

SUPERVISED THEOLOGICAL FIELD EDUCATION: A RESOURCE MANUAL

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PREFACE

The precursor to this manual, titled 'Supervisors Handbook' for the Whitley College 'Supervised Field Education' program, was written in 1994/5 as a resource for the first supervision training program offered by that college in 1995. The developments that have occurred and continue to occur within the Whitley College program, and the fact that Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) is now a much more cooperative venture than was then the case, requires that a more comprehensive resource manual be provided for supervisors.

The first handbook grew out of a supervised research project that I undertook for the Master of Ministry degree with the Melbourne College of Divinity; much of the material for this manual was gathered from research that I undertook for the Doctor of Ministry Studies degree. The recent research enquired into the experiences of students as they engaged in a semester of STFE at Whitley College. During the course of the research I recognised a remarkable congruence between the research methodology broadly defined as 'phenomenology' and the processes of STFE which seek to describe and interpret students' experiences of ministry. For this reason I have included a significant section on phenomenology and hermeneutics in the second chapter – 'A Theological and Philosophical Foundation'. I recognise that not all supervisors will wish, or need, to engage the thinking of Husserl, Heidegger or Gadamer in what may appear to be a fairly superficial treatment of phenomenology. Nevertheless I include the material in the belief that there is a nexus between phenomenology and theological reflection; one is enquiring into human consciousness and meaning-making from an (ideally) unbiased stance; the other is enquiring into human experience from the standpoint of Christian faith and the belief that God is both active in, and revealed through, human experience.

Through other disciplines of theology one can learn to exegete the Scriptures and the traditions of the church. The combination of theological reflection and phenomenology can assist the minister-in-training to exegete experience and interpret experience through the lens of the Christian tradition. It can also lead to a dialectic in which the Christian tradition is interpreted through the lens of experience.

The structures of STFE programs vary to some degree, and so this manual must be read in conjunction with the relevant STFE handbook. Whilst the Whitley College and CCTC programs are similar, changes can be made from year-to-year in the handbooks, so that supervisors need to ascertain that they are in possession of the current edition of serving and learning covenants, evaluations etc.

More attention will be paid to the theory than to the practice of supervision in this manual as the intention is more to acquaint supervisors with the spirit than with the mechanics of STFE. A reasonably comprehensive bibliography is offered in the hope that some aspects of the material in the manual may excite an interest in delving more deeply into the mysteries of supervision, experiential learning, theological reflection or phenomenology. Should this happen the reader can be guaranteed that new vistas in understanding and interpretation will open up bringing both delight and challenge.

1 – INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This resource manual has been developed to support those who have offered to receive training for the important and specialised ministry of supervision in the Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) programs of Whitley College and the Churches of Christ Theological College (CCTC). Together CCTC and Whitley College comprise the Evangelical Theological Association (ETA) which is an associated teaching institution of the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). This resource manual must be read in association with the 'Supervised Theological Field Education Handbook' of the college with which the supervisor is associated.

STFE has been part of the curriculum for ministry formation in the ETA only since the early 1980's and is in a constant process of review and development. Nevertheless it is a mode of theological education that has a significant body of theory supporting it educationally, philosophically and theologically, some of which will be cited in this manual. It is also worth noting that STFE has become an integral component of formation programs in denominational and non-denominational theological colleges in Australia and in many other countries, particularly the United States of America where it originated.

STFE can be taken by any ETA student who has a 16 hour per week ministry placement. It can be credited as thirty points towards the Advanced Diploma in Ministry, Bachelor of Theology, or Master of Divinity. For accreditation of these units, the student must have a supervisor who has been trained and accredited to a standard approved by the Victorian Association of Theological Field Education (VATFE). The ETA/Theological Hall supervision training program has been approved for this purpose and is also accredited by MCD as a level 4 unit (DP415.15) for anyone wishing to use it as a qualifying unit for entry into a Master of Theology or Master of Ministry degree.

All STFE programs are based on students being supervised, much as students receive supervision in most of the helping professions, but supervised in a manner that requires them to reflect theologically on their experiences of ministry. They require a placement in a church or agency of the church (hence the use of the somewhat agricultural term 'field'), and the objective of the program is the education of the student both theologically and practically. This chapter will include an outline of the developments in supervised theological field education in Australia and in the USA, and its place within the theological education offerings in the ETA. I will explore its relationship to practical theology and to clinical pastoral education, the program to which it most closely relates.

The structures of STFE provide a framework for learning, particularly through the process of theological reflection and I shall suggest some situations, sources and strategies for theological reflection. If STFE is to be taken seriously within the seminary, it must be able to demonstrate that it does provide education for ministry, and so there is also a section on experiential learning, the relevant educational mode. It must also be able to demonstrate that it is theological, and this will be addressed in the section on theological reflection, and more fully in the philosophical and theological foundation for STFE in Chapter 2.

This manual is intended as a resource to be 'dipped into' rather than read from cover to cover at one sitting. There will be occasions when a supervisor simply needs to know what the requirements of the program demand for, say, evaluations, and can go straight to Chapter 3 – 'The Structures of Supervision'. On other occasions the issue might be how to structure a supervisory session so that previously identified learning issues are reviewed, and the appropriate section of the manual would be Chapter 4 – 'The Practice of Supervision'. When the supervisor's imagination is caught by questions about the pedagogical and theological foundations of STFE, the starting point would be Chapter 2 – 'A Theological and Philosophical Foundation'.

1.1 The Context of STFE in Victoria

Ecumenically, STFE has been one of the unifying influences in formation for ministry across denominational boundaries. In 1995 Reverend Professor John Paver was instrumental in drawing together theological field education directors from theological and bible colleges across Melbourne. This group was to become the 'Victorian Association for Theological Field Education' (VATFE), an association which values inclusiveness of different types of program and appreciation of differing theological perspectives. VATFE has developed a standards document by which programs and STFE units can be evaluated and accredited (e.g. the Melbourne College of Divinity [MCD] requires that any proposals for accrediting new field education units be first approved by VATFE). The formation of this association has led to co-operation between member institutions on a number of levels, most notably in the training of supervisors accredited for MCD field education programs. In 2002 a training program was offered jointly between Theological Hall (Uniting Church in Australia), Whitley College (Baptist) and the Churches of Christ Theological College. This program also included participants from the Salvation Army and Reformed churches. Another supervision training program was arranged specifically for Salvation Army officers from all states of Australia using a combination of in-house and VATFE teachers. In 2001 I collaborated with Reverend Mike Grechko, at the time Director of Field Education for Tabor College, to provide a supervision training program for Tabor and FORGE (a mission and church planting training program within the Churches of Christ). These are indicators of the influence of STFE in transcending denominational and doctrinal divides.

Prior to the establishment of VATFE, STFE programs had been introduced into the curricula of the Uniting and Anglican Churches' formation programs in Victoria in the early nineteen-seventies, in large part due to the efforts of Reverend Professor Douglas Fullerton, Director of Field Education for the Uniting Church and former Director of Field Education for the Methodist Church, and Reverend Doctor Stephen Ames, Director of Field Education for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. These developments have been well documented by Paver and by Maung-Lat and are significant, not only for the traditions they represent, but also for the influence they have had on the growing acceptance of STFE education as a legitimate component of theological education in some of the associated teaching institutions of the MCD. Baptist theological educators, including Reverend Grenville Hinton, the first Director of Field Education at Whitley College, and myself, were supervised by Dr Ames through the INSTEP CPE program. At that time, INSTEP was the only parish-based CPE program in Victoria and gave many pastors who now supervise in the ETA programs their first experience of this mode of theological education.

1.2 Developments in STFE

In the early nineteen seventies, Donald Beisswenger identified a spectrum of supervisory modes ranging from work evaluation through training to consultant and spiritual guide. Doran McCarty built on Beisswenger's categories to include work overseer, trainer, coordinator, catalyst, change agent, expert and consultant. My growing sense of the value of supervision for ministry within the context of the ETA, is that it is most effective when the supervisor is operating towards the consultant end of the spectrum of modes of supervision, and away from the overseer model. This assumes, as Cooper and Briggs point out, that 'the student is active and self-regulating', i.e. capable of working with new knowledge and concepts to transform their preconceptions and able to set appropriate learning goals for themselves. In my experience, most students who are candidates for ministry are perfectly capable of operating in this manner and flourish with a supervisor who will encourage and challenge them by offering creative options for interpreting and responding to situations, but allows them freedom to choose their own pastoral responses to those situations. Regina Coll supported this view that consultation is the appropriate mode for ministry supervision, but she wanted to avoid any misconception that consultancy is dispassionate or detached:

'Consultation requires a perceptive supervisor who is able to suggest alternatives, to call attention to the consequences of decisions, to firmly and gently confront, and to challenge, challenge, challenge. The purpose of challenge and confrontation is to facilitate insight on the part of the student. It is always done in a positive manner'.

Whilst I agree with Coll's emphasis on challenge and confrontation, it has been my experience that this is best done progressively as trust is developed through the supervisory structures of goal setting, establishing covenants and clarifying expectations, and presenting reports of ministry experiences. Good supervision happens when the supervisor sees the student as a unique 'other' whose story contains valuable clues to their operational theology and world-view. If the supervisor embarks on a particular supervisory mode without first attending to the relationship with the student – and this includes listening to the story that the student tells about his/her experience – unnecessary resistance can result.

Supervisors in the STFE programs offered by ETA give their time without charge. They are not usually located in the student's ministry placement (as is the case for many other supervision programs) and therefore operate more readily in the consultant mode than if they were also responsible for the student's daily performance in the church or agency. The positive aspect of this arrangement is that the supervisor is not tempted to confuse legitimate concerns about the student serving the needs of the church or agency, with the learning needs of the student. The negative aspect of having an off-site supervisor is that the supervisor is not able to observe the student in the context of his/her ministry and is therefore limited in being able to offer guidance in skills development. The supervisor's authority may also be compromised to some degree in not being able to observe and hold the student accountable for his/her response to learning issues raised in the supervisory conference. Nevertheless, there are occasionally students who need a more directive approach, at least in the early stages of STFE, and a competent supervisor will be able to operate in more than one mode.

Writing about supervision in the helping professions, Peter Hawkins and Robin Shohet listed the ideal qualities of a supervisor (apart from arranging good supervision for themselves which they regard as a prerequisite) as:

'empathy, understanding, unconditional positive regard, congruence, genuineness (all from Carl Rogers); warmth and self-disclosure (Coche); flexibility, concern, attention, investment, curiosity and openness (Albott, Aldridge, Gitterman and Miller, and Hess)' .

These qualities remind us that, in the words of Lesley Cooper and Lynne Briggs, 'the most important person in supervision is the learner' , and the focus of supervision needs to be on assisting the learner develop the tools for reflection that will enhance the likelihood that the student will become a reflective practitioner. George Hunter makes a similar point when he writes that a good supervisor must be:

'... a teacher, but also a learner; a person who can exercise authority appropriately, but is also able to acknowledge interdependence with the student'.

I used similar concepts when identifying the 'Criteria for Selection as a Supervisor' (see Appendix 8) for the Whitley College STFE program:

'These qualities of personhood describe an individual who possesses a sense of self that is sufficiently secure to have no need to create the other in her own image or to adopt a guru stance. In a sense the supervisor recognizes that real growth occurs when the supervisee has an 'aha'

experience and discovers insights and answers for herself'.

Of course all of the above is written around the qualities and character of the individual supervisor. In the ETA program, each student receives twelve hours of individual supervision during the year, but engages in forty eight hours of peer supervision. Cooper and Briggs listed some key educational principles which resonate with the collaborative emphasis of STFE:

- Learning is social. It is a dynamic interactive between the collective and the individual.
- Students learn through a process of interaction with others.
- Peers, other adults or experts are important for learning.
- Cooperative and peer group activities are important for learning.
- Students will learn more if they can discover and talk to other students.

The peer group provides the major component of the student's supervision and certainly contributes to their learning and to the richness of the experience of STFE and the development of supportive relationships in ministry. Whilst these concepts of social learning are drawn from the sphere of education theory, they nevertheless have resonances with the implications for STFE of Trinitarian theology that is developed in Chapter 2.

Whilst I have shifted in my educational understanding and method for STFE, as I now read what I wrote in 1995, I recognize that the institution has also changed. In my MMin thesis I wrote:

'As a relatively recent innovation in which few of the faculty have participated, STFE has not been uniformly accepted nor understood. Those involved in teaching practical theology are committed to supervision, but others from more formal academic disciplines of theology tend to be less convinced of its validity as education'.

The situation today is that the faculties of Whitley College and CCTC are uniformly supportive of STFE as an important element in the total educational task of the colleges and are, in fact, wanting to see it expand to become available to all students of theology, not just those in formation for the ordained ministry. I would attribute this change in attitude to two factors:

- 1 - The Dean of Whitley College at the time of writing, Reverend Professor Frank Rees, visited Andover Newton Theological Seminary as part of study leave and observed how the focus of their theological curriculum on STFE, encouraged integration with the academic disciplines.
- 2 - Both faculties have, for several years, been invited to participate in the peer seminars by presenting papers describing their own method of theological reflection and then interacting with the students as they seek to integrate theology and experience. This initiative has been very significant in integrating STFE into the mainstream theological enterprise and in enabling students to identify and articulate their operational theology .

The faculties' commitment to STFE was evident when the new degree of Master of Divinity was introduced by the MCD. It was the ETA representatives on the board responsible for establishing the curriculum who insisted that STFE be included as an optional unit. The Dean of Whitley College has been instrumental in introducing new experience-based reflective practice units into the curriculum and moving to have the supervision training program recognised as a graduate unit available to students in a variety of graduate and post-graduate degrees. This shift in faculty attitude has in no sense called into question the merit of the academic theological disciplines, but it has brought some balance into theological education by recognising that learning involves a variety of activities which include experience, observation, conceptualisation and experimentation . Whilst my experience at Whitley College, and more recently at the Churches of Christ Theological College, has been very positive, I am conscious that this has not been the case for others of my STFE colleagues. John

Paver, in describing the Theological Reflection Seminar offered to students in the Uniting Church wrote :

'My reluctance to include some of my colleagues from the more classical disciplines has been protective, based on my judgement that their stance could be detrimental to the processes of the seminar. However, if the seminar is to be integrative and interdisciplinary it either needs to alter its format or seek ways to involve all members of faculty in a creative manner'.

A supervisor's commitment to the task of STFE must emerge from a deep commitment to the Church as it seeks to be faithful to its vocation of incarnating the life and ministry of Jesus the Christ in the world (I use the definite article to emphasize that 'Christ' is a title and not a surname). The mission of Jesus transcends the boundaries that separate denominations, traditions and theological institutions, and it is providential that STFE by its very nature serves this same end.

1.3 STFE and Practical Theology

Perhaps the difficulty that STFE has experienced in gaining recognition within theological seminaries is partly because its roots lie beyond the seminary. Whilst it now finds its home within the discipline known as 'practical theology', it has not always been a welcome partner in the theological enterprise. Professionally, the practice of supervision for STFE has more in common with supervision in the helping professions than it does with the traditional formation practices of most Christian traditions. For instance, the equivalent of STFE in the Baptist Theological College (later named Whitley College) in the early twentieth century, was offered by a retired minister who talked over with the students the 'possibilities and difficulties, the problems and dangers of the ministry'. In addition there were lectures on 'How to conduct weddings and funerals', 'Intercourse with other denominations', 'Development of a territorial mission', and 'Church business'. In no sense would I want to denigrate the sincerity and integrity of what was given to the students in those days voluntarily, and no doubt with great commitment, by men with a wealth of experience. But in conversations with pastors who trained in the days prior to STFE and spiritual formation, there is often a wistful sense of 'if only we had this opportunity'.

The lack of practical training for ministry and the perceived academic bias of Whitley College under Principal Himbury gave rise to vigorous debate within the College and the Baptist Union in the early seventies and opened the way for the introduction of STFE in 1981. The program was an addition to the existing curriculum; a Southern Baptist field educator, Prof William Hand, was invited to Whitley to institute the program . It then had to be grafted from the programs offered by Fullerton (STFE) and Ames (CPE) and, of course, they had received their induction into the theory and practice of STFE and CPE in the USA.

The situation is reminiscent of St Paul's understanding of the relationship between the Gentile churches and Israel:

'But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. Remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you.' (Rom. 11:17f.)

One of the distinguishing features of STFE (unlike CPE) is that it has remained within the theological institution, and therefore seeks, and must have, dialogue with the four fields that have come to represent what has been accepted as the (to use St Paul's metaphor) natural olive tree of theological education. This raises the question about what the natural olive tree might be in our context of twenty-first century western theological education. A first intuition might be that practical theology is the

natural home of STFE, but that leaves open the further question of how the two then relate to the other disciplines of biblical studies, systematic theology and church history. As I have said, in the context of ETA, STFE has been well and truly grafted into the theological curriculum, but it is nevertheless helpful to briefly sketch the influences that have shaped theological education in its present form, and particularly the relationship between practical theology and the other disciplines.

Practical theology is a term that was originally applied to theology generally – all theology was directed towards practice. Edward Farley traced the steps that led to the partitioning of theology, and the defining of practical theology as a discrete field amongst other fields :

- The first step was when moral theology was distinguished from speculative theology in the late eighteenth-century.
- The second step was when church polity and pastoral care were seen as a natural subset of practical theology.
- The third step was the annexation of moral theology into systematic theology and the identification of practical theology as 'an area pertaining to the church's fundamental activities'.

