

PARTS 10-12: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

INTRODUCTION TO PARTS 10 TO 12

SOME FOURTEEN YEARS after I first had the idea for these Notes and six years after I started writing them, 'one of the things that motivated me to review and evaluate my vocational life analytically and reflectively and to write these Notes was a real desire to understand how it had evolved, what had happened during it, why, how it happened and what caused and enabled it to happen. I wanted to learn as much as possible from my vocational experience.

In Parts 1 to 9 I have completed a detailed description and examination of each aspect of my engineering career, my call to and training for the Methodist Ministry and my subsequent ministerial vocational life to date. Now I turn to teasing out what I am learning, my overall reflections and conclusions in relation to my: overall reflections on my engineering career, my ministerial life and vocation and the work done; my judgement about the ongoing relevance and implications of what I am learning for the work of the Methodist Church in particular and the Church in general in relation to Christian ministry and mission.

During my researching and planning of and structuring these three Parts, I became aware that quite instinctively I was approaching the writing of them somewhat differently than I did Parts 1 to 9. There was a common pattern in the way in which I went about those Parts. First, I orientated myself reflectively to a discrete phase through collating background papers and producing a working outline. Then I wrote much of it straight off by hand or dictated it into the computer. I did not re-read edit the material. Some sections, however did not lend themselves to this approach because of their complexity; those I had to draft carefully and edit and re-edit. Whichever method I used my aim was consistent, to complete each section before moving on to the next without any intention of overall editing.

Now, as I start on these three concluding Parts, I feel that no matter how carefully I might write pieces as I go along, insights emerging from

1 In discussion with Catherine Widdicombe on 22 November 2001 I set out my initial ideas for these Notes which surprisingly are substantially as I have come to write them. (See the file of my co-consultancy sessions with Catherine.) But it was some six years before I started to write them in September 2008.

reflecting and working on subsequent pieces may well compel me to edit and re-edit my material. So, I envisage writing the three parts as carefully as possible and sub-editing them to form a consistent piece.

As I start the writing, I have a real sense of moving from the past to the future in the sense of ‘future and past subsisting now’ in my Christian vocational life. (cf Charles Wesley’s him 662 in *Hymns and Psalms*.) A sense that is of moving from my past and the movements I have pioneered supported served with considerable love and commitment to new opportunities and tasks yet to be revealed and discovered.

Note on referencing Inevitably, by the very nature of these concluding reflections they contain multiple references to Parts 1-9. As I wrote them I eventually gave up on noting all the references in the text. It was tedious and cluttered up the text. The extended lists of contents and indexes facilitate chasing through references to what I have written about people and subjects. So I settled for noting only those references which may be difficult to trace in these ways.

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PART 10: OVERALL REFLECTIONS ON MY VOCATIONAL LIFE

INTRODUCTION

THIS PART opens with a section on the various ways in which I have enhanced my ability for creative thought and for promoting it. Then I turn to my professional discipline and its formation first in my engineering career and then at various stages in my ministerial vocational life. This paves the way for a discussion about the working disciplines and cardinal concepts that have informed and facilitated the various facets of my ministry as a practitioner in church and community development work and as a trainer, tutor, researcher, consultant and author. I followed this with sections on ordination for life and lifelong ministry, the nature of vocational life, vocational allies and soul friends and this section my spirituality. I conclude with an epilogue. Tracing out this pattern of development was fascinating and revealing.

I PRACTISING AND PROMOTING CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION²

Somewhat slowly and in fits and starts I am discerning overall pattern in the work in which I have been engaged over the past fifty years or so. Strong currents run deep and inexorably throughout my vocational life in this direction. They are towards practicing and promoting creative thought and action in my ministerial life and that of others and in and through the human and spiritual developmental work in which we engage in churches, Christian organizations and secular communities. These currents do not always flow smoothly, they can be quite turbulent and I found myself struggling to stay afloat in white water and to remain in the mainstream when caught up in cross currents and eddies. These currents have taken me towards the following cluster of closely interrelated objectives.

Leaving behind the metaphors – pursuing them further becomes convoluted thinking – I need to define more directly this strong current that has carried me forward inexorably. Personally, it has led me to equip myself as best I can to think as profoundly as I possibly can about my vocational

life and ministry, that of others, and how, separately and together, we can pursue them to best effect in churches, organizations and secular communities; equipping myself to think analytically, conceptually and pragmatically on my own and with others face to face one to one and in small and large groups. And to equip myself to be increasingly more competent in motivating and stimulating people to commit themselves to doing these things themselves and helping them to equip themselves to do so in relation to their vocational lives and the church and community work in which they are or plan to be engaged. On the one hand this involves encouraging and helping lay and ordained workers to become committed and empowered autonomous reflective and collaborative (the combination is vitally important) practitioners who promote egalitarian participation amongst those with whom they work and to whom they minister. Consequently, increasingly, through ripple transmission, more and more people become more and more able to think creatively for and by themselves and with others including these who differ from them significantly.

Although I find this enthralling and exciting and get great joy and satisfaction from doing it, it can be very hard and demanding and at times exhausting, depressing and demoralizing. And it is hard work. Consequently, even when you love doing it and have a propensity for it as I have, you have to be tenacious to stick at it when it is particularly difficult to do so. You have to not only be able to do it but also to be convinced that it is essential for your well-being, development, formation, individuation and salvation and that of others. And this is particularly important to those who find the rigour of analytical thinking difficult. Conviction of its importance deepens commitment and overcomes inertia to engage in it and laziness.

All this is not new. I have said it over and again. But what is new is what came out of my thinking quite spontaneously early the other morning of the strong underlying currents that have propelled me to equip myself and others to creative thought and action. Previously I had attributed this almost exclusively to my adopting the non-directive approach, now, in a flash, I saw that this was not the case. In fact, I have been stimulated, nudged forward and equipped to be a more creative and effective reflective practitioner and promoter of reflective praxis in many different ways, movements, concepts and people. Principal amongst them are the following. Much of this I have already discussed but I found listing it with brief comments most revealing.

Ways in which this has occurred

1. Experiential Education

John Dewey's essays on 'experience and education' and Douglas Hubery's *Teaching the Christian Faith Today* ('From experience to experience through experience') and the movement they represented took me, as I have already described into a new world of education in the Church – adult as well as that of children and young people. (See 3.66 etc). It resonated powerfully with a decision I had already made through reading H A Williams' *The True Wilderness*, to preach only out of my own experience and that of others. All this was early in my ministry in the 1960's. From that time onwards I have taken very seriously human experience – my own and that of others – in all the work I have done as a given reality.

2. Listening

I was most impressed by a movement which I think was in the 60's or possibly the early 70's which placed enormous importance to 'listening' attentively with utter concentration on what people were saying (or not saying) and allowing it to 'speak' to you. I tried to practice this and found it rewarding and it has become a part of my praxis. But I was, as I recall it, somewhat frustrated by the vagueness of it and the lack of guidance about how to structure and interpret what was said and heard.

3. The Non-directive Approach

Being introduced to and trained in this approach was undoubtedly the most singularly important factor in the development of my ability to think analytically and to help others to do so. It became a way of life and, as is clear from what I have already written, facilitated everything in my vocational life that followed in relation to the analysis and design of church and community development work and training others in this approach. I need say no more here.

4. Action Research

This diagram representing 'situational' research occurred to me: research on given working situations – on the work, situation or context and their relationship to pure research, sociological, psychological, theological – or behavioural and social science and faith research. It is useful to differentiate between situational work research and that related to the Christian faith and to see that they are related and make different but complementary

contributions to ministry in general and local ministry in particular]

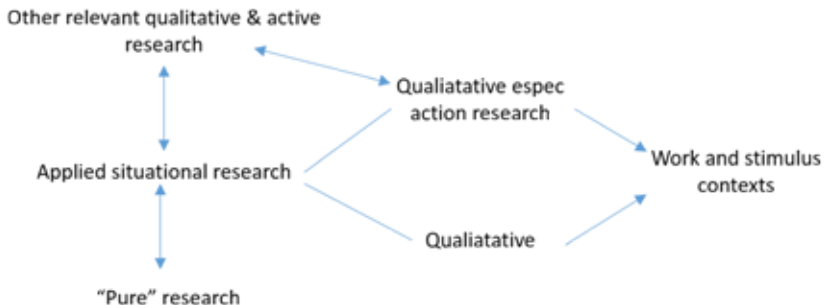
Whilst I was searching for a viable way in which I could research the work in which I was engaged in developing the Parchmore Methodist Church and Community Centre, I first encountered the theory and practice of action-research, a newly emerging discipline. Quite quickly I discerned that this approach would serve admirably my main purposes in researching the work: to enhance my own effectiveness as the principal worker to the Project and that of the work being done by others and to produce an academically sound evaluation of the efficacy of the non-directive approach to church and community development validated by the University of London. I found myself caught up with the excitement of breaking new ground in researching a particular piece of church and community development – a newly evolving discipline in its own right – as it unfolded before me. This was exhilarating and demanding; I had to do some of the hardest thinking I had ever done; it developed my abilities to analyze, evaluate and re-think the work in which I was engaged and to construct a conceptual framework for it. In many ways it developed my ability to think creatively.

When I came to work out the way in which I was going to engage in action-research I discovered that there were two approaches in sharp contention: one involved different people being responsible for the action and the research; in the other approach the same people carried out both the action and the research. Substantial cases were being made for and against both approaches and argued vigorously. For the points I wish to make here it is not necessary for me to rehearse these cases and arguments here. I recognized and accepted the advantages of locating the action and research roles and functions in different people and the dangers of subjective distortions in the second – and many other of the merits and demerits of interest to the two approaches. Try as I might, however, I could not see how the approach which involved different people being responsible to the action and research could work in the Parchmore Project or gaining support for it. I thought it would be rejected out of hand for many reasons. The logistics of the working relationships and partnerships between those engaged in the action and the research would be complex, introduce a research super-structure which would be dysfunctionally intensive and obtrusive and change the nature of the project from one in which work was done for its own sake to that of an ‘experimental research project’. This change of character alone would so distort the project that the value of the research would be questionable: the phenomenon researched would not be a normal natural programme of church and community development work. Whereas, the other approach could research the work being done

for its own sake. And, in any case, where would we find the personnel to act as independent researchers and the finance to fund them? Finding them would divert energy from getting on with the church and community development programme and introduce controversy.

Arguments about the respective merits of the two approaches, and my conviction that the approach that combined the roles and functions of action and research was the more appropriate one for the situation and purposes, logistically it was the only way in which I could see that it was going to be possible to do the work for its own sake and to be felt and seen and known to be doing so and to research it quietly and unobtrusively from within as it was evolving it. So I set about studying or researching ways and means I could continue to be actively engaged in the project as the principal worker and research it in the capacity of an action researcher. Batten became my MSc/PhD supervisor, his objectivity became a corrective foil to my subjectivity. I studied and developed ways and means of collecting, collating, interpreting, correcting for subjective distortion and evaluating qualitative data through being an 'active participant observer'. (There were of course definite advantages in my combined role not least that I was able to follow developments, sequences and causal connections from within; processes not easily discernible from outside.) Along with Dorothy Household, who was in very many ways a very able and effective research assistant, I developed a system of recording events as they happened, writing them up, checking them with participants. This was one of the ways in which we did the work more thoroughly and effectively and 'democratised' the research. I developed a method of evaluating change in relation to purpose which we used together in Parchmore to evaluate the work as it evolved and which I used in my thesis. I got people to evaluate and research the work. All this is described in detail in my PhD thesis.

I believe it worked; continuously assessing the work for what could be learnt from it and ploughing what was learnt directly back into the



programme as it evolved to inform the next round of decision making and action enhanced the quality of the work; at the same time it enabled me to do the theoretical work necessary, to examine and enunciate the underlying concepts and principles, to assemble invaluable and unique qualitative data and to evaluate it and to write a Ph D thesis to get the work assessed academically. I have used the material produced and the insights and understandings gained extensively in my subsequent work, my lectures and my writings and in stimulating other research.

Incidentally this resonates with some aspects of my experience of research at the RAE, Farnborough. My department worked closed with the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine. Doctors of that Institute insisted on being the subjects of experiments related to escape from aircraft and seat ejection. Their argument was that their scientific knowledge of the human body enabled them to read off more perceptively and accurately the effects, including the psychological as well as the physical, upon them. Not to make too much of a fine point of it, those engaged in church and community development work discern things that those who are not fail to do. Hence the importance of autobiographical reflective research writing.

Working on this section and revisiting my experiences of practicing and studying action research has enabled me to see in a new way just how significant this was in thinking things through critically and creatively in relation to my experience and work and helping others to do the same. This is the main point I wish to make and develop here.

The Battens gave practical shape and form to the praxis of the non-directive approach in relating to and working with people for development. Principally, they did this through developing the idea and practice of 'facilitating structures' which helped people to think more clearly, systematically, purposefully, constructively and creatively by breaking down the thinking processes into stages and steps in sequential order. They produced such structures for studying problems and cases and for dispensing training needs. (See *The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work* and particularly the brilliant flow charts on pp47 and 93.) They also introduced the idea of course members producing and sharing papers on their organization and produced outlines for these papers. They conducted the discussion on these papers expertly using the basic elements of working non-directively with groups. Whilst these were analytical and at times penetratingly so, they did not as far as I know produce facilitating structures of the kind they produced for studying problems and cases for examining and re-designing work situations.

My experience of action-research enabled me in collaboration over many years with my colleagues, to build on the work the Battens' did on providing facilitating structures on thinking steps, stages and processes in the following ways:

1. To research further the use of the Battens' facilitating structures for problems and cases in church and community development work. (*Analysis & Design* Chapters 1 and 2)
2. To complement the attention paid to structuring analytical thinking by developing that of ways and means of facilitating creative thinking about designing work and compiling analysis and design in a seamless process. (Hence the book's title, *Analysis & Design*, see chapters 4 and 6)
3. To design facilitating structures for analyzing and designing work situations. (op cit. Chapters 3, 4 and sections of Part II).
4. To produce a generic facilitating structure for examining any and all kinds of work with people and designing it stage by stage through a sequential process from experience through critical and imaginative thought to creative action. (Note the fusion here of the ideas of the language/terminology of experiential education and action research'. See *ibid.* Part II and particularly the diagrams and flow charts on pp 113-116).
5. To produce a facilitating flow chart of the steps and stages of the critical consultancy path of Avec Ten Day Consultancy work and theory courses. This facilitating tool was endlessly adapted for a wide range of work study project work and consultancies. (See *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, Part III, pp 357-65 and Appendix III).
6. To produce structures for consultancy and co-consultancy procedures. (See CMM et al.)
7. To introduce action-research projects and dissertations as an integral part of the MA (Mission and Evangelism) and the MA (Consultancy, Ministry and Mission) post-graduate courses and prior to that in the Post-Graduate Diploma in church and community development course.

Consequently the experience I had of action-research contributed significantly to my becoming my own analytical instrument and to help

others to become the same. Also it contributed significantly to realizing the creative potential in non-directive encounters and working relationships. On the one hand it helped to elicit, identify, order and assess the data, qualitative and quantitative from and through the participants. On the other hand it helped to analyze and design work programmes and projects, Using it directly and in its derivative forms enabled me and others to achieve things which otherwise would have been beyond us. The non-directive way of life facilitated most effective processes of action, reflection, research, design, actions....

5. Writing

Writing in one form or another had made major contributions to my ability to think and developed my thinking. I have referred to this in various parts of these Notes which can be traced through the indexes. This is particularly true of writing journal notes, making records, reports, theses, books. Recently I have seen through a book by Heather Walton that the significance of these Notes is that they are an exercise in autoethnography. I have said elsewhere that I have learnt much about working with people for development through writing records. Preparing distance learning material has taught me much about helping others to think in other ways than through face to face encounters.

6. Work Analysis, Design and Consultancy

Establishing the praxis first of analysis and design of church and community work and then of work consultancy contributed enormously to developing my ability to think critically and creatively and to help others to do the same. (cf *Analysis and Design and Consultancy and Mission Work* pp7f of the latter on the relationship between analysis and design and consultancy). Amongst other things the praxis of these two disciplines provided conceptual maps, aids to conceptual mapping and facilitating structures. Three ways of practicing consultancy praxis emerged: that between consultants and consultors; co-consultancy in which the participants act as consultants and consultors to each other in turn; self-consultancy (see CMM pp355-7 and 396 on this third mode).

7. Interdisciplinary interaction and collaboration

To be as comprehensive as possible I list this here but discuss it in the next section where it fits better.

8. Thinking People

I have learnt enormously from experiencing and learning from thinking people through interpersonal engagement and reading and studying their writings: learning, that is, not only from the outcome of their thinking but the ways in which they think. In this has been especially so in relation to original thinkers. The outstanding example is Reg Batten. It was my great privilege over many years to see him at work in thinking things through and to do so with him.

9. Thinking with Others

This has been an education into different modes and ways of thinking and how they interact, positively and negatively.

10. Evaluating Thinking Experiences

Evaluating thinking experiences, those which I have promoted and those of others to which I have responded and with which I have engaged, have been profound learning experiences. This is especially true of times when I have failed to think creatively or to enable others to do so.

³This is my first attempt at teasing out the principal ways in which I believe with all humility that I have become a more creative thinker and better able to promote creative thought. In doing this I have restricted myself to saying no more about the characteristics of each of the ten ways noted than I considered necessary to indicate the particular contributions that each of them has made and continues to make to my thinking processes. Elsewhere in these Notes and in my books I have explored the praxis of each of them in more detail.

The accumulative effect upon me of these ways is manifold. Various they have helped me to think more creatively in private and in the cut and thrust of interpersonal engagement, enhanced my competence and confidence, developed my emotional intelligence, made me more sensitive to the thinking of other people; aware of my own limitations and more humble in my own thinking and engagement with others and their thinking – and so much more. And, incredibly, the processes continue. I consider myself greatly blessed and extremely fortunate to have had a thinking life and ministry. For all this I am profoundly grateful and consider myself greatly privileged beyond my deserving.

There are ways in which I equipped and trained myself to think more effectively and to help others to do so. But the most effective way in which I developed my thinking was through thinking on my own and with others and reflecting on the process and ways in which I could improve my abilities. Amongst other things this involves gaining deeper understanding about the ways in which my own mind and thinking processes actually work and how more of the people with whom I engaged actually work, the strengths and the abilities. And taking these seriously, working to them, using them, developing them. For example, last evening I worked on some of this material and it simply would not come together coherently. This morning when I awoke it was clear and structured. This is a recurring pattern. I have learnt the importance of working to the rhythms and their timing of my conscious and sub-conscious processes of my mind – but I still try to force the pace and shortcut them, at times out of necessity, but the outcome is rarely as good as those which emerge from working to my natural rhythms. (See *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching*, P56f ⁴)

Thinking Moods and Modes

Then there are the different moods and modes of my thinking processes: the active moods and modes eg analyzing and designing; the reflective, meditating and prayerful moods and modes. And sometimes I move in and out of these different moods and modes to get different perspectives on that about which I am thinking. (See *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* pp 66-68 and *Consultancy, Ministry and Mission* pp 86-7, 91-3) All of this is also relevant to thinking about ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’ as well as about ‘thoughts’ and ‘ideas’.

