

**Reframing The Diagonal Trajectory:
An Interactive Solution For The
Polarized Protestant Church**

by

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Reading Approval

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Brandon University

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An Interactive Solution For The Polarized Protestant
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by Stuart Douglas Harvey

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee: Professor Dr. Ken Beesley

Department of Rural Development

Abstract

Institutions such as churches function as community animating systems, but are themselves in need of continual renewal. The Protestant Church's vitality as a community animating system on the Canadian Prairies is inhibited by a dichotomy between liberal and conservative religious perspectives at every level from intra-personal to inter-group. This study contributes to the bridging of this gap, and the possible revitalization thereby of this community animating system. Two insights by Andrew Murray into the teaching of Jesus, present the possibility of reframing the nature of our relationship with God as being interactive rather than active or passive. Through a hermeneutical text analysis of the four Gospels, the concept is explored and its current utility considered. Extensive background to the development of this solution is provided so as to contextualize the significance of the research in rural community development. Four research questions frame these results: that Jesus' thought, action, and teaching reflect an interactive relationship with God and that he saw this as being of use to people of any culture. Interactivity with God is modelled on an angle matrix, presenting it as a diagonal trajectory, reflecting both liberal and conservative concerns rather than using the traditional modeling of the issue on a zero-sum, left-right line graph.

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Preface

Richard Bowles, writing his best-selling career guidance book (1995 p.446) speaks of having received a request from a Jewish reader to state clearly and with passion his Christian beliefs about how one finds one's mission in life. The reader continued, "I will know how to translate your vision into my own thought forms for my own life, when I reflect afterwards upon what you have said." It is in the same spirit, and with the same assumption, that I write this paper. In order to facilitate such a "translation", I wish to make explicit at the outset four of my own views. As will be seen in the chapter on method, the background knowledge, experience, and perspective of the researcher are all critically important to the conduct of qualitative research. These "subjective" aspects of the researcher are actually *harnessed* in the qualitative research project (Schwandt 2000 pp.194-195). Making my views explicit at this point, will serve this dual function of assisting readers in translating the concepts of this paper into their own idiom, and understanding my harnessed subjective aspects.

1. Nobody knows whether God exists or not. This is a matter of "faith" not "knowledge". Often it is assumed that belief in the existence of God is the faith stance, while belief that God does not exist is a knowledge stance. The perspective taken in this study is that it is a matter of faith *both* that God exists and that God does not exist. We each get to call it like we see it. In my case, and in the case of the people for whom this research is conducted, the faith in the existence of God is assumed to be the explanation which accounts most adequately for the life we experience around us.

2. I have adopted an outlook on the above subject from my father (Harvey 1964) who said, "An open mind is like an open mouth. It's meant to be closed on something — but not left that way. We hold such beliefs in either direction with 'tentative certainty',

and operate from that base at any given time.”

3. Descriptions and explanations of the relationship between Jesus (the Son of God), God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, are many and varied. In order to simplify it for my purposes here, I offer the following structure. If I said I had a house with three rooms, everybody viewing it from the outside would say I had a house. Viewed from the inside, those most familiar with my kitchen, or my living room, or my basement, would likely describe the inside of my house from their experience of being in one or other of those rooms. But my house is not limited to any one of those three rooms. In like manner when God is “viewed” from the outside, like my house, God is one being. Viewed from the “inside”, some people are more familiar with “the Father”, some are more familiar with “the Son”, and some with “the Holy Spirit”. They may even equate any one of those internal aspects with the larger, more inclusive term, “God”. In this paper, I regard the term God as applying to the larger whole, and the three other terms to sub-aspects of the larger term. This conceptualization may not be theologically pure, but it gives a common vocabulary.

4. The concept of the Jews and/or Christians being “chosen people” by God I take in the same sense that a student is chosen by a teacher to come to the front of the class, temporarily, for some pedagogical purpose. In this case the Jews are seen as being a group of people descended from one man, Abraham, who was “called to the front of the class” out of the nations and cultures that existed at that time, so that he and his descendants might learn an extended lesson about God’s ideas regarding how the world God created was meant to run. However, just as when my wife talks to me, what she says is not necessarily what I hear. So too, the Jews took a while to get it right. Finally, however, after a two thousand year period, the gist of God’s lessons to them had been learned, and condensed down by them into a set of “Scriptures”. Jesus arrived on the scene at the end of this time. Although there had been rumblings about 500 years before his birth, that God intended this lesson to be for all nations (Isaiah 49:6), it was the coming of Jesus that

marked the breaking out of these lessons from the single culture context to the rest of the world. Non-Jewish followers now had access to this set of lessons. The newcomers kept the original Scriptures jotted down by the Jewish people (utilizing both Greek and Hebrew versions), renaming them the “Old Testament” or “Old Covenant” (contract) between the “teacher” and the “chosen student”. They added materials relating to the transition period, naming them the “New Testament” or “New Covenant” (contract) with the “whole class” of nations, which was now to be based upon the entire lesson. Some aspects of Jewish cultural practice from the Old Covenant, because they referred uniquely to God’s relationship with that first “single student”, had little relevance for the larger group, and so were disregarded.

**And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.**

— Isaiah [‘Community development worker’ c. 515 B.C.]
(Isaiah 58: 12)

**Thus says the Lord: “Stand by the roads,
and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is;
and walk in it, and find rest for your souls...”**

— Jeremiah [Royal advisor and ‘community development worker’ c. 625 B.C.]
(Jeremiah 6: 9-19)

Part 1 - Research Questions

Chapter 1 — Context for Research — “Voice” on the Borderlands

Border Crossing and “Effective Voice” in Community

Most of my life has been spent on the borderlands between Manitoba’s Aspen parkland and boreal forest. My life journey on the borderlands has taken me in and out of my culture, in and out of my religious denomination, in and out of my profession, and in and out of the rural setting. As Hirschman (1970) points out, we may or may not be able to speak freely, or have an effective voice within our community while we live there, but when we leave, the effectiveness of our voice regarding the internal affairs of that community usually diminishes rapidly. We do gain opportunities to express our voice effectively in our new context, but that opportunity frequently comes after a disruptive period of acclimatization. Loss of voice in this sense is a major factor in the experience of culture shock and re-entry shock, terms used to describe the turbulence which frequently surrounds the crossing of life’s borders (Guanipa 1998).

Life on the borderlands for me has entailed multiple instances of lost voice — in my environment, in my culture, in my denomination, in my profession, and in my rural/urban setting. The impact of both culture shock and re-entry shock have been quite substantial in my life over the years, and have given rise to much of the insight which underlies this thesis. It is frequently noted that going through culture shock can be the beginning of one’s real education (Guanipa 1998). This is true, both because new contexts bring new learning, and because

when we return home we see our home culture with new eyes (Guanipa 1998). In fact, I have found that forever after, nothing in one's home culture is ever assumed to be the only way of doing things — a mixed blessing indeed.

Bob Stiven (1985), who has made several border crossings in his life, described the process of re-entry to one's community, and the difficulty one faces in knowing just what to do with one's new learning, as the "Omega Syndrome." He said that the community was like a giant amoeba oozing its way from the beginning to end — from the alpha to the omega. Every once in a while individuals run out ahead of the community, or are pushed out ahead by the circumstances of life, and come to see a bit more clearly "the Omega" towards which the overall community is moving. With great excitement that individual calls out to the group from his or her place near the Omega, "Come over this way, this is the way!" But the community doesn't listen. It cannot afford to move forward on the experience of just one individual. It is far too risky. So the person returns home to his or her group and faces the problems of re-entry. The first question is, "if I re-enter my home group, will I lose the effect of my new insight?" Eventually the person finds that the answer is "no". Stiven said that as we rejoin the group, if we insist on promoting our new-found learning, that the group will become overtly hostile. However, as we learn to walk along once again with the group as it journeys from alpha to omega, two things happen. First, some people will notice that we walk "a little funny", and may even come alongside and try to imitate us. Second, the group may eventually come to a brook and find itself pressed up against its banks, unsure how to cross. At that time the person moves to the front of the group and says, "Here, follow me," and they follow. When asked how the person could have such courage to move into the unknown, that person

replies, “It’s easy, I’ve been here.” Stiven concluded by saying that there are always people in the community prepared to take such action at any given time, whether or not they all have the opportunity during their lifetimes to exercise such leadership. Helping those with the Omega Syndrome appreciate their role as part of the community “reserves” eases the pressure of waiting for those individuals.

Border Crossing and Adjustments To One’s Perspective

However, there is a far more subtle and profoundly disruptive effect of border crossing. This phenomenon can be just as positively productive for the border crosser upon his or her return home, but unlike the new insights that he or she is aware of, this phenomenon must first be brought to conscious awareness, before it can be of much use. This phenomenon relates to the profound effect that new cultures have on us in terms of changing of the way we frame our universe.

In my own case, I spent the first four years of my working life amongst the Oji-Cree of Northwest Ontario, where I absorbed many of their cultural perspectives. For example, two decades after returning home, a Lakota elder asked me, “Where were you hanging around Indians?” When I told him of my time in northern Ontario, he continued, “Oh, that explains it.” I asked him to clarify what he meant. He said, “When you came in, you looked down, that’s Cree. We’re Lakota — we look ‘em right in the eye.” (Pasap 1992)

The Oji-Cree use the passive perspective far more than do English Canadians, and this preference also gradually found its way into my frame of reference. I first realized how pervasive my use of the passive perspective had become when I was told that I lost a job competi-

tion because people had experienced the dissonance between my enthusiasm for the work and my “deference” versus “competitiveness” when it came to putting myself forward. I was informed, “The people on the committee just could not deal with that amount of dissonance.” (Hickerson 1982) It is not simply a matter one of shifting back to the perspective of our home culture when we return. The problem is that once a person has become appreciative of the psychological perspective which underlies another culture, it is very difficult not to view the world in that new way. Then, as Jesus commented, “. . .out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Mt.12:34)

My own experience of the shift in perspective as I crossed the border between two cultures was complicated by the fact that I crossed a second border about six months after entering the Oji-Cree culture. It was at that time that the full force of the emotional disruption of culture shock ensued in my life. Ivan Ramer, a Mennonite carpenter who is in the community building a church, was teaching me Cree at the time, and seemed to be much more at peace with the cultural dynamics which were wreaking havoc in my life. When I asked him about what had helped him work through it in his life, he introduced me to aspects of the conservative/evangelical religious perspective. As will be seen in the next chapter, I had grown up in a denomination where both liberal and conservative perspectives had been present, but I was mostly familiar with the liberal outlook. It was many years later that I realized in that the conservative religious perspective has a passive (“I am helped by God”) way of framing the universe, which is quite different from the liberal religious perspective which has an active (“I help myself, my society, and my God”) way of framing the universe.

The elders in Sandy Lake have an expression for what happens to people when they cross the boundary and take up a new perspective. They call it “tumbling”, and say that it will continue until the person reconnects with his or her roots (Stiven 1994). It is this dual border crossing, which in both cases involved a shift from active to passive perspective, and the residual (“tumbling”) effects of my absorbing this way of framing my universe when I returned to my home culture, which lay behind my excitement upon discovering Andrew Murray’s insights. For me, these insights pointed the way to a possible reconciliation of these two cultural and religious perspectives. By that time I came upon his insights, I had come to realize that the issue of reconciling these two perspectives had ramifications far beyond those of my own personal life. I had come to see that this unresolved dichotomy was tearing apart or keeping apart the two great sections of the Protestant church on the prairies, just as it had done within my own life. The need for resolving this dichotomy is the research context for this project.

Both Border Crossing Effects Used In This Paper

This paper concerns both of the above types of border-crossing effects. We will be returning to the issue of the loss of effective voice by people within their home cultures, or when they are forced to leave, as it is a major problem in the Protestant Church today. The dichotomy between liberal and conservative religious perspectives will be seen to be one of the major causes of disruption, and this disruption seems to be interfering with the effectiveness of the Protestant Christian Church as a community-animating system on the prairies.

We will also be returning to the matter of changed perspective later in this paper, as it is central to the possible resolution of the dichotomy between liberal and conservative religious perspectives in the Protestant Christian Church. Andrew Murray's insights, however, expand the frame of reference or perspective beyond human relationships to include our relationship with God. It was this new way of reflecting on our relationship with God which opened up to me the possibility of bridging between liberal and conservative religious perspectives within the Protestant Christian Church. That is, with conservatives framing the relationship with God in essentially "passive" terms, and liberals framing their relationship with God in essentially "active" terms, perhaps it is God's desire to have an interactive relationship with us. If this is the case, Andrew Murray's insights point out two very practical teachings of Jesus which help us enter into such an interactive relationship.

The structure of the paper

The balance of this paper is structured in a way that fully articulates the two streams of the developmental process leading up to my discovery of Andrew Murray's integrating insight. I feel that it is only by laying out such background material that the true significance of the findings of this study, and their potential applications in the areas of community, economic, and business development can be appreciated.

Part One: Research Questions. Chapter Two, "Reform of Community-animating Systems", introduces the historic and present role of the Protestant Church on the prairies as a community-animating system; the need for reform within such systems; the phenomenon of

United Church of Canada as a place where liberal and conservative religious perspectives coexisted for a long time; and the four specific research questions for this study.

Part Two Initial Understanding outlines the two streams of information which I developed in my thinking up until the start of this research project. **Chapter Three** “My Quest For Church Renewal In the UCC” outlines my journey which took place as I worked towards church renewal. **Chapter Four** “The Wish List Tool and Angle Diagram” outlines a parallel journey which took place during my work in the area of University student academic advising. This part concludes in **Chapter Five** “Andrew Murray’s Bridge Piece Emerges” with a description of how these two streams converged, and how Andrew Murray’s insights arose as a possible way in which the gap between liberal and conservative religious perspectives might be bridged.

Part Three: Method outlines the research method used in this project. **Chapter Six** “Hermeneutical Text Analysis” discusses the nature of that research method, while **Chapter Seven** “Specific Process Followed” applies that method to the current research project.

Part Four: Findings has two sections. **Chapter Eight** “General Emergence and Overall Dynamic of Fabula” outlines the overall effect of the research process as it relates to the research questions. **Chapter Nine** “Answers to the Four Questions” deals with specific findings arising from the hermeneutical text analysis which relate to each of the four questions.

Part five: Significance. **Chapter 10** discusses the findings A) in community development terms — in relation to the resolution of the dichotomy between liberal and conservative religious viewpoints within the Protestant Christian Church, the potential effect such a bridg-

ing might have in terms of church renewal, and the potential spin-off effects such renewal might have on the Church as a community-animating system on the prairies. B) In economic development terms — consideration is given to the significance of the findings in relation to the possibility of adding a new section to the academic advising and career selection (Wish List) instrument described in Chapter Four. C) In business development terms — consideration is given to the findings in relation to the need for additional power, resource, and guidance in the area of small business development in the rural community.

Chapter 2-Reform of Community-Animating Systems

Institutions within communities animate or bring life to the community itself. Institutions such as schools and universities, churches, libraries, art galleries, the media, governments, Crown corporations and institutes such as the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University, when viewed in this way, could be referred to as “community-animating systems.” However, such institutions frequently need animating themselves. Gerber (1986 p.58ff) notes that businesses and organizations must be “worked on” as well as “worked in” if they are to make successful adaptations to the changing environment over the years.

This research project arose out of the perceived need for renewal within the United Church of Canada (UCC). It is an attempt to investigate the interactive perspective as a possible bridge between the liberal and conservative perspectives. This effort is not undertaken in order to create some kind of a homogenized, ecumenical, or mega-Church. Rather, it is an attempt to find a way for some of us to draw from the blessings of both groups, and to alert each side that they might benefit from the part of the Gospel which they lack. In this way it is hoped that churches will enrich each other as they go about their role as community-animating systems on the prairies.