The consequence of this shift in categorising theology, according to Farley, was first the clericalisation of practical theology, then the removal of praxis from the centre of theological enquiry. A further consequence of the distancing of theology from human experience and activity, wrote Farley, is that there is now a missing element in the structure of theological education as it has been in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. That missing element is 'the theological interpretation of situations', in other words relating the insights of theology and lived experience. To redress this lacuna, Farley suggested four necessary tasks for theological interpretation :

- The first task is to identify the situation and describe its distinctive features.
- The second task is to trace the history of the situation.
- The third task is to locate the situation within its broader context so that a more-than-parochial perspective can be developed. This might be described as locating the situation within its ambient culture.
- The fourth task is to discern the appropriate response demanded by the situation.

This schema is similar to what Poling and Miller described as 'The Essential Components of Practical Theology', the elements of which are:

- Description of lived experience.
- Critical awareness of perspectives and interests.
- Correlation of perspectives from culture and the Christian tradition.
- Interpretation of meaning and value.
- Critique of interpretation.
- Guidelines and specific plans for a particular community.

I would argue that these tasks and elements are very much the project of STFE, particularly in those aspects of peer and personal supervision in which the students undertake theological reflection upon experiences of ministry. In this respect STFE can serve as one influence in the re-integration of theology and the recovery of 'the theological interpretation of situations'.

Alastair Campbell has been a critic of the captivity of practical theology to the structures of the church and proposes that mission must be returned to the centre of theology so that 'the functions of the ordained ministry' are no longer regarded as 'normative for its (practical theology's) divisions of subject matter and delineation of scope'. Campbell recognised in a rather pragmatic way that, because practical theology (as redefined in ways similar to Farley, Poling and Miller) is 'situation-

based', it will always be somewhat fragmentary and unsystematic. However, he did not seek to restore it to its position as 'the crown of theological studies', but proposed that it relate to the other disciplines in a lateral way that is 'more an exercise in creative imagination, the interplay of idea and action, with all the ambiguity and inconclusiveness which this implies'. The theme of mission as justice, and its centrality to STFE, was also articulated by Ian Williams, a former Principal and Director of Field Education at Theological Hall (the theological college of the Uniting Church in Victoria). He is critical of models of STFE that focus on the intra-personal and inter-personal experiences of the student at the expense of reflecting on ecclesial and social/public structures. In a theological reflection seminar that he facilitated, the participants were invited to use their experiences to reflect on three aspects:

- The minister as person
- The minister as leader of a Christian community.
- The leader as agent of God's justice.

These critiques of both practical theology and STFE are most challenging and a much-needed corrective to any natural inclination to allow the student complete freedom to determine the content of their case studies and other presentations. As supervisors it is also a challenge to ensure that the outward focus on mission and justice is brought into the supervisory process.

1.4 STFE and CPE

If STFE is professionally allied to supervision in the helping professions, it is the spiritual younger sibling of Clinical Pastoral Education. CPE has its roots in the reflections of Anton Boisen on a psychotic episode that he experienced at the age of forty-four and his conviction that it had been brought on by a disturbance in his thinking patterns and perceptions rather than by physical damage to the brain, as diagnosed by his physicians. He was subsequently appointed chaplain at Worcester State Hospital and became associated with the Emmanuel movement founded by Elwood Worcester, an Episcopal pastor committed to 'medically supervised, religious psychotherapy'. Worcester was influenced by the ideas of Sigmund Freud and sought to revive the healing ministry of the church through scientific therapeutic (including psychotherapeutic) means, and this provided a sympathetic context for Boisen to develop his own ideas about the nexus between emotional health and the human psyche. As chaplain, Boisen conducted what was most likely the first CPE program anywhere, with four theological students on placement as chaplain interns in 1925. He introduced the idea of regarding persons as 'living human documents' who should be studied by students of theology alongside the documents of the church.

CPE has subsequently developed as a program with clear goals and high standards, particularly for those who wish to be accredited, or to retain their accreditation as supervisors. I have sat on accreditation panels for potential CPE supervisors, and supervisors seeking an upgrade of their accreditation, and the standard required in terms of personal evaluation and theological grounding is admirable. No doubt there are as wide variations in the content and quality of CPE programs as there are in STFE programs, so any general observations that are made about CPE will not apply to all programs.

Many, but not all, CPE programs place a major emphasis on the psychodynamic concepts of transference, counter-transference, and parallel process. These concepts help identify the ways in which the student experiences problems about learning due to their attitude to the supervisor (transference) and learning problems due to their attitude to the patient (countertransference) and the parallel process that occurs between the supervisory relationship and the clinical relationship. Whilst these concepts are covered in one session of the supervision training course for STFE, they are not a

primary feature. This may be because STFE covers the broad gamut of pastoral ministry, only part of which relates to individual counselling, and also because STFE supervisors are not dealing with supervisory relationships on a day-to-day basis and it is therefore not feasible or essential for them to become fully conversant with these dynamics.

The differences between CPE and STFE are perhaps more of emphasis than substance, although the context of the latter leaves it open to the critiques of pastoral theology generally, that it is too often restricted to the affairs of church and clergy at the expense of engagement with the broader community. Program directors need to respond pro-actively to avoid the clericalisation of STFE and to ensure that the cautions of Campbell, Williams and others are heeded so that the program is missionally as well as pastorally focussed. Conversely, a critique that has been levelled at CPE is that it can be too located in the human sciences and lack depth in its approach to theological reflection. Patton was particularly critical of this orientation of CPE :

‘... there is a tendency for students in CPE to lose touch with what they are experiencing because they have become so enamoured with analysing the psychodynamics of a situation. This tendency may be expressed in a suspicion of everything that is obvious and an assumption that a deeper meaning must be found in everything.’

Whilst theological reflection may have been neglected in favour of psychodynamic enquiry in some programs and some eras in CPE, the emphasis on the human person has been its great strength, and in most contemporary programs, the imbalance has been recognised and begun to be redressed.

Another critical issue for CPE is its location within extra-ecclesial settings that can lead to a disconnectedness from its roots within the life of the church. Since 2000, at the instigation of the Health and Welfare Chaplains of the Baptist Union of Victoria, regular meetings of chaplains and representatives of that denomination have been held. The impetus for the meetings was the widely held view of the chaplains that they were not valued as representatives of the denomination ministering in the ‘real world’, and a desire on their part to be acknowledged and ‘owned’ by the church.

Whilst CPE traces its roots to 1925, STFE can trace its roots back to 1935 when the American Association of Theological Schools (ATS) appointed a committee to investigate supervised training, although the standards document that ensued made no mention of field work as such. The real impetus for the recognition and development of supervised theological field education in the USA did not happen until 1966 with the publication of an essay entitled ‘Education for Ministry’ by Charles R. Fielding . John Paver has traced the significant philosophical developments that have led to the differentiation of STFE from CPE, particularly the primary emphasis of the former in fostering theological education through the practice of rigorous theological reflection .

STFE owes a great debt to the CPE movement for its basic structures and critical evaluation of experience. However field education directors and supervisors (particularly those who have been extensively involved in CPE) need to be conscious that there are differences in emphasis and be able to focus on the primary objectives of ministry formation through theological reflection on ministry experience.

2 – A THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 STFE and experiential learning

Donald Schön first articulated the crisis of confidence in professional knowledge in his book, 'The Reflective Practitioner', in 1984. His critique was targeted at the manner in which professions had come to rely on technique, by which the practitioner 'is drawn into patterns of error which he cannot correct'. The pattern of behaviour that he observed was one not uncommon in ministry; the professional develops a body of technical knowledge in training and then becomes 'selectively inattentive' to experiences which do not fit the learned criteria. Schön described this as 'the practitioner having "over-learned" what he knows'. The corrective to this 'over-learning', said Schön is reflective practice.

Alongside the name of Schön in the matter of reflective practice is that of David Kolb whose experiential learning theory, based on the prior works of Dewey, Piaget, Lewin and Vygotsky, has been influential in approaches to adult learning. Kolb proposed that adults learn as they process through cycles of learning that move from Concrete-Experience (CE) to Reflective-Observation (RO), through Abstract-Conceptualisation (AC) to Active-Experimentation (AE). According to Kolb people have preferred learning styles, but that each of the categories is engaged in the learning process. The preferred styles are described as 'Convergent Knowledge' (AC + AE); 'Divergent Knowledge' (CE + RO); 'Assimilative Knowledge' (AC + RO); and 'Accommodative Knowledge' (CE + AE). Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualisation refer to the ways in which we grasp knowledge (the former is knowing through experience in the way that we 'know' the taste of an apple; the latter is knowing through reading or conceptualising, e.g. 'knowing about' molecular science). Active Experimentation and Reflective Observation refer to how that knowledge is tested, or processed, by 'doing' or 'reflecting'. By kind permission of Prof Emeritus John Paver, a paper on the Kolb theory written by him for the Theological Hall (UCA) Field Education Handbook is included at Appendix 9.

Kolb's theory has been criticised for having an inadequate theoretical base and providing too neat a solution to the complex issues of learning, yet even its critics acknowledge that it has provided a valuable entry point into understanding how humans learn through different modes, including experience. I recall a participant in a supervision training course describing the Kolb theory as 'woolly' but also acknowledging that the description of his style as identified by the Kolb instrument actually matched his perception of how he preferred to learn. The theory of experiential learning has developed in many directions in recent years, especially in the area of adult learning. The average age of candidates for ministry in ETA would be early to mid thirties, so that we are dealing with adult learning, and educational methods need to take account of that fact. Some basic principles of adult learning that resonate with theories of experiential learning and with STFE are:

1. prior learning is recognised and respected. Jackson and MacIsaac contended that learners construct knowledge by assimilating new experience and understanding into the knowledge base formed by prior experience and learning. Learning is enhanced when the learner is an 'active participant and active reflector' in the learning process. This forms the basis of a constructivist model of learning, which is the model I based my research.
2. learning is enhanced when there are 'critical similarities between specific learning and specific performance contexts'. Clearly this is a foundational principle of STFE as the student's placement is the context for experiencing, reflecting and learning.
3. differences in learning style are respected and allowed for. The use of the Kolb and MBTI instruments are indicators to potential supervisors that blocks in the learning process may be caused by differences in personality and learning style between supervisor and student.
4. experiential learning can lead to a transformation of previously held values and beliefs (operational

theology), especially when a new experience disrupts the old structure of understanding. Transformation can take the form of a radical change in the perception of an individual about a significant aspect of human experience, as in the theory of transformation and adult learning developed by Mezirow, or it can take the form of social transformation brought about by different perspectives on social issues made possible by social analysis, as in the work of Freire. In the current research, transformation refers much more to the former than the latter as STFE deals primarily with the individual experiences in ministry of the students. Malinen distinguished between 'first order' experiences, which are experiences encountered within the normal course of life that do not disrupt the present cognitive framework, and 'second order' experiences which confront the learner with a surprising recognition that the old categories of interpretation cannot embrace. Transformation occurs on the boundary between these two categories of experience, and it is at precisely this boundary that supervised theological field education operates. The process of transformation is not inevitable and is certainly not instantaneous. Where it can often be seen is in reviewing a student's records over the two years of STFE and observing the shifts in interpretation, and the self-evaluations of the student over that time.

Because STFE is dealing with the structures of meaning for people who are, or will be, engaged in leading congregations in the process of interpreting experience, it necessarily needs to be handled with sensitivity as well as rigour. Not infrequently, the challenges posed by experience are accompanied by challenges in the students' former theological frameworks, especially in the area of biblical studies. New interpretive frameworks cannot be forced, they must emerge from the student's rational processes in the context of supportive yet challenging and reflective supervisory relationships.

2.2 Philosophical foundations

STFE emerged as a partner in theological education about the same time as Farley and others were questioning the efficacy of traditional, perhaps more academic, models of theological education in the task of 'interpreting situations'. It obviously does not invalidate traditional theological disciplines such as biblical studies and systematic theology, for they are indispensable sources for theological reflection.

Similar questions to those that have been raised about traditional modes of doing theology have also been raised about traditional models of education (pedagogies) and about the nature of human knowledge (epistemology). STFE recognises the ambiguity of human experience and the provisional nature of all interpretations of existence. In this it has moved from a modernist, rational, positivist world view to a more constructivist view which recognises that meaning is a complex interaction between an individual and her/his community. It also means that the natural conversation partners of STFE in the academy are the qualitative research methodologies based in phenomenology. Whilst the philosophical background I am suggesting here provides a foundation for qualitative research methods, it also serves to indicate the rationale for the methods of theological reflection used in STFE.

The early Twentieth Century saw the emergence of a number of different approaches to epistemology, and rich conversations about what can be known and how reliable human knowledge is. These epistemologies either built on, or reacted against, the dominant paradigms of intellectual rationalism born of the Enlightenment, or of the anti-rational emotionalism embraced by the Romantics. In broad terms the debate polarised thinking and feeling, science and metaphysics, deductive and inductive modes of interpretation. My intention here is merely to trace some of the major turning points in the road that have led to qualitative research methods gaining acceptance, at least in some faculties of tertiary institutions (of course the debate has neither been won or lost, but at least a plurality of approaches is tolerated in most universities).

2.2.1 Positivism

One major movement in the rationalist stream has come to be known as 'logical positivism', (also known as 'logical empiricism', 'logical neopositivism', and 'neopositivism'). The principle tenet of this epistemology is that 'there are only two sources of knowledge: logical reasoning and empirical experience'. A distinction is made between analytic and synthetic theories; analytic theories relate to objects which can be directly observed and measured; synthetic theories depend on empirical interpretation and cannot be directly observed and measured. Only logical reasoning is regarded as an analytic a priori; empirical experience is by definition synthetic and must therefore be excluded from a valid philosophical system. Logical positivism operates on the assumption that reality is objective and can be accessed through a method that takes account of, and makes allowances for, confounding factors by using control groups. Hypotheses are stated propositionally and are subjected to empirical testing to verify them. The first proponents of logical positivism belonged to 'the Vienna Circle', an informal group of philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists organized by Moritz Schlick... While the Vienna Circle was in formation so was the Berlin Society for Scientific Philosophy, led by Hans Reichenbach and Richard von Mises. These two groups and their associates would come to be called 'logical positivists'. Savage wrote:

'The Vienna group's principal texts were Ernst Mach's writings, Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Its general philosophical position was empiricism in modern logical dress: statements were held to be cognitively meaningful if and only if they are (i) analytic, that is, logically true or false, or (ii) synthetic a posteriori, that is, testable in principle by observation. Synthetic a priori statements (statements of fact that are not immediately observable) were held to be meaningless. The positivist meaning criterion generated enormous controversy; for it was widely employed to argue that ethical, theological, metaphysical, and many (if not most) philosophical statements are cognitively meaningless, and that true statements of pure mathematics are tautologies, albeit non-trivial ones.'

Alfred North Whitehead moved a long way from logical positivism in his later philosophical writings and became the founder of what has come to be known as 'process theology' or 'process philosophy'. The optimism of the logical positivist view has certainly been challenged from outside the scientific community, but it has also been dealt some significant blows from within. In particular, the articulation in 1927 by Werner Heisenberg of his 'uncertainty principle' undermines the idea that humankind, by rational inquiry and discovery, can potentially measure and comprehend all aspects of existence. What Heisenberg recognised was that the very act of measurement changes the state of that which is being measured. He pointed out that, if an electron was fired into a vacuum, its position could only be identified if it impacted another electron and emitted light that could be measured. But the impact would change the electron's state so that its mass could not be measured at the same time. David Cassidy wrote:

'Heisenberg realized that the uncertainty relations had profound implications. First, if we accept Heisenberg's argument that every concept has a meaning only in terms of the experiments used to measure it, we must agree that things that cannot be measured really have no meaning in physics. Thus, for instance, the path of a particle has no meaning beyond the precision with which it is observed. But a basic assumption of physics since Newton has been that a real world exists independently of us, regardless of whether or not we observe it... Heisenberg now argued that such concepts as orbits of electrons do not exist in nature unless and until we observe them'.

The whole thrust of logical positivism was to eliminate from its purview anything that did not emerge from logical reasoning and scientific method: ethics, metaphysics, philosophy and, of course, theology are all inaccessible to logical reasoning and are therefore not meaningful. This rationalist approach to human knowledge has been challenged on many fronts. Paul Tillich, in his *'Systematic Theology'*, accused logical positivism of not recognising that its prohibition of philosophy and its own limited selection of acceptable philosophers are based on arbitrary preferences. He distinguishes between

different forms of reason; 'technical reason', which relates to those cognitive functions engaged in logical analysis, and 'ontological reason' which is 'cognitive and aesthetic, theoretical and practical, detached and passionate, subjective and objective'. I resonate with Tillich's claims that divorcing technical reason from ontological reason, especially when the latter is invalidated by the positivists, is de-humanising. Tillich believed, and incorporated in his own life, that truth is mediated not only through science and philosophy, but also through art, politics and culture.