The development of my ability to think of myself and to help others to do so is extremely important as I have already indicated in these Notes in various places. I have written extensively in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* about the ways and means – the mechanics – of engendering and promoting thought. The index on this subject is quite revealing about the different aspects of doing this that I reproduce a copy of it below. I have written elsewhere about it in *Analysis and Design* about thinking in private

4 I intended to add here a note about how a colleague of mine operates. Frequently, but not always, when presented with radical new ways of thinking about and acting in relation to a particular situations she needs to let them go through her mind overnight. If pressed prematurely to come to decisions about them or to work out the implications she is likely to panic and in self-defence become contentious and creative working relationships become impossible.

and thinking privately in public whilst engaging in discussions with others. What is also important is to acquire the ability to think from first principles which I enjoy doing.

Thinking creatively and rigorously develops the muscles of the mind and mental stamina. And it does something similar for the soul. It enhances our ability to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbour as ourself.

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A Reflective Practitioner and an Analytical Instrument

In various ways and at different phases of my ministry, practicing and assimilating these approaches and methods have contributed to my formation as a reflective practitioner and my abilities to engage creatively in reflective relationships ⁵ and as my own analytical instrument.⁶ And to equip me to help others to develop these attributes as part of their professional praxis. All this contributes to the development of collaborate reflective partners and partnerships not only between those who think similarly but those who differ significantly.

5 See my various writings but particularly the indexed references in *Consultancy, Ministry and Mission*

6 See *Analysis and Design* pp 136-7

II MY PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE AND ITS FORMATION

This section is about the working disciplines and cardinal concepts that have been central to my ministry and vocational development as practitioners, trainer, consultant, researcher and author.

[Earlier I described myself as a ‘ministerial technician’, [9.1.225](#)]

1. Engineering and Ministry

One of the outcomes of writing these notes which I value is that I have come to see my career in engineering differently and more appreciated. For the most part I enjoyed that part of my life, valued it for itself and for the experiences it gave me and had I not been called to the ministry would have happily continued it in one form or another. It proved to be a way out of a most uncomfortable and undesirable period of malaise and a way into a world of desirable possibilities. During the two years following my failing to pass the eleven plus examination, I had come to the conclusion that I was destined for a mundane working class life in which strangely, I did not feel comfortable. Whilst I knew that this was not what I wanted I did not know what I wanted nor how to discern and find it; I felt trapped in a situation without a desirable future. I was miserable. My way out was a chance encounter with a supply teacher with a passion for engineering and a place in a junior technical college. My life and prospects were changed; I became a different person; I was in an environment in which I flourished; I was outstandingly good at my studies and at engineering praxis; I loved engineering; I did well in my engineering studies. But, as I have described earlier, I became dissatisfied with the narrowness of my engineering education and yearned for a more liberal one. Also, I found myself unhappily and frustratingly trapped in narrow and closed minded Lancashire industrial engineering based on and bound by traditional, conventional and time honoured ways of doing things in which there was no place for imaginative and creative thinking and action. This was true even of the ‘research’ department in which I found myself. I was determined to find a way out of this situation. My attempts to get an award to study at Manchester University failed but my way out came through getting a junior experimental officer’s post at the RAE, Farnborough. That opened my life in ways in which I could not possibly have anticipated into open minded experimental research into engineering development.

Exposure to and involvement in this research community culture

induced in me very important processes of formation. Gradually these processes induced in me open minded ways of approaching and paying close attention to phenomena, thinking about them, researching them, hypothesizing about them and exploring them and ways of dealing with them experimentally. They also gave me structured and disciplined ways of doing all these things and of deploying my innate curiosity and ability to think. All this reinforced my engineering formation with its approach to attending to how things worked, how and why they were malfunctioning and how they could be made to work and or to work better.

As I have already explained, this was largely if not totally eclipsed by my theological education and played little part in the early stages of my ministry. It resurfaced through my introduction to experiential education and the non-directive approach to church and community work. Then it made major contributions to the development of the analysis, design and evaluation of people work and action-research into church and community development and providing consultancy services.

2. Enhancing my Own Discipline from Others

Throughout my vocational life my commitment has been to the ordained ministry of the Methodist Church: a profession and an academic discipline with established modes of praxis and standards of good practice. It is associated with a cluster of sub- disciplines: biblical languages and studies, hermeneutics, theology, church history...Generally speaking these discipline, associated with the ‘humanities’ and ‘classics’, made significant contributions to forming me as a presbyter and equipping me for the study and practice of the Christian faith, preaching about it, teaching it, engaging in apologetics and communicating it generally. Nonetheless, they did not equip me adequately for pastoral work and for working with people, Christians and non-Christians, individually and in groups for their development and for the development of other people, churches, organisations and communities. In short, the spectrum of disciplines and sub-disciplines associated with my vocational training was inadequate for the nature of the ministry in which I found myself involved. To acquire the additional skills I had to turn to other disciplines which I have described in various places in these Notes, namely: education, adult and experiential; psychology including the psychology and sociology of education and human and spiritual development; sociology and anthropology; community development and community studies; organisational and organisational behavioural studies etc. What I originally saw to be ‘foreign’ disciplines

became valued allied and associated ones. I had to explore these disciplines and those sufficient of the languages to be able to understand them. This enabled me to discover more effective ways of pursuing my ministry with people, taking practical and theological possession of them and integrating them into my own basic discipline.

Foraging

One of the ways in which I went about this was by foraging in other disciplines for anything which could help me to pursue my own discipline – information, techniques, ways of conceptualising things, insights into how people function and the nature of groups, communities and organisations, ways and means of working with people for development etc. Having discovered something that appeared to be useful I learnt how to use it and, if it fulfilled its promise I assimilated it into my own praxis and integrated it into my own discipline. Describing the process in this way disguises the complexities of the process and the pitfalls. I discuss these and the ways in which I was at times sidetracked in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* pp288-90 (cf *Analysis and Design* pp 146 ff and 251ff). In summary form they were: the temptation to get involved in other disciplines beyond the point of economic investment in relation to my purposes; becoming paralysed into in action through the intimidation of encountering expanding amounts of knowledge, conflicting theories, the growth of new disciplines and sub disciplines; feeling professionally de-skilled, inadequate and ill equipped; and the danger of being seduced into allowing other disciplines to eclipse my own.

Sub disciplines

Another development emerged from and complemented these processes of assimilation, the formation of sub disciplines within my basic profession of ministry. Three such disciplines emerged:

- church and community development;
- work consultancy;
- action research.

Through experience, study, research and training I developed these sub disciplines to professional levels and established post-graduate courses in relation to them; amongst other things this involved defining the curricula for church and community development and work consultancy. But I did not become either a church and community development worker or a work consultant or an action researcher. Consultancy, for instance was a sub

or allied discipline which I practised as an integral part of my ministry both formally through contracts and sessions (see sections on the work consultancy which I engaged) and informally. And, through using the skills in conversations, they became consultancies in all but name. This is by no means new, throughout the generations ministers have pursued other sub-disciplines of ministry and become highly competent as, for instance, academics in new Testament studies, history, theology...whilst pursuing local church and circuit ministries. Such studies obviously enhance their own ministries and those of others.

These sub disciplines simply evolved quite naturally through searching diligently to find ways of equipping myself more completely for my ministry in relation to work in which I was engaged and research that I needed to do: I did not in any foresee their development; and having no idea that I would form them I could not have set out with intentions to do so.

3. Interdisciplinary Interaction and Collaboration

The previous section describes how I used other disciplines to enhance my own knowledge in order to practise my own profession more effectively. I did not master those other disciplines and become a competent practitioner of them nor did I attempt or intend to do so. I simply set out to enhance my own competence in various areas of church and community development work in which I was involved. Clearly this process has very definite limits, it enhanced my competence but did not make me omniscient; I simply did not have and could not acquire all the competencies required in all areas of my ministry and work and in relation to some of the issues and problems which arose. To overcome my professional limitations I had to engage with other disciplines in different ways from those which I have already described. I did this in three principal ways.

The first of these was by exploring and interacting with other disciplines through published works in order to find information, ideas and insights to help me in relation to particular pieces of work or issues and problems that arose. An example of this is in publish research which helped us to understand and to resolve aggressive behavioural crises in the Parchmore Youth Centre in 1968. This we got from research work described by Michael Argyle in *Psychology and Social Problems* (Methuen, Science Paperbacks, 1964, chapter 4). This research demonstrated that some young people are least aggressive when they are not permitted to do certain things but not punished when they do. And that it is greatest when permitted and punished. We had been

not permitting and punishing! (See *Parchmore Partnership* pp 53-61 and my PhD Thesis pp 206-23.) Argyle was brilliant at summarising other people's research and making it directly accessible for use in this and other ways. I used extensively the book already quoted and *The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour* (Penguin 1967), *The Social Psychology of Work* (Penguin Books, 1972), *The Anatomy of Relationships – and the Rules and Skills to Manage Them Successfully* (Heinemann 1985). Other ways in which I did this included interacting with published works on: community studies; groups, group behaviour and the psychosocial dynamics of groups; organisations and organisational behaviour (the work of Gillian Stamp was extraordinarily useful); different forms of consultancy (see my book on *Consultancy Modes and Models*).

The second way was through consulting directly professionals of other disciplines in relation to a wide range of subject matter including that described above.

The third way was through collaborating and working in partnership with people of other disciplines. I did this, for instance during my Parchmore ministry with youth workers and community workers and much more extensively in training courses. In relation to the postgraduate courses in mission and in consultancy I did so with professionals of several different disciplines. The most important of these were with professionals in: missiology; organisations and organisational behaviour; consultants practising methods and modes of consultancy which differed significantly from my own.

[Notes. In *Consultancy Ministry and Mission I*:

- describe and discuss the importance I attach to acquiring the ability and humility to use other people's ideas and research critically and creatively. (See also p 339, cf *Analysis and Design*, p 147.)
- describe and discuss the competencies required by churches, organisations, taskforces and practitioners, see Chapter 7.
- describe and discuss the attributes required of workers, in particular see p 312 and reference3.
- chart the competencies required by reflective practitioners, p 313.]

4. Cardinal Concepts

Foraging for concepts has also played an important part in the development and formation of my own professional ministerial discipline.

At various points and stages in these Notes I have described, listed and discussed the concepts and the people associated with them which have significantly contributed to my ability to do my work more effectively and become integral to my Praxis. At this point I want simply to make a distinction between concepts and disciplines: concepts such as systemic hypotheses are common to many different disciplines and have, as it were, a free floating life of their own. Another more comprehensive way of reviewing these concepts etc is through the extended list of content and the indexes of these Notes and my books.

5. My Professional Ministerial Discipline

Sections 1 to 4 are about the formation of my professional discipline, the disciplines that helped to shape it, the diverse ways in which this occurred and the concepts and insights which have enabled me to practise it more effectively. Earlier in planning this section, I had thought of over viewing these disciplines and concepts in summary form, but, in the event, as these can be readily discerned from what I have already written in these Notes and my books through browsing through the extended lists of contents and indexes, I have decided not to tackle this rather tedious task at this stage because I do not think it would add significantly to my Concluding Reflections in general and the points I wish to make here about:

- The contributions various disciplines made to the formation of my own discipline
- My own discipline and spirituality.

Different disciplines have variously helped me:

- *to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and equipped me to teach it and to preach about it;* (This is particularly true of my biblical and theological training and studies but not exclusively so. Biblical theology was very important from my college days and for much of my ministry. Whilst in College and during the first part of my ministry I gave myself wholeheartedly to these classical and pastoral studies and the disciplines they represented to my great advantage and the enrichment of my whole ministry. The downside of this was that they overshadowed and eclipsed my engineering training to the detriment of my overall ministry.)
- *to understand myself, how to work to my idiosyncratic psycho spiritual nature and the way in which my mind functioned;*

- *to understand people, groups, communities, secular and religious organisations, their nature, how they function and malfunction and ways and means of working with them purposefully for holistic intellectual, moral human and spiritual development and for the interrelated development of churches and communities;*
- *to analyse, design, evaluate and research qualitatively and quantitatively my own work with people and that of others and to help those with whom I worked and other practitioners to do the same; (I have described how my formation as an engineer shaped me to focus on how things work and my experiences of experimental research at the RAE made me receptive to qualitative forms of research and especially action research.)*
- *to educate, and train me to engage creatively in these different kind of activities and in the service and support people engaged in church and community development work morally, spiritually and technically through providing consultancy help;*
- *to support preachers through in-service training programmes.*

Without naming them, this list shows the particular contributions various disciplines made towards enabling me to be more effective in relation to different aspects of my work and ministry. Also, all of them made significant contributions to my understanding of the Christian faith, how to practise and promoted it holistically and its relevance to everyday life and the development, individuation and salvation of people and the communities and societies in which they lived.

ii My own discipline and spirituality.

These Notes show the ways and means by which my perspective on and my relationship between my own discipline and those of others has changed and developed. At various times I have seen the disciplines of others from which I was learning and upon which I was drawing as allied disciplines or professions, overlapping disciplines and sub disciplines. Having reflected and written about all this, what strikes me forcibly is the way in which I feel that I have gained a discipline of my own with its own coherence and three sub disciplines which together form a closely coordinated operational vocational system. The way in which I have engaged with other disciplines has in fact built up my own discipline, expanded it, deepened and unified it in a quite impressive manner. For some years I have acted out of this unified and integrated discipline which I 'own' completely and not out of an amalgam or tenuously connected cluster of disciplines. To my amazement, this professional discipline has somehow or another been formed deep within me.

Exploring and foraging in other disciplines for ways and means of practising more effectively as a minister cum church and community development worker were often fraught and raised tricky and tortuous, painful questions about the theological correctness and missiological implications of including some practices such as the non-directive approach in my ministerial praxis: for instance, it raised tricky missiological questions about the relationship between non-directivity, the directive to make disciples of all nations and preaching; how did adopting the nda relate to my call to preach the givens of the Christian gospel? What was the theological justification for non-directivity doing no matter how pragmatically effective it might be? Working at the fundamental issues raised was intellectually and theologically incredibly difficult and emotionally disturbing and demanding as these Notes have demonstrated. Consequently the protracted processes – which are ongoing – of remodelling my professional discipline was a pragmatic, logistical, hermeneutical, philosophical and theological task which touched on some very sensitive spiritual issues related to and challenged my calling and the very nature of my Christian ministry. Possibly, my praxis was challenged missiologically and theologically more deeply than it was pragmatically.

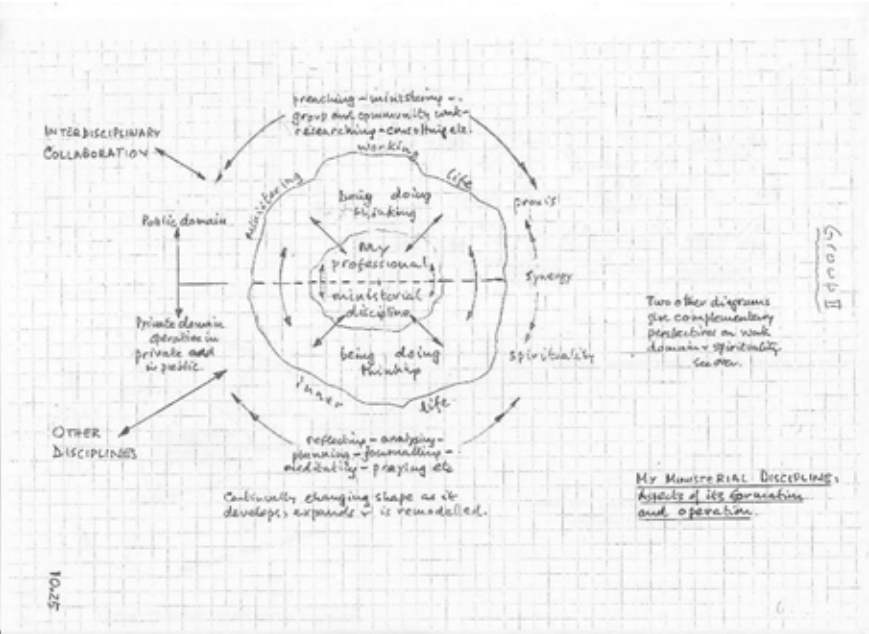
I find it quite extraordinary and deeply moving that out of all this messy interaction and confusion there has been formed deep within me my own discipline which is homogeneous, integrated and holistic: a discipline with which I feel entirely comfortable and in which I rejoice. Incredibly, out of the core of this discipline, I can and do pursue every aspect of my ministry from preaching to working with people in the secular communities to pastoral and consultancy work with quiet confidence in my praxis and its effectiveness. I feel at one with myself, my ministry and my professional discipline. A highly desirable state of being and doing in which to find myself. Of itself, this endows me with added dimensions of professional poise and vocational confidence and therefore adds to my effectiveness. Paradoxically, I consider this state and the professional ministerial discipline upon which it is based to be hard earned and a precious gift of God.

One of the aspects of the functioning of this unified professional discipline is that I find I can bring into play in relation to situations in focus and with which I am engaging, the relevant and appropriate characteristics automatically, immediately, instinctively and naturally; this is an astonishing and blessed phenomenon, at best, economic and elegant in its execution. Somehow, without conscious effort, I am able to select from the extended repertoire of characteristics – concepts, approaches, methods, insights, facilitating structures etc – which I have accumulated, coordinate and form

them into a subsystem appropriate to the task and put them into operation. It seems that when I think and when I apply ourselves to tasks or jobs I see need to be done and which I want to do, relevant aspects of the attributes form themselves instantaneously and temporarily into working systems which fit the task and go into action. (This is reminiscent of the concept of emergence in complexity theory, the arising of pattern through the process of self-organisation.) This ability is an integral part of my professional and vocational constitution. I am of course not unique in experiencing this but I still find it quite marvellous!

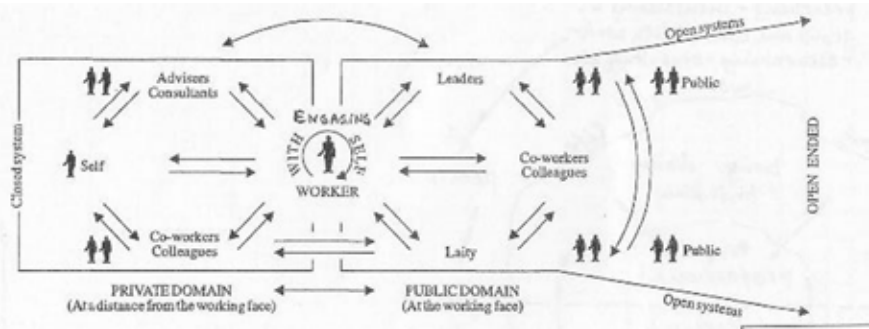
What I am also realising is that the evolution of my professional ministerial discipline and its praxis is intimately connected with and all of a piece with the evolution and development of my inner personal and spiritual life. They developed in and continue to work in sympathy and harmony. There is synergy and creative interaction between them which energise both my working and inner lives: for instance processes of hard critical thinking, analysis and design shade into reflection, meditation and prayer and vice versa: the one form of exploring phenomena informing the other; insights into the nature of problems, difficulties in relationships and how to do things come to me in reflection meditation and prayer; reflections are assessed, examined and turned into plans for action through thinking about them analytically; my subconscious produces insights and complex patterns of thought; courage, stimulation, confidence and energy are generated in my reflective and prayerful praxis. Consequently both are informed by my praxis and there is continuous creative interaction between: being and doing; standing back and direct engagement; my conscious and subconscious. All of this – my outward and inward activity and the interaction between them – is grounded in my ministerial professional discipline and informs, empowers, drives and motivates my vocational life in all its different aspects. So, my moral and spiritual capacities developed from the same sources as my capacities as a reflective practitioner. As I thought this through the diagrams on the next pages came into my mind.