Rural Community Development and the Church

Protestant Christian Churches have had a central role as community-animating systems on the western Canadian prairies from the time of European settlement. Often one of the first institutions to be established upon the formation of local communities, churches are still one of the last to close upon their demise. Even when communities become so small that they can no longer support full-time Church staff, they very frequently become part of larger-area parishes, broadening their scope of concern and definition of “home community,” while retaining their local focus.

Clergy and other leaders in all denominations are involved as front-line workers carrying out tasks which overlap with those of “rural community development.” For example, these men and women support congregants who are currently encountering crushing and incapacitating personal loads from the impact of changing economic and social realities around them. In my working contacts over the past two decades with area clergy, I have found that they have frequently expressed a desire as leaders to move beyond “hand holding”, to empower their congregants into an abundant life as whole people: economically, spiritually, socially, mentally, and emotionally. They are frequently looking to animate their Churches and denominations, so as to upgrade the quality of their church’s impact as an animating system in their communities.

While providing direct support to their members, these institutions historically have had an economic impact on both local communities and the region. The church’s involvement in the formation of co-operatives and Credit Unions (Harvey 1961), the labour troubles in the 1920s (Bochonko and Dooley 1998), the formation of the CCF and later NDP (Blaikie 1996), the promotion of Prohibition to clean up the “wild West” (Albertasource 2002), and spear-heading the development of public works in small towns (Newcomb 1971) are indicative of

the huge economic impact on the Church of the prairies since settlement. At the regional level, institutions for the training of clergy were the basis of the formation of several of the prairie universities, such as Brandon University, which had its roots in “Prairie College” and the McKee Academy, started for the provision of secondary and post-secondary education respectively (Brandon University 2004).

This involvement of Protestant churches as animating systems in their respective communities and regions is by no means a new idea. R.H. Tawney in his book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Tawney 1938) outlines the integral role that the rise of Protestant theology in Europe played in the evolution of the capitalist economic system. Adam Smith in his inquiry into why some nations became wealthy and others did not, presents a fascinating critique of the role of the churches in education of the youth (Smith 1976 pp.758-788) and all people generally (Smith 1976 pp.788-816). In terms of their place in the community as one of the “public works and institutions which are necessary for facilitating particular branches of commerce” (Smith 1976 p.731), he includes a now-humorous aside in which he states that his (Scotch Presbyterian) denomination, though not well-off, is as effective as any other in this regard (Smith 1976 p.813). The Salvation Army was started by William Booth in order to address the plight of the poor as a central focus within the Church of England, breaking away later to form a separate denomination (Walker 1959 p.501). Methodism also began as a reform movement within the Church of England, just as the industrial revolution was getting underway. That denomination addressed many concerns raised during that period of social restructuring (Walker 1959 p.501). Both the Salvation Army and the Methodists are still involved in social and economic concerns today (O’Brian 2001).

Historic Reforms to Improve the Christian Church's Community Impact

Through the years, the Christian church has experienced a number of reform movements. The largest of these reforms gave rise to the Protestant church. It arose out of a felt need for renewal within the medieval Roman Catholic Church (Walker 1959 p.301). It was sparked when Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg in October, 1517, in order to bring his renewal concerns into public debate (Walker 1959 p.305). The Roman Catholic Church underwent its own subsequent counter-reformation (Walker 1959 p.374ff), and the Protestant church experienced multiple splits and divisions later as well, frequently in the name of reform. For example, the Salvation Army broke from the Church of England, as did the Methodists (Walker 1959 pp.501, 463). The Church of the Nazarene is a spin-off from the Methodists (O'Brian 2001), and the Canadian Missionary Alliance a spin-off from the Presbyterians (Boldt 1988).

An Ancient Call to Integrate Vertical and Horizontal Religious Perspectives

An expression of desire for the reform of a religious institution emanating from the community dates back to a wistful vision of a psalmist, writing sometime after 1000 B.C. He writes:

O that deliverance for Israel would come out of Zion!
When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad. [Psalms 14: 7; 53: 6]

In this Psalm, the author expresses his longing for help that should flow, in his estimation, from God, through the temple in the capital city of Zion (Jerusalem), and out into the surrounding rural hinterland. The Psalm is contained in both the northern and southern collections of Psalms (Anderson 1964 p.415), a rare duplication in the total amalgamated collection of only 150 Psalms (Psalms 14:7; 53:6). Perhaps this duplication reflects a widely held sentiment of the day — a desire for reform. The vision itself is an interesting one, which might be characterized as a vertical down-flow of God’s assistance taking a horizontal delivery path. This change in direction takes place through the medium of an individual or group, located at the temple, who on the one hand connect with a vertical dimension of God, and on the other hand, translate that into a horizontal connection of assistance to their community in the hinterland.

In our own day these two dimensions of religious experience, the (vertical) relationship with God and its (horizontal) practical out-working in the community, frequently find expression in separate individuals, and sometimes separate groups. This division of emphasis is particularly evident in the Protestant Christian church on the Canadian Prairies. Within Protestant circles, individuals and groups with an interest or emphasis on the “vertical” dimension, are often referred to as “conservative” or “evangelical”. Individuals or groups with an interest or emphasis on the “horizontal” dimension are often referred to as “liberal” or “mainline” Christians. This of course reflects a matter of interest or emphasis, as both dimensions are present in both of these groups and individuals.

Unfortunately, this division in perspective is frequently found at the centre of conflicts between groups, between individuals, and within individuals themselves. The problem

becomes acute when individuals or groups are unable to find a way in which these vertical and horizontal dimensions of life can find expression, and/or live in some sort of creative tension. Where no such resolution can be found, the tension is far from creative, and at worst terribly destructive.

The tension reflected in this polarization of the vertical and horizontal in the groups or types of individuals of the Protestant Church on the Canadian Prairies has not always been negative. In one particular case, that of United Church of Canada, there have been periods in which this tension has been extremely creative.

The Emergence of a “Mixed” Perspective – A Legacy of the United Church of Canada

Historically, the United Church of Canada was created in 1925 by a union of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists, who were later joined in 1975 by the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB). The original union arose in part from an economic and practical movement on the Canadian Prairies where many small centres were already forming “local church unions” in the early part of the last century (Wilmer 1995 p.10). The EUB group joined when their parent denomination in the United States went national rather than international, leaving that group cut off at the border (Wilmer 1995 p.11). The four denominations were not all that far apart in terms of their statements of faith, but there have always existed two main subgroups within that amalgamation, liberals and conservatives, the boundaries between which do not necessarily follow former denominational lines. The genius and perhaps key legacy of the United Church of Canada to the larger Protestant Christian Church,

is the fact that within this organization liberal and conservative Christians coexisted peacefully for many years.

This coexistence enabled some of us to grow up in that institutional milieu experiencing the blessings of both liberal and conservative perspectives. During the first 50 years of life of United Church of Canada, (1925-1975), a development took place in the lives of many of us who grew up in that institutional milieu. We members of the baby boomer generation knew nothing of the original founding denominations which made up United Church of Canada, and most of our parents were, at most, young children at the time of union in 1925. Although many of us grew up in homes, and attended local churches which exhibited either a predominantly liberal or predominantly conservative outlook, we also were children of “the new mix.”

The controversy over the ordination and placement of openly practising homosexual ministers within the United Church of Canada, served as a flashpoint which caused the separating out of these two groups over the past two decades (Friesen 1997). The controversy itself is not the focus of concern here, but rather the problem of finding a way to restore or regenerate that milieu of coexistence and creative tension between the liberal and conservative (“mainline” and “evangelical”) religious perspectives. I believe that any number of controversial subjects over which sincere and believing Christians disagree could just as well have served as such a flashpoint, resulting in a similar separating out of these two groups.

Although for many of us the development of our understanding of this newly mixed perspective took many years to mature, at the time of the controversy and its aftermath we found ourselves facing the fact that there was, and still is, no real alternative to the former

expression of the United Church of Canada and the “mixed” outlook we had adopted. Dominantly one-sided presentations of either liberal or conservative perspectives were found to be lacking the richness of perspective contributed by the missing complementary half. Those who remained within the United Church of Canada and were comfortable with what was rapidly becoming a singular liberal perspective, had no problem. Those who chose to exit and had a purely liberal or a purely conservative perspective also had little problem finding a new denominational home more in keeping with their outlook. The problem arose for those of us with a mixed perspective, which included aspects of both liberal and conservative outlooks; whether we remained within United Church of Canada or decided to exit. The United Church no longer presented a mixed perspective, and no Protestant denomination outside of the United Church on the Prairies came even close to meeting that need.

A further frustration has emerged for many of us, whether from the inside or the outside of the UCC, who have adopted some form of a mixed perspective. Some of us have come to believe that some of the problems facing the now predominantly liberal United Church, as well as other predominantly liberal or predominantly conservative denominations within the Protestant Christian community, arise because of the fact that each side is missing the complementary and critical perspective of the other side. Those of us with the mixed perspective draw unique components from each of the liberal and conservative perspectives, but have faced a difficult challenge in finding ways to reconnect these two perspectives into a single mix in practice. It is one thing to grow up in an institutional milieu within which such a mix was absorbed by osmosis, owing to the presence of both liberal and conservative people, but it’s quite another to generate or regenerate such a milieu once it is gone. I believe that the

problem of bridging the gap between liberal and conservative perspectives, and finding a way to enable both groups to be blessed by the perspectives of the other without having to give up the essential ground of their own perspective is a critical issue in the life of our community today.

The Emergence of a Model Highlighting the Two Religious Perspectives

Just prior to my years working in Brandon University Student Services, I developed a “Wish List” instrument for helping students articulate the issues of central importance in their life, as these play a central role in their selection of career, institution, program, and courses. This tool, which I used extensively in a number of student-support initiatives in and out of the University, will be described fully in the next section. From this tool emerged a model, also described in the next section, which served to highlight the vertical and horizontal dichotomy. Had this model not emerged, I might not have recognized the relevance to the issue of bridging the gap between the liberal and conservative perspectives, identified in two short passages of a book by Andrew Murray (1975). Andrew Murray’s insights, explained in chapter five, immediately struck me as being a potential bridge-piece between these two perspectives, as well as the key to building a fourth level on my Wish List instrument.

Specific Research Questions

In order for this or any other “bridge piece” to be considered by either liberal or conservative sections of the Protestant Church (in or out of United Church of Canada), such a bridge piece needs to be in keeping with or in harmony with Scripture. Running this bridge piece through the screening mechanism of Scripture is not unique to this particular undertak-

ing, but rather is standard operating procedure within many branches of the Protestant Christian Church, and has been that way since the time of the Reformation.

The underlying question for me is:

A) Could Andrew Murray’s two insights, and the “interactive perspective” they highlight, function as a bridge piece between the vertical and horizontal religious perspectives, and B) should I incorporate them as a basis for building a fourth level on the “Wish List” instrument?

1 In order to answer those questions I needed to investigate whether the Biblical text (specifically the four Gospel narratives) sustains Andrew Murray’s two insights — the focus of this study.

2 If the text did substantiate Andrew Murray’s two insights in such a way that they could be incorporated as a basis for building a fourth level on the “Wish List” instrument, then further practical work would have to be carried out. This would constitute a second phase of future work, following this research study.

In order to focus the Biblical text investigation, four research questions were asked:

1 Are Andrew Murray’s two insights, which highlight Christ as wanting an interactive relationship with people, sustained by the text?

2 If his insights are sustained, what weight might be given to its relative importance of an interactive relationship with Christ in the overall gospel

narrative?

3 Did Jesus himself have an interactive relationship with the Father, and did he teach others about it?

4 Is there any indication in the text as to the utility of Andrew Murray's insights (into the possibility of an interactive relationship with God) outside of Christ's home community?

Part 2-Initial Understanding

Chapter 3-My Quest for Church Renewal in the UCC

Origin of My Interest in Church Renewal

My interest in bridging the liberal-conservative gap began to arise twenty-six years ago, upon my return to my home culture, when I encountered a version of it in a small town in Ontario. The United Church congregation where I was a minister, was mostly made up of people who were either from other denominations or married to people from other denominations. There was an added twist in that there were two widely separate age cohorts whose perspectives differed greatly. After working for two years to create a space for both groups, and developing a new organizational model (Harvey 1978), we experienced a brief but heady period of exuberant success, followed by a precipitous decline and crash. We obviously had missed some critical factor. At that point my “quest for the missing piece” began.

I left full-time pastoral Ministry in the United Church of Canada, to pursue this inquiry outside the institutional church. A host of jobs and occupations provided a wide range of platforms from which I could pursue this “paradigm pioneering” endeavour, the latest of these research contexts being my Master of Rural Development program, and this research project in particular.

Joel Barker’s book, *Paradigms, the Business of Discovering the Future*, describes a process of discovery he terms “paradigm pioneering” (Barker 1992 p.44) which on a continuum would fall somewhere between “participant observation” and being a “crash test

dummy”. His description of these paradigm pioneers, and the role they play in life of teasing out “...with precision the rules and regulations of a new paradigm (Barker 1992 p.43),” describes very closely the process I have used over the twenty-six years leading up to this current research. The paradigm I was pioneering was that of a renewed church within which disparate groups could coexist in creative tension in such a way that their lives would be renewed and enriched by each other, and they in turn would animate the community around them. The articulation of the need to bridge the vertical and horizontal perspectives in the life of our religious community, emerged only slowly during the twenty-six years of my quest.

The Role of Problem Definition and Zeitgeist In Issue Selection

What I would add to Barker’s observations about paradigm pioneering would be the role that “problem definition” and “zeitgeist” play in the paradigm-pioneering task. I have found that the absence of an articulated paradigm can be as serious an issue as the absence of a rule set to implement it. Had I understood from the outset of my quest, the degree to which the need for a bridge between the vertical and horizontal religious perspectives was central to my quest, I feel that it would have made the overall process much easier. However as Churchill points out (Churchill Jr. 1988 p.44), the articulation of the question is often over half of any research task.

Zeitgeist, or “the Spirit of the age” (Webster’s), (sometimes referred to as a fad), also plays a large role in the selection of paradigms to be pioneered. This was certainly true in my case. My interest in, and awareness of the paradigm I chose to pioneer, of a renewed and relevant church, was profoundly influenced by the zeitgeist prevalent during my formative

years, and during the years of my training for Ministry. The following story is indicative of the Spirit of those times.

Bob was the man who, with United Church sponsorship, started the first halfway house in Manitoba for prisoners being released from jail. I'd met him that first day of work on my first "real job" as a lifeguard at a "Fresh Air Camp", also United Church sponsored, which provided an otherwise unavailable holiday each year for about 500 people from the core of Winnipeg. He was the director of the first camp that summer, the camp for intermediate boys, the oldest (and roughest) group accommodated by the camp, beyond which the top boys could be selected for inclusion in an elite corps of junior and senior leaders. He himself is one of the best leaders I've ever met. I saw him take those 50 boys off the bus, sit them down in the shade of a big tree, explain the three nonnegotiable rules of the camp, pick up a ball and bat, and while saying "let's play ball," run for the ball diamond without turning back. At once 50 boys leapt to their feet and streamed after him. He told me later that he had no idea whether they would follow or not, but had they not followed, he would have packed them back on the bus and sent them home.

As he had been director, and I had been lifeguard, we found ourselves frequently in long conversations as the rest of the camp were off with their leaders engaged in a variety of activities. I had just been exposed to Elizabeth O'Connor's (1963) vision of a renewed Church in her book, *Call To Commitment*, and he was in the throes of deciding whether or not to go in to the ministry. As he thought out loud, his paradigm of a vital and engaged Church, animating the life of the inner-city community around it, solidified in my mind and being, and captured the imagination and interest of my life.