Lincoln and Guba gave a thorough and convincing demolition of positivism as a paradigm for researching humankind, demonstrating the inherent flaws in its basic assumptions and the damage that research based on its tenets has done when applied to research on humans. They cited five assumptions of positivism that 'are increasingly difficult to maintain':

- An ontological assumption of a single, tangible reality "out there" that can be broken apart into pieces capable of being studied independently...
- An epistemological assumption about the possibility of the separation of the observer from the observed...
- An assumption of the temporal and contextual independence of observations so that what is true at one time and place ... may also be true at another time and place.
- An assumption of linear causality; there are no effects without causes and no causes without effects.
- An axiological assumption of value freedom, that is, that the methodology guarantees that the results of an inquiry are essentially free from the influence of any value system (bias).

These critiques of positivism are certainly valid when it comes to the area of human research. There are fields of research in which the assumptions of positivism have proven helpful, particularly research into technical systems, but in the field of human research in which I am engaged, logical positivism, as demonstrated by Lincoln and Guba, is quite inappropriate.

2.2.2 Hermeneutics and phenomenology

Qualitative methods of research are based on the premise that, when it comes to understanding human experience, the separation between researcher and researched, between subject and object, is a fiction. Experience, and the meaning attributed to experience, are not immediately observable and accessible to a true/false analysis and therefore lie outside the boundaries of a positivist framework. Some approaches to psychological and social research have sought to observe and analyse human behaviour using positivist principles, but these still do not address the question of meaning (the why rather than the what or how). In this section I trace the foundational developments in hermeneutics and phenomenology that underpin much of qualitative research methods and also much of the practices of STFE.

Hermeneutics

The modern discipline of hermeneutics emerged as a response to the questions raised by the Reformation debate about the authentic meaning of the Biblical text and by the Enlightenment questions about epistemology and philology. The Reformers challenged the Roman Catholic understanding that the text could only be interpreted through the lens of tradition and that its true meaning was not immediately evident to the individual reader. They asserted that truth was accessible to the contemporary reader and that the basis for faith and doctrine could be developed *sola scriptura* without reference to tradition.

Whilst not advocating a return to the authority of tradition as the interpretive framework of Scripture, Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) recognised that hermeneutics involved more than merely reading and understanding the language of the text. He proposed three levels of interpretation:

- the hermeneutic of the letter (grammatical interpretation);
- the hermeneutic of the sense (the matter addressed within the text);

- the hermeneutic of the spirit (both the spirit of the age in which the document was written and the individuality or 'genius' of the author) .

Hermeneutics, for Ast, required an understanding of the world-view of the author and his/her community and of the particular 'controlling idea' embodied in the text. It was an attempt to re-create, as far as possible, the original intention of the author liberated from the contamination of traditional interpretations and contemporary culture.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) followed Ast's line of thought that hermeneutics required that the hearer engage the mind of the speaker as well as the text. In his concept of the 'hermeneutical circle', Schleiermacher grappled with the complex issues of how humans understand. They understand, he claimed, by comparing the object of inquiry with what they already know, thus learning is analogical in character. But they cannot fully understand a finite object (a sentence or a statement) unless they relate it to the whole context in which it exists (the intention or idea of the author). It is this dialectical movement between text and context, part and whole, that constitutes the 'hermeneutical circle'. Schleiermacher's purpose in the practice of hermeneutics was not so much to seek understanding as to 'avoid misunderstanding', misunderstanding being the default outcome when interpreting a text. His dual 'grammatical' and 'psychological' approach to interpretation recognised that the text had to be understood as the author would have intended it, and this required rigorous literary and historical analysis. However the author's intention could not be fully conveyed through the medium of language and therefore the interpreter had to, as far as possible, understand the mind of the author. What made this re-experiencing of the author's thinking possible for Schleiermacher was the 'shared human spirit' of the author and the reader, but it required a rigorous method to bridge the gap and avoid the misunderstanding that was the inevitable consequence of a 'lax practice of understanding' .

Schleiermacher's concern with hermeneutics was still essentially to provide a method of interpreting Scripture for the modern mind in a way that had integrity and relevance. Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) contribution to the development of hermeneutics was to expand the horizon of interpretation to include the humanities and social sciences, '... that is ... all those disciplines which interpret expressions of man's (sic) inner life, whether the expressions be gestures, historical actions, codified law, art works or literature' . All of these expressions of life are open to inquiry as to their meaning but the methods used differ from objective scientific investigation; 'Scientific experiments seek to know and explain. Inquiry into human affairs seeks to understand' .

Dilthey set great store on 'lived experience' (Erlebnis) and of the possibility of interpreting expressions of lived experience because 'all humans participate in a common Spirit' (as for Schleiermacher). He moved the locus of understanding from sacred text to human experience although that experience was more than the subjective experience of an individual. Each individual had a 'world-view' (Weltanschauung) which was shaped, not only in the intellect, but in the whole of life which includes feeling and will as well as thinking. Dilthey had a strong sense of humans as historical beings in which the world-view of the individual developed within a society and culture, so that relationships and the sensations and feelings engendered by their experience in the world, all contributed to their world-view. The texts humans produced, whether written or artistic, were expressions of that world-view, and the task of hermeneutics was to re-create in the mind of the reader, the world-view of the author . This understanding of the task of hermeneutics would change radically in the later twentieth century arising particularly out of the thinking of Martin Heidegger. According to Heidegger, 'interpretation is not an isolated activity, but the basic structure of experience' ; i.e. to be human is to be an interpreter of experience. Hermeneutics presupposes a text, which in Schleiermacher's understanding, would mean the Biblical text, and the text becomes a lens through which experience is interpreted. Subsequent hermeneuticians have recognised that the principles of hermeneutics which evolved to interpret Scripture for differing contexts, can apply to any text, or even works of art which are also

expressions of meaning. Spinelli used the example of the irritation that abstract art induces in many people (because of its seeming 'meaninglessness') to make the point that artistic expression is in fact 'meaningful' .

If I were to follow Schleiermacher's approach to hermeneutics, it would be necessary to interpret these texts from an understanding of the minds of the authors in dialogue with their life situation. Paul Ricoeur suggested a different approach; that the text needs to stand alone as an objective reality since the mind of the author is inaccessible to the reader . I would want to take an intermediate position that does take seriously the author's intent and life situation, but which also takes seriously the reader's capacity to derive contemporary meaning from the text that may go beyond the understanding of the author and the original readership. In my approach to this method, I not only have access to written documents (i.e. the questionnaires), but also, for a brief time, to the authors of the documents in the research sessions. This has enabled me to adopt what Denzin and Lincoln describe as a constructivist approach to understanding the meaning of the experience being researched, by working intersubjectively with the research participants in that process. By inviting the participants to identify key words and phrases and to produce individual and group statements of meaning, they participate, not only in providing data for me to interpret, but by participating intersubjectively with each other in the interpretation of the experience. Of course the meanings derived in this process do not claim to be absolute or universal because of the limitations of language and what Gadamer called the 'horizon of meaning within which the statements were placed' .

A final word about the methodology of hermeneutics relates to what is called a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' that approaches a text asking the question about what is missing and what is false, recognising the human capacity to interpret the same material in a variety of ways. Ricoeur recognised that the desire for objectivity creates a distance between the reader and the text, particularly if some false assumptions or understandings are recognised in the world-view of the author. However he wanted to preserve the sense that the truth in a text can still be discerned provided the methodology used is able to identify and clear away whatever arises from a false consciousness of the author – a process he described as 'demystification' . Of course this raises the question of what is meant by 'truth' and 'falsehood', a question that is much more than semantic. A hermeneutic approach to a text written when the predominant world view was that the earth is flat, does not mean that the text is incapable of being a vehicle for truth for a modern reader, merely that the world view of the author needs to be recognised and accounted for in the hermeneutical process. In the process of interpretation, one must also take into account the world-view of the interpreter and recognise that it has limitations and errors, as does the author's. The corrective to the interpreter's bias is 'bracketing' which van Manen described as 'the act of suspending one's various beliefs in the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world' . This idea of bracketing is reflected in the Whitehead method of theological reflection used widely in supervised theological field education; the first stage in their method is described as 'Attending', the principal requirement of which is the 'capacity to suspend premature judgement' .

Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl was educated as a mathematician and was awarded his Ph.D. for a dissertation entitled 'Contributions to the Theory of the Calculus of Variations'. However his real interest, even while studying, was in philosophy, particularly the theories of Wilhelm Wundt . Mathematics was a primary focus for the logicians who developed the theories behind logical positivism. Doubtless this blending of two disciplines, which represented quite different epistemologies, inspired Husserl to develop a way of experiencing and interpreting the world that was as rigorous as the mathematical model of his primary education, but as open to the complexities and relativities of his reading of philosophy.

Husserl did not deny that there was a 'real world out there' accessible to the body and the senses and

constantly present to him whether or not he was always aware of it. He described this as the 'world in which I find myself or the natural world-about-me' which is always present, and contrasted it with 'the arithmetical world [which] is there for me only when and so long as I occupy the arithmetical standpoint'. But just as the individual inhabits a natural world, so does her neighbour, and the neighbour experiences the natural world in her own way. In order to live together, the individual and the neighbour must 'set up in common an objective spatio-temporal fact-world as the world about us that is there for us all, and to which we ourselves none the less belong'. It is this shared world of fact and interpretation that Husserl described as 'the intersubjective natural world-about-me'.

Husserl believed that much more could be known and asserted about the natural world than logical positivism would allow, but he developed what would in time be seen to be an unrealistic model of inquiry. He proposed that it was possible for the skilled researcher to achieve 'pure consciousness', or 'transcendental consciousness', by 'bracketing out' the individual's experience that had been contaminated by culture, history and societal influences. His concept of 'phenomenological epoche' (or 'phenomenological reduction') required that the researcher's experience of 'the natural world' be set aside; that she identify that her perceptions are eidetic (remembered and therefore interpreted) in character and bracket out those perceptions when interpreting human experience. What remained in the mind of the researcher after such a process would be an understanding of the 'essence' of the experience. Through the method of transcendental phenomenology, in which the researcher bracketed out personal experience and 'transcended' the distortions of history, culture and society, 'pure consciousness' was able to identify the true nature or 'essence' of the experience. What Husserl appears to have done, is to surreptitiously re-instate the subject-object differentiation that was seen to be the deep flaw in logical positivism.

Whilst the method of transcendental phenomenology pioneered by Husserl may have been flawed (in that what it asks of the human mind is an impossibility), his reflections on the functioning of the mind and the way in which humans attribute meaning to experience are foundational for qualitative research methods. The intention of these reflections was to demonstrate how a pure description of a phenomenon could be developed. His reflections revolved around the complex concepts of 'intentionality', 'noesis' and 'noema'. 'Intentionality' is the function of the mind that relates to consciousness and awareness; in particular it refers to the capacity of the mind to direct its attention 'towards some entity, whether that entity exists or not'. The mind can focus on real objects that can be seen, touched, heard, or it can focus on images, concepts or memories, and this selective attention involves choice; there is an intention involved in selecting the focus of attention.

'Noesis' and 'noema' have their root in the Greek word 'nous' and originally had the meaning of 'sense directed on and object'. It could embrace aspects of 'mind, insight, understanding, judgement and meaning' and was often used in connection with making moral judgements. Noesis and noema, in Husserl's description, are both related to intentionality, or the direction of the mind towards a phenomenon. Noema is his way of describing the immediate phenomenon of seeing, say, a flower. The flower is not the phenomenon – it has a reality in and of itself. The phenomenon is what happens in the mind on seeing the flower; the immediate intuitive, pre-reflective response. Noesis is the conscious examination and description of one's experience of seeing the flower which involves the bringing together of sensory data, previous experience and evaluation of similar phenomena, memory, social evaluations of such a flower, all of which allows the individual to identify a range of possible meanings for the experience. Both noema and noesis have to do with meaning. The issue that remains to be established is whether the experience of seeing the flower has intrinsic meaning embedded within it, or whether meaning is only that attributed by the experienter.

Even within his own lifetime, Husserl came to recognise that the claims that he made for his method were exaggerated, in that no individual can so transcend the limitations of historical and cultural existence as to be able to discern the essential meaning of experience. Giorgi made the point that,

not only did Husserl change his thinking over time, but those who built on his work and developed phenomenology as a research method took quite different approaches so that 'a consensual, univocal interpretation of phenomenology is hard to find'. Nevertheless the core of Husserl's methodology, with researchers attempting to 'bracket out' their own experience and cultural presuppositions, are invaluable tools for qualitative research and undergird the research methods that I have adopted.

Hermeneutical phenomenology

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a student of Husserl and hence had an interest in phenomenology. But unlike Husserl, whose training was in mathematics, Heidegger's formation was in theology and this drew him towards a synthesis of phenomenology with hermeneutics, sometimes called 'hermeneutical phenomenology'. Heidegger's primary focus was on the structure of being, and the task of hermeneutics was to understand the mystery of being. Humankind was a 'being-towards-death' (i.e. time was the constraining horizon of being) and it was the awareness of temporality that gave hermeneutics its urgency. The conundrum of hermeneutics was that humans have being (sein), but that the meaning of their being was not immediately apparent and the potential for misunderstanding was great (as for Schleiermacher). Paul Tillich described the issue this way: 'This approach (Heidegger's method in 'Being and Time') must, however, be protected against a fundamental misunderstanding. It in no way assumes that man (sic) is more easily accessible as an object of knowledge, physical or psychological, than are non-human objects. Just the contrary is asserted. Man is the most difficult object encountered in the cognitive process. The point is that man is aware of the structures which make cognition possible. He lives in them and acts through them. They are immediately present to him. They are he himself'.

The experience of 'being-there' (Dasein) was the starting point for Heidegger's hermeneutic method: Dasein was the being of the enquirer which was apprehended through what he termed the 'forestructure' of understanding, and then expanded through a preliminary grasp of the 'existentials' (or structures of being), and on to an apprehension of Being itself. The 'forestructure' was an innate capacity of humans to intuit the meaning of Being and this was what allowed a shadowy grasp of the 'existentials' and a renewed experience of Dasein. Heidegger's 'hermeneutical circle' was located in the lived experience of the interpreter rather than in the mind and world of the author of sacred text as it was for Schleiermacher. In order to access this cycle of meaning and interpretation, one must 'endeavour to leap into the "circle", primordially and wholly, so that even at the start of the analysis of Dasein we make sure that we have a full view of Dasein's circular Being'. The interpreter does not stand outside the circle and analyse existence from an objective, external perspective, as for Husserl's 'transcendental phenomenology; rather it is the very fact of participating in the structures of Being that enables the interpreter to understand Being.

For Heidegger, what was of primary importance was the 'interpretation of authentically historical entities as regards their historicity'. As for Dilthey, Heidegger's understanding of humankind was that it was an essentially historical being, but that the meaning of its being was accessed through inquiry into the phenomenology of the existence in which it participated. Hermeneutical phenomenology was an essentially ontological task because humankind participates in Being and Being has a structure that is capable of being apprehended and understood. Understanding was a matter of uncovering the truth and the meaning of Being which were already there before us and capable of apprehension because of Dasein, 'being-there'. This stands over against the tenets of logical positivism that explicitly exclude empirical experience from the framework of interpretation and require the observer to adopt a detached, objective perspective so that 'truth is grounded, not in existence, but in perceiving an idea'. It also stands against Husserl's transcendental phenomenology that required that the observer 'bracket out' her experience of the natural world. Rather, for Heidegger, Being-in-the-world was always a Being-with-others-in-the world and meaning was necessarily developed within a relationship or a community.

Hans Georg Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, was also critical of the 'modern surrender to technical reason'. Like Hegel, and contrary to Dilthey, Gadamer was suspicious of the merit of personal reflection as a way of accessing the meaning of human experience. Like Heidegger, Gadamer saw humankind as an intrinsically historical being and all interpretations of existence needed to be framed in terms of historical consciousness. Gadamer was also convinced of the importance of the close link between aesthetics and hermeneutics, but at the same time did not believe that the meaning of a work of art was immediately accessible – only historical works of art were open to interpretation and interpretation came as much from the evaluation of the community as it did from individual reflection. Gadamer wanted to rescue the concept of 'prejudice' from the pejorative connotations that now attach to it, and believed that 'the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being'. It is these prejudices which were formed by the participation of the individual in a family, a society and a state that were thus historically constituted and facilitated interpretation, contrary to Husserl who believed that they could be bracketed out by the skilled researcher. Subjectivity, according to Gadamer, was a 'distorting mirror'; the task of hermeneutics was to bring about a 'fusion of the horizons of the past and the present', but it was the horizon of the past that needed to inform the horizon of the present.

I find myself caught between the thinking of two great minds. Whilst agreeing with Gadamer that historical awareness is vital to understanding, I consider that meaning can be discerned within contemporary experience provided the 'horizon of the past' is not ignored. In the theological reflection seminars that form part of STFE, one source of material for interpreting experience is tradition, which includes Scripture and the history of Christian thought. However the sources of experience (of the community as well as the individual) and culture are regarded as equally important to the task.

2.3 Research outcomes and STFE

In early 2002 I conducted research into Whitley College students' experiences of STFE. Through a series of questionnaires and group research sessions, and using methods consistent with developments in phenomenology as I have described, the students described and interpreted their experiences of setting goals, preparing and presenting case studies, etc. By gathering the data from the research sessions and the students' responses, and then processing them according to accepted methods for qualitative research, I have been able to identify a number of core themes that describe the nature of STFE both educationally and theologically. The themes give us a snapshot of STFE from the student's perspective, and therefore a clearer understanding of the program' educational and theological merits.