My Ministerial Discipline: Aspects of its formation and operation.



Two other diagrams give complementary perspectives on work domain and spirituality. Both diagrams are from *Analysis and Design*.

FIGURE 8.1. PRIVATE AND PUBLIC WORK DOMAINS (p 195)



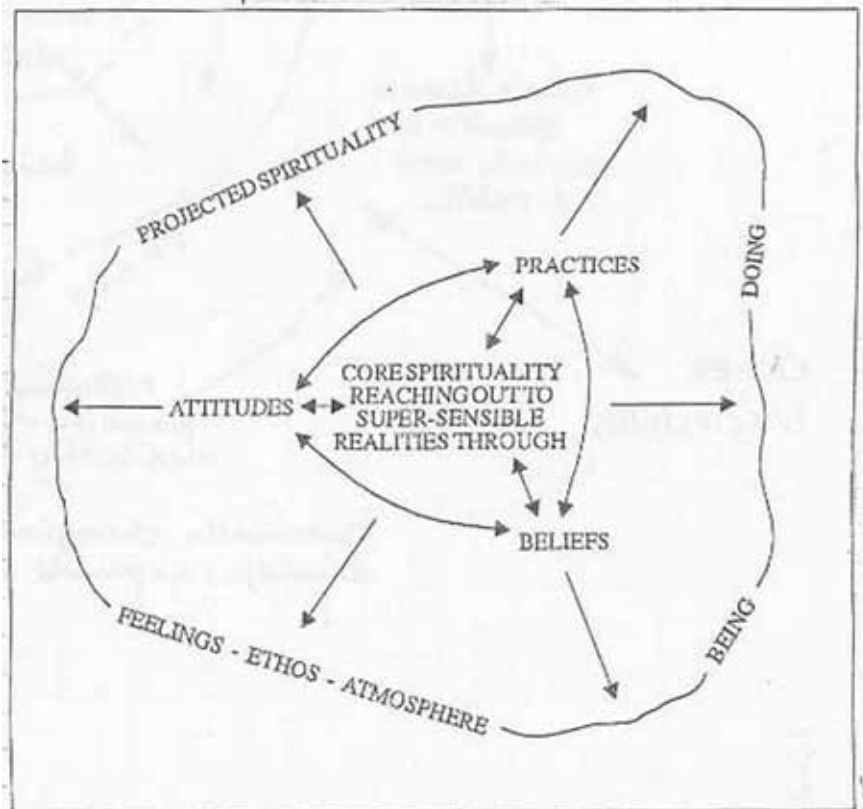


FIGURE 12:1. ATTRIBUTES OF SPIRITUALITY (p279)

III SOME IMPLICATIONS OF I AND II FOR EQUIPPING PRACTITIONERS FOR MINISTRY

⁷In this section I attempt to draw out some of the implications for equipping lay and ordained practitioners for Christian ministry in and through education and pre and in-service training.

During the 1970's and 80's I was deeply involved in church and community development work, with others I was concerned to introduce theological students to what I was learning to be of such enormous value. Occasional opportunities did come my way through invitations to address students in several colleges and to those in the first phase of their ministries. The success of these ad hoc events varied. Along with members of the Community Development group I was concerned to get colleges to build into their programmes introductory sessions to church and community development. To the best of my knowledge we never succeeded in achieving this modest objective. Principals and tutors resisted it. I recall one principal – or was it several – saying to me that they were receiving many such requests from enthusiasts for counselling, group dynamics etc. With all the good will that there is to some such subjects (students were required to attend one two week summer school during their training period on Christian education and youth work run by the Methodist Youth Department. I had lectured on these courses). They said that curricula were overloaded and it was very difficult to make space for such introductory sessions.

On reflection, I see that these subjects were being treated/viewed as 'bolt ons', additions to core curricula for those interested but not central to mainstream ministry and preparation for it and I am more sympathetic than I was to the staffs' problems in including them. Whilst I consider it to be important that the students – and possibly more important the staff should be aware of the various disciplines that practitioners have had to draw on to do their ministerial work – in contradistinction, that is to simply being interested in or attracted to them – my approach would now be different. Now it would with hindsight be more fundamental.

What I would now attempt to discuss with staff members of colleges would be what I am learning from the reflections on my vocational life described and discussed in this Part in relation to their approaches to, purposes for and experiences of educating, training and preparing their students for Christian ministry in church and society in the twenty-first

century. In particular I would want to share with them how enormously important to my ministry, my vocation and to my inner personal and spiritual life and their developments I have found:

- being deeply committed and able to think critically and creatively for myself, to do so with people individually and collectively and to stimulate and help them to do the same;
- using and developing my emotional intelligence so that my thinking is more than clinical objective intellectualism;
- thinking about the thinking of others;
- thinking about significant things that I resist thinking about and helping others to do the same;
- foraging in other disciplines for concepts, ways and means of thinking more creatively, effectively and efficiently;
- adhering into my own professional discipline of Christian ministry and of developing and remodelling it pragmatically, theologically and spiritually through assimilating into it what I discovered to be of value;
- distinguishing between my substantive discipline and my sub disciplines;
- interdisciplinary engagement.

I value these things for themselves and for the ways in which they engender human, moral and spiritual development help me personally and in collaboration with others to work more effectively and efficiently towards achieving our purposes. They are also useful in engaging with people who differ significantly from me. So they are helpful in ecumenical collaboration and engagement with people of other faiths.

I would them want to discuss with staff members of colleges in relation to their approaches to the education and training of their students in various classical and pastoral subjects the importance that I now attach to stimulating and enabling ministerial students and anyone engaged in Christian ministry lay or ordained of:

- understanding the idiosyncratic ways in which they themselves think, feel and work things out and being able to engage with it realistically and creatively;
- understanding and becoming committed to the importance of thinking independently and with others critically in private and in public about phenomena and events and stimulating and enabling others to do the same;

- realizing the potential and importance being able to engage in elementary if not rigorous qualitative research into their own work and becoming their own ‘analytical instruments’;
- foraging other disciplines to build up their own discipline and to form any sub disciplines that would help them to pursue their ministry more effectively;
- being aware of the allied disciplines from which others have obtained significant help and have them done so;
- understanding the place in value of interdisciplinary engagement and how to pursue it with the integrity in relation to one’s own discipline;
- understanding the importance of a coherent approach to ministry in all its aspects and what is involved in achieving and maintaining it.

All in all, therefore, I would be emphasising the vital importance lay and ordained workers being analytical, reflective and collaborative practitioners in relation to a phenomenon they encounter and the situations and circumstances in which they will minister. This approach is radically different from seeking opportunities to carry the torch for church and community development or any other discipline or sub discipline: it is a fundamental orientation to any and all aspects of church and community development work and ministry differing significantly from ways in which ministry is often perceived. I believe that my reflective analysis recorded in this Part would enable me to do this with informed conviction in ways which would simply not be possible without it.

Whatever is now being done in ministerial and theological colleges in relation to the thinking agenda outlined above, it was lamentably neglected for several generations. Consequently, an extremely important part of my/our work in *Avec* and in the post-graduate courses on consultancy has been to help practitioners to think more critically and creatively and to equip them to help others to do the same in the ways described above. And my experience would indicate that this kind of in-service training is still required and is likely to be so for the foreseeable future if those currently engaged in ministry are to be adequately equipped for thinking ministries.

I am highly committed to this approach for many reasons not least of which is that I am utterly convinced that in the foreseeable future a thinking ministry in a thinking church is absolutely essential if we are to deal with the complex realities and difficulties which we are encountering and rise to the enormous challenge of the apologetic and missiological tasks we face.

This is my first attempt at teasing out the principal ways in which I

believe with all humility that I have become a more creative thinker and better able to promote creative thought. In doing this I have restricted myself to saying no more about the characteristics of each of the ten ways noted than I considered necessary to indicate the particular contributions that each of them has and continues to make to my thinking processes. Elsewhere in these Notes and in my books I have explored the praxis of each of them in more detail.

The accumulative effect upon me of these ways is manifold. Various they have:

- helped me to think more creatively in private and in the cut and thrust of interpersonal engagement;
- enhanced my competence and confidence; developed my emotional intelligence; made me more sensitive to the thinking of other people;
- made me more aware of my own limitations and more humble in my own thinking and engagement with others and their thinking – and so much more.

And, incredibly, the processes continue. I consider myself greatly blessed and extremely fortunate to have had a thinking life and ministry. For all this I am profoundly grateful and consider myself greatly privileged beyond my deserving.

IV VOCATION, MINISTRY AND SPIRITUALITY

Earlier, in Part 8, I describe how I felt a compelling call to the ordained ministry and how Molly and I made the transition from my being an engineer to becoming a lifelong Methodist minister. God's call – for that is what both Molly and I and eventually the church believed that it was – brought into being/gave birth to a deep sense of having a God-given vocation. Subsequently it has given my vocation life in all its fullness continuously up to the present time through thick and thin, crises, the ups and downs of my faith belief and unbelief and during times of excitement, disillusion and depression.

In this section I reflect on my vocational life, my ministry and spirituality which have evolved from my call.

1. My Vocation

Having an irrefutable and irresistible 'call to preach' and a vocation to ordained ministry have been extremely important to me, precious gifts of

God and utterly essential for the work to which he had called me and the church has ordained me. Ordination, like vocation, is for life. (However, I do realise that sadly it is possible to lose a sense of call or for it to weaken or lose its impetus.) Providentially for me they remain vitally alive, stimulating and enabling. Inevitably, and not surprisingly, they are significant features in every aspect of my life and ministry. What has, however, surprised and delighted me is that they have taken on new significance as I have reflected on them retrospectively over the past few years – a quite different perspective from earlier prospective reflections. New insights have emerged from writing these Notes, co-authoring *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* with Neil Richardson and reflecting on life and ministry in retirement with my colleagues, Charles new, David Copley and Ian Johnson.

At the outset of writing these notes, some six years ago, I mapped out my vocational life. This helped me to write about it. Here I write about three important aspects of it: its durability; its function as the axis to my vocational life; and hidden vocational junctures.

Durability

One of the things which have emerged is a deep sense of the durability of my vocation and its potential to be immortal. In the theological reflection that I contributed to *Reflections on Life and Ministry in Retirement* I express this in the following ways.

I am humbled and amazed that the call is as a real now as it was sixty years ago and that I am still able to pursue my vocation actively, howbeit less vigorously and extensively, but still with deep satisfaction. As I reflect on it in this the eighty-fifth year of my life, the fifty-fifth of my ministry and the twenty-first of my ministry in retirement I consider myself extraordinarily fortunate and greatly privileged to have been called by God into the work of the ministry.

Doing this (vocational) work has led me to reflect on my ministry as a whole, what I have been able to do and what I have failed to achieve. ... Our contributions are consummated not in and of themselves but in the work of Jesus Christ: 'all things are held together (cohere) in him' (Colossians 1:17). Redeeming and integrating all the pieces of work related to human and spiritual well-being is Christ's work and not mine. I must not confuse my (vocational) contextual and holistic responsibility with that of Christ's. ... Another aspect of my faith is that 'in the Lord your labour cannot be lost'.

Coming as it does at the end of a long chapter on the resurrection (1Corinthians 15:58) I take it that Paul means that our work is to be redeemed and raised as a part of the general resurrection. In faith, this

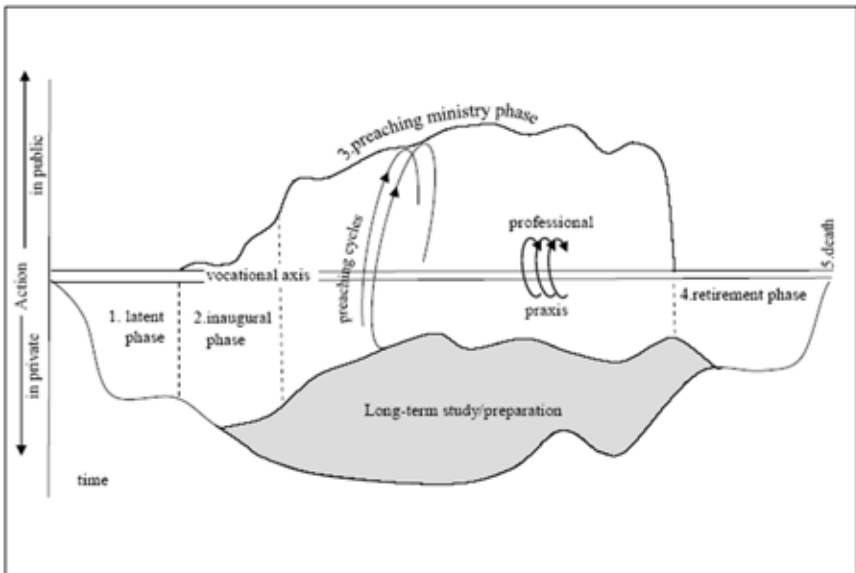
greatly encourages me when much that has been achieved in and by the church at considerable cost which I consider to be valuable is being lost and destroyed or appears to be so.

These tenets of my faith help me to put things into perspective and to see that my future and that of my vocational endeavour is secure in Christ not in me but in the flux and flow of the life of the Christian church and society. My work will end; that of the church and of Christ will go on into eternity. And to that I say, amen!

All in all, I consider myself to have been greatly privileged to have lived such an interesting and fulfilling vocational life.

Axis to vocational life

Another aspect that has taken on greater significance is that my call and vocation has been and remain the permanent precious and continuing core to my life and ministry; they are key to who I am, where I stand in relation to myself, church and society and central to my Christian and professional identity. They mandate, motivate, drive and empower my ministry. In fact, I have come to see my vocation as the axis to my ministry, a concept which I used to model the phases and dynamics of the vocational life cycle of a preacher in the following way. (See *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* Chapter 3 for notes on this life cycle model.) When I came to write these notes I decided that they should be about my vocational life; now I can see that



my vocation is, in fact, the axis to them in a very similar way to the way in which I conceived vocation to be the axis to the life cycle of a preacher and felt convinced that I must write these notes in relation to my vocation rather than my life in general.

Hidden Vocational Junctures

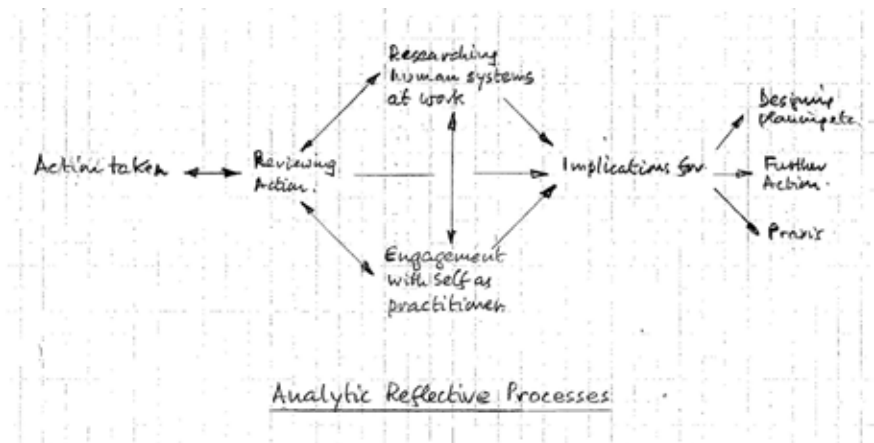
Having established my rationale for writing these notes (Part 1) and determined the nature and structure of the reflective exercise in which I intended to engage (Part 2), I reflected on and mapped out overviews of my engineering career and ministerial vocation (Part 3). In Part 3 I reflected on the evolution of my vocation, charted vocational phases and key issues, noted aspects of my vocational currents and flow and identified what I described as ‘hidden vocational junctures’. These junctions related to my:

- conviction that my ministry following my term in South Wales should be in towns and cities;
- belief on leaving the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit that I must concentrate totally to local church and community development work rather than take up a connexional appointment which Douglas Hubery wanted me to do and/or to do some research in the sociology of Christian education;
- decision to leave Parchmore to engage full-time in action research (Project 70 – 75) which led into my involvement in in-service training and consultancy work (Avec) and then into postgraduate training in consultancy, ministry and mission;
- declining the pressing an attractive request to take up a part-time connection appointment in 1986 related to the pastoral and professional support of ministers experiencing matrimonial and other problems. (To have taken up this appointment would have seriously compromised my ability to pursue my future work in the ways in which I did.
- **Postscript:** Whilst writing this section I came across a journal note that I wrote on 22nd October 2008 tracing some of my vocational roots to my childhood. From a very early age I sensed that my life would be associated with ‘desk work’ in contradistinction to ‘bench work’. This premonition persisted even though at the time the meaning and implications were quite vague because I simply did not know what desk work involved other, that is, than writing which certainly has been a significant part of my vocational life. Then there was my proclivity towards teaching which in my teens led me to being an assistant to

Prof Rifkin in his lectures and lab work and to doing some coaching in mathematics. Later I was involved in teaching engineering during my National Service. And, as I have already described, I developed a deep interest in writing sermons in my early teens although I did not actually preach until much later. (The note is in my journal file.)

2. Reviewing and Researching Action and Self Engagement in Vocational Praxis

Three interrelated processes which have helped me enormously to carry out work programmes more effectively and to develop my vocational praxis are: reviewing action, researching how human action systems work and engaging with myself as an analytical reflective practitioner and as an instrument of analysis and research. I describe and model these in this section and how they interact and then in the next one I described the analytic aids which have helped me to facilitate these processes.



Reviewing action

Reviewing action involves me in searching for meaningful sequences in order to discern causal connections between events and phenomena. These can range from ones that are highly creative to those that are downright destructive. What I learned from these retrospective analytical reflective processes I use prospectively in designing, planning and scheduling work with people for human and spiritual development. More specifically, reviewing action has enabled me to:

- identify what followed what, how and why, creative and destructive causal connections and what caused what.

- tease out connections, pattern and sequences in and between the subject matter of my vocational life and put things in the most meaningful order and shape, structure working outlines which I used to write papers and books (this invariably involved restructuring and reshaping the material);
- analyse and reflect on what emerged, concentrating on one part or aspect after another systematically, describe them and identify insights that emerge;
- analyse and reflect on sections of these Notes and the periods and phases and stages in the evolution of my vocational life, praxis and theology and producing overviews in verbal form and/or charts and diagrams;
- understand what I can and cannot do, should do and not do, how I should and should not do it; consequently it provides invaluable information and guidance for designing, planning, scheduling and carrying out future work.

Reviewing action is an important aspect of the science, praxis and technology of evaluating and designing human action for betterment.