His vision of the integration of the vertical (spiritual) and the horizontal (human) dimensions of life at both the individual and community level, and the role the Christian Church as being both the catalyst for change in peoples' lives and the context for such growth, was not only spelled out for me that week, but exemplified repeatedly (Stiven 1964). An incident towards the end of the week epitomized this integrated vision and life-giving dynamic.

He had organized his camp into cabin groups, naming their leaders with names of Biblical heroes — Moses, Joseph, Sampson, and so forth. The groups themselves were referred to as "the men of Moses," "the men of Joseph," "the men of Sampson," etc. Each day of the camp, the Bible study focused on one or other of these Biblical heroes, and then at the end of the week the entire camp went down to the North Beach where the groups were instructed to make sand-sculptures depicting what they had learned during their week from their particular Biblical hero. When all sculptures were completed, the entire camp went from one to the other allowing each group to explain their sculpture to the others.

As they came to the final group sculpture a profoundly moving event took place. The group was led by a young man, we will call "Joe", who had just been released from prison, and was a new resident in the halfway house. The day after being released from prison he had been brought to camp and put in charge of this group of "rough and tough" boys. The Biblical name he had been assigned was "Dismus", and his group was known as "The Men of Dismus." As the camp circled around this final group's sand-sculpture, the roughest and toughest of its members started to explain the story of their Biblical character and what they had learned from him. He explained how Dismus had been one of the two other people

crucified at the same time as Jesus. He told how the other person who had been crucified with them had mocked Jesus, but how Dismus had rebuked him for doing so. He pointed out how Dismus had turned to Jesus on the cross, and asked Jesus to remember him when he was given his kingdom in heaven. He told how Jesus had replied to Dismus, with the words “this day you will be with me in Paradise.” Then, putting his arm around Joe, he said, “and this is our leader, Dismus, the forgiven thief.”

Joe continued to get his life together, went on to university, and eventually a professional career, citing that week as having been formative in his life journey.

Sequential Zeitgeists in the United Church of Canada

In the case of United Church of Canada, there have been at least four dominant zeitgeist loci since the First World War. I picture what I call a zeitgeist train rolling through time. This train stops periodically to let people off, so that they can become established in that territory, take up the challenge facing people at that particular time, and settle in for a lifetime’s work, because the very nature of such zeitgeist problems demands a long-term commitment of time and resource.

I have no idea what the zeitgeist was which captured the imagination and focused the attention of the group of clergy, including my great-grandfather, who went to training for Ministry prior to the First World War (Freeman 1970 p.1). However, I am aware of the zeitgeist of that group of clergy, which included my grandfather, who went into training for Ministry during and after the First World War. These people were caught up in the issues of unemployment and post-war readjustment owing to the deluge of returning soldiers (Freeman

1970 pp.42,62), the rise of communism (Freeman 1970 pp.100-101), and the disastrous events of the thirties (Freeman 1970 pp.103-104).

The group of clergy, including my father, who went to training for Ministry and moved into churches from the time of the Second World War until about the time I took my training in the late 'sixties, were principally concerned with processing the war and its aftermath, and in particular issues arising from the Holocaust. These people were also caught up in the aftermath of the war with its accelerating prosperity, deepening Cold War, and exploding baby boom. Many of the authors they studied (Neibuhr, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Kagawa), had lived through the war events in leadership positions and faced the dilemmas which that war presented (Harvey 1963). From the time of my training for Ministry until the early 'eighties, the zeitgeist around which our attention focused was "church renewal," an echo of so many reform movements which had their roots and vision of a better world in the 1960s.

The group which prepared for Ministry after us found their zeitgeist centred on issues of human relations, gender, and human sexuality. It would not surprise me if the zeitgeist train soon pulled out of that station, leaving those people to work on that problem, taking the next group on to the next emerging issue-set in our culture and society, perhaps related to or arising out of economic globalization.

It should be noted that zeitgeist issues remain significant when the train pulls out moving people on to other issues. The train has to pull out because there are so many people already working on such long-term problems, that it's hard for new personnel to break into a field of work, especially one so thoroughly worked over. Each zeitgeist area is connected to the issues that precede and follow its focus of interest. These sequential zeitgeist areas have a profound impact on each other.

Church Renewal Literature

This research project, which seeks to address the need to bridge the gap between liberal and conservative religious perspectives, has its roots back in the zeitgeist of “church renewal” and idealism of the sixties. Knowing this helps to frame this research project not only in its centrality in my life as the qualitative researcher on this project, but also in terms of its location in the literature on the subject.

A leading work in the field of church renewal, and the earliest one to capture my imagination was the above mentioned book by Elizabeth O’Connor, *Call to Commitment* (O’Connor 1963) in which she described the genesis and development of The Church of Our Saviour in Washington DC. It was a church founded after the Second World War by a returning Chaplain who had been disappointed by the spiritual development of the average soldier he met overseas, who claimed to be the product of the prewar church (O’Connor 1963 pp.10-11). In this local expression of a renewed church, the group sought to take seriously the vertical dimension of the Christian faith, and integrate that in practical outreach to the community around them (O’Connor 1963 p.13). Membership was conditional on high levels of involvement; annually renewed commitment; participation in some form of mission relevant to each individual; and a high degree of cerebral content (O’Connor 1963 pp.193-200). This church, and the book which described it, was one of the early postwar models which shaped and inspired the aspirations of those wishing to increase the relevance of the church in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies.

One other formative book with wide influence was an American Presbyterian study, *The Church and Its Changing Ministry* (Johnson 1961), which served for many as a ready

reference guide to the historical practices of mainline Christian churches. It was also the source of many poignant and subsequently well circulated quotations concerning the sad state of affairs of the average church and its Ministry in the late sixties. The report contained a summary of another influential study of the time by Samuel Blizzard regarding the contradictory role expectations of local clergy (Johnson 1961 pp.74-78).

There was a veritable explosion of new literature focused on this zeitgeist of church renewal — so much so that one of our courses in the introductory year of theology was dedicated to an immersion in such literature, so as to adequately set the theme of our three-year program. Over the years this flood of literature has dwindled to a trickle. Several key authors/consultants along with several church-support centres have risen to the top as focal points and resource centres for those still interested in church renewal. The Alban Institute (Alban Institute 2004) is an ecumenical support centre. There is training for a network of “Interim Pastors” who are trained in essentially “community development” and “mediation” skill-sets to troubleshoot problem situations (Interim Ministry Network 2004). *Focus on the Family* has a division for the support of pastors (The Parsonage 2004), and serves primarily the evangelical church. Several centres in the United States, which have as their base large and successful churches, mostly evangelical, have risen from time to time. Saddleback Valley Community Church, in Orange County California, with its senior Pastor Dr. Rick Warren, has had widespread influence in evangelical circles, particularly after the publication of his book *The Purpose Driven Church* (Warren 1995). Willow Creek Church in Chicago, was another widely copied model for evangelical church renewal in the ‘nineties (Willow Creek Community Church 2004). Writer and consultant Lyle E. Schaller, author of the book *Hey, That’s Our*

Church (Schaller 1975), which we used in our church renewal effort in the mid-'seventies, has had a wide influence in both evangelical and liberal churches for several decades, perhaps owing to his generic group-sociology information base. Some church renewal literature has drawn its inspiration from an outside model, such as *Steps to a New Beginning* (Shoemaker, Minirth *et al.* 1993), which draws its church renewal model from the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, which in turn drew its model originally from a religious group known as the Oxford Groups (Alcoholics Anonymous 1976 p.xvi).

As helpful as all this literature and consultant support is, one theme seems noticeably absent, despite the fact that the leadership in both evangelical and mainline churches read each other's literature, and frequently attend each other's seminars. The missing theme is that of how to bridge the gap between evangelical and mainline perspectives, whether this gap occurs between organizations, within a town, within an organization or group, between members of a family, or within an individual. It is the bridging of this gap which has gradually emerged for me as the focus in my long-term paradigm-pioneering quest, culminating in this current piece of research.

UCC Dynamics Serve to Sharpen the Paradigm Pioneering Issue

During the last two decades of my paradigm pioneering work, dynamics within the United Church of Canada, stimulated by the controversy over the ordination of homosexual ministers, served to sharpen the focus of my activity, because of a secondary effect of that controversy. As mentioned above, the liberals and conservatives, who had coexisted for decades within that organization, separated out into polarized groups, with many of the

conservatives leaving the organization (Frisen 1997). As I witnessed these unfortunate dynamics from outside the organization, my initial problem of the incompatibility of two age-cohorts expanded to include the problem of the incompatibility of liberals and conservatives. In both cases one side “won the day,” and the other group departed. In both cases there was both great loss and great pain. The urgency and the importance of my completing my paradigm-pioneering task became abundantly clear. What also became clear, was that nobody seemed to have been able to find a way to bridge the gap between liberal and conservative religious positions, particularly in a volatile or hostile situation.

Albert Hirschman’s Insights and the Dynamic in the UCC

Jewish Economist, Albert Hirschman, in his book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, (Hirschman 1970) reflects on his own experience of having to leave Nazi Germany prior to the Second World War, owing to the enforced social change within that national community brought about by a changing government. Hirschman outlines two alternative responses available to people, such as himself, who face drastic social change in a direction which is intolerable to them. The first choice, the one he eventually took, is to leave — to exit. The second choice is to remain behind, express one’s objection, and enter into activities designed to ameliorate the situation. These choices are not always open to individuals, as in Hirschman’s case. Many of his relatives chose to remain in Germany, and were faced with a reality which might be depicted as being one of crevices, crumbs, and a surreptitious life, which ended for many in violent death.

Hirschman's book and a later paper written after visiting Germany when the Berlin Wall fell (Hirschman 1995), offer fascinating insights into the human response to enforced social change. The situation he reflects upon bears some striking similarities to a critical problem which has emerged for some of the clergy and laity in the Protestant church on the Canadian Prairies.

Two Alternatives

Hirschman makes some interesting comments about these two alternative responses available to people, such as himself, who face drastic social change in a direction which is intolerable to themselves: to "exit", or to express one's "voice".

Being an economist, he notes that these two alternative responses tend to be used in quite different types of contexts. Exit is the option which is used mostly in contractual relationships, such as business and financial dealings. Capitalism is predicated upon the existence of multiple buyers for multiple sellers, so that when a person is dissatisfied with the products or services offered at one establishment, the way one expresses one's dissatisfaction is to exit — one votes with one's feet, and goes next door. Although there are complaint departments in many stores, these are used far less frequently than the exit option by dissatisfied customers, he claims. Shopkeepers are expected to tally up such walking votes and respond accordingly. (Hirschman 1970 p.46)

According to Hirschman, the option of voice is most often exercised in the context of family, church, and community relations, where the option of exit is not as easily exercised (Hirschman 1970 pp.30f, 40). He points out that it may be a simple matter to take one's business elsewhere when not satisfied with goods or services available within a given estab-

lishment, but it is quite a different matter to vote with one's feet, and leave a marriage, a church fellowship, one's community or nation of origin. Human interrelationships, after all, are slow to develop for many people, are not easily broken, and frequently cause great social and personal disruption when they are terminated.

The Problem of Unavailability Of Appropriate Response Options

Hirschman says that these two arrangements/options, exit and voice, are sufficient for the needs of people in most circumstances. However, a problem arises when the method of problem-resolution most appropriate to each of these two situations is not available for one reason or another. (Hirschman 1970 p.110) In his case, the option of voice was denied to Jewish citizens in Nazi Germany. All political opposition was firmly repressed, and informal channels of voicing one's opposition shrank dramatically. The exit option, with which he and many of his fellow citizens were faced, was not one which was easily/lightly taken up. Many of those of Jewish descent who chose to remain in Germany lost their lives because of that choice, even if they may have remained silent, keeping their objections to themselves. (Leventhal 1995) In their case, they had neither voice nor exit as viable options, the Nazis having decided that their death was a far more satisfactory solution because *they* had been defined as being the problem (Keren 2001).

After encountering Hirschman's observations four years ago, I started to wonder whether the two normal responses formerly available, exit for expressing dissatisfaction in contractual relationships, and voice for expressing dissatisfaction in familial relationships, were now becoming reversed. In other words, voice now seems to be the main option available for dissent in the contractual world of business and finance. Further, exit (either volun-

tary or forced), at least in some situations, seems to be a rapidly accelerating choice for expressing dissent in the relational world of family, friendship, church, and community. If this is so, our society is facing a major challenge, because in both cases the solution for resolving unsatisfactory situations would be, at least according to Hirschman, the least desirable of the two options.

For example, with the consolidation and centralization of business enterprises to large conglomerates, small stores, or local establishments are frequently driven out of local towns and regional centres by the establishment of big-box stores and retail chains, usually subsidiaries of large national or multinational conglomerates. As the number of stores and service outlets diminish, the opportunity to vote with one's feet likewise disappears. One of the basic assumptions of the theory of capitalism, upon which its central tenets rest, is that no buyer and no seller has either monopoly or sufficient individual influence on the overall market, and that his or her choice to buy or sell makes not the slightest "ripple" in the overall price-supply "pond" (McConnell and Pope 1978 pp.90-91). However, for example, with Wal-Mart spreading throughout Canada, and being America's largest retailer at \$245 billion a year, and 82% of Americans making at least one purchase in that store per year (Gross 2003), it is obvious that this assumed context of market openness is now questionable. It is perhaps too early to know whether online shopping will fill this gap or become an on-line reflection of its bricks and mortar real-world counterpart. With a diminishing number of outlets for goods and services in North America, and in particular, rural Canada, one wonders whether the opportunities for one to exercise one's voice effectively in the business and finance world actually exist. With a diminished opportunity for people to vote with their feet and exit contractual relationships, it

is an open question whether the institutional structures for exercising one's voice within the world of business and finance are capable of carrying this new level of traffic. Perhaps this is one factor lying behind the recent public frustration, unrest, and violent demonstrations in Seattle and Quebec (Weisbrot 2000; Atkinson 2001).

A parallel situation is emerging in the area of familial relationships. Many people within familial relationships such as families, communities, groups, associations, occupations and political jurisdictions, who find themselves without a voice owing to such things as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, political philosophy, or power dynamics, find themselves in a similar situation to Hirschman. Not only are they unable to voice their dissent or dissatisfaction, but frequently they are also unable, for internal or external reasons, to exit. This is especially true for women and children who often find themselves being vulnerable parties within abusive family relationships. Those who find themselves voiceless and powerless within familial relationships, yet when possessing strong bonds, and driven by powerful social or economic needs to remain within those relationships, are indeed in a difficult dilemma. Our soaring divorce rates bear mute testament to the high degree of social pain of the voiceless being forced to exit (or finally freed to be able to exit) their family relationships within that area of our society today (Bach and Deutsch 1971 p.xi).

Both sides of this situation, the contractual world with its new and less appropriate option of voice, and the familial world with its new and less appropriate option of exit, as a means of expressing dissatisfaction, provide fascinating avenues of exploration and research. Both dimensions also serve to highlight the urgency and importance of my paradigm-pioneering task. Bridging the gap between the liberal and conservative religious perspectives might

well alleviate this deteriorating problem resolution process in at least one sector of our community, the institutional Protestant church. Effective voice might well be restored as the preferred mechanism for resolving problems within the Church, with an accompanying decrease in the use of the less appropriate mechanism of exit by clergy and laity.