The themes that have emerged from the research are:

1. Mutuality of learning

All participants in STFE are learners.

As an educational medium, STFE functions best when all participants are learners. The intrinsic power imbalance between a supervisor and student, (or between a peer group facilitator and students), can be redressed if the supervisor is able to acknowledge his/her own willingness to learn and to grow. The role of the supervisor or facilitator is significant as the student responds to the perceived expertise, interest, understanding and care of the supervisor. Challenge is constructive and helpful if it is done in a transparent and invitational manner in which the student's perceptions are respected, but in which both student's and supervisor's perceptions are open to enquiry and adjustment. The participants who experienced the supervisory relationship as 'friendly/friends', 'equals' and 'non-threatening', were as keen to learn as one participant whose supervisor saw his role as 'the burr under the saddle'. Where they felt 'encouraged', 'supported' and 'nurtured', the participants seemed even more prepared to enter into the sometimes painful, threatening and risky process of revealing themselves to themselves and to others. Nevertheless it must be borne in mind that the student whose supervisor's style was more confronting was insistent that she came to appreciate and respond to that style and recognised that it was intended to encourage her reflection and learning in ministry. In this the supervisor could be said to be exercising appropriate authority by adopting a style that he believed (and was subsequently proved right) would encourage the student's learning.

This first theme is about intentional relationship as a stimulus to growth. The structures of STFE require that all of the participants agree (through the serving/learning covenants) about the processes, expectations, obligations and privileges that each will give and receive in the relationship of learning. The terms of the covenants are negotiated, not imposed, and become a guide for the learners, rather than a rigid rule to be applied in all situations. This theme recognises that the most effective learning is self-learning which can be either enhanced or discouraged by the nature of the supervisory relationship.

2. Intersubjective learning

Learning in STFE is principally intersubjective.

This is similar to the previous theme, but focuses, not on the power balance between supervisor and supervisee, but on the relationships between two or more people who relate to each other as subject-subject, rather than subject-object. According to Jessica Benjamin, 'The joy of intersubjective attunement is: This Other can share my feeling'. This experience is well attested in the research data, particularly the session that dealt with the student presenting a case study to the peer group. The key

words and phrases developed by the participants are rich in allusion to the experience as intersubjective and educational, e.g. 'discovering', 'shared journey', 'mutuality in learning', 'discernment', 'learning process facilitated by being taken seriously'. A creative response by one of the participants conveys the joy that Benjamin describes, as well as the essence of intersubjective learning:

'Open up, trust the group, and they will honour that trust.
They ask, they help, they encourage, they discern.
They learn with me.
This is great!'

Warren Lett distinguishes between intersubjectivity and inner-experiencing as it relates to the relationship of therapist and client. As the client represents experience through verbal and other modes of communication, the therapist experiences inner responses as thoughts, feelings and emotions. The therapist then makes choices about what she will reflect back to the client and with what use of language and other modes of communication the intersubjective response will be offered. When the intersubjective response finds a resonance within the client, the sense of shared feeling described by Benjamin, and the feeling of 'being understood' described by the research participants, is established. Intersubjective responses, whether in a therapeutic or educational setting, create a set of shared meanings for common or 'typical' experiences and, in that sense, the meaning is constructed by the participants in a way that creates options for future action.

3. Chosen vulnerability

The greatest learning occurs when students choose to make themselves vulnerable.

To be vulnerable is to be 'open to emotional or physical danger or harm', or 'exposed to an attack or possible damage' (Microsoft Word Dictionary). In a program in which students present reports which reveal something of themselves to their supervisor or peers, there is always the perception, and indeed the real possibility, that they may suffer emotional harm. Group interactions can be destructive if a student's particular weakness or failing is emphasised and probed to the point of causing distress. This kind of interaction can be experienced as an attack (e.g. Alice felt 'undermined' and 'misunderstood') and can potentially affect the student's self-esteem and relationships with those who are perceived as the attackers. For this reason, I emphasise confidentiality (which breeds confidence) and respect through all aspects of the STFE program. In the peer group, which is the part of the process where participants are most likely to be carried away in their enthusiasm, I will halt the discussion if I sense that it has moved from a healthy discomfort experienced by the presenter to an unhealthy and potentially damaging harassment of the presenter. The process over which a director of the STFE program has least control is the congregational committee. On two occasions in ten years I have disbanded a congregational committee because I sensed that some of the committee members were using the process to manipulate or harass the student.

There were times, early in the semester, when I wondered if the relationship between one of the participants and her supervisor would need to be suspended when she indicated that she felt undermined. However I did not judge, and her later evaluations validated my judgement, that the supervisor strayed beyond the boundaries of appropriate levels of challenge with his perceived confrontational style. In fact it would appear that, once the student became accustomed to it and recognised that it was an indication of his support and commitment to her learning, his style of supervision elicited her enthusiastic co-operation (including making herself vulnerable) in the learning process.

The initial effect of vulnerability was identified by the participants in Session One as 'apprehension', (because 'I am sharing much of the inner me'), and was attended by physical sensations of sweating

and shortness of breath. Whilst vulnerability can have a shadow side, it can also be a most productive avenue for growth in self-understanding. For this to happen it must be a 'chosen vulnerability' not a compulsory vulnerability. In other words the student must discern and decide that the act of revealing to others some hidden knowledge or truth, will of itself lead to a new understanding and liberation from a previously held, perhaps unhelpful perception. The supervisor or peer group can encourage and invite the student towards a disclosure that they perceive will be helpful, but the student must be free to choose the levels of disclosure with which s/he is comfortable. One of the students used the image of abseiling which expresses this theme well:

'Opening ourselves to others
requires careful instruction and preparation
and a willingness
to leap off
into the unknown and clamber up again

to the top of the cliff
wondering
what all the fuss was about!'

The student is invited to go over the edge, makes the decision him/herself, and in the appropriate environment, finds that it is not so daunting after all and s/he has in the process grown in confidence and self-esteem.

4. Revelation as a path to new understanding Revelation of self to others leads to new understanding.

'Chosen vulnerability' is a form of revelation. This form of self-revelation is intuitive and it can be nurtured and learned; the name 'Discovery' was assigned to one cluster of key words and phrases by the participants to describe 'intuitive knowledge nurtured', 'perception – seeing beyond words', and 'capacity for broader analysis, for self-analysis'. This same cluster included 'surprise' and 'fascination', an indication that the process of self-discovery is exciting. In the same session, one participant was able to identify that the process enabled him to gain a 'different perspective'.

Revelation comes in three ways through the STFE process:

- The revelation of self that comes to the student through the preparation of the materials for goal setting, case studies and evaluations.
- The revelation of self to others in making presentations to the supervisor and peer group.
- The new revelation of self that comes through the intersubjective responses of supervisor or peers.

Knowledge of self is a, or perhaps the, primary objective of STFE, as described in the Handbook; 'To foster self-understanding and professional insight through reflection on ministry'. When it is combined with knowledge of the other through the 'subject-subject' relationship of 'intersubjective learning', a whole new learning paradigm characterised by respect for self and other, compassionate curiosity, and the capacity to 'suspend premature judgement', becomes possible. It is a paradigm that, because of the elements of 'surprise' and 'fascination', is likely to inculcate continued learning within the student post-ordination or post-graduation.

Knowledge of 'self' and knowledge of 'other' through 'intersubjective learning' and 'chosen vulnerability' is a more-than-cognitive knowledge that engages the whole self; mind, body and emotions. It is a knowledge acquired through what Paul Tillich describes as 'ontological reason', which is 'cognitive and aesthetic, theoretical and practical, detached and passionate, subjective and objective'. That is why it is important that supervisors give space for the students to express their

intersubjective responses to situations in creative ways that engage their aesthetic sensibilities through art and poetry, as well as helping them discern practical responses to the situation. On a number of occasions during and following the research phase, the participants expressed their appreciation of the employment of artistic expression in the research process and the new perspective on their experience that it frequently gave them. This seemed to confirm Tillich's challenge to the Enlightenment elevation of the cognitive processes ('technical reason' as he described it) to the pinnacle of human ways of knowing. Mahan, Troxell and Allen advocate the case study method of theological reflection as the most effective means of clarifying ministry situations as 'knowledge arises out of dialogue'. However they make the valid point that, 'when writing and discussing a case, the presenter is always revealing and concealing'. Concealment could be expected to increase in inverse proportion to the presenter's sense of safety with the supervisor, hence the priority that must be placed on confidentiality, trust and respect if revelation is to be encouraged for the sake of the student and his/her ministry.

5. Experience as a locus for learning

Experience is a primary source of learning.

This theme is an implicit assumption in all of the data; the whole STFE process is predicated on experience being the starting point for the action-reflection learning model. Experience is present in the process at three levels:

- The original experience of the student in a ministry placement. To be allowed into the STFE program, students must have a ministry placement of at least two days per week as a context for learning.
- The experience of preparing a case study for the supervisor or peer group (which might be described as re-experiencing the situation). The choice of situation for the case study can of itself provide material for reflection (why is this situation of interest?), as well as the circumstances of the situation.
- The experience of presenting the case study.

Each of these elements of experience, woven together, forms a learning opportunity for the student. In STFE, the initial focus of the learning opportunity is on an experience of ministry, rather than on an abstract concept of ministry, or even a theological framework for ministry. This focus then moves to the student as a ministering person and explores the student's actions and reactions to the situation as a means of uncovering the student's instinctive interpretation of the experience. This creates a dialogue between the twin foci of the situation and the student's responses to the situation that facilitates new insights into, and transformations of the student's interpretive frameworks, or operational theology.

There are other valid starting points in the learning cycle; one can start with tradition or culture and achieve transformations in one's framework for interpreting experience. The traditional academic theological disciplines of Biblical Studies, Church History and Systematic Theology provide tools for interpreting the tradition and experience of the church in different situations. Practical Theology offers insights into the analysis of experience within particular cultural contexts. In STFE, however, the starting point is the current experience of the student, and I believe this research has demonstrated that this is a valid form of theological education, alongside other modes, in that it encourages a structured analysis of the student's ministry experience, using the insights gained from other disciplines.

2.4 A theological foundation for STFE

In the Whiteheads' three-part schema for theological reflection (Experience, Tradition and Culture), the research data fits squarely within the category of experience. What I seek to develop in this section is a theological framework that authenticates experience as a source for theological reflection, making reference to the research outcomes, as they are encapsulated in the themes. I need to preface this by explaining what I mean by a 'theological framework'. David Tracy suggested three ways of doing theology, each of which referred to present experience and the Christian tradition. The first category he named 'fundamental theologies' which he defined as using the resources of philosophy to examine and interpret contemporary experience. The second he named 'systematic theologies', the task of which was 'the re-interpretation of the tradition for the present situation'. The third category identified by Tracy, 'practical theologies', included political and liberation theologies. These began with assumptions about how the world ought to be, analysed the world as it is, and sought to redress the imbalance between 'ought' and 'is' through intentional action. The 'Praxis Model' of theological reflection that I refer to in the section following is an example of a 'practical theology' as described by Tracy. His description of the common factors in practical theologies, explains very well the way in which STFE actually 'does' theology:

'One clear positive proposal unites theologians of praxis before the major differences occur: Any proper understanding of praxis demands some form of authentic personal involvement and/or commitment. Any individual becomes who he or she is as an authentic or inauthentic subject by actions in an intersubjective and social-historical world with other subjects in relationship to concrete social and historical structures and movements. Praxis, therefore, must be related to theory, not as theory's application or even goal as in all conscious and unconscious mechanical notions of practice and technique. Rather praxis is theory's own originating and self-correcting foundation, since all theory is dependent, minimally, on the authentic praxis of the theorist's personally appropriated value of intellectual integrity and self-transcending commitment to the imperatives of critical rationality. In that sense praxis sublates theory, not vice versa'.

In other words, theology is done in the realm of lived experience and action, and is subsequently informed by the insights of philosophy and the resources of the Christian tradition. Theology is not, according to Tracy, what is learned in the classroom and subsequently applied in practice.

In proposing a theological foundation, I am not wanting to offer a token 'fundamental' or 'systematic' theological justification for STFE and so undermine the primacy of experience that I am wanting to defend. Theological foundations for STFE, to be faithful to the assumptions of practical theology, must be grounded in the reality of lived experience. What follows is intended to be a genuine engagement with the resources of Scripture and contemporary theological enquiry, in conversation with the research findings, in ways that will give direction to all involved in STFE.

To re-iterate the research findings, the themes are:

- Mutuality of learning.
- Intersubjective learning.
- Chosen vulnerability.
- Revelation as a path to new understanding.
- Experience as a locus for learning.

The first two themes describe learning that is made possible through the qualities of relationship intrinsic to the model of supervision employed in STFE. They indicate that this kind of learning requires at least two people, intentionally focussing on the experience of one, but both committed to learning and growing through the experience. Theological themes that are inferred in these themes would include 'faithfulness' or 'righteousness' (*dikaiosune*), and 'community' (*oikumene*). They are essentially themes that describe a relationship governed by a like commitment to a common objective

that is valued by both supervisor and student. In STFE, the ideal is that this common objective is education for the vocation of Christian ministry.

If the first two metathemes are intersubjective, the third is intrasubjective; i.e. it has to do with the autonomous choices made by the student about the level of self-disclosure that s/he will risk within the supervisory relationship, whether in personal or peer supervision. Theological themes suggested by the theme of 'chosen vulnerability' might be 'courage', 'risk', 'trust', or 'faith' (pistis), themes that imply a willingness to venture beyond what is safe and comfortable for the sake of a desired end. 'Chosen vulnerability' conveys the sense that there is the possibility of loss as well as gain in the decision to make oneself vulnerable; a good outcome is hoped for but not guaranteed.

The name of the fourth theme, 'Revelation as a path to new understanding', is ambiguous, an ambiguity that I consider apposite. In the context of the research, revelation referred to the learning that can happen when a student is prepared to be vulnerable and reveal something of him/herself to a supervisor or peers. The student is the one who offers the 'revelation' of self to others and in the process experiences new learning. In the New Testament, 'revelation' (apocalypsis) refers to the unveiling of God to humankind, particularly in the event of Jesus the Christ. This revelation of the rule of God is not unambiguous or intrinsically comprehensible, as can be seen from Jesus' response to a question about the purpose of parables (Mark 4:10-12):

'When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven."'

I have already referred to the interplay between revelation and concealment as it relates to STFE in the discussion on the theme, 'Revelation as a path to new understanding'. This same dynamic relationship between revelation and concealment is evident in the Lucan pericope of the Emmaus journey that forms the basis of a Biblical model for STFE, covered in some detail later in this section.

The final theme, 'Experience as a locus for learning', might be thought to be self-evident. In a sense all of Scripture is an extended reflection on experience and the consequent learning from experience of the Hebrew and Christian faith communities. And yet reflections on the same experience do not necessarily lead to identical interpretations. Blanchette suggested that pastoral counsellors need to have the skills to be able to offer clients alternate interpretations of their experience whilst respecting the client's interpretation of events. Gerkin, in addressing the issues of pastoral interpretation and hermeneutics, advocated that:

'... a broad interdisciplinary approach to pastoral interpretation or hermeneutics can assist the pastor in avoiding both the superficiality of popular cultural interpretations of the events of everyday life and the tendency toward reductionism ...'

The possibility for multiple interpretations of the same event is evident in the Gospels. The presentations by the Evangelists of pericopae that are clearly rooted in a common oral or written tradition can vary markedly. The story of the anointing of Jesus prior to his passion is a good example :

- in Matthew and Mark it takes place at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. In Luke it takes place in the house of Simon the Pharisee without naming the location, and in John it takes place in Bethany, but at the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus.
- in Matthew and Mark the woman is not identified. In Luke she is 'a sinner', but in John she is Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus.
- In Matthew and Mark, the woman pours the ointment on Jesus' head to anoint him for burial. In Luke

and John she anoints his feet as a sign of extravagant hospitality and wipes them with her hair.

- in Matthew the critical comments are made by the disciples, in Mark it is not clear who is critical. In Luke the critic is Simon the Pharisee and in John it is Judas Iscariot, 'not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief ...' (John 12:6).

No two of the Gospels agree on every aspect of the story, and yet it is inconceivable that there are four separate incidents recorded. Each of the Evangelists, in creating their Gospel, drew on the resources of oral and written material, some of which would have been common to at least some of them. Yet they felt the necessity and the freedom to use the traditional material flexibly to address their context and the contemporary experience of the faith community for which their Gospel was written.

Contemporary experience is a locus of learning and, for STFE, the starting point for theological reflection. However it calls for a rigorous method of exegeting experience that both recognises and respects the varieties of interpretation possible in a given situation, and also identifies interpretations that might legitimately be understood as 'Christian' and those which could not.