Researching how human action systems work

When I am reviewing action I focus on the outworking of initiatives taken whereas when I am researching how human action systems work I focus on inner dynamics and mechanics. I use a wide range of investigative process to discover the nature of critical inner dynamic processes of personal/interpersonal/social interaction in and between people engaged in the life and work of churches, organisations and societies in general and that which is especially related to promoting human and spiritual development. Doing this variously involves me in examining work experiences, what is or has happened in development projects and programmes, investigating, analysing, studying and formulating and testing hypotheses especially systemic hypotheses. Sometimes I do this in relation to action and work in which I have been engaged or observed; at other times, in consultancy sessions for instance, I do it with others in relation to work in which they have been involved. My purpose in doing this is: to determine how things are in actual fact operating, functioning and malfunctioning, working and failing to do so; to understand and model the internal workings of operative systems; to discern how to make them more effective human purposeful work systems. Internal mechanisms, I find, can range from highly creative

to downright destructive. What I learn from these processes helps me to improve existing action and work programmes, develop my working praxis, improve the ways in which I relate to and work with people, churches, organisations and institutions and design work programmes.

In my researching I have found disclosure models, especially those expressed diagrammatically, help me to do this. Brain mapping also helps me in this process – but more of this below.

Engaging with myself as an and analytical reflective practitioner

Working with and for people for development has been exciting, wonderful, fulfilling, demanding and painful. The range of emotions engendered within me range widely and at times is difficult to control. Coping with disappointment, disillusionment, depression and the emotions associated with problematic relationships, friction, faction, experiences of anger and the breakdown of relationships has been extremely painful and caused me a great deal of stress, strain loss of sleep. Living with all this and engaging with the intellectual demands of developmental work with people have taxed me enormously in every possible way – physically psychologically and spiritually. (I return to this later.)

A significant part of pursuing my vocation purposefully is engaging with myself as an analytical reflective practitioner through constructive introspection and self-analysis on my own effectiveness and ineffectiveness to improve and develop my ability to work with myself and others and cope with myself when I am anxious, stressed and upset. Amongst other things, these processes help me to: examine and revise my praxis and how I function subjectively and objectively; to synergise the inner and outer sides of my being and doing; more to cope with my emotional and spiritual ups and downs. Consequently, they are significant means of researching my own involvement in developmental work (on this see *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* p 341-345). Pursuing this process constructively and creatively I have needed all the aids that I could get. Below I describe those that have enabled me to engage more effectively with myself as an analytical reflective practitioner.

Reviewing action, researching action systems and engaging with myself

Existentially the interaction and relationship between these three

processes and activities is complex and varied. Throughout my experience I found them to be were variously tidily and untidily sequential, concurrent and systemic. Sometimes they have been coordinated, integrated and quietly conducted and ordered and carried out calmly in reflective moods and modes: reviews and research have been carefully programmed and structured over short and long periods (examples my PhD, project 70 to 75, Mark Europe's survey of Avec's programme). At other times it has been anything but that – done rapidly, under pressure and often frenetically; reviewing, researching and engaging with myself in somewhat muddled processes in fast-moving working relationships which are sometimes tense and induce stress nigh on panic!

Surprisingly, engaging in these processes in quietly and hectic in private and in public has helped me to see things holistically, trace out causal and dysfunctional connections, see how things are working and malfunctioning, discern patterns and the direction in which things are moving; to see things in a different light, gain holistic pictures of what's going on, to take hold of events, assess what I think about them and take purposeful action in relation to situations and long and short sequences of events.

What I find in my work generally and have done so in researching and writing these Notes is that interaction between these three processes – reviewing, researching and engaging with myself – are synergistically creative when focused sharply on the specifics of human interaction in work programmes. Together these processes engendered multi-perspective analyses which bring together creatively internal and external aspects and dynamics of action and work programmes and the working lives of practitioners and the micro and macro systemically. They are equally effective in relation phases and stages of varying lengths. In these Notes, for instance, I have considered each stage phase on my vocational life and now I am attempting to overview it. Getting at the nature of constructive and causal connections and conditions, circumstances, activities and the relationships through which they operate and the inner dynamics of human functioning are, in fact, essential to the art and science of every aspect of reviewing, designing, planning work and carrying out work with people in churches, religious organisations and secular communities.

Creative Interaction Between Reviewing, Researching and Self Engagement

I have used these three approaches and written about them extensively. That is not new. What is new for me is seeing more clearly than I have

previously the differences between these three ways of getting at the heart of things related to working with people, their complementarity and the respective contributions they make to reviewing, evaluating, planning, scheduling, designing work with people and carrying it out. Below is a diagrammatic model of their relationship. Undoubtedly, this will enhance my praxis.

Analytic Aids to Reviewing and Researching Action and Self Engagement

Now, I turn to the analytic aids I have used to help me to review and research action and engage with myself and my praxis. As I have already said, I have needed all the help that I can get to help me to engage more effectively in these processes in private and public in relation to ongoing work programmes. In this section I describe the aids that I have found useful and illustrate them from my use of them in these Notes. I have variously encapsulated essentials of what I have discerned in different kinds of diagrams: charts and maps; brain patterns; disclosure models; structured lists. In one way or another they have helped me to conceptualise and work my way through things; to unscramble tangled events in thinking; to identify paradigm shifts; to evaluate and find ways of writing about them. As presented, these charts etc are an end product of critical analytical and evaluative thinking; they are instruments of my critical thinking; they have helped me to develop my reflective thinking and to express them; they are tools of my trade which I use in every aspect of my working life. (They have done for me what Sir John Hicks said about the way in which habitually he explains his propositions in words diagrams and mathematics and that he only publishes when he can do all three.)

In what follows I describe the analytical aids that have helped me, list examples of them which appear in these Notes and indicate those which helped me in various ways to review action, research action systems and engage with myself. I have numbered them simply for reference purposes. I have classified them under several heads although some could easily appear in more than one grouping

Charts and maps

Charting has helped me enormously to think my way through things systematically and systemically – not least when my mood and that of others and the tempo of events in life militates against doing so. More specifically they have helped me to identify and represent the flow of

events, to tease out creative and destructive causal connections, to trace positive and negative feedback through ‘loop analysis’ and, in general, to do what Gillian stamp referred to as ‘workscaping’. (I have described these different kinds of diagrams in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* pp 333 – 5.) Reviewing I have found to be an important aspect of the science, praxis and technology of evaluating and designing human action for betterment.

The following examples of these kinds of diagrams occur in these Notes.

1. Overall map of my ministerial vocational life plotting my circuit, connection of and ecumenical ministries and study, work, researching and writing. (p 62)
2. Schematic map of my general and specialised presbyteral ministries. (p 63)
3. Church and community development initiatives and Avec. (p 681)
4. Avec: the pattern of enabling disenabling factors. (p 761)
5. Avec and post-avec work. (p 683)
6. Avec’s closure and post-Avec development: systemic pattern of causes, culpability and consequences. (p 800)

I have used these mostly to review action and to engage with myself and on some occasions to research action systems.

Brain Patterning

Brain patterning and brainstorming have helped me to get ideas out of my head and onto paper and to put into some shape into those thoughts and ideas chasing around in my mind. (See *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* 186 for a description of this kind of diagramming.) There is only one example of this in the text but I used the method extensively as ‘scaffolding’ whilst writing these Notes. It is ‘A brain scan/map of my thinking about class issues’.

I have used these to review action research action systems and engage with myself.

Disclosure Models

Diagrammatic models have been referred to as a ‘rich pictures’ because they are a better way for reading the rich moving pageant of relationships and connections than linear pros. (See *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* p 333 – 5.) This is just what I have found them to be in my extensive experience of using them. There are two kinds of these diagrams, ‘scale’ or ‘pictorial’ and ‘disclosure models’. Disclosure models have helped me most. All of those

which follow are of this kind. They provide insights into ways in which things work, the inner dynamics and causal relationships. In this they are different from charts which, generally speaking, represent observable phenomena and events in contradistinction to what is happening deep within them which makes them function or malfunction, perspectives discernible to the mind, not to the human eye. (I have written extensively about these and the ways in which I have used them in *Analysis and Design, Consultancy Ministry and Mission and Diagrammatic Modelling*.) Examples in these Notes are:

1. Missiology and four related disciplines. (p 899)
2. Private and public domains of my preaching life. (p 936)
3. Systemic form of my preaching subject matter. (p 953)
4. Aspects of formation and operation of my ministerial discipline. (p 996)

I have used these mostly to research action systems and engage with myself.

Structured Lists

Structured lists have similar properties and functions to those of charts and maps. It is a method that I have used extensively in writing these Notes – and everything else I have written including lectures and sermons. Prospectively, for instance, it has helped me enormously – and continues to do so – to find the best way(s) and order in which I can present my thoughts, ideas and experience and describe events so that the text and arguments flow sequentially and is most accessible and assimilable. Retrospectively, lists of the contents of what I have actually written help me to edit and restructure my material to make it flow better. I find myself structuring and restructuring my lists until I get the best possible results. Making indexes for these Notes helped me in a not dissimilar way. Most of my working lists become redundant but the three examples cited below are structured facilitating lists of permanent value. (Making structured lists also helps me to get at the meaning of papers and books that I read.)

1. CV's (pp iv-xiv)
2. Lists of contents, simple and extended.
3. Indexes

I have used these extensively in relation to reviewing action, researching action systems and engaging with myself and with every aspect of my working and personal life.

Paradigm and Praxis Shifts

Over the course of my vocational life significant shifts have occurred in my beliefs, principles, thinking, relationships, and praxis and in working

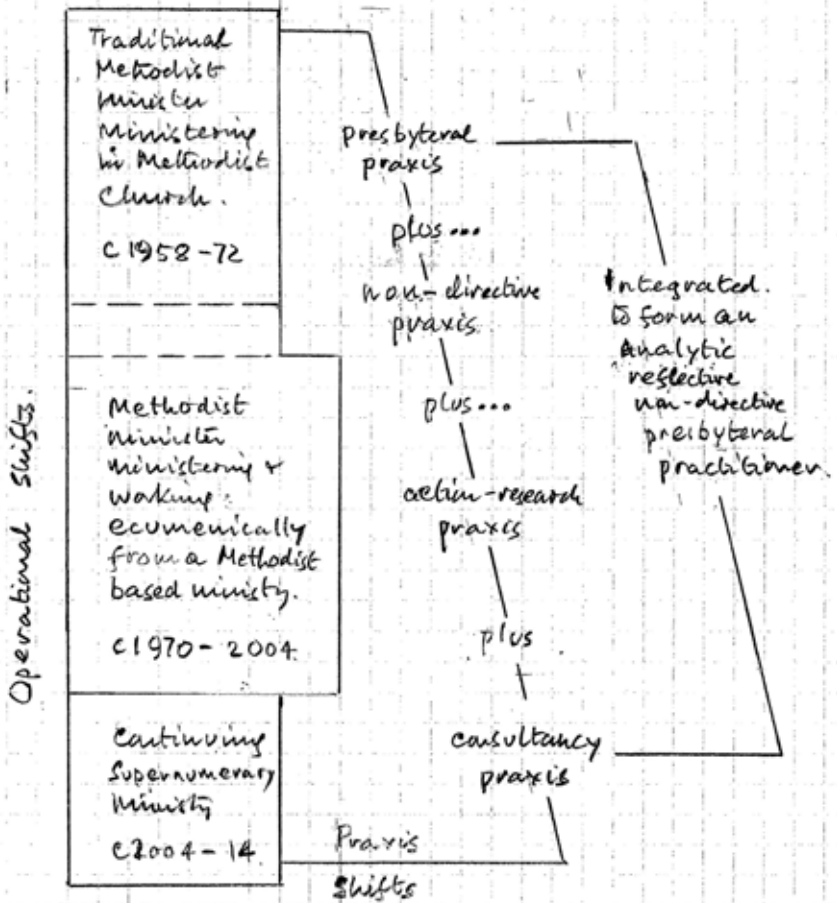
and organisational contexts. They have occurred in society, religious organisations and in me personally. Identifying and conceptualising them has helped me enormously to ‘read’⁸, understand and relate creatively to situations and to paradigm shifts. (A paradigm is defined as ‘a pattern especially one underlying theory and methodology’.) Awareness of shifts comes in different ways. Sometimes it is through sensing that something is changing imperceptibly or vague feelings of unease or dissonance. In the first section of these Notes I describe such an experience in A Note on a Shift Which Seems to Be Occurring in My Work and Ministry (Appendage to Part 1, p 1.8-9, 15th of November 2005). An example of the way in which this concept helped me is in a diagram listed in the charts and maps section: ‘Schematic map of my general and specialised presbyteral ministries’(p 63). The diagram below illustrates paradigm shifts that have occurred during my vocational ministry.

I have used these extensively in relation to reviewing action, researching action systems and engaging with myself and with every aspect of my working and personal life.

Concluding Note

All these aids, ways and means, have helped me to recapitulate, summarise, reflect, journal and prepare multi-perspective position papers which in turn have made important contributions to analysing, designing, planning and evaluating church and community development work in private on my own and in public with others. They feature, for instance, in my personal thinking, journalling, working with other people and consulting. As far as the particular use I have made of them in these Notes is representative of my working praxis generally, lessons can be learnt from them about their function and value not only in this extended autoethnographic exercise but in the work-a-day life of any and all forms of ministry. They are a small selection of the diagrammatic devices which have helped me to work my way through the subject matter and compose the text. Others are on file; many have been destroyed. Some are like builders’ scaffolding, a means to an end dismantled when the building work is completed!

8 I was introduced to the idea of analysis as diagnostic reading of situations from multiple perspectives through Gareth Morgan’s brilliant book, *Images of Organization*.



Operational & Praxis Paradigm Shifts.

3. Ministry

A major part of these Notes constitutes a multi-perspective word picture of my ministerial vocational life and ministry to date, illustrated by photographs, diagrams and charts with descriptions of events, causal connections, insights into processes and retrospective interpretations of my vocational story. Drawing on this I discuss various critical aspects of my ministry under the following heads:

Ministry in retirement
 Shaping my own ministry
 Public and servant ministries
 Influence not power.

My ministry in retirement

Vocational ministry is for life. Realising the reality of this saying has been an unanticipated and incredible experience for me. My retirement has unfolded as an extraordinarily creative experience beyond my wildest dreams; it is capping my vocational life and made critical contributions towards resuming my bereavement of Molly; it has been a career in itself – twenty years and still counting, howbeit slowly. When this dawned on me whilst I was working on the paper about ministry I became aware of its significance: the scale diagram below shows that it is much more than a third of the whole of the time I have spent in full-time ministry and about the same length of time that I spent in Avec! It is the third phase of my vocational life as a presbyter: the first being fourteen years as a circuit minister during which, inter-alia, I found and established what became my life-long vocation in church and community development, a vocation within vocation; the second as a sector minister engaged in training and consultancy in church and community development; the third as a supernumerary minister working flat out on harvesting the intellectual assets of Avec, writing articles and books, establishing and teaching postgraduate courses, conducting in-service training, providing consultancy services, preaching... It is proving to be an incredibly productive, creative period and deeply satisfying period of my life. I consider myself greatly blessed to have this ministry of the third age: call, ordination and ministry are indeed for life!

A reflective note⁹

Writing the previous section has proved to be much more difficult than I

anticipated. I have had to restructure and redraft it several times. I simply could not get the flow of ideas right. However eventually on Wednesday in a marathon session I reorganized and rewrote much of it radically and felt pleased with the result. Then, when I came to do the final editing yesterday morning, it was not where I thought I had filed it on the computer. For some time I thought I had lost it to my great distress. But I found it in a back-up file and proof read it and ran it off. After the cleaners had been in my study dusting etc, I found my desk watch on its side and it appeared to have been broken. For the remainder of the day I was weary and depressed. Catherine and Paula invited me to go on a holiday with them and I just didn't want to or feel I could. That distressed me but Catherine was understanding when I told her in the evening. Growing concerns about the Notes worried me – the section above had taken an inordinate amount of time and I had overtaxed myself in sorting it out. I so want to conclude them now. (In fact it took me about 10 days I now see.).

This morning it came to me that I must remember these are notes not manuscripts for publication. Over-editing and tidying them up is possibly counter productive except for key passages. I must orientate myself to write in that way. Overnight, some other thoughts have emerged about the previous passage. I am tempted to draft them in properly but have decided, not least because further thoughts may well surface, to annotate the existing manuscripts.

To my amazement and joy when I made a last attempt to get my watch going it worked! A sign? I read it as such! I am beginning to feel better.

I think I need to get back to writing the Notes rather than roughing them out and dictating them into the computer and editing and editing...

Last night, in spite of everything I slept for 2 hours and 4 hours. I rarely sleep for more than 2 1/2 at a time. My subconscious did some good work because I am moving on!

Shaping My Own Vocational Life and Ministry

In Section II above I described my professional discipline and its formation. Undoubtedly I was formed in many ways, not least by the hand of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. In that section, however, I concentrated on my part in the formation of my discipline. Similarly, my vocational life and ministry were formed in part by many human agents, spiritual forces and influences and providential promptings and opening and opportunities. Describing these has been an important part of telling

my story in these Notes. Although I can distinguish these two processes – the formation of my professional discipline and my vocational life – they were intricately interrelated and so complex that at times they merged into each other. As in Section II I concentrate on my part in shaping my vocation which took place in the overall context of feeling that I was being held, constrained by God in my ministry in church and community development from my time at Parchmore onwards, ie, from c 1970 to date.

Some twelve years ago in connection with some work on vocation in which I was involved (I think with Peter Howdle on professionalism and vocation in medicine and ministry. See *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* pp 44-45) I read a book by John Adair, *How to Find Your Vocation: A guide to Discovering the Work You love*. Two of the ideas which struck me were: that of creating my own vocation in contradistinction to entering into a given vocational structure through the ‘invitation’ process; that you cannot produce/magic, create a genuine and true sense of vocation – it comes, is given. These ideas struck me forcibly and helped me to see what had happened to me; they tied in with my experience. From my Parchmore days onwards I felt the context, shape, form of my vocational life and ministry was given by God through a series of providential opportunities or openings – Project 70-75, Avec, RIHE, Westminster College, Cliff College etc. At the same time paradoxical as it may be I felt I/we, Molly, Catherine and I/ (supported and helped by many others) had to work hard at shaping my own idiosyncratic vocational life and ministry within which I could (and did) pursue my call to preach and pastoral ministry in the Methodist Church and my ecumenical vocation and ministry to which I felt equally called in the fields of church and community development, training, consultancy work. There simply was not a given tailor made ministerial appointment in which I could pursue this duality of God given vocations. Victoria and Chelsea Circuit and particularly Chelsea Methodist Church played a major role in helping me to do so through giving me and Avec a physical base but more importantly a presbyteral Methodist ministerial station/appointment and a spiritual home. Thanks be to God.