Two Additional Complicating Factors

A. The Question of Loyalty

Two other aspects of Hirschman's study are relevant here. First, he notes that regardless of which option a person chooses to exercise when expressing his or her dissent or dissatisfaction, his or her loyalty immediately comes into question. (Hirschman 1970 p.76) If a person chooses to stay in an unsatisfactory situation, and chooses to express that dissatisfaction in words or actions, those in positions of power, or in sympathy with current arrangements, immediately wonder whether the person is, as my mother would say, "throwing mud from the outside to knock down the walls, or from the inside to strengthen them" (Harvey 1961). On the other hand, if a person leaves, as Hirschman chose to do when he fled Germany, his or her loyalty to his home country is put in question both in his native land and his newly adopted place of refuge. Familial ties run deep, and situations of conflict (in his case the impending Second World War) tend to exacerbate questions of loyalty. It was the awareness of the possible existence of such conflicting loyalties which drove the dominant culture in Canada and the United States to intern many immigrant-citizens from Central Europe and Japan during the Second World War, just to be on the safe side (Lamb and Johnson 2002). It is frequently quite difficult to tell the difference between a refugee, an exile, a turncoat, and a spy.

B. The Possible/Frequent Loss of Voice upon Exit

The second complicating factor raised in Hirschman's study, which is relevant here, is his reflection on the fact that once people leave their home group, firm, or organization, particularly when this departure arises as a response to its perceived decline, they lose their effective voice — they are no longer able to work from the inside to rectify an unsatisfactory situation. (Hirschman 1970 p.106) In this sense then, the options of exit and voice are to a great extent mutually exclusive (Hirschman 1995 pp.12-13). That is, after all, the reason why certain states choose to use exile as a method of handling or containing unwelcome dissent. (Foundation 1999)

However, as Hirschman (1995) points out in his retrospective essay on his original book, exit and voice do not always work at cross purposes to each other, diminishing one another, but rather, "... exit can cooperate with voice, voice can emerge from exit, and exit can reinforce voice (Hirschman 1995 p.43)." Such insights arose primarily from the later history of the German Democratic Republic, where exit and voice intermingled: "As was pointed out by an East German sociologist, here exit [out migration] and voice [protest demonstrations against the regime] worked in tandem and reinforced each other, achieving jointly the collapse of the regime" (Detlef Pollack quoted in Hirschman 1995 p.13).

Rising Conflict in the Church

The last few decades have seen a dramatic rise in the number of pastoral charges from all denominations experiencing conflict between congregational members and their leadership. Lazarus ministries writes in regards to American statistics, "It may be surprising to find

that over 1500 pastors a month leave their pulpits, and 43% of pastors report a serious conflict with a church member each month. Conflict in the church is a serious and growing problem.” (Lazarus Ministries 2004). For a 15 year period stretching from the mid-’eighties to late ‘nineties, when I was traveling in and around the Brandon area for a number of projects, I came in contact with a large number of clergy from several different denominations who were encountering just such conflict, or who had been badly wounded in some sort of recent dispute. In order to inject an element of humour in an otherwise quite bleak situation, I invented a fictitious organization I called “The Fricasseed Friar’s Association — an Association For Barbecued Ministers.” Whenever I heard of yet another church fight I took it upon myself to ring the minister’s doorbell and “welcome him or her to the alumni,” advising them with a grin “not to inhale that stuff — is bad for one’s health.” Over time, spouses of the Brandon area alumni formed a support network, at the year-end wrap-up of which a couple of dozen people were present. Over the years of this involvement, one theme seemed to recur — that of the conflict between liberal and conservative perspectives between clergy and their respective congregations. It really didn’t matter who held which outlook, because the results were about the same regardless. This broadly based, inter-denominational experience intensified my desire to find some way to bridge the gap between these two polarized perspectives, and in particular, reduce the wear and tear on leadership in the Protestant Church. It is a classic case of the breakdown of voice as a mechanism for negotiating dissent, and exit being a very inappropriate but now widely used approach.

When it comes to the matter of laity leaving a congregation a further complicating factor exists. This complication arises from a phenomenon noticed by sociologist Reg Bibby,

that in Canada people do not readily change their denominational affiliation. They may leave that organization for a longer or shorter period of time, but they tend to come back. If they are not able to come back they frequently continue to declare their affiliation with their original organization (Duncan 2002). Although this creates a problem for anybody shifting denominations in the Protestant Church, members of the United Church who hold a mixed perspective, as indicated in chapter two, find there is no alternative denomination with such a mixed perspective within which to find even a temporary home.

Relevance of the Issue and Research to Rural Community Development

A discourse is an extended conversation carried on in a community about a subject which takes many conversations to resolve. (*e.g.* How to pay farmers fairly for the part they play in the food production chain). In all three areas of rural community development (RCD) — community development, economic development, and business development, there are many such extended conversations taking place at any given time. I picture each of them as taking place around a table with a chair available for each community stakeholder. I believe that the chance of a good resolution of any discourse emerging depends on at least two factors:

1. Complete representation of all stakeholders at the table, and
2. Quality of the input from each stakeholder's perspective.

I believe that the quality of input from the “faith community” might well be improved if the church community could resolve the above issue. If they could find a way to restore or redevelop a context within which people holding liberal and conservative religious perspec-

tives could co-exist in the same organization, each drawing from the blessings of the other perspective, they would be greatly enriched. Perhaps then, with that new level of maturity and understanding, they would be able to help others facing a similar challenge, as they participate in or contribute to the various rural community development discourses.

Chapter 4- The Wish-List Tool and Angle Diagram

The Utilization Of an Ancient Piece of Wisdom

In 1987, just prior to working in the academic advising context, I had developed a tool which an individual student could use to identify and articulate rapidly a set of core interests and concerns in his or her life. This tool development work resulted in an unexpected boost to the problem of bridging the gap between liberal and conservative religious perspectives.

The instrument itself was based on an ancient insight, which was taught by Lao-tzu, Confucius, Plato, many Old Testament teachers, Jesus (Johnson and Buttrick 1951 p.329) and his brother James (James 2: 8). In the Christian tradition, it appears as the “Golden Rule” (Mt. 7: 12). My utilization of that insight, which forms the basis of this instrument, I present to students as follows,

Wish List- Level One

- There is an ancient piece of advice which states that if you make a list of all the things that you wish someone had done for you (or had happened) in your life which would have made your life better, or a list of the things that you appreciate happening that did make your life better, and you do those very things for somebody else, your life is going to come together.
- And further, if in a second column you make note of the reasons why each of the items on your list is of particular significance to you, you will then have an

indication of when to stop doing such activities for other people. That is, our interest in assisting other people in areas that are significant to us tends to diminish rapidly once those people reach the point where we would have been satisfied ourselves.

Wish List — Level Two

I have used this instrument with hundreds of individuals. Over the years I have found that it works best when administered in two stages. First, I have the person generate their “wish list”, looking at it from a variety of perspectives — positive and negative, past, present and future. When that is complete I have them rewrite their lists side-by-side on the page under the following headings:

- If I were to take this ancient piece of advice seriously, and do for somebody else the very same things that I wish someone had done for me (or the things I appreciate someone having done for me), I would....
- And I would do it for someone else until they....

Then I ask people to read out each “translated” item as a complete statement integrating the headings with each item. When they are finished I ask them if they would be excited to have someone pay them \$50,000 a year to do something along that line, I’ve seen people burst into tears because it articulates so clearly their core life priorities in a way they had never seen before.

The community development project I was involved in on White Bear reserve used this instrument along with several others to help project participants articulate their life direction, and lay out short-term and long-term approaches to moving in that direction. Short-term

projects which we funded for university students during the summer months were funded on the basis of proposals they each wrote, for projects in keeping with such wish lists (Harvey and Digneau 1994). The chairperson of the screening committee later said to me, “I’ve known these students since they were children. I don’t know how you’re doing it, but I’ve never seen projects so much in keeping with each of their personalities” (Standingready 1994). Said one of the participants, “What a concept. Here I am 39 years old, and it’s the first time in my life that someone has said to me, that the only thing that they will fund is what I can convince them as being of greatest importance to me” (Name Withheld 1994).

The issue of helping individuals to grow and mature in the human dimension, which includes a healthy participation in their community, in ways that are in harmony with the core of their personality as they come to understand it, is one of the chief challenges and central joys of the task of academic advising and career counselling. This Wish List instrument is one which works well in resolving a very common problem encountered in the field of academic advising and career counselling — the problem of lack of focus. When focus is clarified the problem of motivation frequently resolves itself. This instrument helps people come to see that bringing their life into harmony with who they are, and their activities into harmony with the list of concerns which they know are important to them, is critical to their sense of well-being in life. It frequently results in a release of pent-up excitement and energy.

This movement towards personal maturity on the human level both individually and socially can be diagrammed as a horizontal axis on an angle graph, with a the zero point on the left, and extending to the right. This line then indicates the person’s increasing maturity as

well as the person's ability to translate that maturity into a practical and responsible "taking hold" of their life. (Figure 1)

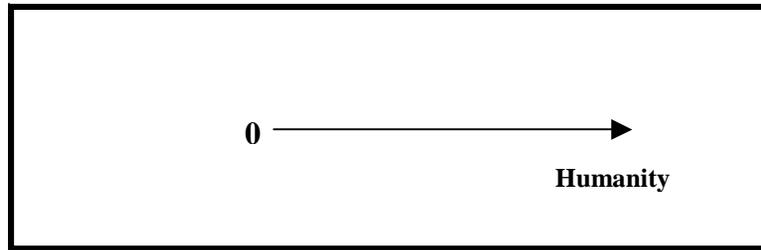


Figure 1. Development on the human dimension.

Wish List Level Three Emerges

For many students stage one and stage two of this instrument are sufficient for them to get moving in their life. However, I found that after about two years people started returning to me with a problem. The problem was no longer one of lack of focus, or loss of direction. The problem was one of resource. They knew where they wanted to go, but they could not get there. This was certainly true of marginalized people with few resources, disrupted education, and sometimes a difficult past. However, it was also true for many people with a great deal of resource, a high level of education, and relatively smooth early stage in their life. When it comes to doing the things in life which are of greatest importance to us, it is frequently the resources of an internal nature which are in short supply.

Over the years when people returned with questions of this nature I found myself entering into discussions with them about the nature of the spiritual resources focused on in the religious sphere of life. As most of my work in the past has been conducted in First Nations or secular institutions, the students I have dealt with came from a wide variety of religious and nonreligious backgrounds. I found such discussions extremely stimulating as I encouraged them to do their exploring from within the framework of their own cultural-

religious background, and share such insights when we met. My own personal background enabled me to at least initiate such explorations with people, and introduce them to the claims of a variety of faith groups in terms such as “this is my understanding of the issue as your faith-group views it when they say such and such — maybe you want to check out their insights on this matter.”

Owing to the short-term nature of many of the projects in which I have been involved in the past, there were not a lot of students with whom I was able to enter into this third stage of the conversation. However, enough of these conversations transpired for me to begin to conceptualize a vertical axis in relation to the horizontal axis on the above diagram. When these vertical and horizontal lines are connected together, the very familiar angle diagram of elementary school mathematics emerges. Just as the horizontal line extends to the right from a zero point to indicate any increase in development along the human dimension, the vertical line in my diagram serves to indicate increased development along the spiritual dimension, as this line extends upward from the zero point (Figure 2).

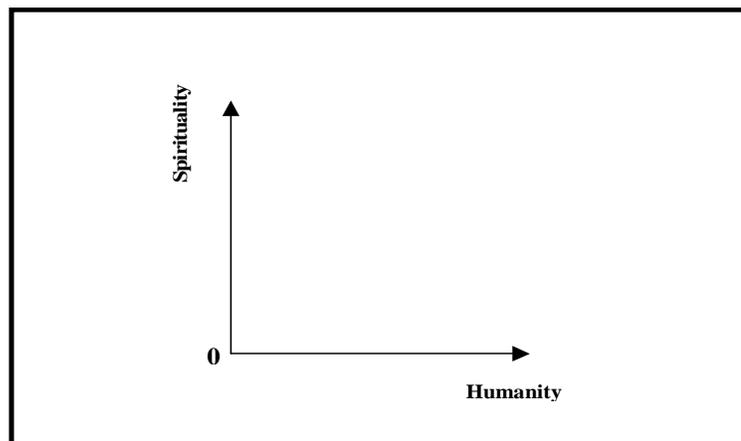


Figure 2. Growth on the spiritual dimension.

Level Three Concept Migrates to Liberal-Conservative Issue

In this academic advising context, much thinking from the church renewal area started to merge for me. When I took the above angle diagram and transferred it across into the issue of the gap between conservative and liberal religious perspectives, some interesting insights started to emerge.

One of the first things which this new use of the diagram helped me to resolve was the problem raised by the customary framing of the conservative-liberal dichotomy on a standard “line graph” continuum, with zero at the centre, liberals several points to the left, and conservatives several points to the right, on a single continuum (Figure 3). This way of conceiving liberals and conservatives arises from the seating in some European legislatures (Webster’s).

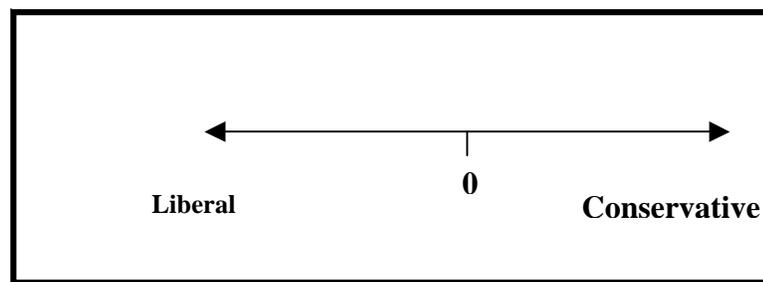


Figure 3. Liberal-Conservative dichotomy illustrated on a line graph.

The problem with a line graph, is that any issue described by means of it, is framed as a zero-sum framework. Any movement along the continuum from liberal to conservative or vice versa, necessitates a giving up ground from the former perspective. By shifting to the new angle diagram, I started to see the liberal-conservative issue as not being one of “either-or,” but rather one of “both-and.” The liberal religious perspective, with its concern for God-inspired, and spiritually-generated maturity along the human and social dimensions of life was

indicated along the horizontal axis of the diagram. The conservative or evangelical religious perspective, with its concern for God- inspired, and spiritually-generated maturity in the spiritual dimension of life was indicated along the vertical axis of the diagram. The development of an individual in both factors could now be indicated on the diagram simultaneously and independently. A person could place himself or herself anywhere on the graph, and indicate quickly and easily where they felt themselves to be in terms of their own level of development in both human and spiritual dimensions of their life.

This reframing of the liberal and conservative perspectives and/or human and spiritual maturity, also enabled the introduction of the concept of the movement of an individual within the space of the diagram over time, which the line graph inhibits. Growth in spiritual and human dimensions now could be conceived as being a normal and positive two-dimensional development rather than a zero sum giving up a one dimension of development in order to develop in the other. (Figure 4)

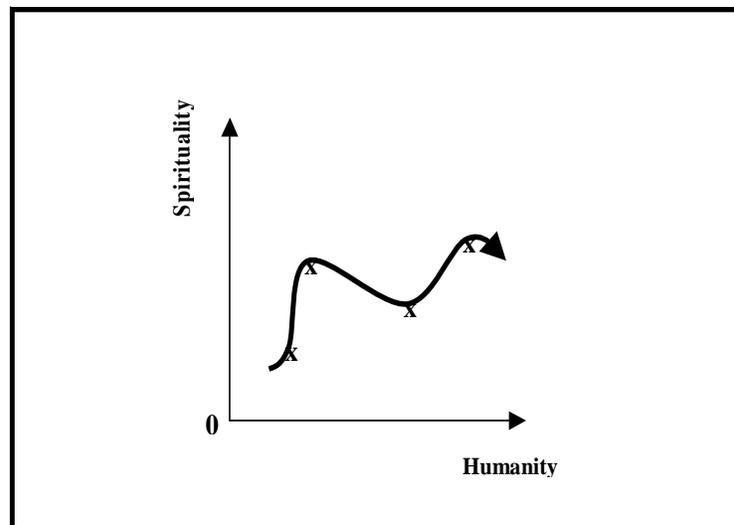


Figure 4. Current location in two dimensions plus movement can now be indicated on an angle diagram.