2.4.1 A Biblical model for supervised theological field education

There is within Christian ministry a paradox that, whilst acknowledging Scripture as authoritative for faith and practice, the integration of Scripture and experience often appears to be superficial and unreflective. This may be a harsh judgement in the case of the person who has so 'befriended the Tradition' that a seemingly simple analogy drawn between an event and Scripture may mask a deep commitment to relating Scripture and life creatively and with integrity. Ulrich and Thompson suggested a simple structure for exegeting Scripture based on literary, historical and liturgical analysis of texts, whereas I find myself constantly drawn to the Gospels and to the instinctive use of redaction and form criticism in relating Scripture to experience. The development of reader-response criticism modes of interpreting Scripture, which shift the focus from the intention of the author to the experience of the reader (from the world behind the text to the world in front of the text), offer new and creative possibilities for relating Scripture and contemporary experience. Perhaps one's use of Scripture is more grounded in who we are as persons, and in passages that validate our beliefs and values and those of the faith communities in which we interpret experience, than in an objective and disinterested correlation of Scripture with lived experience. With this caution in mind, I will use the Emmaus Road story in Luke's Gospel as a Scriptural model for my understanding of the ministry of supervision. I shall attempt to demonstrate the ways in which the passage, and Lucan theology more generally, embodies many of the themes identified in the research.

The narrative of the journey of two disciples to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35 is exclusive to Luke. The reference to the appearance of Jesus 'in another form to two of them walking in the country' (Mk 16:12f.) in the later appendix to Mark's resurrection narrative is either a direct reference to Luke's account, or to the tradition from which Luke developed his narrative. Fitzmyer and Marshall agreed that the Markan redactor is most likely referring to the tradition rather than directly to Luke's account, and that the story in Luke is a rich combination of the (most likely oral) tradition and Luke's own creative redaction of the tradition. Of the three segments of his resurrection narrative, the Emmaus journey is the longest, the most detailed, and contains many elements of Lucan theology (by contrast, the appearance to Peter related in Luke 24:34 is third-hand and refers to him as 'Simon' contrary to the usual Lucan appellation of 'Peter'). Schweizer drew parallels between this story and the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch through the ministry of Philip in Acts 8:26-40: 'Both stories have a road as their setting, and failure to comprehend the Scriptures is met with an interpretation that focuses on Jesus' suffering; a request to stay precedes or follows. Both accounts end with a sacrament – the Lord's Supper or baptism – and the disappearance of the helper'.

This parallelism indicates that, whilst the core of the story was part of the tradition available to Luke, he has re-worked it significantly in order to convey the Gospel through an 'orderly account' which

nevertheless conveys 'the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed' (Luke 1:3f.) The underlying truth for Luke is that 'Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people' (vs. 19) is also 'the Christ (who) should suffer these things and then enter into his glory' (vs. 26). The partial understanding of the two travellers is filled out in conversation with the stranger on the way. The story is given central place in Luke's resurrection narratives as the first personal encounter with the risen Christ, an encounter in which the essential elements of discipleship are embodied. It is clearly a very important story for Luke's account of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ.

The key elements of the Lucan story that relate to STFE are:

1. The journey motif.

For Luke, being 'on the way' is central to discipleship, and 'journey' is a central motif as Jesus turns towards Jerusalem and the final climax of his ministry in his death and resurrection (see Luke 9:51). Cleopas and his companion were journeying to a village, not necessarily their home, even though they were able to invite Jesus to stay with them (they may have been staying with friends or at an inn). The journey took place 'that same day' (vs. 13), i.e. the day of resurrection in which the women were encountered by two men 'in dazzling apparel' (vs. 4). The two 'on the way' already knew of this story and interpreted the women's experience as 'a vision of angels', reflecting the opinion of the Apostles for whom 'these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them' (vs. 11). There is an implied rebuke of leaders in Luke's own community who discounted the experiences of less influential members, and a reminder that revelation and truth can come through the most unexpected means and unlikely people. He earlier quoted the 'Q' saying of Jesus, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will' (Luke 10:21).

'Journey' has already been identified by the research participants as an important motif for STFE. Students are required to engage in a ministry placement from which they can learn, and in which they can reflect on experiences of ministry. They are people 'on the way,' following a sense of call in which they may experience the confusion of Cleopas and his companion, and may have their preconceptions of God and dreams of ministry crucified on the cross of the reality of the life of the institutional church. The difference with STFE is that no one takes on (or should take on) the role of Jesus, who 'interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures' (vs. 27). In STFE all are seeking truth but none is able to provide definitive interpretations for the others. One research participant identified the mutuality of the journey as a theme thus; 'Presenting a case study to my supervisor means meeting in the middle, where both of us can learn and grow together. It is a journey that involves opening ourselves to the presence of God that we find in one another'. In this sense, none is Jesus and all are Jesus, as new understanding emerges on the way.

2. Focussed conversation.

The two talked 'with each other about all these things that had happened' (vs. 14). The conversation centred on the circumstances of the crucifixion and the early reports of resurrection, but also on their interpretation of the situation; 'But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel' (vs. 21). Event and interpretation, as Heidegger asserts, are inseparable; they form a cycle of approximations to meaning in which new experience calls into question old structures of meaning. The conversation on the way facilitated the quantum shift in the understanding of the disciples about the person and mission of Jesus from a national to a universal scale, and of his significance as one limited to their historical and chronological categories, to one transcending those temporal categories. In this transformative process, not only were the theological foundations of the disciples' belief system shaken, their cultural presuppositions of Jewish messianism were also demonstrated to be groundless.

Focussed conversation that begins with telling a story ('What are you discussing with each other as you walk along?' – literally 'What are these words that you throw back and forth at one another as you walk along?' vs. 17) and explores the experience of the storyteller, is the beginning of theological reflection. To be 'taken seriously' and to be 'carefully and thoroughly listened to' (the participants descriptions) unlocks 'new thinking', 'realisation', 'discernment' and 'discovery'.

3. Listening to the Tradition.

'Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures' (vs. 27). Having listened to their experience (and having castigated them for being 'slow to believe' which I wouldn't necessarily choose to do), Jesus directed their attention to the tradition of the Law and the Prophets to make connections between the tradition and their present experience. In STFE this responsibility lies with the supervisor, or the peer group facilitator, to ensure that the conversation moves beyond a fascination and preoccupation with the story, to look for resonances (and even dissonances) with the tradition. Obviously Jesus was selective in his use of Scripture as messianic nuances are interspersed with narrative, poetry, commentary and legislation, not all of which is unambiguously messianic. In the Galilean ministry (Luke 4:14 to 9:50) which described in word and deed the nature of Jesus' ministry, Luke drew particularly on Isaiah 61 quoted in the Nazareth manifesto :

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'
(Luke 4:18f.)

This image of a Messiah who incarnated God's preference for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised was acted out in the perambulatory Galilean ministry and reinforced after Jesus had 'set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Luke 9:51).

This raises the question of whether STFE is value-free, or has a theological centre that ought direct the focus of the theological conversation in a particular direction. I referred earlier to the comments of Ian Williams that are critical of models of field education that do not intentionally address issues of justice as they relate to ecclesial and social structures . However others may be just as convinced that the conversation should be directed towards evangelism; 'since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith' (Romans 3:23-25). Or the supervisor or peer group facilitator may consider that STFE ought not have a particular missiological focus, but serve only to identify the student's operational theology and to integrate this with their formal theological education and ministry experience.

Experience on its own is an inadequate foundation for theological reflection, it must partner a rigorous exposure to biblical, systematic and historical theological disciplines during both formation and continuing formation throughout one's life in ministry. Competent supervision requires that the supervisor have, 'not mastery but befriending – an increase in intimacy with the tradition. The image of befriending suggests a more-than-intellectual grasp, a familiarity that includes both appreciative awareness of the tradition and comfort with its diversity and contradictions' . It also requires that the supervisor know his/her own theological centre and convictions and be able to represent different perspectives in the process of theological reflection with the student. Because the research that I undertook focussed on the participants' experience of STFE, and did not specifically address the issue of integrating biblical interpretation and pastoral practice, I am not able to draw any formal conclusions about the efficacy of STFE in achieving this integration (a worthy research project for the future) even though I have strong sense that it does.

4. Revelation as sacrament.

Most commentators (e.g. Schweizer, Fitzmyer, Byrne and Marshall) do not question the eucharistic allusion in vss. 30f; he 'took the bread', and 'blessed', 'broke it' and 'gave it to them'. Each of these formulaic statements is directly paralleled in Luke 22:19, the only disparity being 'blessed' (eulogeo) which appears in Mark and Matthew but is replaced in Luke with 'given thanks' (eucharisteo). Green, however, thought that those who see 'eucharistic overtones' in the denouement of the story misunderstood the significance of 'table fellowship' for the early church (as in Acts 2:42) and 'an exaggerated view of the Third Evangelist's interest in the eucharist'. He preferred to see the 'breaking of bread' as an allusion to the feeding of the five thousand in Luke 9:12-17, and interpreted Luke's schema for the pericope as The Journey, Hospitality and Table Fellowship, and Scriptural Fulfillment. It may well be that Luke was intentionally making connections between all three narratives and that the tradition had already made connections between the feeding of the multitudes and the eucharist. Personally I am convinced that there is an intention that the reader draw the conclusion that this is a sacramental event, in which the Christ is made present and 'recognised' (or 'known' epegnosan) in the eucharistic breaking of bread.

Whether or not the author intended to make the link between the breaking of bread and the eucharist, I would want to argue that the whole event of the Emmaus journey is integral to the sacramental experience of recognising Jesus as the Christ. The shared journey, the telling and hearing of the story, the search for meaning through engagement with the experience of loss and with the resources of the tradition, all contribute to the final eye-opening revelation of a truth that was with them all the time.

The Emmaus Road and the themes of STFE

It has been my experience, and the research outcomes expressed in the themes would seem to confirm, that the key elements of the Emmaus Road story are also present in the STFE process:

- Experience as the locus of learning.

The Emmaus event was not the same as the experience of witnessing the trial and crucifixion, but it afforded an opportunity to re-experience the event, reflect on its meaning and come to a new understanding of the person and mission of Jesus.

- Intersubjective learning.

The teaching from Scripture augmented their knowledge, it did not replace it; Jesus 'interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24:27). The tradition was an aid to his revelation of himself to the two, but it was not a disengaged, disinterested treatise on the Scripture. In a sense they were telling their story from the perspective of immediate, unreflective experience and Jesus was telling his from the perspective of a profound theological reflection upon experience.

- Chosen vulnerability.

The disciples were in what might today be labelled a post-traumatic condition of vulnerability to begin with, but they nevertheless opened themselves to this interested stranger who joined them on the way. They made a choice to extend to the stranger the privilege of entering into their experience of loss, and then to offer the hospitality of their table. The vulnerability of Jesus was the possibility of rejection (e.g. 'Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountains to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted' – Matt. 28:16f). The gracious invitation of God to participate in the life and rule of God, could as easily be rejected as accepted as revealed in the story of the messianic banquet (Luke 14:15-24).

- Revelation as a path to new understanding.

When their eyes were opened and they recognised Jesus, the two experienced a complete transformation in their understanding of the crucifixion, and of the nature of the ministry of Jesus. The experience of revelation and the consequent new understanding galvanised them into a change of

their immediate plans. Whatever business they thought they had in Emmaus was set aside as they 'rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem' (Luke 24:33). The 'revelations' experienced in STFE may be less dramatic and life changing than that experienced by Cleopas and his partner, but the participants expressed that the 'self revelation' they experienced through the program led to 'shifts and transformations' in understanding for them.

The journey to Emmaus is a story that Luke placed at the centre of his two-volume Gospel. It was a Gospel for all people, 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' (Luke 2:32), to which the non-Jewish name 'Cleopas' pointed. When the two returned to Jerusalem they shared their story with the stories of others, an important feature of the message of this pericope. As Byrne put it, 'The community comes to full knowledge and faith when individuals and groups bring together and share their previously separate stories'. And whilst it is enriching as an allegory for STFE, it is but one Evangelist's depiction of the person and mission of Jesus, written from a First Century perspective and world view. In the next section, therefore, I will endeavour to lay a contemporary theological foundation for 'knowing God through knowing self and knowing other'.

2.4.2 A contemporary theological foundation

Supervised theological field education is an educative process based on relationship. The structures of STFE establish the tasks and expectations, the boundaries and the criteria for evaluation that define the relationships. But the real value of the process is dependent on the quality of the relationships themselves. I have likened the structures of STFE to the scaffolding for a building under construction; the scaffolding is not the building, but without it the building could not be created, and when the scaffolding is removed the building remains. Ultimately the benefit of STFE will be wasted if it does not inculcate within the student a capacity for self-supervision, which does not imply supervising oneself in isolation, but choosing to create for oneself continuing structures of supervision.

From the themes identified in the research ('mutuality of learning', 'intersubjective learning', 'chosen vulnerability', 'revelation as a path to new understanding', and 'experience as a locus for learning') it is evident that the model of supervision called for in STFE is relational and non-hierarchical. I have found inspiration for a theology of supervision that supports this model in the contemporary renewal of interest in Trinitarian theology, and particularly in the work of Catherine Mowry LaCugna. The section following will cover something of the movement of the understanding of Trinity as representing the Being or substance of God, to Trinity as representing the relationships between the three Persons of the Godhead in relationship. The implications for human relationships, and hence for the practice of supervision, of this shift in understanding of the Trinity emerge out of a reflection on humankind created in the image of God (*imago Dei*).

The character and quality of supervisory relationships is both a practical and a theological issue. Practically the qualities required of a good STFE supervisor can be derived from observing the outcomes of the supervisory process, and have much in common with quality supervision in any of the helping professions. Theologically, I would want to ground the supervisory relationships in the nature and being of God, and in the nature and being of humankind as a creature reflecting the image of God. Neither of these theological questions is unambiguously clear, and so the following sections will seek to draw on current scholarship in both areas of enquiry.

The Trinity as relational Persons

Trinitarian theology grew out of the early church's attempts to define its experience of Jesus Christ and the presence of God, understood as Spirit. If Jesus is God, and the Spirit that drives the church is God, how can this be understood within the framework of a monotheistic Creator who is One? How do the Three relate to each other, and is there an hierarchy between them? Tertullian recognised the potential for polytheism inherent in the idea of the Trinity and the dilemma that it posed for the monarchical understanding of God that he wished to preserve. If God is Three rather than One, does

this not diminish the absolute power of God, unless the Son and Spirit are subordinate to the Father? Further, if God as Trinity is of the same substance (substantia, ousia – one Being), does this not mean the Father suffers in the person of the Son (later developed in Patripassionism) ? Tertullian's solution to the dilemma was to describe the function of the Trinity as 'an economic union' (from oikonomio – to manage a household) in which there is One God experienced under different 'degrees and forms and aspects' . The 'economic trinity' is an expression of the saving acts of God in history ('God for us'), ultimately in the Son, Jesus the Christ. Augustine sought to explain the relationships within the Trinity in terms of hierarchical 'processions' :

- The Father begets the Son.
- The Son is begotten by the Father.
- Father and Son produce the Spirit.
- The Spirit is produced by Father and Son.

According to Catherine Mowry LaCugna, the first tension in Trinitarian theology was between the doctrine as a description of the essential Being of God (ousia), and as a description of the nature of the relationship between the persons (hypostases) of the Trinity – is it a unity of 'substance', or a unity of 'relationship' ? A further tension highlighted the difference between Eastern and Western Christian traditions; in the East, particularly through the tradition of the Cappadocian fathers, the relational understanding of the Trinity was stressed, and union with God was understood to be accessible through the practice of silent (hesychastic) prayer. In the West, under the influence of Thomas Aquinas, the 'otherness' of God, and hence the substantial understanding of the Trinity (the 'immanent Trinity') was emphasised; conversation about the Trinity was conversation about the essence of God. God, according to Aquinas, was accessible through the analogia entis by which humankind could 'make analogical predications of God by virtue of a distant resemblance between God and creature' . This analogia entis was, in Aquinas' understanding, the rational self which he understood as the imago Dei, so that God could be known through the rational processes of philosophical speculation on the divine attributes, a process we now call 'natural theology' . Aquinas was drawing on the theology of Augustine who postulated that, 'the vestiges of the Trinity have been imprinted in the human soul. Thus one should be able to discern within oneself a pattern of three-foldness that is the image of the Trinity' . According to Augustine, the nature of the Divine could be grasped through the process of interiority , or reflection on the inner life, whereas for Aquinas this could only be achieved through deductive and philosophical reason.

It is not difficult to imagine how the combination of an hierarchical doctrine of God, combined with the elevation of philosophy and reason to the pinnacle of human knowing, might produce a culture of hierarchy and domination within the Western tradition. According to LaCugna this understanding of God was reflected in the structures of the church :

'This pattern was replicated in the church: one God and one bishop, and in society: one God and one emperor. The divine monarchy was used to justify different types of hierarchy: religious, sexual, political'.

It is to these tensions between the economic Trinity as God's saving acts in relation to humankind, and the immanent Trinity as the essential nature of God (what Aquinas termed theologia), that LaCugna attributed 'the defeat of the doctrine of the Trinity'. To the modern, scientific mind, these debates were nothing more than unverifiable metaphysical speculation and not worthy of serious theological consideration. Through the modern period, until the early part of the twentieth century with the publication of Karl Barth's 'Church Dogmatics', theological conversation about the Trinity had all but disappeared. LaCugna cited Karl Rahner's estimation that, 'in their practical life most Christians are monotheists' and, 'should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain unchanged' .