¹⁰The Methodist Conference authorized my pursuing this form of ministry in 1972; in 1984 it allocated funds to support me in this work and in 1990 it adopted a report which said that I had a ‘vocation in this area (church and community development)’¹¹ and affirmed that funds should be

¹⁰ 29.9.14

¹¹ At a London Conference in the late 80’s I guess, I had a strange experience. I was there as a visitor at the opening in the gallery at Westminster Central Hall and spoke to Mrs Baker, widow of Eric Baker distinguished secretary of

made available up to my retirement to fund me in this work – ‘to ensure the continuing use of his special gifts in the area where they could be best deployed’. The funds for Avec were tied to me. (See letter in Appendages to Parts 9:4 and 5). This endorsement of my vocation was very important to me spiritually. Without it, of course, I could not have continued as a Methodist minister in good standing and pursued my vocation in church and community development work. Nor could I have pursued it to good effect without the support of a considerable number of people who believed that I had this vocation and helped and supported me – the Trustees, for instance, and particularly Ted Rogers and Trevor Rowe.

But it was not easy to make the financial arrangements in the early days and to find accommodation for Molly and for me. Molly lost her status as a circuit minister’s wife and my status was not readily understood by many people. Gradually our financial position improved and we emerged in retirement financially very secure and owning our own house.

Several things enabled me to shape this vocation and to pursue it effectively and with satisfying fulfilment. Amongst them are the following.

First, the unwavering conviction that my vocation in church and community development work was entirely consistent and compatible with my call to ministry – indeed it was/is an expression and an outworking of it. Both were God given and God driven.

Second, my circuit ministry and my ministries in church and community development were about local ministry and work to which I was entirely committed; they were, therefore, all of a piece in the relation to the vital missiological importance of the ‘local’.

Third, I was determined to pursue my call to preach and my work with

Community Development Conference 1951-70 and an academic. His widow was quite the opposite, practical and a teacher of domestic science. I met her through the in-service training session I conducted with Elaine May whilst I was minister of Parchmore. I asked her how she was. She said she was all right and glad to see me because she had a message for me from Eric who had been dead some years. I was bemused and wondered if she was serious. She must have sensed this because she said that she received messages from him daily and he told her what to do about all the issues and decisions with which she was engaged. Then she gave me the message: ‘Eric has told me to tell you that it is time you were back in the proper ministry! I was nonplussed. I knew he had an encyclopedic knowledge of Methodism while he was secretary. But my transfer to the sectors was two years after his term of office and I have no recollection of having a discussion with him at any time!

Project 70-75, Avec etc and to engage in local church life and worship.

Fourth, I saw my work in church and community development as ministry and it was received as such.

Fifth, the need for the services I/we were offering was enormous and they were taken up eagerly and extensively by practitioners from all denominations engaged in widely different kinds of church and community work and by Christian organizations and agencies. Indeed as I reflect I realize the vocational promptings came from my awareness of the needs and was justified and validated by it.

Sixth, I was able to do the work, had a flair for it and got much satisfaction from doing it. I felt needed, used and in the right job and place – and others felt it too!

Inevitably engaging in this ministry meant I could not or did not engage in others as I would have liked to do. My preaching ministry had to be curtailed. I have written about that. Also, I did not sustain my District and Connexional involvement by conscious decision. I wanted and needed the time it would have taken for other work. But I have some residual regrets. There are things, I feel, that I might have been able to achieve through doing so. John Vincent pursued his work in urban theology and in Connexional life vigorously. Why couldn't/didn't I? Perhaps I made a mistake in giving myself so completely and exclusively to church and community development work. The arguments for and against what I did are complex and are somewhat academic. But there are possibly lessons to be learnt about the most effective relationship between doing the work and promoting it, and engaging in the wider life of the Church. I don't feel able to address them at this state.

Roughly speaking there were three phases to my shaping my vocational deployment in church and community development. The first was related to my leaving Parchmore and becoming a full time research worker to Project 70-75; the second was in relation to becoming the director of Avec; the third was in relation to the interregnum period between retirement from Avec and becoming a supernumerary. Each of these junctures have already been described. The final one actually formed my vocational deployment during the first part of my retirement.¹²

¹² * One of the prayers in the readings for today (1.10.14) in the Methodist Church Prayer Handbook was:

Teach us good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to grudge the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to seek for any reward, save that of knowing that we do

Personal problems experienced in an aspect of my ministry

This section contains reflections I wrote some time ago on two problems that have dogged me as I have engaged in aspects of my church and community development work ministry. They have been significant aspects of the downside or shadow side of my inner life.

The first is associated with my regretting that I was unable to achieve all that I saw was needed to promote and establish the development and extension of church and community development. These feelings, to which I have already referred, haunted me even though by common consent I made significant contributions to the inauguration and development of this new field of ministry and mission.

The second is directly associated with the extensive educative, training and consultancy work involved in doing this work. The nature of this work was a service and servant ministry. Essentially it involved me in facilitating, promoting and supporting the ministry and vocations of others through offstage activities such as in-service training and consultancy. At best, it made significant contributions to their success for which they were credited and through which they were affirmed. That is how it is meant to be and should be in a servant service ministry. Quite genuinely I rejoiced in what they achieved and the status that they gained and felt privileged to have a part in it. Invariably they were deeply grateful for the help that they had received, acknowledged it and thanked me for it. For my part, I loved the work, enjoyed doing it and found it deeply fulfilling and satisfying. I was sure that this is what God was calling me to do. Consequently, my job satisfaction level was very high and I felt ministerially fulfilled.

One would have expected that that was all the affirmation that a Christian presbyter should require. For much of the time it was, but to my surprise and shame that is not how it was with me all the time: periodically I felt the need for further affirmation quite acutely. My felt need may result from a personal deficiency of one kind or another and/or the inadequacy of my spirituality. However that might be, confessing it is far from easy, but honesty is required if I am to face up to it and deal with it adequately. Also, if it is a common phenomenon, sharing and examining it may help others and lead to acknowledging the need for and provision of adequate

your will; through Christ our Lord. Amen. Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491-1556). *Partners in Sacrifice*, p10. With regret I realized just how far I fall short of the ideal of Christian life so powerfully expressed in this prayer.

affirmative support systems to those involved in servant service relationships and ministries.

Almost exactly four years ago I experienced a particularly debilitating episode of both of these problems. Deeply desiring to surmount them I journalled my way through my feelings and thoughts. The notes I made are presented in the remainder of this section. I leave them to speak for themselves.

I still live with the first problem but the second has abated not least because in the last few years I have received much affirmation in relation to my ministry in church and community development in general and Avec in particular. The award of the Lambeth DD was an unbelievable endorsement of my ministry. Last year I visited the Methodist Conference as a guest of the president and was quite overwhelmed by what people said informally about my work having changed their ministries and the ethos of the 70s – 90s. I am most grateful for this.

An abiding regret and unmet needs for appreciation¹³

Problem One

Soon after waking this morning I found myself depressed. A long standing problem was sparked off by Donald Nicholson's talk last night. At 94 his work takes centre stage at an international conference in Melbourne and he is making a major contribution through a video presentation. I am delighted for him. It is quite incredible. Then, Leslie Griffith's autobiography work arrived at lunchtime. What these two events have done is brought to the surface the feeling that I somehow fell short of breaking through to the kind of eminence that they achieved. I just hadn't got what it took to do so. Had I been able to do so I would have been able to achieve so much more through my life's work. And that I regret deeply. Reflecting on what I have achieved from very unpromising beginnings, does not, as some support it should, overcome or negate these feelings. They are painful and depressing.

¹⁴After some desultory and downhearted musing on all this I found myself trying to get into a better perspective. One of the positions to which I seem to gravitate and in which I feel much at ease is that of a facilitator, supporter, enabler. And this has been the case from my teenage years if not my childhood. Conversations with Raymond Routledge about his

¹³ 24.9.10

¹⁴ 25.9.10

involvement in dubious activities come to mind. Classes in mechanical engineering I conducted in Tel-el-Kebir, are another example. Then there is my extended career as a non-directive practitioner in in-service training and inter-personal support: “a servant of the servants of the Servant” ministry.¹⁵ But then I have been a public leader in this field and in my preaching ministry. However, I am most comfortable in my supportive, back room, off-stage supportive role. Yet, I continue to yearn for and to lament the absence of a high profile ministry in multiple roles and functions like Leslie. That did not happen and is certainly not going to happen now: I am in many ways what I have been and became. And if it had, it would have exacted a high price on me and even more so on Molly: I may not have been able to maintain it. Please God help me not only to accept and be reconciled to my vocational lot destiny but to rejoice in it and be thankful that through your providence I have become established in a key ministerial field and to some considerable measure, by common current, effective and successful in what is my best movements I see to be my rightful vocational niche.

Problem Two

A difficult and distressing recurring shadow side of helping others confidentially and quietly with their ministries and work is that it is publically unheralded. There are times when I yearn public acclaim and affirmation. It occurs sometimes but not always when public figures receive praise and honour for achievements towards which I have made significant contributions through consultancy help and support. Rarely do I, and other enablers for that matter, receive their rightful share of that acclamation because of the nature and of the consultancy help and the conditions under which it is proffered and features necessary to the efficiency of those forms of help. An on occasions when the help is publically acknowledged I am not generally presence to experience it and the refuse it might receive. Essentially, because consultancy help is a private and confidential transaction, so are expressions of gratitude. Gratification is one, but only one arguably not the most important energizing stimulants that helps practitioners to keep at their work especially when it is demandingly difficult and problematic.

Self-gratification, is, of course, for me a fundamental and wholesome form of gratification. But however important this is, periodically I need

15 See H&P's 653 v3 for inspiration for this phrase. Looking through Pratt Green's hymns to find this ref I was struck by the number of refs to 'servant ministry and the servant ministry of Christianity cf for eg, 8.4, 200 v2, 686 v3, 594 v3, 551 v1, 455 v2, 454 v3, 169 v7

gratitude and affirmation from others, especially those whose judgment I respect and I need it to be expressed in various measures publically as well as privately. At times when I am feeling deprived of public recognition my soul cries out for it when I see, for instance, a concert-soloist receiving deserved rapturous applause for their performance – proper recognition of their performance, their hours and years of demanding and sacrificial practice and training and a spur to further punishing private effort and training. Deprivation of these seems so unfair. I am almost ashamed to write this piece because it reveals so much about me, any weaknesses and, possibly, my insecurity. It indicates my lack of grace and humility which are proper spiritual antidotes to those debilitating feelings and provide the spiritual resources to live and work without public recognition over long periods: in fact they help us to live a life of deferred gratification. (Something, incidentally, required in writing these notes!) But write honestly and openly I must if I am to make any progress in achieving the purposes I have set myself for these Notes.

Sadly, over many years these archetypical attitudes, feelings and postures have erupted times without number under predictable circumstances without being corrected. Consequently, they are deeply ingrained in my psyche and in my self-identity. Expressing them has only reinforced them to my shame. I have half-heartedly challenged them but they emerge largely unaltered. However, they have served some useful emotional functions through being self indulgent, self pitying, cries for sympathy, appreciation and affirmation. Here I want to make an effective attempt at changing and healing them so that I can, howbeit late in my life, move towards and embrace a more realistic, healthy and balanced perspective on my vocational life in my servant niche that is more emotionally satisfying. And that is one of the aims of these notes!

Towards Containing and Overcoming these Problems

Now I turn to ways and means of compensating for, containing, correcting and living with these problems. Over the years I have discovered ways and yet the problems have recurred, why? I want to see if I can find ways of reinforcing preventative measures and reducing the impact of their recurrence if not eliminating them.

Problem One: the regret that I lacked skills and abilities to achieve all I saw to be urgently needed in the fields of church and community development, in-service training and consultancy praxis. (One aspect of this was the failure to secure the future provision of services provided by Avec which will be

dealt with in Section 9.4).

Undoubtedly, there is much substance in this regret, more progress would have been made if I had had more skills and abilities, higher national and academic profiles, and more self confidence, better connections and put myself forward more and promoted myself better, but it is my negative emotional and spiritual response to these facts of life that is at the heart of the problem, not the facts, as we will see are commonplace in any human development systems. But I did not have these abilities and do some of these things. There was a salvatory moment during a retreat at St Beuno's when I was haranguing God vehemently about the inadequacy of my gifts for the work he had given me.

Suddenly the words rang through my whole being:

What you have got is enough for your task, not for all that has to be done....

I have given you a very important talent

- the ability to work with people;
- the non-directive approach;
- skills in work consultancy, listening etc;
- there is no one better at this.

I have given you six of the best minds in your research group....

Get on with what you have and can do.....

(See my personal and confidential notes of that St. Beuno's retreat, BKI pp 28-29 and sermon 473).

That put me in my place! It certainly helped me to come to terms with my position, limitations, opportunities and to get on with researching and writing no fewer than for substantial books which were published between 1995-1996 (see p2 of my CV), a not inconsiderable achievement given my insecurities about writing well or attractively. I did not do all this on my own, of course; I had an enormous amount of help and support but it involved countless days of struggling to get complex subject matter into some coherent form. Nonetheless, in spite of this and many other insights and achievements, the regret has recurred. This is indicative of its depth and power and the sheer difficulty of coming to terms with no less than two

things: ones own limitations and impotence; living and working in God's economy. Much has been said about the first of these and more is to come in relation to overcoming the negative affective power of both problems.

The second of these things takes us into the nature of the working economy and structures of the Kingdom of God – and for that matter in secular institutions. To state the obvious, however great or limited my contributions might be it is only one contribution to all that is necessary to achieve God's or human purposes in this world. Collaborative team work is required; the Church is the body of Christianity. So my regret should be regret that the human and divine contributions to date have not been able to achieve all that I desire not to say anything about what God desires. Within my own vocational work, it is more appropriately directed to the collective not simply the personal failure of achieve. Sadness that these were not more people committed to the enterprise or particularly academically able and skilled people; that there was no one to follow Catherine and me in Avec and to serve it as we did or even better; that more resources were not made available by the churches and that they did not ensure its continuance; that there was not more support; that finance was made available so that we would research our work, write about it and promote it. Oh, and so much more. Briefly stated, we were unable to attract a work force which had the complement of skills required to get to the heights of which I am thinking. The resistance must have been enormous because the effort expended was prodigious!

At the end of the day, of course, perfection eludes us and through faith I rest on two fundamentals of my Christian faith. First, that all things cohere in Christ, "all things are held together in him". (Colossus 1:17). In my early days in Parchmore this became an enormously important concept for me – and has remained so. Prior to taking up the Parchmore appointment I had been for some time, and increasingly involved in the work of the Church at regional and national levels. And I had come to believe that widespread effective change which was substantive was inaugurated at those levels rather than locally. How wrong could I be and my subsequent work proved that. But at that time I believed it. At the same time I was utterly convinced that I must give everything I possibly could to the Parchmore project if I was to honour it, learn from it and give it the best chance of succeeding. This and the conviction that, amongst other things and even above them, I must withdraw from all my district and national work. The tension between these conflicting beliefs was awful and I remember one day stomping around the manse arguing with myself and God and, whenever I entered a room where Molly was, with her. Eventually, I decided to give

everything I could to Parchmore, I could do no other even though I still thought that significant change came from above, not below. Two things put the decision into first and then a providential context. The truth of the text from Colossus and the passage in which it is set consumed me; they came to life for me, possessed my soul and excited my mind and heart. My job was to do my bit along with everyone else, to do all I could to aim for holistic development – and of the rest to leave it to Christ to put it all together in the ultimate act of divine creation. I genuinely felt free to get on with Parchmore – and that I did night and day for six years and more.

Another illumination of a similar kind occurred some ten years ago when the significance of Corinthians 15:58 exploded within me: ‘..... in the Lord your labour cannot be lost’. At the end of a chapter dedicated to the resurrection it surely meant, I was convinced, that our work, effort, achievements are raised as part of the great cosmic resurrection!

There are yet other things which I believe help me to counter and cope with this recurring regret at the heart of Problem One. Briefly stated they are in no particular order:

- My conviction about and commitment to my vocation;
- Nor did I use my resources so widely and superficially that the action did not have the depths to take root. All my work was in-depth work. I retained a creative focus, even over a wide range of projects and unclear. This genius of app. and method.
- My thorough-going responsible stewardship of my gifts and resources; (I believe I have made the most of my abilities and resources. I have not squandered them; I have been single minded and focused to a fault; I have pushed myself to the limits of my capacity over long periods of time; I eschewed attending the Methodist Conference, for instance work with returning missionaries. Had I attended I might have gained more attention and a connexional position – perhaps I should. Observing my boss for many years, Edward Rogers, at work, I suddenly realized that he always worked well within his capacity because his intellectual reserves were so enormous. When I ventured to share this observation with him his somewhat indignant reply was, “of course do”. Whereas I frequently laboured at the extreme limits of my strength, reserves and ability).
- My achievements by any standard were considerable if not extensive and received recognition, not least by being awarded a Lambeth DD by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2006;

- My publications;
- Given my start in life and my limited gifts I did achieve much and gain exalted distinction.

One could reasonably expect that these conceptual considerations (theological, spiritual and intellectual) combined with outcomes of the work done (actual achievements and public recognition) would completely overcome or prevent the regret. That is not the case. In fact the opposite seems to apply, that the sense of regret regularly rises in its orbit and eclipses all these counterbalancing factors. And this is so even though, at one stage of my vocational journey or another, I have recognised these factors, and seen them as supportive and corrective, given my full assent to them and internalized them. My experience is that incidents of the kind described earlier put out of kilter carefully balanced perspectives constructed by the various factors I have described. To put it another way, the regret surfaces and dominates and induces lopsided views and depresses me. (Recording this is making me feel emotional about the power of this ‘recurring’ phenomenon). Why does this happen? I do not know is the honest answer and therefore I can only speculate about possible reasons and an effective antidote – but that I must attempt.

¹⁶Several possible explanations emerged in the first round of reflections before I came to see something but I do not think I had seen before. Before coming to that I must try to get some of these on paper. Dwelling on the regret could be masochistic indulgence or simply self denigration or false humility or a form of self-defence. Another possibility is that it emerges from a more basic and abiding sense of failure going back to my eleven plus failure. Allowing it to dominate and suffuse my consciousness is emotional and at times melodramatic indulgence, sinfulness, to which I am periodically and chronically prone. God forgive me!

Eventually I came to see things in a quite different way which shed new light on the phenomenon for me. In practice three things seem to interact: the perspectives I have upon my vocation, my mood and the context in which I find myself. It seems that I select from my repertoire of perceptions on my vocation and life’s work by way of response or reaction to my mood and/or my current context. For instance, if I am depressed my sense of failure might surface more naturally than one of success and achievement. Reciprocal interaction increases both my depression and my sense of failure. Exposure to the success of others, as we have seen, can induce my own sense of failure. Once aroused, counteracting these feelings is not

easy. Consciously and wilfully introducing more position and optimistic perspectives does not always nor automatically overcome or displace the negative and pessimistic ones. The interaction between substantive perspectives, mood and context is complex and possibly random – or at least it appears so; organizing, directing and manipulating them can be difficult and at times simply not possible, they seem to have a life of their own. Glimmering this (but finding it difficult to describe it as clearly as I would like) several things started to become clearer.