Level Three and the Mapping of Non-continuous Growth

Conversation with Dr. Kenneth Bessant, in regards to his doctoral research (Bessant 2000) about non-contiguous movement throughout the space of such diagrams, and the several common patterns which have emerged to researchers, opened up for me a whole new use for this diagram in counselling. Subsequently, by using the angle diagram in yet a new way, I have better been able to discuss with people the fact that most of us do not grow along either human or spiritual dimensions in a smooth and continuous line. Rather, we grow in spurts, and have setbacks in such growth. As this discontinuous growth often includes a period of extreme and accelerating tension at the point when a person breaks through to a new level of maturity (for example a conversion experience), the diagram makes for an excellent conversation tool. Even to be able to indicate that there are a number of differing patterns of growth, regression, and breakthrough, which have emerged to researchers working in this area (without going into a lot of detail), and that a person's non-contiguous experience is quite normal, is often quite helpful in counselling situation.

Level Three And One's View of Christ

The new angle diagram also facilitated a discussion concerning one's perception of the nature of Christ. Classic theology describes him as being fully mature spiritually (along the vertical dimension), and fully mature in his humanity (along the horizontal dimension) (Pelikan 1996 p.38), and his inviting, encouraging, and enabling of people to join him, as his fully mature "body" of which he, Christ, is the "head" (Eph.4:4-16). I found as a discussion tool, this angle diagram enabled me to ask people, "where are you now?", "where would you

like to go?”, “where is your group?”, “where have they been?”, “where are they going?”, “where is your group’s leader?”, “where is he or she heading?”, and “where has he or she been?” (Figure 5).

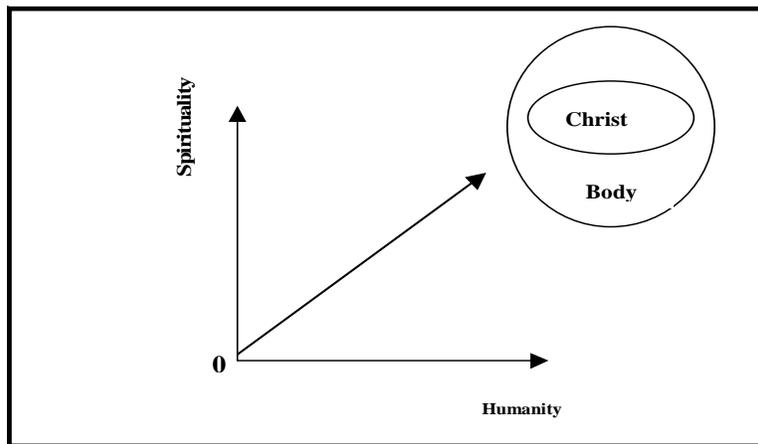


Figure 5. Christ located so as to indicate his fully developed spirituality and humanity, to which he invites people as his “body”.

Level Three and Mapping Evangelical/Mainline Churches

In many of my discussions, conflicts between liberal and conservative (main line and evangelical) individuals and/or groups were central to the problem at hand. I was now able to indicate on the angle diagram, how most of the evangelical churches tended to be scattered along the vertical continuum, and the main line churches tended to be scattered along the horizontal continuum in terms of their theology, interest, and outlook (Figure 6). The diagram enabled me to open up an objective discussion as to the strengths, weaknesses, and potential problems of various religious perspectives where an extra emphasis in one or other of these two perspectives exists. The angle diagram also helps to shed light on particular problems, by being able to ask a person what might be done to rectify the situation, if the situation were to be reframed in terms of the insights highlighted by that diagram.

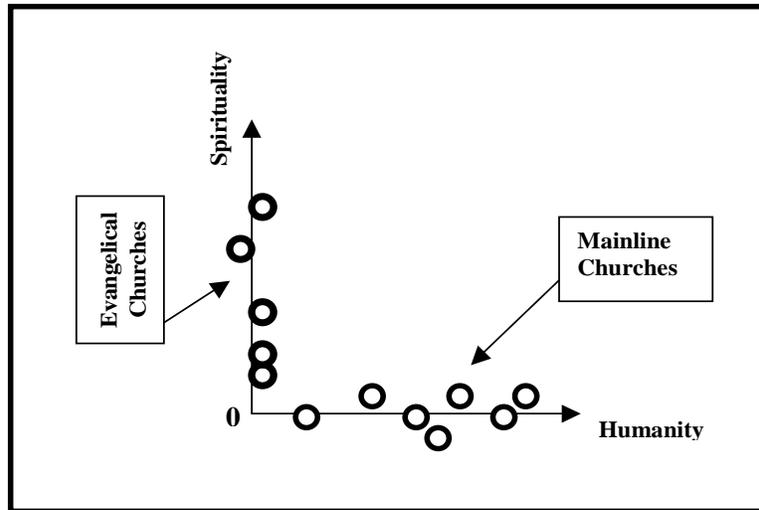


Figure 6. Evangelical and Mainline churches configured to illustrate their main emphasis and orientation.

The Fourth Level Issue Emerges

The model is by no means perfect, but it does serve to highlight the fourth level problem which emerged from my use of the Wish List instrument in academic advising. The third level of the wish list is carried out when people come back to me with their questions about how to resource the activities articulated at level two. What I do with such students is simply have them change the titles at the top of each of the columns of their level-two wish list as follows:

Specifics for Administering Level Three

- On the left-hand side I get them to write, “Jane, these are the types of things that I wish to do in the community through you...”
- On the right hand side I get them to write, “and I wish to do them in the community through you until...”

- Then I get the student to go to the bottom of the page and write the words “signed, God”

When I have the student re-read his or her level-two wish list with these new headings, reading each heading and item as a full sentence, the level-three perspective emerges immediately. That is, God is now clearly seen as being the active agent who wishes to carry out his work through that individual, in areas identical to the person’s listed wishes, desires, and concerns. The question of resource for carrying out the level two list now is completely reframed. God is the one with the resource, who is carrying the burden of desire for its completion, and who holds the bulk of the responsibility for seeing that the task is carried out, even if that particular individual happens to get hit by a truck. That is, if that particular individual is unable to do it, God’s desire that the task be done is undiminished and undeterred.

This third level of the wish list instrument, needless to say, has a tendency to generate very interesting conversations, regardless of the faith stance of the individual at the time. This is because the instrument makes clear the exact nature of the faith claim from the religious or spiritual perspective in life. The particulars of the discussion, of course, will vary depending on the faith background of the particular individual. I take the approach, that if a person approaches me with a question about resource, then it’s my job to ensure that that individual is made aware of the full range of resources, spiritual and terrestrial, so far as I’m aware of them. What the person decides to do with that information is up to him or her.

Level Three and Step 11 in 12-step Recovery Programs

Over the years I have found that this configuration of the third level of the wish list by means of the angle diagram, has also enabled me to enter into a more meaningful discussion

of an issue raised by a particular subset of the student body. People who come to university out of a troubled background by way of one of the many 12-step recovery programs, and in particular those who come to university after heavy involvement in chemical addiction, sometimes have a very particular concern as they try to get their lives together along the horizontal dimension. Such people have frequently found terrific relief in sobriety and serenity, after years of living hell, with the discovery of the spiritual resources, described above as being along the vertical continuum of the angle diagram. If the horizontal dimension is characterized as being the growth in our capacity to “take hold” in life, then the vertical dimension can be characterized by the growth in our capacity to let go, and let God help us in life (Alcoholics Anonymous 1976 p.63) (Figure 7). Once people move along to the 11th step in their 12-step program (the step in which they get on with their life now that the mess is cleaned up), there is frequently a sense of wariness on the part of these people to move out from the shelter of a simple and clear cut “letting go” of the concerns of their life by “letting God” take care of them. In other words, these particular people are facing the problem of integrating the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life in such a way that these two dimensions interface in a creative and healthful way. The stakes are extremely high for such people, because the last time that many of them even dared to enter into the realm of “taking hold” of the reins of their own life, they got into trouble with a variety of chemicals.

I have found the angle diagram extremely helpful in being able to indicate to such individuals that any spiritual growth on the vertical dimension does not have to be given up in order to move out along the horizontal dimension of life. On the contrary, I have been able by means of the diagram to show that their new increased level of spiritual maturity and interface

with the God of their understanding (Alcoholics Anonymous 1976 p.63), means that they are now re-entering the horizontal dimension of “taking hold” of responsibility with added resources at their disposal (Figure 7). In other words the angle diagram helps me to reframe their situation in creative and resource-filled terms rather than in the terrifying and life-threatening terms with which they had been viewing it.

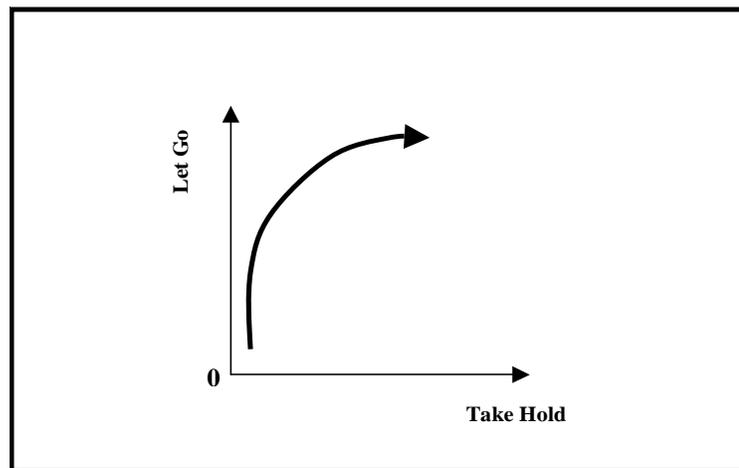


Figure 7. Growth in capacity to “let go” and let God assists in one’s life is not lost as a person turns to “take hold” of life. Rather, a new level of spiritual resource is brought to the task.

The Unresolved Blockage at Level Four

For those of us involved in ministry, or various other types of counselling, the problems people face with integrating the spiritual and human dimensions of life and growth are frequent occurrences. This integration issue is the heart of the fourth level of the wish list instrument.

Some students return to me with the following “fourth level” problem. They have learned that there is a place in life for taking hold of the reins of one’s own life. They have also learned that there is a place for letting go and letting God look after the affairs of life in which they are involved. The problem is that now they find themselves flip-flopping back and

forth between taking hold and letting go and this experience is extremely disturbing to them (Figure 8). The image that comes to mind is that of a novice canoeist trying to steer a canoe by paddling a few strokes on one side and then a few strokes on the other, as they wobble their way across the lake. In that case, what the person needs to learn is the “J-stroke” which integrates the effect of paddling on both sides of the canoe into a single adjustable stroke. The J-stroke certainly does make life easier in a canoe. The question which the students were raising was how to develop the equivalent of the J-stroke for integrating the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life into a smoother dynamic than that of flip-flopping between taking hold and letting go.

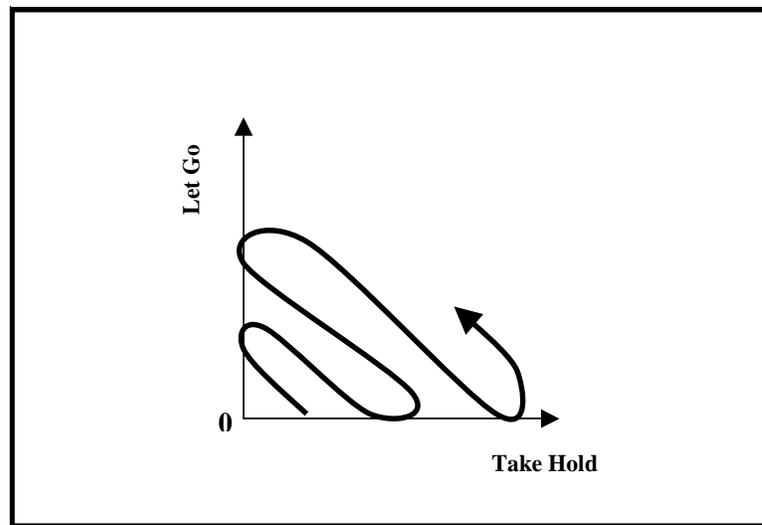


Figure 8. People alternate between taking hold and letting go in life as they seek to integrate the spiritual and human dimensions of life. This “flip-flopping” can be extremely frustrating.

Chapter 5- Andrew Murray's Bridge Piece Emerges

The Andrew Murray Insight.

Andrew Murray, writing out of Africa at the turn of the last century, wrote a book about a subject which was of major concern to him, intercessory prayer (Murray 1975). That is, his interest was in prayer which not only related to God on the vertical dimension of the angle diagram, but was integrated completely with a practical application of such an encounter with God on the horizontal plane in one's encounter with one's community.

Colin Morris, also out of Africa, and author of *Unyoung, Uncolored, Unpoor*, spoke along similar lines at Wesley Chapel in London, England one Sunday evening in the summer of 1971 (Morris 1971). We were all concerned at that time about the disastrous flooding which was then taking place in Bangladesh. Morris made a statement early in the service which surprised many of us. He said that he was going to move the intercessory prayer from its customary place early in the service to a time following the sermon, because he wanted to talk about the nature of intercessory prayer. He conjectured that when he had finished, many of us might not wish to participate in such an activity. Morris then went on to describe his understanding of intercessory prayer. He said that

- Intercessory prayer is the most dangerous activity a Christian can engage in, because in it we lay ourselves unconditionally at the disposal of God in rela-

tion to some matter of deep concern in our hearts. We say to God that we are at his disposal to use as he sees fit, no strings attached.

■ When we pray like that we may just find ourselves on a boat to Bangladesh.

■ We might, on the other hand, find ourselves being asked to go down the street and give some person (and it always seems to be someone repulsive to us) a big hug, because, unknown to us, that simple act will be the catalyst for a series of events which will result in that other person being on a boat to Bangladesh.

(Morris 1971).

Three years ago I encountered Andrew Murray's little book on intercessory prayer, which he had laid out in a format designed for daily reading and meditation over a period of a month. He had many things to say on the subject, but it was his insights on "Day 10", and "Day 11" which I recognized immediately as having the potential for resolving this problem of bridging the gap between the horizontal (human) and vertical (spiritual) perspectives in life.

Day 10 Insight — "Are You in This with Me?"

In his Day 10 reflection (Murray 1975 "Day 10"), Murray took note of a peculiar incident recounted in the Gospels. Jesus was heading south to Jerusalem just before he was arrested and killed. He passed through the city of Jericho, and in doing so came across a blind man who called out to him for help. Jesus then asks the man a question, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mk.10:51) As Murray points out, that was a strange question to ask somebody who was obviously blind. Murray goes on to say that upon closer examination the question is actually very appropriate. He notes the difference between the meaning of the

words “will” and “wish”. Wish indicates a request for service with no involvement on the part of the person making the request. Will indicates consent by the person making the request to be actively involved in the process and/or results of a request. So, rephrased, Christ’s question would mean, “what are you actively willing that I do for you?”

