about the NFR](#)

[The vocational axis](#)

[Text of NFR](#)

[Electronic version of NFR](#)

[Contextualising my story: notes from retirement](#)

## NOTE ABOUT THE NFR

I started thinking about this project as early as early as February 2009 (see a Journal note dated 22.2.09.) From the beginning I realised that writing these Notes would be a big job. Establishing the rationale and the purposes etc. (Parts 1 and 2) proved to be much more difficult and demanding than I had anticipated. Getting my mind around the material, mapping out a structure for the notes and sorting out masses of background papers into readily accessible files were enormous undertakings which I tackled in two ways. First, I established a basic structure of the Notes and used it to organise the background material. Then, as I worked at each section I refined the structure of the Notes and reorganised background material: these proved to be interrelated tasks which I did piecemeal. Writing was interspersed with various problems. Some of these I thought

my way through on paper through a process that I refer to as ‘journalling’. I have included some of these pieces in the text as parentheses as they reveal insights into my reflective processes which can be somewhat confusing and turbulent!

Towards the end of 2010, I received a copy of the following poem from Catherine Widdicombe, my colleague of almost 50 years. It reflects some of the inner struggles I had in coming to terms with the slowness of some of my creative writing processes and the time required to complete this large undertaking.

### PATIENT TRUST

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything  
to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way to something  
unknown, something new.  
And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through  
some stages of instability –  
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.  
your ideas mature gradually – let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don’t try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances  
acting on your own good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that His hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 12.1.2011*

## The Vocational Axis

At an early stage, after a considerable amount of thought and confusion, I decided to write the Notes as a vocational autobiography. This led me to the idea of writing in relation to what I thought of as the vocational axis of my life and work. I used this concept consistently to help me to decide what not to include, what to write and to decide how to order and structure it; it proved to be an effective way of keeping to my purposes. However, it was not until I had been working on the Notes for five years that I discovered in 2014 that they are, in fact, a particular form of autoethnographical writings. Heather Walton defines such writings as:

...an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno). (*Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* p3.)

My Notes, therefore, are about the work culture of vocational life and ministry of ordained and lay workers in Christian churches and their communities and the nature of the purposeful missiological culture and ethos that they generate in the constituencies in which they work. (I explore this more fully in various parts of the Notes, see in particular Part 12.)

## Text of N F R

The text as it now appears comprises in manuscript some 1370pp + appendages. As some of the pages are typed and others hand written it would be very tedious and time-consuming to get an accurate figure of the number of words. Assuming typed pages are c480 words and the written pages are 350 and taking an average of 400, a very rough estimate is that the text is a document of some 550,000 words plus appendages! This figure embarrasses me; the thought of working on a long document is intimidating. Given my other writings, it would seem that I write in excess of 100,000 words a year! (see NFR Part 12).

## Electronic Version of N F R

At the suggestion of my colleagues I have produced a digitalised form of the text of Notes From Retirement, but only with a limited number of appendages. It is a verbatim copy apart, that is, from minor corrections or

essential explanatory notes.

## Contextualising My Story: Notes from Retirement

Throughout my story is intimately related for varying lengths of time to first one institution, organisation, community, church, individual and group of people and then another. All of these have their own story; the life of some is still ongoing; others regrettably no longer exist or are alive. I have written as much about them as was necessary to tell my story and theirs authentically and how they related to each other.

As I have written I have made occasional use of information on the Internet. In some cases I have given website references but the ways in which the material on the Internet is so brilliantly and extensively indexed means that the vast amount of information can be accessed by minimal reference to the subject matter. But it was late in the day, the beginning of March 2013 in fact, when I was writing about my ministry in Anerley Methodist Church (section 9:1) that I suddenly realised that increasingly churches have websites which describe their current activities and their history in ways that I simply could not do. That led me to see the Internet and the countless websites as complementary foils to these Notes which can be used to set my story more adequately within the context of the institutions, churches and people with whom I have been privileged to share varying periods of my life and ministry and theirs. (As I browsed through them I was moved to find my name cropping up occasionally.) So, I was delighted to discover, that using the Internet can be a corrective to the inevitable egocentrism of writing about my vocational life from my own perspective.

There are two websites directly about aspects of my work and that of those with whom I have worked: ([www.avecresources.org](http://www.avecresources.org) and <http://www.preacherdevelopment.uk.7.net>) and there is one about the work of TR Batten (<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/batten.htm>). Also, some of my books are online ([www.avecresources.org](http://www.avecresources.org)).

Reading these Notes, therefore, with a laptop or an iPod to hand enables readers to set my story much more fully in context and to get more rounded pictures of the situations and places in which I have lived and ministered and the people with whom I have worked and to see where their stories have taken them.