The various perspectives I have on the effectiveness and value of my vocation are independent entities and operate as such. They can be put together in a cluster as I have done above but that does not represent them as or make them into an interactive system of key factors; it does not integrate them under an overarching concept. And it must not be assumed that that is so. So far, I have not found an overarching concept. If this analysis is correct, it follows that the different perspectives cannot act in concert, they can only act separately or possibly in parallel. This helps us to be clearer about what we are doing when we try to get the factors down on paper in an orderly way as I have done above and the usefulness and value of doing so. We are not forming them into an interactive system – and it is dangerous to assume, as I think I have, of doing so. We are listing them as clearly as possible, itemizing them. Getting them in good order on paper is undoubtedly useful, my experience bears that out; amongst other things it helps me to get them into better and good order in my head, my heart and my psyche. But then one does not automatically follow from the other as I well know because getting them in good itemized order is quite a different process from writing them down – but an utterly vital one. It helps to know when and possibly why they come into play unbidden and to draw upon them so that different perspectives are approximately in action. For instance it helps me to know and evaluate why this regret is active – it simply my speaking? Is it a reaction to some external event? Is it a realistic reflection on my / our / their vocational failure?

Where does this take me?

It is important to understand the dynamics, to be aware of them in action and to take account of them. The regret is most damaging and debilitating when operating in isolation from other features of my vocational life and commitments. Work at internalizing what has emerged.

- Consider whether there is an overarching perspective on my vocation
- Journalising is important, i.e. finding the time, leisure energy to think issues such as these though even at this late stage of my life. It is therapeutic.
- When the ideas in this piece have mattered in my mind and soul they will probably benefit from serious editing and re-writing.
- Interpersonal support is extraordinarily important in relation to these issues and correcting my perspectives.
- When I do this it gives me a better subjective purchase on my vocational life.

Problem Two: working privately and confidentially on the work and vocations of others without adequate public recognition and acclaim. This arises particularly in relation to the in-service training and consultancy work described in area 4. Surprisingly, it does not apply to area 3, pastoral work. This is reproduced from pp4 & 5. I wrote earlier about this problem as follows.

A difficult and distressing recurring shadow side of helping others confidentially and quietly with their ministries and work is that it is publically unheralded. There are times when I yearn public acclaim and affirmation. It occurs sometimes but not always when public figures receive praise and honor for achievements to work which I have made significant contributions through consultancy help and support. Rarely do I, and other enablers for that matter, receive their rightful share of that acclamation because of the nature of the consultancy help and the conditions under which it is proffered – features necessary to the efficiency of those forms of help. And on occasions when the help is publically acknowledged I am not generally not presence to experience it and the refuse it might receive. Essentially, because consultancy help is a private and confidential transaction, so are expressions of gratitude.

Gratification is one, but only one and arguably not the most important energizing stimulants that helps practitioners to keep at their work especially when it is demandingly difficult and problematic. Self-gratification, is, of course, for me a fundamental and wholesome form of gratification. But however important this is, periodically I need gratitude and affirmation from others, especially those whose judgment I respect and I need it to be expressed in various measures publically as well as privately. At times when I am feeling deprived of public recognition my soul cries out for it when

I see, for instance, a concert-soloist receiving deserved rapturous applause for their performance and proper recognition of their performance, their hours and years of demanding and sacrificial practice and training and a spur to further punishing private effort and training. Deprivation of these seems so unfair. I am almost ashamed to write this piece because it reveals so much about me, my weaknesses and, possibly, my insecurity. It indicates my lack of grace and humility which are proper spiritual antidotes to those debilitating feelings and provide the spiritual resources to live and work without public recognition over long periods: in fact they help us to live a life of deferred gratification. (Something, incidentally, required in writing these notes!) But write honestly and openly I must if I am to make any progress in achieving the purposes I have set myself for these Notes.

Several things, I find compensate for this need or help me to endure it when it is not met.

- My preaching ministry with its immediate feedback which is normally positive and sometimes overwhelmingly so. It gives me a real feeling to do the preparatory work (which is often hard and sometimes painful. Cf *SPP*) for preaching and to do things which lack the external stimulant of affirmation.
- Notwithstanding what I have said about this problem, my capacity to work for long periods on my own on tasks where the external rewards and satisfaction are long deferred is considerable. In fact, I enjoy it enormously and find it deeply fulfilling, gratifying and satisfying. That does not mean I do this private work entirely out of my own resources and resolve, it is bolstered and in a sense energized by the private interpersonal support, encouragement and help of family, colleagues and soul friends who believe in me, love me, share the ups and downs of such endeavors as the accompany me intimately. Writing these notes exemplifies this attribute as do my books.
- Sharing in other peoples' work, helping them, however modestly, to achieve their vocational aspirations and accompanying them in times of success and failure in the privacy and confidentiality of consultations is an enormous privilege with enormous rewards. Engaging with people on such holy ground is to be in the presence of God, it is as much an act of prayerful dialogue as it is an exercise in work analysis and design. It opens up amazing words of human and spiritual knowledge and understanding and bonds people together at great depths. It multiplies exponentially enables

one to contribute to the vocations of others and therefore extends and multiplies exponentially ones contribution to the Christian project in ways which are simply not possible through ones own personal field work. My vocation because, in a sense, the vocations of others which together is the collective vocation of us all and the overarching vocation of Christ. And, to give even further added value to this servant ministry to the ministries of the ‘servant of the Servant’, it nourishes and enriches and informs me in the pursuit of my personal vocation and times can be described as ‘circular’. In view of each enormous and privileged gratification and reward it seems spiritually obscene to desire or to need more. And it is. But that has been my need. Having poured out my heart above in a way I have not done previously, I feel repulsed by it and what it reveals about me. Possibly it will reduce my need. Another part of me says that the sense of unworthiness (sin? guilt?) induced by the unexpected power of this exposition of the rewards in the work itself should not prevent my taking need that has recurred over the years seriously.

Writing this piece did not take long (possibly thirty minutes) but was an experience of timelessness, I felt I was in an enormously expansive spiritual place. It has moved me deeply, shaken my foundations and reshaped my feelings. I am overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude to God for my vocational experience; I am mortified at the feelings I have had which seem churlish, immature, peevish; I am rightly rebuked, ashamed and penitent but at the same time grateful for the new light that has shone into my psyche.

Before proceeding to consider the implications, I need to note other compensatory factors.

- I have received considerable external affirmation, some of it, such as my Lambeth DD, was lavish. Much of it has come through what people, some of whom are national figures, have said and written publically. Notable amongst these has been Leslie Griffiths. (See some of the Methodist Recorder articles in the file ‘Various autobiographical pieces of/about CW and GL and the ‘Red book presented to me by L.G. after the award of my DD, ‘George Lovell DD’) But, in all honesty, I am bound to say flattering, gratifying and moving as these were the negative feelings returned although of course they banished them temporarily.
- Then, of course, there is the private appreciation than comes, generally privately, from those who are the principal recipients

of interpersonal help. Of itself that is a rich vein of reward and satisfaction.

I am sure I have not exhausted the possibilities in this section but I have run out of steam!

Some Reflections and Implications

It will be interesting to see what lasting effects the disclosures I have made have upon my desires for gratification beyond that which accompanies private work and whether my appreciation of it changes and becomes more sufficient for me. However but might be, I am convinced that periodic exposure to it in the way in which I experienced it earlier today is health giving. It is certainly an antidote to the yearning for other objective forms of affirmation and appreciation whether or not it proves to prevent, be largely or totally, recurring episodes of felt words for further expressing of it.

So far my emphasis has been upon human forms of affirmation and gratification, personal and interpersonal, private and public. I have grossly neglected in this piece and in my praxis I am ashamed to say, the spiritual affirmation that comes from God through Jesus Christ and the quiet but profound ministries of the Holy Spirit. Why is this? I simply do not know. Possibly because of the poverty of my devotional life in general and my prayer life in particular. I have long felt this and not done anything about it. This is a very important area for thoughtful and prayerful action. Certainly the few retreats I have had have resulted on significant re-evaluating to my life, ministry and proper valuing of them. Would meditation help, I ask you with some hesitation?

This certainly requires attention, not least because access to the grace of God is possibly the most powerful antidote to the problem.

An implication that has hovered in my mind for sometime but which I have not explored relates to my need for a more adequate preparation of the praxis of servant ministry to the servant of the Servant. This would need to cover the theological, personal, spiritual and practical implications of my need for objective as well as subjective affirmation etc.

Practitioners needs for these different forms of affirmation will obviously vary enormously in relation to their circumstances and personalities.

However that might be, it is wise (after the event in my case) to consider carefully what is involved in this form of ministry and the inner

resources and back up required before embarking upon it. But, possibly this is unrealistic because critical aspects emerge through experience rather than before it no matter how perceptive one is in imagining effects and consequences in advance. This place enormous responsibility upon those who urge people to engage in servant ministry and who recruit, train and deploy and support them. Here is another area task – examining what has been written in relation to Christian ministry and secular helping and saving agencies (because they must encounter similar issues) and during what hasn't but needs to be done.

So two tasks emerge: reappraisal of my devotional life in relation to this second (and possibly the first) problem, looking for an adequate theology of the praxis of servant ministry.

Working on these two problems has simply demonstrated the value of prolonged, leisurely reflection at the pace at which I can process my thinking creatively is productive. Also, it shows that writing and journal aids and stimulates the reflective processes as well as recording how they are operating and what emerges from them. It has also given me much vocational assurance. Thanks be to God.

Some Further Thoughts

¹⁷Reflecting on what I have written in this section, and after a deeply moving service yesterday to celebrate 57 years of Sunday Worship at Moortown and to mark the suspension of it, at which the Golden Jubilee of my ordination was also celebrated and I was given the opportunity to speak for a few minutes, an overwhelming feeling was how self-indulgent, querulous petulant can one be. I am somewhat ashamed. The reality is, sadly, but such is a downside my human flesh even when engage in and deeply committed to my spiritual vocation. What I have written is as true an expression of a shadow side of my life as I can at this stage make. I have no regrets about writing it and taking quite a lot of time to do so, but I do regret not doing so much earlier. The testimony – and that is what it was – came to me spontaneously soon after completing this section. (The notes from which I spoke are on the next page). In the middle of the night it went through my mind over and again in improving cycles until early in the morning I got up and transferred it from my mind and heart to paper. If I needed proof of the therapeutic and transform – active effect of my work on the Note in this section, this is it. This is possibly the overwhelming theme which had eluded me: gratitude!

Another thought, equally sobering and humbling, is that vast numbers of people live out their lives without any or absolutely minimal affirmation and appreciation from other people and countless people have to endure self negation and abusive undermining by others. God help them. How do they survive? Many don't.

One thing I would add to what I said yesterday is gratitude to do so much deeply satisfying, howbeit at times difficult, work with so many different people of so many denominations and faiths and more. The sheer diversity of that is breath taking.

Work Generated Problems ¹⁸

The problems discussed in the previous section, personal problems, arise from the kind of person I am; they are associated with my nature, being, psychology and spirituality. These personal factors are activated by my engagement in my vocational work but they are intrinsic to me not to the work or context. The source and cause of other problems are not in me, they are in the work; some arise from malfunctions others are an expression of difficulties in achieving objectives; some are generated by people, others by, for example, logistics and the sheer difficult of working for human and spiritual development some are avoidable, others are intrinsic to the nature of the work and ambitious purposes.¹⁹ These objectively generated problems activate personal ones.

My objective in this section is to make this distinction to note the interaction between personal and work generated problems and to indicate the work areas which have and still do present difficulties.

To pursue my ministry effectively I engage with: myself as the instrument of my vocational ministry; the givers of the work in which I am involved (people and their socio-religious communities, organisations, events.....); my personal problems and those in and of the work; the complex interplay between them. The interplay is between the subjective and objective and the authority of situations and the idiosyncratic natures of those engaged in the work.

The work generated problems I encountered related to the following:

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¹⁹ I have discussed problems – initiating and sustaining causes and ways and means of tackling them in various publications and particularly in *Analysis & Design and Consultancy, Ministry & Mission* (see indexes for principal references.

- Finding finance
- Recruiting personnel
- Creating viable organizational agencies
- Engaging with and analyzing human relations issues and problems
- Designing causes and projects
- Tackling work problems and finding ways and means of analyzing, designing, evaluating etc.

Significant issues, crises, contentious, problems encountered in the work areas listed above are described and discussed in these Notes apart that is for one area: that is the issues and problems encountered in the work studies we did on the Avec causes and in the project work and in consultancy commissions. These were the work and the personal issues and problems that the practitioners were experiencing. Some of these have been discussed in my books and particularly in *Parchmore Partnership, Analysis & Design* and *Telling Experiences*. But, as I think I have already said, much could be gained by studying the records and reports of the work studies and consultations in the Avec and my Archives. A task I would love to do but I think it is not one I am going to tackle.

There may be some value in classifying the issues and personal and work problems described in these Notes. But, again, it is not something I am going to do now. My feeling is that I should complete these Notes without being diverted onto such major undertakings. The appraise with others anything further that needs to be done in relation to the Notes and who could/should do what emerges.

Influence not Power²⁰

Originally I set out to make the point in this section that from my time in Parchmore anything and everything of value that resulted from my work with practitioners on their work and vocations was achieved through influence and not power through my being and acting non-directively: an obvious statement: view of what I have written above, in a sense it had to be cause I didn't have any directive or executive power neither in respect of those with whom I worked nor in their churches or organisations. Neither of course did the practitioners in relation to voluntary members or workers of their churches and organisations. [Incidentally the fact that I did not have such executive powers was a considerable advantage; knowing that I did not have such powers practitioners were less guarded and more open as I could not use anything they said against their interests]. Consequently I

had to operate non-directively, coercion, persuasion and manipulation not being acceptable options to me.

However, as I reflected on the stark contrast between influence and power, I realized it was somewhat simplistic. For one thing, personal and professional influence is a form of power indeed of considerable power to which people can all too readily defer even against their better judgment and instincts; it can be manipulative and persuasive and coercive by design or default. So, what was it in the statement that attracted me? I did “influence” practitioners creatively without having executive power over them. In some cases they were only too willing to follow my ‘advice’ without thinking or questioning. I did all I could to prevent this. At times I was directive, variously appropriately and inappropriately so! This too was generally accepted. What in fact I aimed and worked for was, for those with whom I engaged to be influenced, not directly and simplistically by me, but by the relevance and validity of anything – ideas, insights, ways and means of doing things and working with people etc –that emerged from our discussions about and analyses of their work. For my work to be effective my personal and professional influence must be secondary to the influence of what they saw to be relevant to them and their work. I used any influence I had to get practitioners to examine things thoroughly and to make sound judgments and decisions about what emerged. To achieve this I had, *inter alia*, to create a context and environment in which they could make wise choices and reject ideas with impunity.

4. Vocations and Vocations²¹

I have had many ideas about how I should write this section and the content. Amongst them was the idea that I should list all the people who have been vocational colleagues, allies and soul friends and describe what they had meant to me and how they had influenced me. Now that I have come to this section, that seems too ambitious. All those who have been important to me and my ministry and the ways in which they have been so appear in these Notes and other things that I have written.

Also I have written about various modes of influence and movements that have informed, inspired and helped me. I found myself wanting to weigh and quantify the vocational support and help I had received from different people. That is obvious from what I have written. To graduate the help is invidious and in any case it formed vocational systems that variously came into play and then became dormant. For the time being I have settled

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on two things: to put the notes I have about vocational colleagues in some order in the background papers; to write something that came to me about vocations and vocations.

By their very nature these Notes are about or revolve around my vocation, that is the axis of what I have written. Inevitably there is some vocational distinction in this approach even though I have contextualized my vocation by describing in some detail how I have pursued my vocation by describing in some detail how I have pursued my vocation with others with similar vocations and how they have helped me to do so and they ways in which the non-directive approach and methods have helped me in this. (This alone is the theological validation of this approach as an aid to collaborative vocational ministry). Here I wish to make one or two points that help to correct or redress the possibility of this distortion.

In a very real sense I ‘own’ my vocation even though I do not possess it and have sacred responsibilities to pursue it diligently and as faithfully as I can through my life and ministry and the work I do. It is my vocation and there are things that God has called and ordained me to do. True as this is, I distort its nature, and greatly so, if I conceive, approach and pursue it in an out and out individualistic manner. My ministry has been effective and consummated when I have collaborated with Christianity and his vocation²² and with other people and their vocations and participated in the vocational ministries and work of the Church in religious and secular communities. This has enabled me to experience the privilege and wonder of working together with others – Christians and more Christians – through the conjunction of their vocations and mine in temporary or long term ‘collective vocations’. The koinonia of pursuing collective vocations is an incredible gift of God.

All of this enabled me to pursue my vocation in context with others and for that I am deeply thankful.

5. My Spirituality²³

Describing and examining my religious beliefs and experiences relevant to my theme has been an integral part of telling my vocational story in these Notes. At various points, I have, for instance, described my approach to religion in my childhood and early teens, my conversion, my healing and

²² All things cohere in Christ. See Colossians 1:13-20. Also he redeems our work and vocations. See the theological reflection the paper on “Ministry in Retirement”, Part 9:6, Appendage X.

²³ 10.10.14

call to ministry, religious influences and especially that of Garfield Evans and my paternal grandmother, my spiritual experiences and so much more. These can be accessed through the extended list of contents and the indexes.

In this section I concentrate on my spirituality: its nature, core characteristics, expression and how I think of it, describe and explain it. It would be interesting to see how this subjective perspective relates to how others experience and describe my spirituality which is a more objective perspective howbeit from their subjectivity.

Spirituality is much in use in contemporary religious and secular settings by people of all faiths and none. It is one of those words which points to realities readily understood but difficult to define.²⁴ My SOED (1973 edition) defines it as ‘that which was a spiritual character’ i.e. pertaining to.....’the spirit on higher moral qualities’; ‘the quality or condition of being spiritual’; ‘a spiritual thing.....or quality as distinct from a method or worldly one’. I don’t find these definitions help me. In fact the hard differentiation between spiritual and material is decidedly unhelpful not least because spirituality relates to and is expressed through both. Wikipedia is more helpful:

Traditionally spirituality has been defined as a process of personal transformation in accordance with religious ideals. Since the 19th century spirituality is often separated from religion, and has become more oriented on subjective experience and psychological growth. It may refer to almost any kind of meaningful activity or blissful experience, but without a single, widely-agreed definition.

When I described and discussed the spirituality of church and community development I found Gordon Walkfield’s writings on the subject and his definition most helpful I could find. (See *Analysis and Design* pp 278-281). Earlier I have referred to this and re-produced the following diagram (10.26) but I now reproduce a key paragraph I wrote and a diagram I used because I think they are pertinent to this section.