When I read this, and pictured it in terms of the angle diagram, suddenly I heard a new way to bridge the gap in the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life, by enabling a person to move along the diagonal life trajectory (Figure 9). What Jesus was asking the man was still being asked from a vertical perspective — I, Christ, will do it for you — but the new twist came in the form of the verb that he chose to use in asking the question, “will” versus “wish.” That verb choice indicated the necessary and willing consent of the recipient in the process of being healed. He was in a fact asking, “So, how far can I take you in this? Do you realize that if I heal you that I am going to ruin your occupation of begging, and if I do so, you are going to have to go out and get a job? Are you willing to live with any kind of process involved in getting healed? Are you willing to live with and participate in the results of being healed?” What Jesus seemed to be inviting this man into was an interactive participation with him in the healing process, and in a subsequent life in relationship with him as a sighted man. The blind man, upon receiving his sight followed Jesus into Jerusalem, presumably witnessing his execution a week later — an interesting first view of one’s world. (Mk.10:46-52)

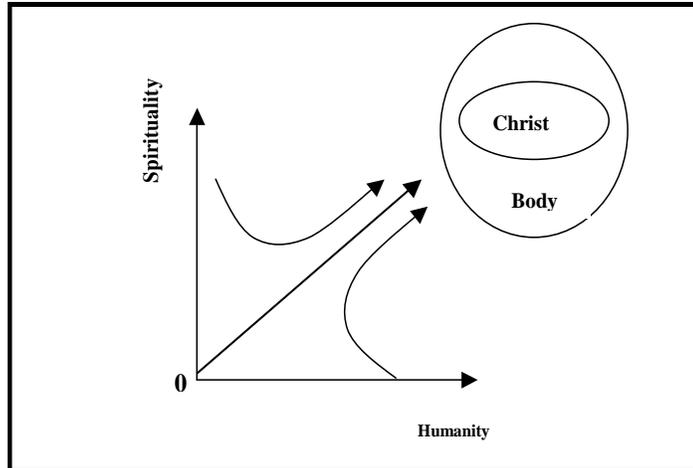


Figure 9. The new interactive relationship is enabled by Christ offering assistance while at the same time inviting consent and willing participation from the recipient of that assistance.

Andrew Murray’s insight was presented in his book in terms of the difference in English between the words “wish” and “will”. It remained for me to find out if Murray’s observation was based on the difference in word usage in the Greek text as well. This was one aspect of the first of my research questions in this research project. However, even if such a distinction existed at the Greek level, I knew that the issue of the value of Murray’s interpretation was a bit more complex in than that. Although Greek was the common language of the eastern Mediterranean area at the time, there is no way of knowing for sure which language Jesus actually spoke, or, if he spoke several, which language he spoke on which occasions. The chances are that he mostly spoke Aramaic, a dialectic Hebrew (Bowman 1964 p.733). For this reason one must be very careful about putting too much weight on critical distinctions directly in Greek word meanings in establishing what Jesus might have meant by a particular saying. The gospel narratives were most likely written directly in Greek, which would mean that the original authors of these four narratives may well have been recounting their memo-

ries of these events directly into the Greek language, but the events themselves may have happened in another language which they likely also knew. On the one hand this could mean that the critical distinctions between two words which we experience as we read the Greek, may well be a linguistic way of conveying a critical distinction in meaning which Jesus may have conveyed in quite a different way in the original setting. But on the other hand, a critical distinction between two word meanings in Greek may bring out a possible interpretation/ understanding of the original event, which in fact, may not have been intended in original event.

It was because of the uncertainty about drawing meaning from particular Greek words used by Jesus in the four Gospels, that I used four research questions rather than one in this study. By using a hermeneutical text analysis I wanted to be able to look for other indicators of an interactive perspective on the part of Jesus.

Day 11 Insight — “Check Your Mail”

Day 11 in Andrew Murray’s book of reflection (Murray 1975 “Day 11”) held an equally startling observation based on the comment recorded in Mark 11: 24. In this incident Jesus and his 12 disciples are heading into Jerusalem for a day of teaching shortly before he was arrested. He says to them, “Therefore I tell you, what ever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mk. 11: 24). What Murray goes on to say is that instead of always asking God for things, we should maybe look around for what he has already given us. Once we become aware of that which we have already received, that is what we should ask for, because then we can be assured that we will receive it.

When I understood what he was saying, an incident from my life up north came back to me. I had gone to the Hudson Bay store to get the mail, just before closing time. I had decided not to take the Skidoo, but rather to walk the mile or so across the ice. When I posted my mail, including an order from the mail-order-catalogue, the clerk told me that a parcel had come for me. She asked me if I wanted to accept delivery of it at that time, or return for it later with my skidoo, as it was quite large. I asked what it was. It was a huge case of Pampers, a gift to us from my wife's mother. I realized that I had better take it home, even though it would be very awkward to carry. So I accepted delivery of the package and stumbled my way across the ice.

What Andrew Murray pointed out about this particular statement made by Jesus to his disciples, was that instead of always "turning in our Sears orders" to God, and wondering why they are not delivered right away, we should at least stop to check our mail. Maybe we are all so busy making requests that we fail to notice that there's an unexpected parcel for us with our name on it, one we didn't even order, waiting for us to accept its delivery, take it home, unpack it, do whatever assembly is required, and integrate its contents into our lives.

The Two Insights Migrate to the Angle Diagram

When I put Murray's two concepts together, and placed them both on the angle diagram, a completely different conceptualization of our relationship with God snapped into focus. What emerged was a new way of conceptualizing the interface between God's resources, power and will, and the resources, power and freewill he built into the universe at the time of creation for our benefit and enjoyment. He seems to be inviting us into an interactive

life which is mutually participative. I realized that God is calling us into an interactive life with him on an ongoing basis (Figure 10).

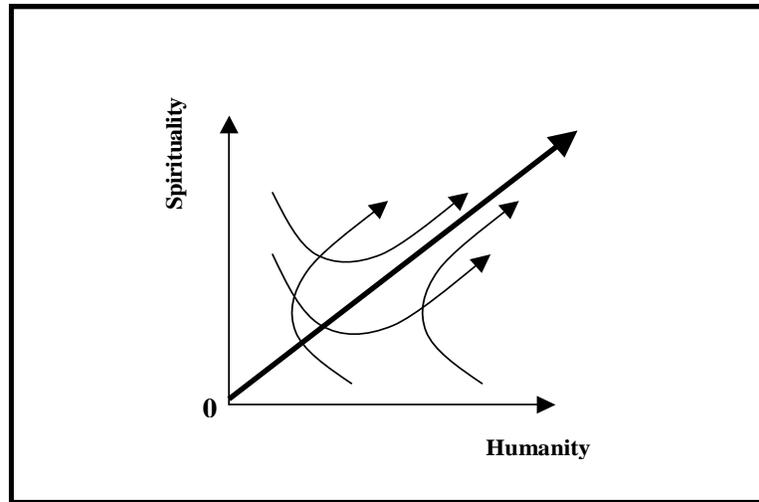


Figure 10. Christ's invitation to people to enter into an ongoing relationship which is mutually participative, interactive, and interdependent.

An Interactive Life with God Versus Active/Passive

What Andrew Murray noticed about Jesus' teaching and life was that he was inviting people into an interactive relationship with him, and that he said that he wished to continue doing so (Jn. 15:1-11). As this concept of an interactive bridge between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of religious life was quite new to me, I decided to set it aside for two years until I had become more comfortable with it. I had realized that Christ was indeed inviting us into a life with a diagonal trajectory on the angle diagram, and now I started to see that perhaps he had also given us a very practical set of guidelines as to how we could enter into such an interactive life with him. Perhaps, in fact, Christ had given many such clues, and the two articulated by Andrew Murray on Day 10 and Day 11 of his book were just a small part of a larger teaching on the subject.

The Need Emerges for This Current Research Project

As the end of the two-years I had waited in order to get used to Murray's ideas approached in the spring of 2003, I decided to check his insights in the light of the gospel narrative. I wanted to see whether his ideas were in fact central to the life and teaching of Christ as presented in the gospel narratives, or whether they were merely an instance of special pleading by an author desiring to make a point in a book with a somewhat different subject from mine. This decision to investigate the matter more closely gave rise to this current research project.

Part 3-Method

Chapter 6- Hermeneutical Text Analysis

The essence of this research project is a revisiting of two statements made by Jesus and asking if they might shed light on one of our current problems in the area of rural community development. The technical term for this process is “hermeneutics” (Smart 1974 p.30). As Jesus, himself, did not leave any written record that we know of (Clark 1964 p.667), most of what is known of him at this date, is contained in a few scanty records passed down from some of his followers, giving a brief account of his teaching and action. Because this “text” is all we have to work with, the technical term for our process might more accurately termed a “hermeneutical (Brewer 2003 pp.138-139) text analysis” (Silverman 2000 pp.825-829).

Understanding Hermeneutical Text Analysis

Hermeneutics is a term used to describe the whole process of moving meaning from the form in which it originally becomes available to us, to a contemporary context (Smart 1974 pp.29-30). The term itself becomes somewhat confusing because it is frequently used to depict one or other subparts of this process. Steinmueller, a Roman Catholic Biblical scholar, goes to great lengths in his book *A Companion to Scripture Studies* (1958 pp.245-259), to outline accurately his version of the many categories and subcategories of this particular

academic activity. He points out that properly speaking, the field is broken into three major sections:

- Neomatics — work at the level of single and multiple words (1958 pp.225-231)
- Heuristics — work at the grammatical-historical document level (1958 pp.231 — 245)
- Prophoristics — work at the explanatory/exegetical level (1958 pp.245-277)

Each section is subdivided further. Writing originally in 1941, his academic focus, particularly in the third section, reflects a strong adherence to an institutionally sanctioned application of the Biblical text, and reflects an apparent disdain for Protestant exegesis (1958 p.273) and Protestant understanding of Biblical inspiration (1958 pp.11-12) rarely heard since Vatican II helped to thaw out Protestant-Catholic relations in the 1970s.

This apparent disdain, however, might arise from a sharp difference in perspective between Protestant and Roman Catholic academics. Pelikan (1996) points out that there is a major shift in the hermeneutical process which takes place at the time of the Reformation, which is reflected in the Protestant approach to scriptural interpretation, and is regarded by him as one of the major events of that turbulent period (Pelikan 1996 p.24). He quotes Gerald L. Bruns, perhaps reflecting a pro-Protestant bias, in describing just how this change took place:

If one were to look for a symbolic moment of transition between the ancient and modern hermeneutics, one might choose the winter semester of 1513-14, when Martin Luther began preparing his first lectures as Professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg. He was to lecture on the Psalms and wanted each of his students to have a copy of the

Scripture text to consult. Luther therefore instructed Johann Grunenberg, the printer for the University, to produce an edition of the Psalter with wide margins and lots of white space between the lines. Here the students would reproduce Luther's own glosses and commentary, and perhaps (who knows?) they would have room for their own exegetical reflections as well. At all events Luther produced for his students something like a modern, as opposed to a medieval, text of the Bible — its modernity consisting precisely in the white space around the text. In a stroke Luther wiped the Sacred Page clean as if to begin the history of interpretation all over again, this time to get it right (Pelikan 1996 p.29).

Brewer confirms this shift, and adds that the term hermeneutics has also "... come to be used loosely in social science discourse to describe an approach that studies People's social meanings, much like the term *Verstehen*. "It is not appropriate," he says, "to use either term as interchangeable with social meanings, although it is easy to see how the mistake occurs." (Brewer 2003 p.138).

Smart (1974), writing out of concern about the apparent rupture in linkage between hermeneutics and preaching in the modern church, which he traces back to over-departmentalization in theological schools, comments:

What adds to the problem, as we shall see more clearly later, is that not all Biblical scholars are interested in the full task of hermeneutics. "Hermeneutics" is a comprehensive term that embraces all the elements that enter into the interpretation of Scripture — linguistics, textual criticism, literary analysis, form and tradition criticism, historical exegesis, and theological exposition — and its full task is to move from a determination of the original meaning of its text to a translation of that meaning into contemporary language and thought forms (Smart 1974 pp.29-30).

The term hermeneutics, then, has a broad usage, but its use in this study takes its focus from a phenomenon commented on by Smart who notes that its use arose from a contention "... that each individual is capable of reading and interpreting Scripture" (Smart 1974 p.138).

This belief in the capacity of ordinary people to draw meaning from wisdom expressed at different times and different places around the world, and to apply it in their own contexts, has become so commonplace, that it seems strange that it was not always viewed in this way. This shift within the Protestant section of the Christian Church, to the affirmation of the layperson rather than the priest as a legitimate interpreter of Scripture, arose as people declared (for a variety of reasons) their right to be led by the Holy Spirit directly (Jn.16:12-15).

This did not mean that Protestants turned their backs on the role of scholarship and academic investigation in the area of hermeneutics. Far from it. In fact it was the drive to develop centres for academic study of Scripture; to train people to do such academic study; to train field workers (clergy) who could interpret Scripture intelligently and train lay people to do the same; and to develop elementary and secondary schools to foster literacy in support of such an activity; which was the primary drive for the Protestant churches around the world in the educational field. Our own Brandon University arose from the amalgamation of Prairie College (secondary school) and the McKee Academy (postsecondary school) both of which were started by the Baptist Church (Brandon University 2004) for precisely these purposes.

Supplementing Face Value Hermeneutical Insights

Even though a great deal of information can be drawn from a text at face value, hermeneutics can be greatly enhanced by understanding the context within which the text was originally written. I witness this repeatedly when helping recovering alcoholics grapple with one particularly terse section of their main book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Alcoholics Anonymous 1976), and the example is informative.

The background information on steps six and seven of the 12-step program contains all the information that is necessary, but it is so densely written that it is almost totally incomprehensible. In order to help people understand what's being said (the concept in the text is itself quite simple), I use a two-step process to facilitate their use of hermeneutics in this case, just as they have done earlier in the text. First of all I take them back to two earlier pages and introduce the context within which the book was written in order to broaden their base of understanding. That is, the book was written by a group of people in 1935 as a way of responding to the flood of requests for information about the new organization, Alcoholics Anonymous, after word spread across North America through the media about its existence. Bill W. agreed to "write" the book only in the sense of being a scribe for the group. So the book was written as a timesaving "love letter" response to a deluge of mail prior to the days of the Internet. It included that famous line "here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:..." (Alcoholics Anonymous 1976 p.59). The book itself was edited by this small group of people sitting with coffee and cigarettes around somebody's kitchen table. At one place there is a list of possible responses a person might have after taking their fifth step (sharing their life story with another human being, and owning their past). At first glance it just looks like a list. But knowing the context within which it was edited, allows one to have a seat at that table. I tell the person "I picture Bill W. coming in and presenting the next piece of text for their approval. Perhaps he said something like, "after we've done the fifth step we feel pretty good". But before he can move on, I picture there being protests, with everybody saying, "Well, that wasn't my reaction!" In the end it seems to have been decided to include a list of the reactions of everybody around the table that night. We don't know for

sure, but let's just listen to the text with that picture in mind, and then ask ourselves, if we had been sitting around that table that night what would we have added as our reaction to having done our fifth step?". Then I get them to read the passage:

Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the broad highway, walking hand-in-hand with the spirit of the universe (Alcoholics Anonymous 1976 p.75).

The process works like magic. Once people reframe their experience of the "Big Book," adding to their subjective face-value hermeneutics, an enriched awareness of the context within which the book was written, that awareness carries over into other sections of the book, such as that densely written section on steps six and seven, and suddenly they're able to hear the words in a way that makes sense to them, which up until that time meant absolutely nothing.

The Role of Support Personnel in Hermeneutical Analysis

This example illustrates the Protestant church's conception of the role of scholars, professors, and clergy in relation to the task of hermeneutical analysis on the part of lay people. The leader's role is to provide information, background, and training in improved technique, thereby opening up and enriching the capacity of lay people to experience and interpret the text for themselves. The assumption is that hermeneutical analysis is a normal human function, and that like curling, it's a game that can be played at many different levels.