The contemporary renewal of Trinitarian theology is driven less by a desire to explicate something of the mystery of God, as by a desire to recover something essential of the experience of God that has been lost (or 'defeated') in Christian theology to the detriment of Christian faith and practice. For LaCugna, the distinction between immanent and economic Trinity was only helpful if it began with an understanding that there is only one Trinity; the inner life of God, and God revealed in history, and ultimately in the event of Jesus the Christ, were one and the same. God could only be known through God's saving acts in history, and therefore examining the relationships within the Trinity in the light of the human experience of God is the way to understanding how God expects us to be in the world. Rahner expressed a similar understanding:

'In the Trinity in the economy and history of salvation and revelation we have already experienced the immanent Trinity as it is in itself. By the fact that God reveals himself (sic) for us in the modes we indicated as Trinitarian, we have already experienced the immanent Trinity of the holy mystery as it is in itself, because its free and supernatural manifestation to us in grace manifests its innermost life'.

For Christian theology, the centre of salvation history, and therefore the human experience of God, is found in the person, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Jürgen Moltmann makes the remarkable assertion that 'The Trinitarian history of the cross entails the central act of suffering through which God not only effects the reconciliation of the world, but also constitutes himself as the triune one' (my italics). In this understanding of Trinity, God is not immutable, but is open to the Creation, and chooses in the Incarnation a mode of Being necessary for the redemption of the Creation. Consequently knowledge of God does not come through natural theology or metaphysical speculation, but through an 'historically constituted transcendental experience of God'. It is this idea of exploring the faith experience of the individual in his/her cultural and intellectual milieu, set within the shared experience of the faith community, set within the extended experience of God witnessed to by the Christian tradition, that constitutes what I understand to be the essence of STFE.

Perhaps the crucial concept in the contemporary conversation around Trinitarian theology, is the one termed 'perichoresis'. The concept, used in relation to the Trinity by John Damascene in the eighth century, depicts the three persons of the Trinity as separate persons (hypostases) of equal standing that relate to each other in perfect harmony and unity, interpenetrating one another without diminishing the personhood of any. Moltmann described perichoresis thus: 'The divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another and in one another, that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable and complete unity'. The logical implications for the church of this understanding of God as Trinity, said Moltmann, is that the ecclesiastical structures of power and hierarchy that flow from the notion of a divine monarchy, must give way to the horizontal structures of fellowship, equality and interdependence.

Gunton asserted that 'God is not God apart from the way in which the Father, Son and Spirit in eternity give to and receive from each other what they essentially are. The Three do not merely coinhere, but dynamically constitute one another's being ...' He then went on to explore the implications of a Trinitarian theology of God, in which perichoresis was the operating principle, for the ways in which humankind was called to function in terms of interpersonal relationships, relationship with the material world, and in the realm of 'knowledge, action and art'. In the next section I will reflect on the first of these, particularly in relation to STFE, and what manner of being-together will reflect a relational, Trinitarian experience of God.

Human persons as the Imago Dei

The idea of humankind as the 'image of God' (imago dei) obviously refers to the Creation account in Genesis 1:26,27:

'Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'
So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them'.

However the concept of imago dei immediately creates a conundrum: is there something within the human creature that intrinsically reflects the image of God regardless of circumstances (the 'structural view'), or do special conditions apply? In what respect and under what conditions do human beings represent the image of God when they are capable of great differentiation in culture, in values and in self-understanding. The innumerable contemporary conflicts arising from differences in belief and cultural expression, further compounded by competition for resources, is testament to the diversity of human expression of self and society. From a modern, rational, Western, secular, individualistic perspective, the prospect of destroying one's own life in order to kill as many 'innocent' people as possible is incomprehensible. From the perspective of a suicide 'terrorist', the innocent are not innocent, but enemies in a political, racial or religious sense (or all three). Does the modern, Western 'individual' represent the imago Dei? Does the religious zealot prepared to destroy life, including his/her own, to serve God and achieve salvation represent the imago Dei? How should we understand ourselves as human persons created in the image of God and what implication does that have for how we should be in the world? For Muslims, the starting point from which to answer that question might be the Qur'an; for some Christians, the starting point might be the Bible; for other Christians the individualistic WWJD (What Would Jesus Do? – available in bracelet form).

Charles Taylor tracked the development of the understanding of the self that has been instrumental in producing the rational individualism that characterises modernity . This individualism came from an 'inwardness' and a sense of ourselves as 'beings with depth' , worthy of respect from self and other. LaCugna identified the emergence of this idea of the self to the reflexive style of Augustine's 'Confessions' (interiority), and attributed its further development to Descartes' emphasis on cognition, consciousness and self-awareness: 'The Cartesian method isolated the self from the world beyond the self, and presupposed that the self can be a self by itself, apart from relationship with anything or anyone else' . Grenz cited Douglas Hall's description of the equation of human reason with the imago dei in modern times:

'The notion that it is human reason that constitutes Homo sapiens, God's earthly imago, is so firmly entrenched in the conventions of Christendom that it is hardly possible for anyone who is part of the intellectual stream of our culture to read Genesis 1:26-27 without immediately and subconsciously assuming that the ancient Hebraic author's phrase 'image of God' specifically referred to the rational capacities of the human creature' .

The great benefits of the modern, individualistic, rational sense of the self are the affirmation of the dignity of the individual and the articulation of the human rights of the individual. Taylor pointed to the changes in attitudes to human suffering that accompany the modern view of self, and in particular the modern intolerance of capital punishment . What was once a public spectacle, inflicting as much pain on the criminal as befitted the crime, is now carried out, if it is carried out at all, in camera away from the public view and as painlessly as possible because of the importance modern society places on the individual self. But the great loss in modern individualism was the loss of the sense of the self as participating in a 'defining community' which contributed, not only to one's sense of identity, but to making moral judgements and developing meaning through participation. The modern individual participated in a society by observing its laws and exercising voting 'rights' within its democratic institutions. But freedom of conscience also encouraged the individual to stand against the social and even legal norms on matters of principle.

Grenz described two ways in which particular expressions of Christian theology and practice have contributed to individualism in contemporary Western society. The first was Calvin's theology of sanctification in which 'the Christian life is to be characterised by continual growth in obedience to divine precepts ...'. This placed an emphasis on the achievement of spiritual goals by the individual, fuelled by the desire to be sure of one's election to salvation. The second influence was a corollary of the first and related to the Pietist emphasis on regeneration and the quest for individual salvation. In this theological framework, the focus of salvation moved from the faith of the community expressed in baptism, to the salvation of the individual represented by an experience of conversion. Both of these expressions of individual faith and salvation, elevated above communal expressions of faith and salvation, are evident within the contemporary Baptist denomination in which I minister as a director of supervised theological field education.

The starting point for a Christian understanding of the imago Dei, as individuals and faith communities, needs to be God's revelation of Godself to humankind in the life, death, resurrection and anticipated parousia of Jesus the Christ, and God's continuing presence in the faith community through the Spirit. We understand our potential and calling as persons in relation to the God revealed as Trinity through the event of Jesus the Christ. That is not to say, however, that we only reflect the image of God when we have an understanding of Trinitarian theology. One of my life-transforming experiences was to spend a short time in remote villages in the hill country of Nepal (well away from the tourist track), and to observe a tribal culture that was isolated to a large degree from modern influences. Whilst there was extreme poverty in terms of material goods, I observed a wealth of inter-dependent community life that lived out the idea of perichoresis far more effectively than is manifest in much of contemporary Christian Western society. It is not when we understand Trinity, but when we live in a manner that reflects the perichoretic relationships within the Trinity, that humankind can be said to represent the imago Dei.

LaCugna provided an extended reflection of perichoresis from feminist and liberation perspectives, and drew the following conclusions, inter alia :

- Persons are essentially interpersonal, intersubjective.
- A person is an ineffable, concrete, unique and unrepeatable ecstasis of nature.
- The person is the foundation of a nature.
- The freedom of the deified human being consists in being free-for, free-toward others, poised in the balance between self-possession and other-orientation.
- Living as persons in communion, in right relationship, is the meaning of salvation and the ideal of Christian faith.

These conclusions offer a way forward in which the dignity and rights of the individual, so prized in modernity, can be preserved in a manner which also redeems the concept of humankind as the imago Dei in a relational sense rather than as participation in the Divine substance. At the level of government, this standard can be enshrined in constitutions and legislation; at the level of church polity, it can be the guiding principle of doctrinal and dogmatic statements and codes of ethics; in the theological college, it can challenge the modern interpretation of cognitive reason as the imago Dei (often an unrecognised or unacknowledged presupposition in theological institutions).

The very term, 'supervision', can readily introduce ideas of hierarchy and images of supervisory relationships with an unequal balance of power. When checked in the Microsoft Word Thesaurus, 'supervision' offered synonyms such as 'management', 'regulation', 'administration', 'command' and 'control'. These are not descriptors that accurately reflect the nature of supervision for ministry; defining one's model of supervision is therefore essential. It is imperative that each supervisor's model and practice of supervision be consistent with his/her theological convictions about the nature and Being of God, and about the character of humankind.

The theological foundations that I have outlined in this chapter spring from my best understanding of the nature of God, expressed in the Incarnation of Jesus as the Christ, and grounded in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, relating in a communion of Three Persons of equal merit and standing. The symbolism of the Emmaus journey, with stories of crucifixion told in the unrecognised presence of resurrection, is a most apt christological motif for STFE. In the presentation of case studies, and in the exploration of the meaning of the experiences presented, there is often a sense, not only of new insight and understanding, but of the sacredness of the interaction that has taken place. An important task for supervisors in STFE is to identify their own theology of supervision and ministry, and to ensure that their practice is consistent with their theology.

The integration of the imago Dei with the understanding of Trinity expressed in the concept of perichoresis, both affirms and challenges the models and practices of supervision described in this manual. The themes identified in the research, 'chosen vulnerability', 'mutual learning', and 'intersubjective learning', indicate that the character of the STFE process, particularly in the peer group and personal supervisory sessions, should reflect what is implied in the idea of the imago Dei:

- Respect for the person, including his/her experience and values, balanced by respect for the person, experience and values of the other(s) present;
- 'Chosen vulnerability', which makes possible levels of mutual understanding, knowledge and trust that engenders the kind of community that embodies 'perichoresis';
- 'Mutual learning' and 'intersubjective learning' which speak of mutually educative relationships that nurture and deepen the individual and the community.

Of course peer and personal supervision in STFE is only a taste of perichoretic relationships. It is in a sense an artificial community in that it only gathers during the teaching periods of the academic year, and the participants are unlikely to be involved in the same faith community as each other in the long term. The frequency of personal supervision is only half that of the peer groups making the development of open and trusting relationships even more challenging for that aspect of supervision. Nevertheless for many students, the experience is transformative and offers a model for how the church might better represent the imago Dei through the depth and quality of its relationships.

2.6 Theological reflection

Theological reflection is the primary concern of STFE. The structures of the program provide a framework for the student to observe and evaluate their experience and practice of ministry; theological reflection gives him/her a framework for interpretation of those experiences.

If the structures of STFE represent the body, then theological reflection represents the spirit. I do not suggest this in the Hellenistic sense of a separation between body, soul and spirit, but in the Hebraic sense that spirit embraces all of life, thinking and feeling, willing and acting. In the sense in which theological reflection has come to be used in supervised theological field education, it is a passionate engagement with life experience and with the Christian Gospel as student and supervisor, or student and peer group, wrestle with the interpretation of a particular situation. But the task of theological reflection is more than searching for an external, objective interpretation of experience. It is also part of the uncovering of the person's (or group's) 'operational theology' which I understand as the core beliefs and values, recognised or unrecognised, by which the person instinctively makes judgements and takes action in response to situations. One's operational theology is formed cognitively, affectively, aesthetically and socially through one's life experiences. It may well embody contradictory values (e.g. 'I value the rule of law and I value justice') assimilated from different sources (family, church, popular culture) that create dissonance in the face of a given situation. Being able to identify

aspects of one's operational theology in a given context is part of the task of reflecting theologically on experience so that one can respond to the situation with integrity. Mary Ellen Sheehan wrote: As a method, I understand theological reflection to be a process centred on discovering one's operative theology as it unfolds in human experience. Theological reflection assumes the involvement of God with human history which mediates his prophetic and healing presence in word and sacrament

Theological reflection is taught, modelled and practiced at a number of levels in the ETA:

- It happens through the course of many of the units taught by the faculties; experience is engaged in conversation with biblical studies, systematic theology, pastoral studies, missiology and spiritual formation because that is how the faculties teach. Experience-based learning may not be formally articulated as one of the teaching methods in every unit, but the teaching faculty recognises that it is a vital ingredient of theological education.
- Teaching on the theory and practice of theological reflection is included formally in two of the eight sessions of the supervision training course; one session focuses on the Whitehead Model and Method of theological reflection and one is devoted to exploring the use of Scripture in theological reflection. In the context of these two sessions, supervisors-in-training are given a number of texts and articles to read which amplify the material presented in the teaching sessions.
- Students engage with faculty in conversation about theological reflection during eight of the twelve semester weeks, again using the Whitehead model as the starting point and basic model against which others are compared.
- During those eight weeks the students engage in theological reflection with the peer group facilitators and with each other, based on their case studies and ministry reports. As facilitators we have the opportunity to model theological reflection in the way that we structure the peer sessions.
- The students and supervisors engage intentionally in theological reflection on the student's experiences of ministry in eight of the twelve supervisory sessions.

As part of their ministry report, students are asked to attempt a theological reflection. In fact this section is frequently not attempted or very skimpily done; students find it very difficult to do theological reflection alone. But that should not be surprising as the supervisors, who are often experienced pastors, also find it difficult to do theological reflection on their experiences of ministry. I find it difficult to do theological reflection in isolation. Mary Ellen Sheehan captured this phenomenon well:

'Normally I find the process of theological reflection to be most effective in a group of six or seven that can meet regularly for some length of time, usually over two semesters, so that each student has an opportunity for two presentations. By the end of one semester a solid group identity usually develops marked by trust, commitment, mutual appreciation and honest, supportive peer group critique and evaluation. If the trust level is good, the facilitator, whose experience and knowledge and reflective skills are usually more 'seasoned', may try to tease out deeper insight through dialectical questioning to help the group reach beyond the horizon of its present awareness' .

This idea is also shared by Robert Kinast:

'Theological reflection works best in a small group. A group is able to see more in a given experience than an individual and a group can keep an individual from distorting or mis-reading an experience' .

It is in theological reflection, particularly as it is practiced within the peer group, that STFE most closely resembles the disciplines of phenomenology and hermeneutics as they have developed, particularly through the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer. There are significant parallels between these disciplines and the processes and purposes of theological reflection. All are modes of enquiry into human experience, but with different presuppositions. Phenomenology as proposed by Husserl presumed that the meaning of experience could be accessed by a 'skilled researcher' on the

assumption that the researcher had the skills to make allowances for his/her preconceptions and biases, an assumption that was later acknowledged by Husserl himself to be unrealistic . Nevertheless the idea of 'bracketing out' the researcher's biases points towards the need for students to identify and critique their 'operational theology' in order to gain a new perspective on a situation. Phenomenology presumes a naïve researcher whose interpretation of a situation will emerge from examination of the experience. Theological reflection, however, requires attention to sources that lie beyond the immediate experience of the researcher, in particular Scripture and the tradition of the church.

One of Husserl's key concepts, 'intentionality', is an essential feature of theological reflection. By 'intentionality', Husserl referred to the capacity of humans to focus their attention on a particular entity which could be an object or a concept, e.g. the supervisor and the student intentionally focus on a ministry experience, and then focus on the cultural milieu in which the experience occurred. They then focus on the stories and values of the faith tradition of the context, and then on where the experience might find resonances within Scripture. Not all aspects of theological reflection will be covered in every supervisory meeting, but they should all become familiar territory to be explored in seeking to understand experience. It is this function of intentionality that makes theological reflection possible, attending to situations and to sources for interpretation. This raises the questions of which situations are worthy of attention and what are appropriate sources? How are the sources accessed, and who directs attention to the situations? This is where supervision, individual or peer, is an opportunity for experienced practitioners to model theological reflection to students.

Situations for theological reflection

John Paver gave a thorough treatment of three different models of theological reflection, each of which has a different focus of attention :

1. The Ministry Model.

This is the model initiated by James and Evelyn Whitehead and perhaps the model most referred to in the treatment of theological reflection. In this model, the intentional focus of reflection is on three conversation partners: tradition, including Scripture and the history of the church's interpretation of Scripture; experience, which is the experience of individual Christians and the collective experience of faith communities; and culture, being the 'convictions, biases and values that form the social setting in which reflection takes place' . This is the model that I operate with almost unthinkingly. Their pithy phrases, 'the capacity to suspend premature judgement' to describe what Husserl calls epoche (bracketing biases), and 'befriending the tradition' to describe the minister's relation to the Scripture and the history of interpretation, have become household phrases in STFE . Students appreciate the model because it is simple and because the method leads to a decision and a practical response. The model respects difference in interpretation and suggests that 'consensus building – the ability to move from honoured diversity to shared action – becomes a skill of pastoral reflection' . The model is oriented towards the building of faith communities and the task of the minister is to encourage the community in its three-fold process of reflection leading to authentic action.