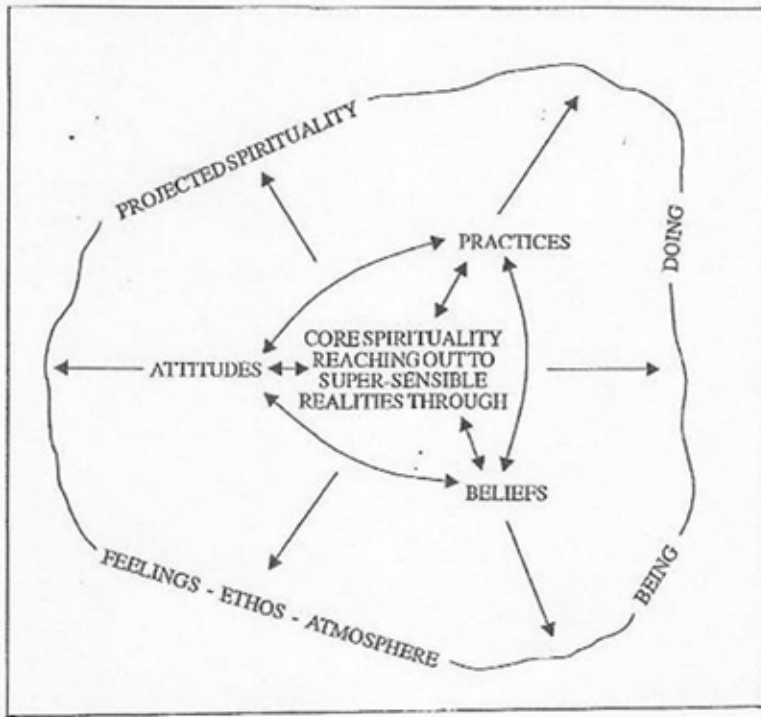
The approaches, methods we are considering adopted and internalized, contribute a distinctive work culture that influences and being and doing. They are not simply a collection of techniques or technical tools. In fact, they characterize the nature of our involvement in human affairs, become away of life and generate a spirituality all of their own, the spirituality of church and community development. Spirituality, a concept much

24 I encountered this difficulty during the early part of my ministry in Parchmore and discuss it in my PhD thesis pp130 -1 159; 263ff, 275, 403f.

in use now by people in religious and secular organizations, is defined by Dr Gordon Wakefield as “a word which has come animate people’s lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities”. his definition helps me to distinguish inter-related aspects of spirituality: the things that generate it (beliefs, attitudes and practices); its affective content within individuals and groups (the “core spirituality”); the feelings, ethos, atmosphere that it engenders; (the “projected spirituality”); and those things that it facilitates within, between and through people. The first and fourth of these are comparatively easily described; the second and third are directly communicated to the senses but elusive to description. Thus understood, “spirituality” points to the essential substance of human being and doing, not to something vague, amorphous and “religious“. Figure 12:1 helps me to conceptualize this.

This approach to and definition of spirituality I am finding as helpful to conceptualizing and understanding my own spirituality as it was in doing so in relation to church and community development.

Characteristics of my Core Spirituality



My core spirituality is as wonderfully mysterious as my being and the inner life of my subjectivity: aspects and dimensions of it are impenetrable; it is to be treated with the same respect appropriate to the religious, spiritual, human and secular entities to which it relates and of which it is a function. It is holistic and systemic; it is creative but flawed. Given this understanding of its nature which derives from a lifetime of experience of it, trying to understand it and to nurture its development, it is with some hesitation that I factorize it by describing the characteristics in the nucleus which forms my core spirituality. But that I must do, so here goes! The following are interrelated and overlapping key characteristics of my core spirituality.

My spirituality is Christian

Fundamental to my spirituality is my belief in and commitment to Christianity. Or, more precisely to a particular understanding and practice of Christianity: that espoused by the Protestant tradition as expressed in the beliefs and practices of liberal evangelical Methodism – but not without some reservations and qualifications! Importantly for me this is inclusive Christianity: “for all, for all my Saviour died” wrote Charles Wesley over and over again. Christianity is a bedrock all-persuasive characteristic of my spirituality.

My spirituality is Christo-centric

This characteristic is composed of and defined by: my belief in Christ’s disunity, my belief in and experiences of his resurrection, his omnipresence, my faith in him and my experience of his salvific and providential ministries to me and his real presence and what I have seen him do in and through the personal and collective lives of others. (

My spirituality is inclusive and universal²⁵

My spirituality is inclusive in the sense that I endeavour to approach all people and diverse aspects of human religious and secular thoughts, experience and life in an acceptive but not a naïve manner with an open questioning mind and with respect. I try to engage with them sympathetically and seriously, circumspectly and creatively. So, for instance, I am keen to dialogue with people of other faiths and more about critical religious and secular matters.

It is universal in that I believe that Christianity is relevant to the whole

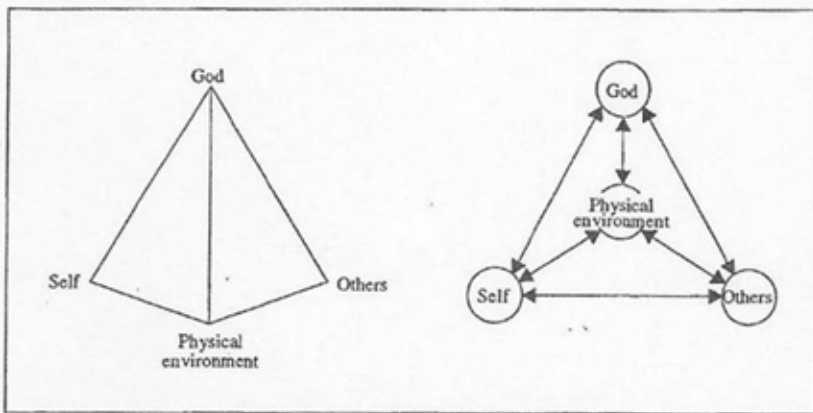
created order and has significant it not exclusive contributions to every aspect of it and to its totality. The God in whom I believe and worship is the God of creation and redemption.²⁶

The early phase of my ministry was dominated by a salvation model centered on Christianity's saving ministry. This overshadowed my creative model. My commitment to the salvation model became an inadequate overarching conceptual framework for my ministry in church and community development. I resolved the dysfunctional theological tensions that this caused me by focusing on a creation model as the overarching model for my ministry within which the Christian salvific model was operative, redemptively and creatively. This was a major paradigm shift in my theology and approach to ministry which released and enabled me to think universally about all the diverse contributions, human and divine, to sustaining the created order, redeeming people and creation and to creating and developing in all kinds of ways human beings, their habit and institutions. Marking this shift was both traumatic and exhilarating. (I described this in some detail in *Diagrammatic Modelling* pp 31-39 in 1980).²⁷

Obviously I relate to a minute aspect and have ministered to it over

26 See, for example, Colossians 1: 15-20 which is one of my favourite passages which still excites me with the concept of the Cosmic Christ and has done so. And I am one of Mr Wesley's preachers who claimed the whole world to be his parish!

27 In a subsequent point I discuss the trihedral of human and spiritual relationships which facilitate this universal approach.



A TRIHEDRAL OF RELATIONSHIPS *

an infinitesimal period of time. But I have done so in the belief and understanding that, because of the systemic nature of creation and that all things cohere in Christianity (Colossians 1:17), working with the parts of this universal system in context I am in some small way affecting the whole. (In Consultancy Ministry and Mission I discuss systemic, systemic family theory, systemic by prostheses and systemic thinking. I also discuss these subjects in Consultancy Modes and Models and soft systems thinking and methodology, systemic interactive process, systemic punctuation, systems engineering et al. Also I discuss the ‘butterfly effect’, hurricanes, for instance, being influenced by minor perturbations equated to the flapping of wings of a distant butterfly several weeks earlier. See sermon S473 9.7 139-42). And, of course, the universal effect of a three year ministry in Palestine 2000 years ago!

I think also that my spirituality is universalistic in the sense I believe that all will be saved and the creation will be redeemed (cf, for instance, Romans 8.21.....”the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and is to enter upon the glorious liberty of the children of God”).

My spirituality is experiential and existential

In various places in these notes I have written about the importance of experiential education and existentialism have been and remain to my personally and in my ministerial life. So much so that I do not need to add any thing further here. The real presence of Christ is a very important aspect of my spiritual experience and therefore of my spirituality.

The Ignatian retreat I did at St Beuno’s in 1994 was a spiritual centered existential experience. (See my note books of the Retreat and ‘An experience of the Ignatian Exercises’, *Epworth Review* September ’94, 21/3).

My spirituality is non-directive²⁸

My spirituality is non-directive in approach, orientation and action/behavior. It is way of spiritual life just as it is a way of pursuing my vocational ministry: it is an attribute of my spirituality. I do not need to add more because I have written much about the nature, praxis and theology of this approach.

My spirituality is prayerful and critically reflective

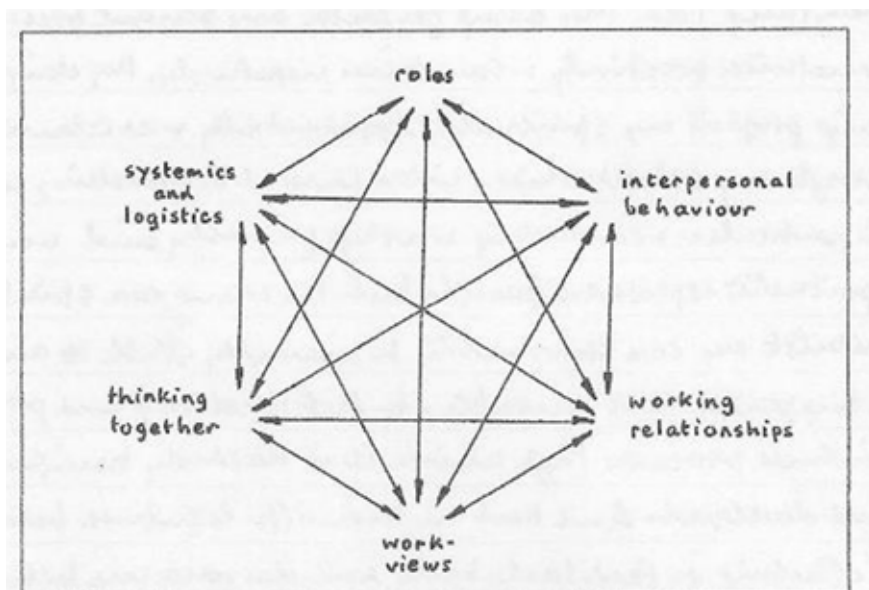


Figure 2:1 Systemic Relationships Between Six Consultancy Elements

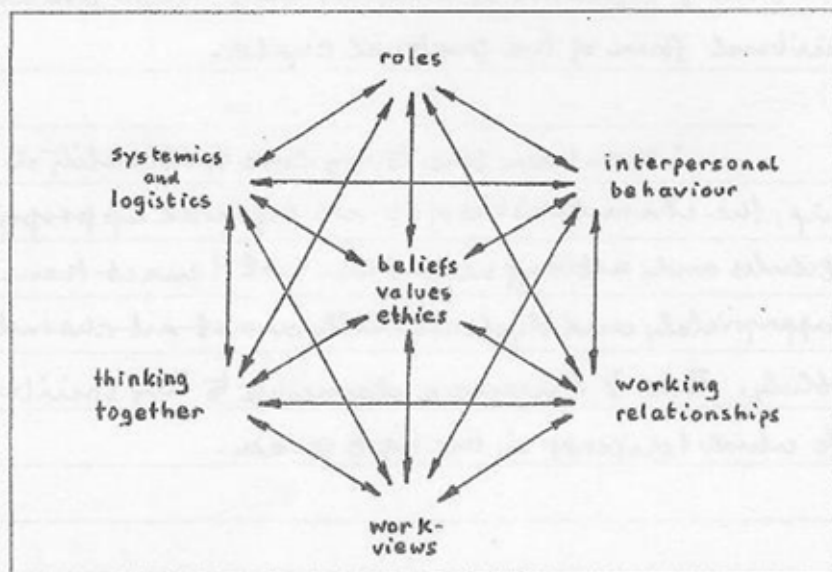


Figure 2:2 Systemic Relationships Between The Seven Consultancy Elements

What I have written above about these characteristics is indicative rather than an exposition; sufficient to identify their nature. Core spirituality is about the whole of life: praxis is about putting it into practice in different ways. So there is the spirituality and the spiritual praxis of preaching, of church and community development. (see P5.1) etc.

It seems to me that there are the six characteristics which form my core spirituality: there may well be others but at the moment these are the only ones that I can identify. They are attributes of my person and my being; they are written deep into my mind, body and spirit, embedded; they are intrinsic to my whole contribution and form my spiritual nature.

Here I have distinguished between them in order to define them but they are interrelated and interactive. They form an integrated spiritual system; they relate to each other very much like the parts and organs of the human body do. They derive from my Christian faith and religious experience and what I have learnt about being a presbyter and the praxis of ministry in church and community.

Consequently they are functionally and theologically compatible and essential to one another. So my spirituality and my ministerial praxis are all of a piece: it is not something I put on when I engage in religious activities.

Try as I might, I cannot find a word or phrase that adequately indicates the nature of my spirituality.

The practice and projection of my spirituality

My core spirituality informs and affects every aspect of my doing just as it does my being. Therefore it is always active in one way or another. In private it is active when I pray, reflect, analyze and design work programmes, journals, read, study and write etc etc. In public it is also active in everything I do. My being generates my personal presence and atmosphere, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. My doing as well as my being projects my spirituality experientially and existentially. I do this through my relationships, interpersonal interaction, work, preaching in particular and conducting worship generally and my attitudes. So my spirituality expressed differently but the same core spirituality.

Whilst my core spirituality is normally stable and has been over a long period it is mutable. In fact practising and projecting it induces processes through which it is variously verified, modified, and developed. And that in

turn affects future behaviour. Reflecting a feedback – back and dissonance between my spirituality and praxis is unimportant. These processes are a spiritual form of the pastoral cycle.

When I am true to my core spirituality in my being and doing, the characteristics of it are expressed appropriately in my life, private attitudes and action; when I am not I enact them inappropriately and dysfunctionally or act out character privately and publicly. There is of course a downside to my spirituality and inner life which I discuss in the next section.

Trihedral of Human and Spiritual Relationships

My core spirituality is worked out in private and in public in and through many different human and spiritual personal and business, professional and working relationships and various roles and functions. A model which over many years has helped me to conceptualize the overall structure and interaction of these relationships in the following trihedral (triangular pyramid).

See *Analysis & Design* pp234-6

The lines represent relationships.

Amongst other things, this exemplifies the universality of my aspired spirituality and how my core spirituality is worked out through the ways in which I relate to myself, others and to God. It is operative in all aspects of my life in different ways whether I am conscious of it or not. I am realizing there is much more work that could be done on this section!²⁹

P5.1 The Spirituality of Church and C.D.

On p10.73 I quote from A&D what I wrote about church and c.d. spirituality. When I come to sort my background papers I realized that what follows that extract is highly relevant to what I have just written so I reproduce it here.

At the heart of the spirituality that characterizes church and community development are the beliefs, practices and attitudes that enable people in

29 See also Chapter 2 of *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, where I work out the seven elements of the practice theory of consultancy or particularly the figures on p34. This shows the praxis elements through which my core spirituality operates alongside and integral to consultancy skills, methods. Our second thoughts, seeing their significances I reproduce them across!

all kinds of situations and circumstances to initiate and sustain imaginative critical thought and action relevant to the complexities of contemporary society. These processes of thought and action engender an ethos and an atmosphere in which people feel they matter and know instinctively that they and their interests are being taken seriously. It is an atmosphere in which they feel equal and enjoy equality of opportunity and participation and in which they know with deep personal assurance that they are significant. It is an environment within which people know that they are accepted for what they are, non judgmentally and without patronage or condescension. The freedom to think, to think aloud and to think again is in the air.

The ethos encourages all forms of exploration and the facing up to differences: it discourages argumentation, rhetoric and debate; it is therefore unitive rather than divisive. It is characterized by receptivity, affective as well as intellectual responses, waiting or attentiveness and the acceptance of pain as intrinsic to the bringing forth of life. It constrains people to stop and think, stimulates them to go and act and deters them from being quietists or activists. It is a spirituality or being and doing. The atmosphere is that which goes with creative activity people discovering and learning together and from each other how to do or to make something of importance to them. It is the ethos of healthy people at work rather than sick people at therapy. It is a learning atmosphere. It is my hope that readers will have felt some of these things as they have read the description of the processes in this book.

In the spirituality of church and community development the love of God, neighbour and creation coalesce. It is informed and infused by the vocation of Christians and the church and the findings of modern behavioural sciences.

A compounding process is at work within this spirituality: beliefs, attitudes and practices engender a distinctive affective content and an ethos. Combined, these facilitate things in human affairs; integrated, they refine beliefs, attitudes and practices, affective content and ethos. The cycle repeats itself over and again in relation to all kinds of work programmes and projects; in relation to promoting thoughtful action, holistic development, egalitarian and co-operative working relationships, power and responsibility sharing, interfaith and interdisciplinary dialogue and the de-privatization of religion; in relation to helping people use their subjectivity creatively; and in relation to providing consultancy support services.

This understanding of the spirituality of church and community development helps to understand and manage what happens when individuals and groups in complex organizations adopt the approaches and methods advocated in this book. They experience incremental or transformational change in their work culture and their spirituality. In either case it affects to a greater or

lesser extent all aspects of their being and doing. If all members of the group or the organisation adopt the approaches, they manage the processes of loss and change together and work out what they want to conserve. However, the most likely situation is that only some of the members of an organization or group will be attracted to these approaches. When this happens, an alternative spirituality—it might be a sub-spirituality or a counter-spirituality—is generated. The interaction between normative and alternative spiritualities determines the pattern of development that ensues. It is more likely to be for the common good if the beliefs, practices and attitudes of the alternative Spirituality are brought to bear on the dynamics of the interaction, whatever they might be.

All my experience convinces me that church and community development is a movement of the second half of the twentieth century that has much to contribute through its methodology and spirituality to Christian mission and ministry in the twenty-first century, through equipping practitioners, churches and communities for creative reflective action.

This is based on my experience and is therefore a good example of the interaction and out working of different core spiritualities.

6. My inner life and my vocational subjectivity

Introduction: a subjective focus

Parts 3 to 9 describe and discuss my early life, my engineering career, the emergence of my call to ministry and the outworking of my vocational life. I am the central figure and the narrator. Inevitably, throughout they are about the objectivity and subjectivity of my experience and the interplay between them. They explore the processes and cycles of: what I thought, felt and did; what happened as a consequence; outcomes; how I and others responded. They trace these processes backwards and forwards from the inner to the outer, the subjective to the objective; from thought to action and evaluation. The overall thrust of the narrative is outward from thought to action; it is neither inwardly directed nor introspective.

Now, I turn to a purposefully inwardly directed exploratory reflection of my inner life: an examination of my vocational subjectivity as I experienced it in Parts 8 and 9 and how it related to my outward being and doing. I give as open and honest account of what was going on within me as I engaged in my vocational work as I can, given, that it is, that I consider it essential to respect confidences and the feelings of others. I do so under the following headings.

A hyperactive inner life of varying quality
Subjective activities
Limitations to reflecting on and analysing my inner life
Satisfaction and dissatisfaction
Angst, reactive depression and panic
Causation and causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction
Generic causes of feeling satisfied
Generic causes of feeling dissatisfied
Causes of reactive depression
Effects of reactive depression
Coping with the downside
Towards assessing the quality of my inner life

A hyperactive inner life of varying quality

My inner life is my private world; I control public access to it which I exercised with varying degrees of discretion. It is ever present and variously active and inactive wherever I am, in private or public and whatever I am doing, on my own or with others. I stated these obvious facts to minimise the danger of equating inner life with private life.