Reflections on how we understand the world around us

The above example also draws attention to the question of just how it is that such “magic” happens. That is, how does our mind work, when it comes to understanding; to transferring understanding to new fields or contexts; and to interpreting the actions, words, and artefacts in the world around us? How do we know our interpretation is right? Do the answers obtained by scientists using the “... empiricist, logical atomistic, designative, and representational account of meaning and knowledge” (Schwandt 2000 p.196) have a particular corner on accuracy that other human beings do not?

Central Tenets of Philosophical Hermeneutics

Schwandt points out, that there is a wide range of opinion on this subject, and that qualitative research workers, for the most part, lean toward a perspective on the matter which, although quite diverse, rejects the classical scientific “objective” outlook (Schwandt 2000 p.196). In his article on the subject in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Schwandt outlines four key tenets of philosophical hermeneutics (the branch of philosophy that looks at how understanding works, with a particular focus on the hermeneutical dynamic) (Schwandt 2000 p.196):

- Understanding is part of being a human being, “...understanding *is* interpretation...”(Schwandt 2000 p.194).
- Tradition (richly defined) can never be set aside, constantly affects how we see, and therefore is best harnessed as an asset in the seeing process. However, all tradition is modified by new input, which in turn sees the world from a changed

perspective — it is an iterative process (Schwandt 2000 pp.194-195).

■ When engaging in our world in such a dialogue, we put all our tradition at risk by our very entry into that dialogue. In that sense then, the newly changed tradition is arrived at by an (instantaneous) negotiation in our mind (Schwandt 2000 p.195).

■ We do not apply new understanding as some sort of commodity, but rather we are changed, and that newly changed person acts and reacts differently in the world (Schwandt 2000 p.195).

Appropriateness of the Research Method to the Larger Task at Hand

Schwandt closes his article with an interesting comment, noting that what is at issue here, (and in the other items he raises), is “... how each of us wants to live the life of the social inquirer” (Schwandt 2000 p.205). In my own case, I do not take either qualitative methodology in general, or the hermeneutical approach to text analysis in particular, as the only way I choose to “live my life as a social inquirer.” Rather, I believe that hermeneutical text analysis happens to be the most appropriate methodology for me to use in addressing my particular research questions at this time. This research method parallels the process used by many liberal and conservative clergy in the Protestant church as they do their background preparation for preaching in their congregations and as they conduct their own personal study of Scripture along with their lay people. In this sense this research project is being carried out on their behalf as a preliminary exploration of the issue at hand, using the same techniques that church leaders will use later if such a preliminary exploration warrants the use of their time in order to consider further the concept of an interactive relationship with God.

The Nature And Place of the Biblical Text

Range wars within the university are not new. Prickett, in his reflections on the relationship of Biblical interpretation and poetry (Prickett 1989 p.1), says that theology and the natural sciences were distinctly separated from the rest of the university in 1809 when the University of Berlin was established, privileging in this case, the humanities, as being the epitome of the university. He notes that it was a century before the same division was made in Britain, enabling the English Romantic poets, during the intervening period, to cross back and forth between the humanities and theology without difficulty. In my own experience over the last four years, it has been interesting to note the number of people who are surprised that either theology or the humanities have any business at all in an “interdisciplinary” Rural Community Development Department. Even more astonishment has been evident on the faces of some people when they find out that my research subject involves a text that is 2000 years old. Hans Walter Wolff, in a chapter in Westermann’s *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, makes an interesting aside that interest in history, in his estimation, has dropped partly because of the rise in favour of evolutionary philosophy, because in popular understanding of that philosophy, things historical are rendered irrelevant (Wolff 1979 p.336). His article concerned texts 600-800 years older than mine.

The text to which hermeneutical analysis is applied in my study, is a set of four narratives, the “Gospels” according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These four narratives were selected out of the sixty-six documents in the Protestant Christian Bible, because they are

generally regarded as the core material of the New Testament in the church, and because they focus is on the life and teaching of Jesus rather than that of his disciples.

These books are the first four books in the New Testament, in the Protestant Christian Bible. They, along with twenty-three other pieces of New Testament literature were gradually consolidated into the “canon” by 360 A.D. (Sanders 1964 p.682) as being the most appropriate selections for public use in the Christian Church (Sanders 1964 p.680). Opinions as to the time of their writing vary considerably, but the sequence of their writing is very well-established (Grant and Luccock 1951 p.630). The gospel of Mark was written first, and is the shortest of the four narratives (Williams 1964 p.748). Matthew wrote his gospel next, basing his structure on that of Mark, but adding his own material (Williams 1964 p.748). Luke wrote next, and his gospel was actually the first volume of a two-volume work, the second volume being The Book of Acts (Lampe 1964 p.882). Luke, who had access to both Mark and Matthew, based his work on Mark as well, and added in his own material (Williams 1964 p.820). These three Gospels, because they use the same structure (that of Mark), are referred to as the “Synoptic” Gospels (Williams 1964 p.748). The Gospel of John was written last, and although he did not use Mark’s structure, he may have had knowledge of the other Gospels (Barrett 1964 p.844). He seems to have written his Gospel in a complementary fashion to the other three, in order to fill in missing material, and add his own theological comment (Howard and Gossip 1952 p.437).

The Gospel of John has most of its material clustered around several of the annual feasts in Jerusalem which Jesus attended, while the other three Gospels’ material, except for the last Passover feast in Jerusalem, concerns events between the festivals.

All four Gospels were written by different authors, at different times, for different Church communities, located in different towns. All four Gospels were concerned with the same core subject matter — the life and teaching of Jesus — with the main focus on the last two and one-half to three years of his life, which also constituted his three years of ministry in Israel. He, Jesus, lived from about (earliest) 8 B.C. (Taylor 1951 p.115) to about 28 A.D.

It is estimated that Mark, possibly a companion of the apostle Peter (one of the original 12 disciples of Jesus), wrote his gospel at the earliest about 40 A.D., for the community in Rome, where Peter had moved (Johnson and Buttrick 1951 p.240). Matthew, possibly one of the original twelve disciples, wrote no later than 100 A.D. (Johnson and Buttrick 1951 p.241), but it was probably earlier. Written possibly in the interior of Palestine, his book may have gained wide acceptance through its adoption by a community such as the one in Antioch (Johnson and Buttrick 1951 p.231). Luke, the physician who traveled with Paul (who seems to have had some kind of physical ailment) (Lampe 1964 p.882), may have based much of his book of Acts on his own diary (Johnson 1962 p.1319). He collected a great deal of other material in his travels, compiling it into a two-volume work for an otherwise unknown Roman official by the name of Theophilus (Acts 1:1) likely around 80 AD (Lampe 1964 p.820). John, the last of the original 12 disciples to survive, wrote his gospel sometime between 90 and 115 AD, possibly in the region of Ephesus (Barrett 1964 p.844).

This research project was done in translation, using The Revised Standard Version of 1952 (May and Metzger 1977). *The Gospel Parallels* (Throckmorton 1967), has the Synoptic Gospels in three parallel columns making it easy to compare those three versions of the narrative, and is also based on the Revised Standard Version translation.

Chapter 7-Specific Process Followed

Teasing Out the Fabula

Although the excellent techniques articulated in Meike Bal's *Narratology: Introduction to The Theory of Narrative* (Bal 1992) are not appropriate for this particular project, I found his insight into the three levels of the narrative to be extremely helpful in deciding how to approach a hermeneutical text analysis of four parallel narrative accounts. Bal outlines how any narrative, real or fictitious, can be more readily analyzed if it is thought of as being in three interconnected layers. He goes into great detail as to both the nature of these layers, and typical indicators within any narrative which would flag a particular detail as belonging to one of the other layers. This detail is beyond the scope of this study, but the basic concept is useful.

At the lowest layer of any narrative, Bal says, is what is called the fabula (Bal 1992 p.11). The fabula is the real or imagined series of events which go into a narrative. The next layer up, is the story layer, where there is "an intentional ordering of the story for a purpose" (Bal 1992 p.50). In our case we have four stories, each written by one of the four gospel writers, even though they all are concerned with the same series of events, or fabula — the teachings and actions of Christ during his ministry. In terms of narrative analysis, Bal says that there is a third layer as well, which concerns text. It is at the text level that the narrator selects words to tell the story (Bal 1992 p.119).

I decided that the purposes of this research project would best be served if I arranged the four gospel narratives roughly parallel to each other, and worked through the emerging fabula according to the four narratives simultaneously, as much as possible. My objective was to distil out a common fabula, and use the material from that layer as the base for my hermeneutical text analysis, with its focus on the research questions centred on Andrew Murray's insights. The other alternative was to deal with each gospel sequentially, but that would immediately launch me into constant considerations at the story and text level. For example, a sequential approach would require factoring in each author's unique audience and the context into which he was writing. I did not feel that bringing these upper two layers would add anything useful to the study, but on the contrary, would likely render it impossibly large and unwieldy.

A second consideration played into my decision to work with the fabula level as far as possible. I felt this approach might leave both liberal and conservative schools within the Church free to make their own mental adjustments to anything I might draw from the fabula level. Liberal and conservative scholars vary in the approach they take to matters such as duplications between four gospel accounts. I felt that if I could keep the focus of my study limited to the fabula, and be clear about decisions I made about sequencing, I could leave the others to make allowance for any issues they felt relevant from their perspectives.

The purpose of this study is not so much to have the final word on the research questions at hand, but rather by means of these research questions to open up the possibility that Andrew Murray's insights might warrant deeper examination and further discussion. In this sense, this study is exploratory in nature, and suggestive in purpose.

Limits to the Study

I further decided to limit the beginning of the study to the beginning of Jesus' formal ministry rather than include the birth stories. I decided not to extend the study into Luke's second volume, the Book of Acts, except for the part at the first which forms a bridge between his two books. I felt that the material within my selected range would be sufficient for the answering of my research questions, and that if there was need to investigate further, that could well be left to others.

Process for Aligning the Four Narratives

In 1997 I saw a report of, and materials from, a workshop conducted by Dr. Dann Spader of Sonlife Ministries Inc. (Boldt 1997; Spader 1997). Spader's workshop was part of a graduated series of leadership development workshops designed for the Evangelical wing of the Church. What caught my eye at that time was not so much his leadership input, or the larger purposes of his workshop, but rather the ingenious way in which he had harnessed one of the standard books we had used in theology, *The Gospel Parallels*, in order to line up the four Gospels for simultaneous consideration. At the time I saw Spader's materials, I constructed my own chart, and blocked out the Gospels, basing it roughly on his approach, and then constructed a second chart designed to examine the first one hundred and fifty years of Church history using a similar system. My purpose at that time was to see whether his system was helpful or not, by using several of my own textual questions as test questions. Although I disagreed with some of the decisions he made in aligning the four Gospels, I found that his

clarity about the basis of those decisions facilitated making my own adjustments. I decided to use an adaptation of his approach in aligning the four Gospels for this study.

The bulk of the material in the Gospel of John takes place during one or other of the annual festivals in Jerusalem. In order to align the four Gospels, the festival material from the Gospel of John formed a set of anchor points throughout the three years of Jesus' ministry. A few other common elements within the four Gospels serve a similar purpose. The synoptics, because they used Mark as a common base, were much easier to align. Once these anchor points were written into the Bible texts, and the relevant sections from the *Gospel Parallels* (Throckmorton 1967) were located and marked as well, I left the alignment in rough form, rather than following through exactly. I wanted to let the narrative unfold as I walked through it, making fine sequencing and alignment adjustments in light of the content as it emerged. Periodically, I would block out a section ahead, particularly if it became difficult to sort out the logical sequencing of events, and then work my way through that section.

Modular Organization

Segments or modules of the story which I used as the focal points for reflection, varied in size depending on the content, and its hermeneutical impact in relation to research questions at hand. In some cases a module would encompass several paragraphs, while in other cases a single line or phrase would be the focus for several modules. Modules were handwritten, tended to be about 2500 words in length, and were filed in three-ring binders separated with a variety of coloured tabs. These tabs indicated which year of ministry Christ was in, the number of disciples he was dealing with at the time, whether the festival was underway at the

time or not, and if so, which one. Altogether, four hundred sixty-eight modules were written over an eight-month period.

Maintaining Rural Community Development Focus

As Steinmueller points out, hermeneutical analysis is the basis of exegesis and homiletics (preaching) (1958 p.249) in the Church. In order to help me keep the community development focus, I sequenced the numbering of the modules on a 52-week cycle. This mimics what clergy in my two target groups (liberal and conservative) would be doing in their communities if they were doing a hermeneutical text analysis of the same passages, with their community needs in mind, in preparation for preaching or teaching from that particular passage — while using that passage as a basis for talking about Andrew Murray’s insights in their context. The information, text alignment, and tab-section flags were then assembled on an Excel spreadsheet for ease of analysis.

Part 4-Findings

Chapter 8-General Emergence and Overall Dynamic of the Fabula

New Depth Emerges in the Fabula

Aligning the four Gospels in parallel, with as much correspondence as possible between them brought the fabula of the narrative to the foreground for me. It did so in such a way that my background knowledge and familiarity with the story and text level information did not interfere with hearing afresh the words of Jesus as recorded in the four narratives, and “experiencing” afresh his actions and interactions for the two and one-half year period of his ministry. Proceeding slowly and reflectively over an eight-month period, attempting to reconstruct as closely as possible the events as presented in the four Gospels, while stopping to “look around”, allowed the sheer drama of the story to emerge from the page.

A new sense of the overall flow of the fabula became an important aspect in answering the research questions. The stature and depth of Jesus’ personality was enhanced for me by the dynamics of the events he stimulated through his encounters with the people. The sense of the rising tension, first in the North (Galilee) and then in the South (Judea), becomes evident when the four gospel narratives are considered simultaneously, adding a new dimension of depth to the dynamics of the fabula.

The Overall Event Structure which Emerged

Jesus, about the age of 30 (Lk.3:23) , goes to the Jordan River just to the northeast of Jerusalem (Mk.1:35) from his home farther north in Nazareth (Jn.1:5-6). He is baptized there by his cousin John, an event which marks the beginning of his ministry (Mt.4:54). After a brief time in the surrounding wilderness praying with the Father, about his approach to ministry (Mt.4:1-11), and working alongside John (Jn.4:1-3), he heads north to the area where he grew up (Lk.:4:16), and centres the first part of his ministry in three little towns at the north end of Lake Galilee (Mt.11:20-24). He works at first in what seems to be a series of “one-shot” missionary endeavours (Lk.:4:1-5:27), following which he “calls” four disciples (Mt.4:18), with whom he works for the first year and a half of his ministry (Mt.10:1; — if Jn.5:1 coincides with Mt.9:9). He then increases this number to 12 (Lk 6:12-13), and eventually to 72 (Lk.10:1) disciples.

While working in the north, a volatile mix of extreme popularity (Mk.6:34) and sharp opposition (Mk.6:14f) develops. Perhaps in order to defuse this unstable situation (Lk.13:31-33), he takes a series of journeys outside of his working area returning each time to his home base in Capernaum (Mk.9:33), pausing there briefly before departing again (Mk.10:1). His first trip is to the Northwest along the Mediterranean coast (Mk.7:24f), the second in the opposite direction along the eastern side of Lake Galilee (Mk.7:31) , the third is due north (Mk.8:27) , and the fourth sweeps south of his home base, but without crossing into the southern province (Mk.9:30).

At the point of his expansion to seventy-two disciples (Lk.10:1f) he crosses over into the southern province of Judea (Mk.10:1ff), working ever closer to Jerusalem (Lk.13:22) .

Throughout his entire ministry he makes several trips to Jerusalem during their festivals (Jn.2:13; 5:1; 7:1; 10:22; 13:1). Following an attempt on his life at one of those festivals (Jn.10:31) approximately three months before he was finally arrested and killed, he goes back across the Jordan River to the east (Jn.10:40), near where he had originally worked with his cousin John (Jn.10:40), as this area is in a different political jurisdiction, providing thereby a margin of safety (Jn.10:40).