2. The Praxis Model

This model emerged out of liberation theology which itself emerged out of the experience of the marginalised poor in Latin America. The model brings the issues of justice, as advocated by Alistair Campbell and Ian into the centre of theological reflection. John Paver described the Praxis model as 'a model in which the central insight is that theology is done, not simply by providing relevant expressions of Christian faith, but also by commitment to Christian action' . This model of theological reflection, looks not only at experience, but also at structures which oppress and hence employs social analysis in addition to the other sources suggested by the Whiteheads to interpret situations. Paver's critique of this model is that, whilst it engages the participants in the struggle for justice, it is sometimes experienced by students as 'too scientific, overwhelming and lack(ing) warmth'

3. The Transcendental Model

This model begins with oneself and with the idea that it is possible to transcend our present mind set, to as it were step out of ourselves to re-frame our understanding of reality. Reality in this way of understanding existence is no longer an external, objective world which we have to apprehend, but is something that we shape ourselves. According to Paver 'It attends to spirituality without neglecting critical analysis, social justice and the need for change'. In some ways this model is reflective of Husserl's 'transcendental phenomenology' which posits that the skilled researcher can transcend the limitations of perception to apprehend real truth. Paver pointed out that, whilst the model has great strengths in calling out personal integrity (the authentic self) and taking seriously one's spirituality, it is vulnerable to subjectivism and self-deception. My sense is that, if this dimension of theological reflection is ignored, the likelihood of unconscious self-deception on individual and social levels is far greater (i.e. in the application of the Ministry and Praxis models). It is not uncommon for students to be in ministry placements where their own values and spirituality are at odds with, if not devalued by, the context of ministry. A common response is to sublimate spirituality in ministry activity and ignore the inner tension that this creates. By employing the transcendental method, the disjunction can at least be identified and appropriate strategies developed.

Perhaps the art of theological reflection for the supervisor or peer group facilitator, is to be aware of the potential situations that can be addressed within ministry experience and be able to use the resources of these models to direct the students' reflections so that they are confronted with alternate realities. This is what I mean by utilising the faculty of intentionality to direct the students' reflections in ways that will encourage them to re-frame, or at least re-consider, their operational theology. A student who naturally operates within the Ministry model having grown up within the embrace of the church might be encouraged by the supervisor to address broader issues of society that require the employment of the Praxis model; or a student comfortable with the Praxis model because of a passion for social justice might be gently encouraged to engage the Transcendental model. For the supervisor, theological reflection is not a matter of curiosity about experience, nor about identifying a satisfying theological descriptor to attach to the experience, it is about providing for a student those conditions of encouragement and challenge that will lead to growth in understanding and practice as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ.

Sources for theological reflection

Intentionality will enable the supervisor to direct the student's reflections towards different kinds of situation. It will also help the supervisor direct the process of theological reflection with the student towards appropriate sources. The Whiteheads identified Experience, Tradition and Culture as the primary sources for theological reflection. They distinguished experience from culture by identifying the former with the experience that is particular to this minister and this community, and the latter with experience that is common within a culture. The dividing line between experience and culture is blurred because the faith community is embedded within a culture and, wittingly or unwittingly, imbibes the values and shares the experiences common to a society. Similarly the distinction between tradition and experience is not absolute since the faith community inherits values, beliefs and guiding stories from the faith tributaries that make up its tradition.

Each of these sources needs to be listened to (attended) in the process of theological reflection, but do they each carry equal weight when attending to the sources shifts to assertion about the meaning of the situation and then decision about action to be taken? This question is most frequently asked by students and trainee supervisors in relation to Scripture. The Whitehead model embeds Scripture within tradition, which calls to mind the Reformation debate about authority; does it lie with the tradition and its interpretation by the Curia, or can the individual Christian and faith community rely *sola Scriptura*? Baptist ecclesiology has traditionally upheld the authority of Scripture as the ultimate determinant of faith and practice within Baptist communities and the competence of the individual in

matters of spiritual and moral discernment . The interpretation of Scripture and response in faithful living is the province of the local church as discerned, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by the gathered community in the regular church meeting. It is therefore an issue that I need to pay significant attention to in any treatment of the topic of theological reflection. Prof Keith Dyer, in his presentations on Scripture and theological reflection to the trainee supervisors, argues that Scripture does belong within tradition, but in some respects also belongs within experience and culture, and in other respects stands outside each of the spheres including tradition. Raymond Collins argues that, 'the Scriptures would seem to have a function that is at once constitutive, indicative, provocative and validating with regards to theology' .

Scripture provides a point of reference by which experience, tradition and culture can be critiqued according to the values of justice and love revealed in God's interaction with human communities of faith, and ultimately for the Christian, in the incarnation, passion and mission of Jesus. To engage in theological reflection that has integrity, one must confront the reality that Scripture is not univocal, and can be enlisted as easily in defending our preconceptions as it can assist in broadening our vision of the mind and activity of God in the world. Scripture has been invoked to justify the subjugation of races and the subordination of women; it has been used at times to preserve clerical privilege and control, and must therefore be seen to stand both inside and outside the sphere of tradition.

Stephen Pattison observed that there is an 'almost absolute and embarrassing silence about the Bible in pastoral care theory' . Graeme Griffin makes a similar point that, in the development of pastoral theology in the twentieth-century, Scripture has been an almost silent voice:

'But where is that biblical scholarship, that biblical leadership and that biblical guidance when we descend from the pulpit or the lectern and face the routines of the parish week and the needs of our people in other contexts than their gathering together for worship? It is all too often true that our pastoral care in general and our pastoral counselling in particular reflect much more clearly current fads and fashions in psychology, psychotherapy and social work than they embody the best contemporary understanding of biblical witness and what it calls us to' .

Both supervisors and students frequently struggle to link experience and theology, and even more, to make connections between experience and Scripture . Most attempts to do so do not reflect a deep engagement with the text, and resemble proof-texting presented as a justification to support a judgment already made . This presents a challenge, not only for supervisors and directors of STFE, it surely represents a challenge for teachers of Scripture in theological seminaries. If Scripture is taught as an academic discipline bearing no relationship to contemporary lived experience, then its use will be restricted to pulpit and lectern and privatised spirituality. If Scripture is to be integrated into the processes of theological reflection within faith communities, it is vital that those who are in formation for leadership within those communities learn ways in which sound exegesis and hermeneutics can be enlisted in the task of interpreting lived experience with the aid of Scripture. A sign of hope lies in the revised edition of James and Evelyn Whitehead's seminal text, 'Method in Ministry' . A new section is given over exclusively to the use of Scripture in theological reflection . The authors acknowledge that mastery of the Scripture is not possible for those who are not engaged in research or teaching. Rather they encourage the minister (in this case the supervisor and student) to develop an intimacy with the text that is a 'more than intellectual' grasp of Scripture (described by the Whitehead's as 'befriending the Tradition' in the first edition). STFE can be part of this process by encouraging supervisors and students to become equipped with the tools of interpretation and by constantly engaging Scripture and experience.

Strategies for theological reflection

I have already indicated where theological reflection happens within the structures of STFE. It always begins with an experience, and of course the reflection on the experience is not the experience itself.

It is a thoughtful process that begins with the student committing reflections to writing. Those reflections, which express the reality of the experience to the degree that the student is naturally reflective, articulate and able to recognise the human capacity for self-deception, then become the material for the supervisor or peer group to engage the student in further theological reflection. Each level of the process becomes a new experience with the potential for new knowledge, insights and understandings, not only for the student, but also for the other participants in the process. Supervisors need to keep in mind some basic principles of operation:

1. the focus of the supervisory conversation must constantly be on the student. Resolution of the situation presented in the verbatim or case study is important, but more important is what the student learns about him/herself and his/her operational theology, because these are understandings that will not only impact the current situation, but the student's approach to ministry into the future.
2. all of the partners in the conversation need to be heard. The partners include the experience, and the voices of the other participants in the situation, the tradition, Scripture, and cultural factors relevant to the situation. Voices that are silent in the student's presentation, yet deserve to be heard need to be identified.
3. the conversation needs to be structured to allow the student to re-enter the experience, to address feelings that may or may not have been identified in the report, and to work with interpretation and meaning.
4. the supervisor needs to help the student develop non-verbal modes of describing experience. In the research session for this project, the group overwhelmingly endorsed the merit of working interactively at a verbal and cognitive level to find expression for an experience, but to then have time alone to express the experience in a drawing or a poem. Working with creative art can help the student find a new way of understanding and interpreting experience.
5. theological reflection does not finish when an acceptable mode of expressing a situation has been achieved. Developing pastoral plans for a response to the situation, arising out of the process, is integral to theological reflection.

In all of these aspects of theological reflection, the relationship between supervisor and student is crucial, and the respectful yet curious and active engagement by the supervisor is essential to stimulate the reflection process. John Patton identified memory, imagination and narrative as key human faculties that need to be fully engaged in theological reflection; evoking the student's memories by questions that seek what is not apparent; using imagination to draw creative, yet authentic analogies between experience and tradition; and listening attentively and interactively to help the student 'tell a good story'.

3 – THE STRUCTURES OF STFE

SFE provides for the student a network of people and a structure of tasks that provide a framework of relationship and reflection which create conditions for learning and growth. It is important that supervisors are aware of the program in its totality, and the crucial role that personal supervision plays in the student's learning and growth. To be allowed into the program the student must have a ministry context of at least sixteen hours per week for two semesters amounting to some four hundred hours of ministry experience on which to reflect theologically. Within that context, the student gathers a group of five to seven persons who are able to observe his/her ministry and provide feedback about how that ministry is received and evaluated. This group, described in the Whitley College program as a 'Congregational Committee' and the CCTC program as an 'Evaluation and Feedback Group' (EFG), meets three times per semester with the student and provides feedback through a set of discussion guidelines (which can be downloaded from the Whitley website) covering ministry tasks such as preaching, leading worship, offering pastoral care and administration. The Congregational Committee or EFG offers 'reflection' but in a different way from the reflections with the supervisor and peer group. Doran McCarty regards the committee as just one of the 'mirrors' that reflect back to the student, the

ways that his/her ministry is received and perceived by others . On occasions this group can be sidetracked into focussing more on the issues of the institution than on the growth of the student, and this is why the selection of the chairperson is vital to its effective functioning. The chairpersons receive a half-day orientation session at the beginning of the year and are invited to direct questions to the director at any time. Mostly it is a good experience for the student and the committee, and the completed discussion guidelines often contain very insightful feedback for the student. There is a need for flexibility with Congregational Committees and EFGs, especially if the context is an ethnic congregation where issues of respect and 'loss of face' can make it difficult for the members to say anything of a critical nature, and can reduce the student's standing within the congregation.

The other people involved in the STFE process are the personal supervisor, trained and appointed by the college, with whom the student meets six times per semester for approximately one hour per session, and the peer group, which meets weekly for two hours. The first personal supervision session of each semester deals with the student's goals and establishes the supervisory covenant; the next four deal with issues of ministry which must be presented as a case study, verbatim or equivalent report of actual ministry experiences (as opposed to hypothetical experiences or abstract concepts); the final session of each semester deals with the evaluations prepared by the student and the supervisor. The peer group follows exactly the same pattern as personal supervision, dealing with goals, reports of ministry and then evaluations, but there are obviously more sessions of each category.

The process can overwhelm students at the outset, and it has to be recognised that there is a lot of work required of them compared with other units in the degree course. Because they are dealing with the tasks of ministry, and with their own development as ministers, most seem to take well to the process and very quickly become engaged in reflecting on what is happening within their context and within themselves. That is not to say that resistance is never encountered in STFE, but the process is such that identifying and working with resistance in personal and peer supervision provides perhaps the greatest opportunity for growth.

The structures of STFE contribute to the formation of the student as a ministering person, and the more rigorously they are maintained, the more effective will be the formation process. Supervisors need to be familiar with all aspects of the structures and ensure that they are providing the student and the college with formative evaluation about the student's progress and learning needs as the year progresses. Keeping the student accountable for the quality and punctuality of meetings and presentations will ensure that the student's learning through STFE is maximised.

3.1 Serving and learning covenants

The use of covenantal language to describe the agreements between the student and the other partners in the learning experience is intentional. Covenant is the most basic form of agreement in Scripture, binding God and God's people to a defined set of rights, obligations and rituals, 'If you will, then I will.....'. It recognises that the principal partner in any covenantal agreement is the God whose divine project is the redemption of humankind and the renewal of Creation. The covenants cut between God and Noah (the promise of grace), God and Abraham (the promise of community), David and Jonathan (the promise of faithful friendship) and between Christ and the Church (the promise of forgiveness and redemption, and the establishment of community in the Spirit) are all echoed within the idea of covenant in supervised theological field education . The covenants set out the expectations that the church or agency has of the student, the obligations of the church and the college to the student in terms of remuneration and ministry opportunities consonant with the student's learning goals, the mutual expectations and learning goals of the student and the supervisor. The covenants represent a benchmark, set by the student in consultation with the other parties to the covenants, by which the student's performance and achievements can be evaluated

during and at the conclusion of the program. In reality few students grasp the significance of the covenant at the start of the process (getting the covenants returned on time is always problematic), even though it is explained to them at the orientation session. Most regard it as a chore to be undertaken to fulfil all righteousness, but generally come to recognise its value in retrospect.

There are two covenants that supervisors need to be familiar with:

- the 'Serving & Learning Covenant' (see Appendix 1) which is a three-way covenant between the student, the context (church or agency) and the college. This is the covenant that defines the obligations of all parties and sets boundaries on the demands made of the student. The role of the supervisor in this covenant is to check that the church's expectations are reasonable, and that the balance between study, ministry and family are appropriate. It is important that this covenant be completed by the end of the first month of semester and supervisors are asked to continue to check progress with the student until it is finalised and signed by the church, the student and the supervisor.
- The 'Learning Covenant between Supervisor and MIT' (see Appendix 2) which includes all of the student's goals and expectations of the supervisor, the supervisor's learning goals as a supervisor and expectations of the student. These goals and expectations define the covenanted relationship and form the basis for the character of the supervisory sessions and the final evaluations. It is helpful if the supervisor is explicit about expectations of the student (e.g. a written report is required 24 hours before each meeting).

3.2 Goal setting

The student is required to set up to six goals relating to the ministry placement (Ministry Learning Goals), personal growth and spiritual formation (Personal Development Goals). The goal setting form is included at Appendix 3. The goals form part of the covenants and are the basis on which the student's progress is evaluated. As for the covenants, goal-setting stimulates resistance with those students who find it easier to be re-active rather than pro-active in ministry. But there is also generally a recognition in retrospect that setting goals has clarified situations, given students some sense of control within their situations, and helped them own their achievements in ways that could not otherwise have happened. Goal setting encourages students to be intentional in their approach to ministry and it also helps them set boundaries around the demands of ministry which can lead to burnout if not addressed .

The goal-setting procedure is outlined in Section 6 of the students' STFE Handbook and a sample goal is included under Appendix 6 of this resource manual. Although few would carry formal goal setting with them into their ministry post-ordination, the general principles that lead to intentional, as opposed to reactive, ministry can change the way in which some MIT's function as ministers.

The task of the supervisor is to examine the goals developed by the student to ensure that they are significant goals for him/her and that they are concrete, measurable and achievable. Check the background information to satisfy yourself of the importance of the goal to the student; if you are not convinced that the goals are workable, say so and ask for clarification. Check that the outcomes are couched in concrete language ("to love my church more" would not be an acceptable outcome as it is not expressed in the past tense; it is abstract and therefore not measurable; and it is probably not achievable - unacceptable on all counts!) Keep encouraging the student to reduce the goals to manageable, realistic outcomes. Ask the question, "Will the steps to be taken achieve the desired outcome?" If not you may have to offer some suggestions. Ask the student, "What might stop you from achieving this goal?" and then work on formulating steps to overcome these constraints. A greater number of smaller goals is likely to be more effective than an all-embracing universal goal which sets the student up to fail. Don't forget to check that the student has nominated an "achieve by"

date.

Typical of goals that students identify most regularly are:

- ministry goals, that help the student focus on a particular program (eg. setting up a Bible study for parents of pre-school children).
- personal goals, that will keep the student and his/her family in good shape with the combined rigours of ministry and theological education (eg. block out family time in the diary and turn on the telephone answering machine).
- spiritual formation goals (eg. spent X hours reading Y spiritual classics during first semester).

At every supervisory conference, the supervisor should check how the student is working with the goals, acknowledge progress and encourage him/her to keep working on them.

3.3 Case studies and reports

This will be the major component of supervision through which the student will have the opportunity to discover insights about his/her ministry style, strengths and weaknesses. A report should be available to the supervisor at least 24 hours before the supervisory conference and consideration of the report will occupy the bulk of the time allocated for the conference. If a written report is not received, the supervisor is entitled, at his/her discretion, to postpone the conference. A sample verbatim report is included under Appendix 7.

Students are given clear guidelines about the structure and content of reports, whether they be case studies, verbatims, sermons or other kinds of report. The basic content of any report must include background information about the situation and the people involved including the student, a description of the event in some detail, an analysis of the situation including an assessment of their own actions, a theological reflection as a first attempt at interpreting the experience, and their pastoral plans for the people involved, including themselves. These reports provide the main medium for theological reflection with the supervisor and the peer group. Because these reports often contain sensitive and personal information we ask the students to use pseudonyms for the other persons. All copies except the one for the supervisor's and director's files are returned to the student, and absolute confidentiality is constantly enjoined on all participants in the reflection process. It is this ambience of confidentiality that breeds confidence and trust and allows the students to present material of a sensitive nature that they might be reluctant to disclose in another setting.