My inner life has always been very active and at times hyperactive to the extent that I cannot keep up with it: it produces more material for creative action than I can possibly undertake. This activity is variously located in my conscious mind, my subconscious and unconscious. These levels of consciousness act in concert: there is synergy between them; in many different ways they affect, interact, intercept and inform each other somewhat mysteriously. Even the creative activity can include unpleasantly debilitating episodes. This occurs, for instance when my subconscious and unconscious are trying to sort out and put in good order things I have failed to do by applying myself rigorously to them consciously. At such times I variously feel drained, unable to settle to anything, ill at ease and unwell. My sleep is fitful and disturbed by awful dreams. Then, often at 3 am or when I get up in the morning, the creative results of these activities pour into my mind and bring me back to life with new enthusiasm. Such generative events are associated with much if not most of my vocational life. I have already written about them and living with them.

The quality of my inner life varies enormously and is subject to mood swings. Some of it is wonderful, inspiring and exciting; some is horrible and painfully difficult to live with constructively.

What follows is an attempt to explore critical aspects of all this.

Subjective activities

My inner life comprises several interrelated but distinguishable activities including the following:

- praying and worshipping; relaxing and allowing my mind to freewheel; responding to the stimuli of what I read, view, see on TV etc; (These are very important and whilst there is always need for improvement and development, there is nothing I wish to say here.
- writing and journalling; different levels of consciousness; (These are important to point are making here but I have already commented on them.)
- thinking; (thinking is one of the most important and precious attributes of my life with all its ups and downs; without this ability and opportunities I would be bereft. A fact of my life is that I simply do not and cannot stop thinking about things that attract my attention and I considered being of importance to others, to me and to my vocational life and work. I have written about this in these Notes and elsewhere. All that I have written comes out my experience of thinking on my own and with others. The most comprehensive account is in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* (pp 71 – 101). Two sections are of particular relevance to my inner life: thinking in different emotional states (83 –6) and different thinking moods and modes (86 – 7). I am not going to go over this ground here.)

In each and all of these aspects of my inner life I variously experience satisfaction, dissatisfaction, angst, depression and, very occasional, panic: these are part of the shadow side of my inner life. Describing them and correlating them with the overall quality of my life is far from easy. Nonetheless, I must attempt to do so.

Limitations to reflecting on and analysing my inner life

I had forebodings that writing about my inner life was going to be difficult and painful especially about its shadow side and ‘black dog’ experiences. And so it is proving to be; fortunately there are glimmerings that there

might be some good outcomes. One thing I that is causing difficulties is my propensity to drift from soft to hard reflection and from reflection to analysis. The nature, wonder and the mystery of aspects of my inner life lends itself to reflection but imposes strict limitations upon my ability to analyse it profoundly and to reach sound insights and judgements: distortion and self-deception are very real dangers; the data is so private and subjective that objectifying it, checking it with objectivity and correcting it are charged with difficulties. And, anyhow, how much of my inner life and the private data related to it should I share?

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Comparing and contrasting the good and bad experiences of my inner and outer lives is proving to be useful even though quantifying my experiences is simply not possible. Catherine and I in one of our co-consultancy sessions on 24 March 2008 had an illuminating and exciting experience. It was based on the simple diagram that came to me suddenly as we were discussing good and bad experiences in our working lives. The diagram consisted of a horizontal ellipse divided by a dotted line on its axis; the upper part we labelled positive and satisfying, the lower one negative, dissatisfying, unsatisfying; arrows indicated two way movements between these aspects and the external and internal workings of them. Basic as the diagram was, it animated us and generated the fast flowing sharing of insights which we came to treasure.

The diagram indicates that in my working and personal lives satisfaction and dissatisfaction coexist, indeed that is the norm for me. However, like all diagrams, it has its limitations. Other diagrams are required to indicate other features of my experience of satisfaction and dissatisfaction such as: the mercurial variations in the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction from situation to situation; the ways in which they dominate alternatively and unpredictably from time to time and situation to situation; the creative and the dysfunctional interaction between them. (On 2 February 1992 I wrote a Journal note listing when I was not happy in my work, what I felt at the time, what was disturbing me and what would help me. I also drew the simple chart indicating the levels of satisfaction from my time in South Wales to the date of the journal. As it is revealing and relevant I am attaching a copy at the end of this section.)

Clearly, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are intricately and variously related in my vocational work. Some experiences of satisfaction simply occur from within: they are self induced; I generate, own and possess them; they give me emotional stability and motivate me to do difficult private

work over long periods with little stimulus from external affirmation. Dissatisfaction can be debilitating and can lead me to experience angst and reactive depression. On the other hand, it can perform important constructive and creative functions by leading me to identify what is wrong and how I can improve my performance.

Discussing the elliptical satisfaction/dissatisfaction diagram with Catherine and reflecting on it afterwards helped me to see that:

- uncontrollable oscillation between satisfaction and an satisfaction is very disturbing;
- preoccupation with getting a balance is not helpful;
- various things are inclined to drag me down into a state of dissatisfaction such as: indecision, uncertainty, external perturbations, excessive demands, overwork, unrealistic expectations, tasks that are beyond us, uncertainty about what we are supposed to be doing;
- the diagram is a useful device in thinking about these issues;
- the key questions are, What drags me down from satisfaction to dissatisfaction? What raises me up from dissatisfaction to satisfaction?

Naturally, my inner life feels to be at its best when satisfaction is in the ascendant and at its worst when dissatisfaction is dominant. But in different ways both states have helped me to do my work better.

Later I discussed the problems of quantifying my experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and correlating them with the overall quality of my life.

Angst, reactive depression and panic

Periodically, throughout my life, I have suffered bouts of reactive depression of varying duration and intensity. I am using this description advisedly to distinguish my experiences from clinical depression. There are three ways of referring to this type of depression -- "relational," "situational" and "adjustment" -- which help describe how and what it is: a depression resulting from a situation that occurs, or that's related to events in a person's life, that requires a time of adjustment to handle the changes and implications. It has many causes, symptoms and forms and sometimes it even results from good events happening in our lives. (I am drawing upon piece on the Internet, reactive depression.) What follows is entirely relating to my own bouts of depression entirely attributable to bad events.

I believe this is a sound explanation of the experiences to which I refer

and will describe. I am a serious minded person, somewhat introspective, I feel the good and bad experiences of life deeply being sensitive and empathic and get excited and enthusiastic about things and particularly ideas, concepts and insights, life in general and work in particular (this comes out in the text of these notes) but I do not think I am or ever have been bipolar. [I am not a great believer in the My Myers-Briggs Indicator but my rating dated 5.10.86 was ENTJ (3, 31, 1, 27) I understood that this meant that I bordered on extraversion and introversion. The characteristics frequently associated with this type among young people did not resonate with what I know myself; that for INTJ did. Make of that what you will!] From time to time doctors have told me that I am suffering from reactive depression but I have not been diagnosed as clinically depressed and I don't think that I have ever been so. Although I think I might have come close to it on a couple of occasions – one is the outburst about Avec to Michael Bayley, see [p.769](#).

My Journal notes are almost entirely devoted to episodes of reactive depression. They describe the range of causes, what I felt during these periods of depression and how I work through them analytically and pragmatically. But, as they are about the unsatisfactory or shadow side of my personal vocational life, there are unrepresentative of my life experiences a whole. This is in contradistinction to my writings which are mostly about the creative and satisfying aspects of my vocational life with proper reference to the professional and technical difficulties I have experienced. But they do not tell the inner story that comes out in these Journal notes. My Journal notes and my writings complementing each other; together they give a more balanced picture of my emotional history again these notes give a much more reliable picture of the ups and downs, the satisfactory and unsatisfactory, the creative and shadow sides of my life. Therefore, my writings, these notes and my journal entries married scratch that combined give an overall picture of my professional and emotional life pock marked by episodes of reactive depression. (It would be interesting to correlate the inward and outward events of my life in a summary timeline but it is not something I feel able to undertake at this time.)

Causation and causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

These notes describe many incidents of my experiencing satisfaction, dissatisfaction, angst, reactive depression and occasional incidents of panic. Journal entries focus on specific experiences of dissatisfaction, intractable problems, angst and depression. What I attempt in this section is to identify

generic causes of these in earth. These causes are variously complex, multiple, multilayered and systemic; only rarely are they simple, single or linear. (See *Analysis and Design* p 189.)

Identifying external causes is generally not too difficult; it is slightly more difficult to identify those which are attributable to my nature and personality. Illuminating as it was to reflect on these causes, I had lurking suspicions that deep within my psyche were factors, features forces and causes that eluded me. Some of the causes of angst and depression – and possibly those of well being – seem to be grounded in mystery and beyond my ability to identify and analyse them with any certainty. Similarly there are mysterious aspects of the relationship between my conscious, subconscious and unconscious machinations. Nonetheless, from my multiple experiences of the ability of my subconscious to bring order and shape overnight out of chaos I have learnt some of its alchemy and its dynamics but not much about its mechanics – I know the pattern of its operation but not how it does it; that is shrouded in the same kind of mystery for me as how my TV, computer and the Internet work! My subconscious has a private and impenetrable life of its own.

Consequently identifying the external causes of the angst – and other things too – I experience is one thing, chasing out and tracing the non-modes and means of interaction between my inner and outer worlds and my levels of consciousness in order to discover how to gain more purposeful control over the heavy two way traffic between them is much more problematic; doing so frequently ends in frustration, failure and defeat. Reflection on my inner life and its dynamics, therefore, is more likely to be productive than analysis of its mechanics.

Many things cause my dissatisfaction some of which have already been mentioned above. My instinctive response to empathise with people, to enter into their experiences by carers the in depth and my drive to reflect on and analyse what is happening to them and the implications is one of the things that has equipped me for the work that I have done with people in church and community and is therefore a source of satisfaction. The downside is, that it can depress and worry me, enhance my angst amplify my sense of dissatisfaction.

Generic causes of feeling satisfied, fulfilled and successful are occasions when I sense or know that:

- I have sincerely worked for the well-being of people and situations with humility and without self interest;

- I have made significant contributions towards achieving my purposes, realising my ideals, satisfying my desire for perfection;
- I have been faithful to my beliefs, convictions, principles and the authority of working situations;
- I have treated people with courtesy, love and respect;
- what I have done has contributed to the human and spiritual well-being of people and their empowerment;
- what I have contributed has been valued;
- I have contributed significantly to overcoming difficult problems and resolving complex issues and situations;
- I have conducted myself with integrity and dignity;
- I have broken new ground and gain new insights;
- I have established good personal and working relationships and feel in with those with whom I worked and in harmony at peace with myself;
- I have enhanced the ability of those with whom I worked to make their contributions and to develop themselves and their situations.

Generic causes of feeling dissatisfied, depressed are occasions when I sense or know that:

- I have failed to make significant progress towards achieving my purposes, ideals and satisfying my desire for perfection;
- I have been unfaithful to my beliefs, convictions, principles and the authority of working situations;
- I have treated people with discourtesy, courtesy and manipulatively and disempowered them;
- I have compromised myself by allowing my covert purposes to generate conflict between what I think is needed, what the people want and need;
- I have pursued my personal interests, ambitions, pride and self-aggrandisement;
- what I have done has not contributed to the human and spiritual well-being of people;
- what I have contributed has not been valued;

- I have failed to make significant contributions towards resolving problems, complex issues and situations;
- I have conducted myself without integrity and dignity;
- I have failed to establish good relationships and feel ill at ease with and out of harmony with those with whom I worked and myself;
- I have failed to help or empower those with whom I worked as a my inability, lack of skills, conceptual and technical flaws in what I did and unforced mistakes;
- I have failed to deal with clashes of personality and conflict of aims;
- I have lost face and caused others to lose face;
- I have allowed myself to be intimidated through lack of self-confidence or self-worth.

These are indicative unstructured lists of which have variously contributed to the positive and negative sides of my inner life. (There is an interesting flowchart in my Journal notes of negative feelings on 11 June 1994 and one of what was giving me satisfaction and making me unhappy on 11 April 2011.)

Causes of reactive depression

Below I list the principal causes of my periodic experiences of reactive depression in order to present a general overview before discussing some of them.

- Personal and working relationships: offending people; temporary breakdown of relationships; intimidation; lack of self-confidence and self worth; self-doubt; fear;
- Intellectual, logistic, pragmatic, technical and theological problems: challenges to my thinking;
- Situational: facing up to challenging, difficult and intimidating situations and relationships and especially those which seemed to take me beyond the limits of my perceived ability; feeling inadequate; significant and costly mistakes; regret and remorse; fear of failure and things going wrong; aftermath of things going wrong; crises and contentious issues;
- Loss, bereavement and adjustment: of colleagues, loved ones and soul friends through death or estrangement or the unavoidable

ending of important and valued working relationships; of important and valued agencies and employment.

I am dissatisfied, saddened and shamed by various things that I have done and that have happened to me; periodically one or other of these overwhelms me; this can induce soul wrecking havoc in my inner life. All too often, for instance, for me criticism from one person can overshadow or eclipse the affirmation of the many; comparatively minor faults in something I have made, done or written, imperceptible or unnoticed by most people, often spoil the pleasure that I have from it. Whilst they are operative they eclipsed my sense of satisfaction and induce despair, guilt, remorse and depression.

Effects of reactive depression

Each incident of reactive depression results from a wide range of incidents and events. One is described in [p.763](#). Consequently each one has its own peculiar characteristics. As I have indicated earlier my journal notes describe actual experiences of reactive depression. I had thought of including some extracts in these Notes but I don't feel up to doing that at the present. Possibly a task I will undertake later. They invariably disrupt my sleep patterns in various ways: insomnia; restless shallow sleeping and tossing and turning; very unpleasant nightmarish dreams. For instance, a recurring dream pattern before a very important preaching or lecturing event is that no matter how hard I try or how fast I run I simply cannot get to my destination, one thing after another blocks my way. Another pattern is that I cannot get my notes into order: carefully structured notes simply will not come together coherently. Amongst the other effects are the following: feeling debilitated; lack of concentration; issues going round and round in my mind chaotically; raw feelings. And so much more.

A series of experiences I wish to record was different from all the others. I cannot date then with any accuracy but it was whilst I was the director of Avec when we were living in Reddons Road, probably during the late 80s or early 90s. I thought I had written about it but I cannot find anything. I have never talked to anyone about it. Most if not all of the mornings for a prolonged period of time, months or possibly a year or so, when I awoke, turned on my left side and opened my eyes I saw a hangman's rope noose dangling in front of me. When I got up it disappeared. I sensed it to be an ominous omen but I have no idea what it was about except that its symbolism seemed to be pointing to my demise, dying or a definitive ending ending. My emotional response was muted; it didn't throw me into emotional turmoil, it simply saddened and subdued me and made me feel

mildly depressed for a short period. They were disturbing, and worrying and unwelcome experiences. I desperately wanted them to discontinue but they persisted until one morning when I was in the house alone the idea came to me out unbidden to form a noose out of a piece of rope. Then, in an attitude of prayer I performed what I conceived of as an act of exorcism: slowly and deliberately I unravelled the knot of the noose and dismissively threw the dangling rope as far away from me as I could. I had not premeditated this exercise and rehearsed it: what I must do and how I must do it simply came to me. The experiences ceased and did not return!

Reflecting on it, I wonder if it occurred around the period that led up to the cathartic event when I unexpectedly broke down during the discussion with Michael Bayley which led eventually to my retirement as director of Avec (see [p.769](#)).

Coping with the downside

These Notes illustrate many of the ways in which I coped with the downside of my inner life and, in part, they are an attempt to deal with unresolved historical and contemporary experiences of it. The paper on Ministry in Retirement is particularly revealing on the ways and means by which I cope. Several things have been particularly important and helpful to me: prayer; journalling; unburdening myself in the presence of and talking things through confidentially with people I know well and whom I trust (Molly and Catherine were particularly helpful); differentiating my culpability from that of other people and taking responsibility for it and encouraging and helping others to do the same; orientating myself to my limitations which, for instance, involves my thinking not that they can't/won't do this but I do not seem able to help them do this; constructive withdrawal from working relationships which are beyond my ability to redeem.

Towards assessing the quality of my inner life

These Notes in general and this section in particular show that my inner life was a mixture of supreme, sublime and difficult painful experiences. But the downside does not represent nor define in any way whatsoever how

I feel about my inner life. It was what I had to endure for the wonderful experience and wonder of my being. My inner life was a life of itself with its ups and its downs. Every aspect of my inner life contributed and facilitated in one way or another to a deeply fulfilling, exciting and privileged vocational life in the ministry of the Methodist Church. Overall I feel much satisfaction from my inner and outer lives, my being and my doing, and particularly from my vocational life: undeservedly I think that I have been extremely fortunate and blessed and I am deeply grateful to God and all who have travelled with me for what they have contributed to this. That makes me feel good.

In the summer I wrote the following contribution to our Circuit prayer diary, 2014 – 15. It is about my current experience of my inner being but it expresses much that I feel about my inner ministerial vocational life as a whole.

Over and again I thank God in deep gratitude:

- for the inner life of third age Christian living;
- for third age learning and creative thought;
- for the vastness of the interior life, a ‘sea without a shore’;
- for the awesomeness and beauty of its landscapes, its heights and depths;
- for the ability and opportunities to rove and wander through past, present and future;
- for the opportunity to reflect in-depth on and reshape and reinterpret my understandings and feelings about my life and find new meaning in it;
- the joy of meeting Christ, my Lord, in the depths of my being and experiencing him walking my Emmaus Road with me and opening the scriptures and breaking the bread of life for me;
- time to forgive others and myself and to find and receive forgiveness;
- and, oh, for so much more! Amen

[I am far from satisfied with this section: it needs sub editing and possibly illustrating more fully. But this is as far as I feel I can or should take it at this particular point of time. And therefore, with some reluctance, I leave it consoling myself with the fact that these are notes not a manuscript prepared for publication. 4th November 2014]

Post script (10th November 2014)

Since writing this section I have scanned through my Journal notes to make a list of the contents in order to: get an overall picture of them; identify entries on depression and those, which for various reasons, I felt

I should destroy or embargo. I thought of doing this before I started to write this section but simply could not face up to what appeared to be a formidable task, getting my mind around details of the Journal Notes as well as thinking my way through all the other material buzzing around in my head. So I embarked on a somewhat illogical process of writing this piece against the background of my memory and impressions of them because that was the only way I could proceed at the time.

Scanning the Journal Notes has been revealing. For one thing, it has shown me that my impression that I journalled only or mainly when I was depressed is mistaken: of 134 entries from 1964 to 2014 only 17 of them were about depression i.e. some 13% and they occurred from 1989 to 2012 when there were 117 entries i.e. 15%. So, they were much more spasmodic than I had imagined. This does not mean that there were not other periods of depression. I think there were but they were not deep or serious enough to cause me to attempt to journal my way through them. It follows that the subject matter was much more varied than I had thought as can be seen from the list of contents in the Journal Notes folder.

How did I come to get such a distorted view? Possibly because journalling made highly significant contributions to getting me through these difficult periods long before I discovered Paul Gilbert's book, *Overcoming Depression*, in 2006 (see Journal Note for 27.6.2006).