The report may address any aspect of ministry in which the student has been recently involved. Section 7 of the STFE Handbook describes some of the forms that the report may take, but this is not an exhaustive list by any means. Tapes or videos of sermons or leading worship should be allowed as valid reports on ministry. Topics may cover pastoral counselling, deacons meetings, or conversations at the church door. Whatever is of significance or perplexity to the student under the broad rubric of "ministry" should be grist for the supervisory mill. However that does not mean that an inadequately prepared report will do. The report must deal with an actual event or series of events, in other words a real experience of ministry. The supervisory conference is not the place to discuss the merits of a particular church growth or evangelistic strategy nor any other abstract concept. The purpose of supervision is to reflect together on what has actually happened and to learn together from the experience.

On receiving the report, the supervisor should read it carefully and first establish that it shows evidence that the student has given quality time to reflection on the incident (or the ongoing situation if it is a case study) and to preparation of the report. If unsatisfied with the quality of the report, this

needs to become one of the first issues raised with the student. Poor quality reports are most likely to become an issue after the student has become familiar with the supervisor and the STFE program and is under pressure with other assignments and pastoral work. It is important not to let a poor report pass unchallenged (or allow the supervisory game, “poor me”, to deflect the task of supervision) because under the pressure of ministry, reflection is generally the first casualty, to the inevitable detriment of the quality of ministry offered. Usually this issue has to be mentioned only once for the student to take a more positive approach to report writing.

Assuming the student has submitted an acceptable report, it is helpful to read it several times prior to the conference so that the issues can be discussed without having to constantly re-read the written document. Look for central issues, both for the student and for others involved in the situation. Make notes on the report about missing information, assumptions to be clarified, hunches about what was happening for the student, some of your own reactions to the situation described. Look for evidence that the student has given thought to future ministry to the person(s) and to theological reflection; how do you respond to his pastoral plans and theological reflections?

After the preliminaries are completed, (“How are you? How are the goals going? What has happened since last meeting?” etc.) it helps to have a flexible structure for the conduct of the conference. For example:

- first ask the student to identify the significant issues from the report that s/he wishes to focus on. Add any other issues that you have observed in the report.
- spend 20-25 minutes exploring the event; what the student recalls of the circumstances, what were his/her aims and intentions in acting in the way that s/he did, how has the event impinged on emotions, relationships with the others involved, family relationships, ministry to the wider church etc.
- without rushing through the examination of the event and its ramifications, move into reflection upon the nature of the ministry that was given and invite the student to evaluate what he has done. Explore some alternative responses that might have been made. What theological insights might bring interpretation and understanding to the event?
- identify the student’s pastoral plans for follow up in the situation.
- bring the conference to a conclusion by praying for each other. Confirm the time, date and venue of the next meeting.

Remember to be circumspect about advice-giving; even though you may have experienced parallel circumstances and have learned much from your own experience, the greatest learning for the student will come from what s/he recognises and discovers for her/himself.

3.4 Evaluations

The student receives multiple evaluations during the year. At the end of each semester there is a self-evaluation based on the goals set at the beginning of the semester, on the student’s perception of growth during the period and identifying new areas where further growth is required leading to revised goals for the next semester. The student also evaluates the supervisor and the Congregational Committee/EFG. After each Congregational Committee/EFG meeting, an evaluation sheet is returned to the college having been seen and signed by the student, and the chairperson provides a final evaluation at the end of the year. The supervisor completes an evaluation at the end of the year, as does the program director. But these are merely the formal means of evaluation, described by Bernard and Goodyear as ‘summative evaluation’ . The other form of evaluation that they describe as ‘formative evaluation’ is the regular feedback given by all of the partners in the STFE process, but particularly the supervisor, throughout the program. And they make the point that the summative evaluation should never contain any surprises because the formative evaluation should have already

conveyed the feedback that is given in the formal written evaluation at the end of the program. STFE is graded on a pass/fail basis because of the multi-level and complex nature of the task of evaluation, and because the relationships, particularly with the supervisor, can affect the student's performance and the supervisor's evaluation. The purpose of evaluation in this process is to help the student understand more about themselves as a ministering person rather than to enable the institution to grade them in levels of ability or performance. Students fail this subject if they do not engage the processes of learning and growth, and this is usually because they have failed to complete the set tasks in compliance with the covenant.

Evaluation, which happens throughout the year, is a central feature of supervision. Supervisors evaluate students; students evaluate supervisors; both evaluate the STFE process which draws them together. To evaluate is to assess and accord value to the other, and part of the support nature of STFE program is that the supervisor should be constantly feeding back informally her e-"value"-ation of the values that s/he sees in the student. This does not imply that the supervisor should inflate her/his estimation of the student or indulge in ego-stroking, but that the supervisory relationship should be such that the genuine qualities and giftedness of the student can be recognised and appreciated, as well as weaknesses acknowledged. The supervisor who is uncritical in his/her evaluations fails the student as much as does the supervisor who is hyper-critical

The supervisor needs also to constantly evaluate his/her own work with the student, and to be prepared to hear the student's evaluation of her supervision. Evaluation, then becomes an open and mutual process that is fully understood by the student (there should be no surprises for the student at the end of the year).

There is only one "summative" evaluation required of the supervisor, the form of which is contained in Appendix 5. This should be completed as soon as possible after the final supervisory conference and forwarded to the director by the end of semester. The evaluation is treated in the strictest confidence and the supervisor should give an honest and detailed evaluation of the student and self-evaluation of her/his own performance. It is vital that this evaluation be made and returned promptly so that the overall evaluation of the student's performance in STFE can be completed by the end-of-year graduation.

4 – THE PRACTICE OF SUPERVISION

'When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said too.
When one says It, the I of the word pair I-It is said too.
The basic word I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being.
The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being'.
(Martin Buber)

This chapter deals with some of the practicalities of supervision. Whilst it may take the form of a "how-to" guide to supervision, it is recognised that supervisors are not cloned (neither are students) and will have individual styles and preferences about how they go about the practice of supervision. And so "a model", not "the model" of supervision is offered. The contents of this chapter will be a yardstick by which supervisors can evaluate their own style and performance of supervision as well as a resource for addressing issues that arise in supervision. It is expected that supervisors will be receiving supervision themselves (either personal supervision which the supervisor will arrange individually and/or peer supervision through the monthly supervisors meetings at Whitley College). This will be another resource for dealing with the issues of supervision. Problematic issues can also be taken up with the Co-ordinator of STFE at any time.

4.1 A Model of Supervision

Supervision is an educational task in which both supervisor and minister-in-training are educators and the ministry situation of the student is the learning field. The educational model appropriate to supervision is non-directive teaching "in which the relationship between teacher and student is best described as a partnership ". Hawkins and Shohet describe the three main functions of supervision as educative, supportive and managerial , and each of these functions pertains to the overall STFE process. For supervisors in the STFE program, however, the educative and supportive functions predominate. Hawkins and Shohet regard the primary tasks of supervision as the following :

- to provide a regular space for supervisees to reflect upon the content and process of their work - educational
- to develop understanding and skills within the work -educational
- to receive information and another perspective concerning one's work - educational/supportive
- to receive both content and process feedback - educational/supportive
- to be validated and supported both as a person and as a worker - supportive
- to ensure that, as a person and as a worker one is not left to carry, unnecessarily, difficulties, problems and projections alone - supportive
- to have space to explore and express personal distress, restimulation, transference or counter-transference that may be brought up by the work - managerial/supportive
- to plan and utilize their personal and professional resources better - managerial/supportive
- to be pro-active rather than re-active - managerial/supportive
- to ensure quality of work - managerial "

Other than the last one, each of these functions of supervision is relevant to a greater or lesser extent (allowing for the therapy-based focus of the authors) in the context of STFE. Most of the managerial functions are covered by other aspects of the STFE and ministerial formation program; the only such functions required of the supervisor are to insist on the submission (on time) of written presentations by the student and to return end-of-year evaluations to the director (on time). Otherwise the role of the supervisor is educative (in the sense described above) and supportive.

In this model of supervision the primary learning initiatives are taken by the student. In the early stages of the supervisory relationship the supervisor may have to offer more suggestions about how to undertake the kinds of presentations that will assist the learning process. As the year progresses, however, it will be essential that the student take more and more responsibility for the issues that form the basis of the supervisory conference. One of the goals of supervision is to encourage each student to take responsibility for his own growth and to develop the reflective skills that will lead to self-supervision and a continuing reflective approach to ministry post-ordination.

Some experiences of supervision will be like teaching a fearful child to swim; in the early stages the "supporting hands" will be required as the student becomes accustomed to the feel of the water. To learn to swim the supporting hands must be gently withdrawn and the coach must be prepared for the panic of the novice and know when to have "hands-on" and when to let the learner flounder. Other experiences of supervision will be more like breaking in a colt and the supervisor will need to find ways of introducing bit and bridle to a reluctant pupil. In both kinds of situation the aim is to encourage the learner into a mind-set of reflection upon the practice of ministry and continuing growth in ministry. Then there will be those experiences of supervision in which the student takes to the process like the proverbial duck-to-water and the task of the supervisor will be to match the student's enthusiasm for growth and learning.

4.2 The Supervisory Relationship

Entering a supervisory relationship holds both threat and promise for the supervisor and for the minister-in-training. The first meeting(s) can be occasions of anxiety and uncertainty as the supervisor attempts to understand where the student is on the ministerial learning curve, and as the student wonders what this “other”, who is perceived to have some status and power, will be like to work with. How the relationship develops is crucial to the learning process for the student. If the relationship becomes too informal and “matey” the supervisor can lose the capacity to probe and challenge, even to recognise, the student’s presuppositions. The opposite extreme of excessive formality, in which the supervisor reveals nothing of him/herself, can abort the development of trust and openness that is essential for self-learning to occur.

The following criteria may help in accelerating the “getting-to-know-you” phase of supervision:

- always bear in mind that the primary purpose of the supervisory relationship is the growth in the student’s capacity for self-learning and reflection on ministry.
- for the duration of the supervisory conference, the supervisor is fully present to and for the student as a “supervisor”, even if they may relate as peers, friends or in other ways in other environments.
- the process of supervision will be facilitated by the supervisor adopting with a degree of comfort the persona of supervisor which is consonant with her natural supervisory style.
- allow the relationship to develop through focussing on the tasks of supervision rather than trying to establish the relationship before proceeding with the tasks. Remember that the supervisory relationship and the supervision process are a two-semester commitment and not all bridges need to be crossed in the first meeting.
- always be ready to address the student’s questions about the process and objectives of supervision.

As the supervisory relationship deepens through the sharing of the student’s journey into ministry, it may be expected that s/he will be more open about personal issues that are affecting her/his ministry. This is a great privilege and needs to be treated with all of the sensitivity of the confessional. However the supervisor needs to keep a check on the extent to which such disclosures begin to take the conference away from supervision into the territory of therapy. Therapy may be needed, if so the supervisor should arrange an appropriate referral.

A fruitful supervisory relationship can be a great joy to both participants. There have been many instances in which the outcome has been a continuing relationship of mutual encouragement and support long after the year of supervision has been completed.

4.3 The Supervisory Conference

Some basic understandings need to be established between supervisor and student and these are best negotiated prior to, or at, the first conference. Supervisors need to stipulate some of their own expectations and invite the same from the students, but the following will serve as a guide:

- absolute confidentiality of all matters presented by the student, or shared by the student or supervisor during the conference will be respected by both participants.
- the student will be responsible for arranging the time and venue of conferences by negotiation with the supervisor.
- the student will provide a written report which will form the focus of the conference. The report will be in the supervisor's hands at least 24 hours prior to the conference. If no report is received the supervisor will be at liberty to postpone the conference.
- if either the supervisor or the student have concerns about the supervisory relationship, they will be free to raise those concerns with the director.

The first meeting(s) are important for setting patterns of relating. Doran McCarty describes the "initial stage" of supervision as the time of orientation of the student to the program, but also a time for the "supervisor and supervisee to share their pilgrimages and some of their dreams ." The first meeting is a time to share stories and then to focus on the goals that the student has set for her/himself. At the first meeting of second semester the student's goals should be revisited and revised. From time-to-time the supervisor should remind the student of the goals and check how they are progressing.

The final meeting(s) are a time for evaluation of what has been gained, what work is unfinished, and what might be new directions for the student who is moving towards ordination. There may well be a significant sense of loss for both participants if the relationship has been a particularly fruitful one (the end-of-year STFE graduation dinner is a helpful termination ritual).

The other supervisory conferences form what McCarty terms the "structural stage " in which the focus is on the ministry experiences reported by the student. This will be the stage in which the student engages in ministry, reports on the experiences and reflects on them with the supervisor; this is the stage in which major new learnings are most likely occur.

Each supervisory conference needs to have a structure and a flow to it:

- immediately prior to the meeting, spend 10-15 minutes reading the student's report. Look for gaps in information that need elucidation, major issues that the student will need to consider.
- a brief "warmup" exchange of "how are you?", "what's been happening?" etc. (connecting).
- briefly follow up on the major issues raised at the previous meeting (the supervisor needs to keep some notes for this purpose).
- explore the report together, looking at the situation from different angles, seeking understanding of

what happened from the perspective of the major participants.

- allow significant time to reflect on the meaning of the event; how does one understand this experience from a Gospel perspective; how do the theological disciplines bring understanding to the event (ref. Chapter 5 - Theological Reflection)?
- work with the student to develop some pastoral plans for responding to the situation in the future.
- spend time in prayer.
- for ten or fifteen minutes following the supervisory conference, review what happened and write notes in preparation for the next meeting.

The supervisory conference should be contained as close as possible within an hour. Whilst there may be occasions when it is appropriate to exceed that time span, were overruns to become habitual, the supervisor should raise it as an issue with the MIT.

4.4 Styles of Supervision

This manual is not the appropriate medium for a comprehensive treatment of individual differences, however, for effective supervision, it is important to recognise that supervisors and supervisees may have different personality types and this will have a significant influence on their styles of supervision, learning styles, values and perceptions.

Supervisors may have some knowledge and experience of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator psychometric questionnaire and this may provide helpful insights into the dynamics of the supervisory relationship, particularly if difficulties are being experienced. For example, a “Judging” supervisor may become frustrated with the seeming indecisiveness of a “Perceiving” student; an “Intuitive” supervisor may tend to make intuitive leaps in interpreting a given situation and become frustrated by the attention to detail and inability to grasp the big picture of a “Sensing” student, and so on . Whilst these insights may be helpful on occasions, they ought not become the primary focus of the supervisory conference.

Inadequate supervisory styles can be a source of unnecessary and unhelpful anxiety for the student. Reviews of supervision with social work students has identified some particularly unhelpful styles of supervision :

- amorphous supervision - supervisors offer too little clarity about their expectations of the student. Ambiguity about the criteria of evaluation, uncertainty about the supervisor’s expectations, significantly raise the student’s anxiety level.
- unsupportive supervision - the supervisor appears cold, aloof, even hostile and is very critical of the student’s performance. There will be occasions to challenge, even criticise, but this must be in an

overall climate of support.

- therapeutic supervision - the supervisor constantly alludes to deficiencies in the student's character or personality to account for perceived shortcomings in the student's work.

The most effective supervision seems to occur when the supervisor adopts a balance between challenge and support, where mistakes by the supervisor are acknowledged and mistakes by the student are not experienced as failure.

4.5 Blocks to Effective Supervision

Most of the blocks to effective supervision are caused by anxiety in the student and/or the supervisor. Student's may well fear the influence that the supervisor may have upon their acceptance for ordination; they may even be fearful that the supervisor's theological stance may threaten their own. The response of the student to his anxiety may be to curry favour, friendship or sympathy with the supervisor to divert the arrows of judgement. Alternatively the supervisor may encounter a wall of resistance and non co-operation as the student does the minimum required to fulfill the requirements of the course. The blockage can only be cleared if it is recognised, named and dealt with. The supervisor needs to be able to identify the behaviour and articulate it to the student in such a manner that the underlying anxiety can be recognised and allayed.

Blocks that originate in the supervisor's anxiety may be more difficult to deal with. If one hides behind the supportive nature of supervision to the extent that the student is never challenged and the conferences are unfailingly "nice" and civil, effective supervision is impossible. To recognise and overcome one's own anxiety as a supervisor requires a degree of self-awareness and self-understanding and a willingness to take some risks in supervision (the risk of not being liked or the risk of alienating the student, for example).

Doran McCarty borrows from Eric Beirne's "Games People Play" to describe the "Games People Play In Supervision ". Most of these games (with intriguing names like "seduction", "kick me", "harried executive", "let's you and he fight", "yes but", "I've done the best I can under the circumstances" and "I did what you told me") are symptomatic of an underlying anxiety about being found out by the STFE process to be somehow inadequate in ministry. Supervisors can play games too, such as "I wonder why you said that" or, "one good question deserves another ", usually as a means of maintaining some degree of control or superiority over the student. Games are not effective modes of supervision.

Supervisors need to recognise when the supervisory relationship has become blocked and be prepared to deal with the situation directly with the student. Some indicators might be that the supervisor finds the conferences boring and has difficulty focussing her/his mind on the student's presentations; the student is constantly defensive, or else overly submissive; the quality of the

student's presentations is consistently poor, showing little evidence of attempts at reflection. These are the times to risk some different strategies with the student, particularly naming the behaviour and addressing it is a priority issue in supervision.

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