He returns from that area after a very short period of time (Jn.11:8), because of the sickness and death of his friend Lazarus (Jn.11:1), who lives in the village of Bethany (Jn.11:1), about two miles east of Jerusalem. He seems to realize upon returning to the Jerusalem area that he would be raising his friend Lazarus from the dead (Jn.11:11), thus making his continuing presence intolerable for the authorities (Jn.11:4). Shortly after the events in Bethany he takes his twelve disciples to a small village in the hills about fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem (Jn.11:54), where he seems to wait for three months until Passover time. About a week before Passover (Jn.12:1) he goes to Jerusalem (Jn.12:1), perhaps using Bethany as his centre operation for the final week of his life (Jn.12:1). After a week of public teaching in Jerusalem (Lk.22:53) he is arrested at night in a small park between Jerusalem and Bethany (Jn.18:1f). He is given a perfunctory trial (Jn.18:1-19:16) and quick execution (Jn.19:17f), following which he rises from the dead (Lk.28:5-6) and spends a short period of time consolidating his group of disciples (Acts 1:3-8. At this point he ascends into heaven (Acts 1:9-11), and sends the Holy Spirit to guide and empower his disciples (Acts 2:1-47).

Jesus' Mentoring Process Possibly Increases Tension

Spader's conjectures (1997) that Jesus organized his disciples in a pyramid-like structure of "pairs," with each pair being given other pairs to work with, resulting in a groundswell of well-mentored followership. This possibility provides an ingredient for additional tension (Spader 1997). When the four, then 12 then 72 disciples are combined with the two other numbers we hear around about the time of Jesus execution and resurrection — 500 (1 Cor.15:6) and 3000 (Acts 2: 41) — it forms a geometric progression of "pairs", meaning that Jesus may well have entered Jerusalem with 500 followers in this loosely organized extended pyramid network. If that was the case, it would partly explain why he was not arrested in broad daylight, and why his trial and execution were carried out so rapidly.

A General Context of Drama and High Tension

The execution of his cousin John by Herod about midpoint in Jesus' ministry (Jn.9:7-9), the constant harassment (Jn.7:1), and the attempts on his life (Lk.5:29; Jn.10:31) , all serve to make it abundantly clear that his ministry was not one conducted in quiet contemplative serenity, but rather in the context of high tension and drama.

The Hermeneutical Text Analysis Proceeds

The process of hermeneutical text analysis is the opportunity to "walk with" Jesus down each dusty road, be a participant in each crowd, identify with the many personalities and subgroups he encounters, listen each time he preaches and teaches, and observe the contexts within which such preaching and teaching take place. In the original fabula, each member of the crowd or each person who encountered Jesus would bring their own current life issues and

questions. So too, I carried my research questions with me as I journeyed with them, a silent and unseen participant in the various dynamics. What follows are the answers I received to my questions throughout this endeavour. Central to all of these questions was my underlying curiosity as to whether Jesus was seeking an ongoing interactive relationship with the people he encountered, and whether there was any indication that he is continuing to seek such a relationship with people today.

Spader (1997) draws attention to a well-known pedagogical method adopted by Jesus, that his main task was teaching and training his disciples, and that he did so by teaching, preaching, and healing in a public forum, at which the disciples were in attendance, debriefing them in private afterwards (Mt.13:1,10). If that is the case in this incident, then Jesus' question to the blind man may well have been designed as a set up for a pedagogical moment during a debriefing session with the disciples later. That is, the discourse on prayer during the Last Supper (Jn.14-16), about a week later, brought forth teaching with much the same interactive prayer-principle as was acted out in this particular setting.

This particular insight gains additional strength from an argument of silence. As I "walked along" with Jesus and his disciples during what's known of their two and one-half years together, I saw or heard nothing which would contradict Andrew Murray's insight about Jesus seeking such an interactive relationship with people on an ongoing basis. There is another incident in which Jesus uses this same phrasing, and it is used in the context in which Andrew Murray's second insight is situated (Mt.10:35-36), as we shall see.

Insight 2: "Whatsoever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours". ("check your mail")

The second statement of Jesus which Andrew Murray draws attention to, occurs in Mark (Mk.11:20-26), while echoes of it appear elsewhere in the gospel narratives. The Greek sentence itself (Mk.10:35-45; Mt.20:20-23) is somewhat convoluted and open to interpretation. However, if Andrew Murray's insight is sustained, the insight does help to explain the strange attempt by James and John (and/or their mother) to get Jesus to accede to their request that when he arrives in his kingdom, they may be granted the privilege of sitting on his right

and left hand (Mk. 10:37; Mt. 20:21). The way this story is recounted in the gospels echoes this teaching of Jesus. In the teaching, Jesus says, “whatever things as you come to believe that you have received, while in prayer, ask for them and they will be to you”. It almost sounds like these two disciples only partially understood what Jesus had been teaching them, by the way they phrase their question. In Mark’s version they say to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whenever we ask of you...” (Mk.10: 35).

At this point Jesus responds to them with the same question he will use a few days later with the blind man, “What do you want me to (will that I) do for you?” (Mk.10:36). It is interesting to note that James’ and John’s request happened on the same stretch of road as the incident with the blind man in Jericho. Jesus and his twelve disciples had been coming out of their three-month retreat in the Hills 15 mi. north-East of Jerusalem at the time, and passed through Jericho, on the way to Jerusalem just before the last Passover. On the subject of willingness to participate in both process and results of one’s request, Jesus then asks them “are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” (Mk.10:38). In other words he asked them if they were able to go through what he was about to go through in Jerusalem. Although they replied in the affirmative (Mk.10:39), he knew that in fact they would flee in the face of trouble (Mk.14:27), which they did (Mk. 14: 50). It seems that in these last few days together, this issue of requesting things of Jesus, and his desire to make it abundantly clear that such requests involved the active and willing participation of the person making the request in an ongoing interactive relationship with him, was a priority item on the agenda of Jesus.

As with the first of Andrew Murray's insights, in regards to the argument from silence, I encountered nothing in any of the four gospel narratives which negated such an interactive interpretation (the argument from silence).

In short, I believe both of Andrew Murray's two insights, which highlight Christ as wanting an interactive relationship with people, are sustained by the text, and that based on the other instances of Jesus' use of these two concepts, a case can be made in support of Jesus having held these two thoughts as an integral part of his outlook.

Question two: If Andrew Murray's insights are sustained, what weight might be given to the relative importance of an interactive relationship with Christ in the overall gospel narrative?

It is clear that the contents of Andrew Murray's insights relating to Jesus desire for an ongoing interactive relationship with people are not specifically mentioned in his final instructions, so they certainly do not play a dominant role in Jesus's teaching as such. In Matthew's account of Jesus' closing words of instruction (the "Great Commission"), Jesus talks about discipling, teaching, and baptizing (Mt.28:18-20). In Mark, he talks of preaching and baptizing (Mk.16:15-16). In Luke, he says how "... repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem" and of their being his witnesses (Lk.24:47-48). In John he speaks of sending them out as he also was sent (Jn.20:21), and instructs Peter specifically about feeding his sheep (Jn.21:15-17). In the early part of Acts, Jesus speaks of them being his witnesses (Acts1: 8). Jesus desire for an interactive relationship with people is not mentioned in the accounts of his instructions to either the twelve (Mt.10:5-13), or seventy-two (Lk.10:2-12) disciples, as they went out on their earlier missions

throughout the two and a half years. The sense of the centrality or importance of the content of Jesus' teaching to which Andrew Murray draws attention, is that of it being "critical" but not necessarily large. I once asked a person whose job it was to supply parts for the German tanks at the Shilo Army base, what the smallest part was that would keep one of those huge tanks from operating. He replied, "A small gasket. All the rest of the tank can be fully operational, but without that gasket, that tank isn't going anywhere." It is in that sense that I mean that the content of Andrew Murray's insight, in relation to the rest of the gospel material, is small, and likely critical, but not the main thrust of the gospel.

In short, I believe that although Jesus seems to have held the two thoughts contained in Andrew Murray's insights ("Are you in this with me?" and "Check your mail"), they seem to have played more of a background role in his overall teaching. Although they seem to be critical to his teaching, they did not seem to play a dominantly overt role in it.

Question three: Did Jesus himself have an interactive relationship with the Father, and then teach others about it?

Jesus says that he lived in interactive relationship with the Father (Jn.5:17-46; 8: 28-30); that he did nothing that he did not see the Father doing (Jn.5:19; 8: 28); and that he said nothing that the Father did not want him to say (Jn.3:34; 5:30; 8:16; 8:28; 12:50). This is in keeping in a general way with Andrew Murray's second insight — that Jesus advised us that we should accept delivery or ask for the things we've come to believe while in prayer that we have received, rather than fretting about the things we have not received. His statement that "my father is working still and that I am working" (Jn. 5: 17) is also in keeping in a general

way with his advice that we ask only for what we are actively willing to participate in attaining, and with the results of which we are willing to live (Andrew Murray's second insight).

The Selection of the Disciples

In a more specific way it is informative to notice the account of Jesus' selection of his twelve disciples. Just as he recommended to others, he became convinced while in prayer that he had received from the Father the names of the specific twelve whom he then called (Lk.6:12-16). He later spoke of the fact that his understanding of his mandate here on Earth was to disciple those specific disciples, "and not lose one of them" (Jn.6:39). As I went through this hermeneutical experience, one of the things which became evident was that a good case could be made that he really was not necessarily impressed with the twelve men he was given (Mk.8:33; Lk.9:55; Mk.16:14). He had to reassure the eleven remaining disciples that he was fully aware of Judas' weakness, had not been duped (Jn.13:18-19), and that things would be all right with the people with whom Judas had been working (Jn.13:20). One gospel writer even comments on the fact that Jesus, "having loved (a Greek word meaning working for their welfare) his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn. 13:1), a comment which takes on added meaning if we consider that perhaps he did not really enjoy having them around. They did after all flee for their lives when he was arrested. It is interesting to note that when he moved from four to twelve disciples he had his four disciples pray that the Father would send more harvesters for the crop — another indication of his orientation to work with what he was given — rather than asking them to pray that he might receive wisdom to make a good choice himself (Mt.9:37-38).

Jesus' Understanding of His Larger Mission

In terms of Jesus' understanding of his mission in the larger sense of the term, and the "cosmic" task of conquering death which was his to accomplish, he seems also to work on the basis of it having been given to him and his having come to an understanding of that reality in prayer. There is an incident on his trip north of his home base in Capernaum, where he goes up on the mountain with Peter, James, and John, and is transfigured while in prayer (Lk.9:28-36). There is a fascinating choice of words in describing this incident (Lampe 1964 p.832), when the gospel writer speaks of him talking with Moses and Elijah. The term used, "Exodus", harkens back to an incident in early Israelite history, where Moses was taking the children of Israel out of Egypt and had found himself trapped between the Red Sea and the encroaching Egyptian army. God told him that he was to "stand still and watch the salvation of God". The next morning a wind blew the water down the other end of the Lake allowing Israelites to cross over. A wind then blew the water back (Psalm 77:16-20 says it was a hurricane of some sort) before the pursuing Egyptians could cross over after them (Ex.13:17-14:30).

The earthly mission that Jesus was involved in was "preaching the good news of the kingdom of God" (Lk. 4: 18-20). He stated quite openly in Jerusalem that he was no coward or hireling-shepherd fleeing at the thought of trouble in the South, but rather that he was building for the long-term release of people, and that when the time was right he would be back without flinching (Jn. 10: 11-18).

Jesus knew that once he moved into the Jerusalem area he would come under direct attack from the authorities there (Mk.9:31), who had already made threats on his life (Lk.13:31). He also knew that for his disciples such threats would be sufficient to drive them

away at least temporarily (14: 27-28). He knew they viewed death, or the threat of death as the ultimate block to any activity, and that they would back away from it whenever it became a reality. He was convinced that death is permanent (Jn.32:34-36), and often quite ugly (Mk.14:34-36), but that it was not ultimate (Mk.15:62). He believed that God would raise him back up to life (Jn.12:31), and that when he came back, his disciples would see that death was in “fact”, or in “threat”, no barrier to the best things in life (Mt. 10: 28). That is, that he would have “conquered death” for them. It is in this sense that the author of the gospel describes Jesus conversation with Moses and Elijah as discussing “the *Exodus* (Lampe 1964 p.832) he was to perform in Jerusalem.” As Moses had been backed up against the seemingly impenetrable barrier of the Red Sea and had been taken through it, so too, Jesus was backed up against the seemingly impenetrable reality of death, and was to be taken through it, releasing thereby all people from their fear of it, and its dreaded hold on their lives and activities. (Lk.9:31) It is following this incident that Jesus shifts his focus from general teaching to the task of preparing his twelve disciples to weather the coming crisis, so that he would have someone to come back to see when he had been raised from the dead (Mk.9:30-32).

In the above example we see clearly that Jesus lived out both aspects of his own advice. As Andrew Murray has articulated it, he “accepted delivery” of the larger mission he had come to believe, while in prayer, that he had received. Further, he asked his father to do for him what he was willing himself to participate in. That is, he was willing to live with both the process and the results of his request being fulfilled.

Jesus' View of Crowds

Apart from the specific teaching that Jesus did which is cited above, he also models the two principles that Andrew Murray draws attention to (“are you with me in this?” and “check your mail”) in his relationship with the Father. That this was noticed at the time is evident in a comment made by Martha, at the occasion when Jesus raised her brother Lazarus back to life. When she met Jesus upon his arrival, she says, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God would give you” (Jn. 11: 22).

Jesus can also be seen modeling these principles in the way he handled the crowds (who were not “given to him”) in relation to his disciples (who were given to him). There are two instances while working in the north, where Jesus encountered large crowds. One instance occurred in his home-base area where a crowd of 5000 people arrived at a retreat he was trying to hold with his disciples after their return from their first solo missions (Jn.6:1-13). The second occurred when he was traveling out of country on the East side of Lake Galilee (Mt. 15: 32-39). (Other instances of there being large crowds are mentioned but in less detail (Mt.19:2; 20:29; Mk.2:4; Lk.19:3).) The first of these two instances is of particular interest here. Jesus fed the crowd by means of a miracle (Jn.6:11-12). The crowd was impressed, and wished to seize him and make him their king (Jn.6:15). He immediately put his disciples into a boat and sent them home (perhaps lest they get caught up in such misplaced enthusiasm) (Mt.14:22). He dismissed the crowd (Mt.14:22), and slipped off into the hills (Mt.14:23; Jn.6:15).

It is interesting here to notice the contrast between the way Jesus saw his relationship with his disciples and the way he saw his relationship with the general population of listeners (Mk. 4: 10-13). Jesus very clearly states that his primary responsibility is to his disciples (Jn.6:39), and that it was on the basis of their multiplying like leaven (Mt.13:33) through his “mentoring”, or discipling process that he was going to do his long-term work (Mt.28:18-20). The larger crowds were essentially listeners, and provided a context within which to train his disciples by example (Mt.5:1). They also provided a “farm team” for the next round of disciples (Mt.8:18-22) . He had no interest in working with 5000 people on a long-term basis. In his gospel, John comments about Jesus in relation to the crowd at one point, “he did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man” (Jn.2:24-25).

Jesus’ Use of Personal Challenge

Within the four Gospels, the modeling of the two principles to which Andrew Murray draws our attention, seems to be confined to the life of Jesus. I did not see any clear modeling of these principles on the part of his disciples within the gospel narrative.

In terms of the pedagogical process used by Jesus so as to move people along from being listeners to becoming disciples, he uses a combination of teaching and challenging, working very interactively within whatever context he found himself. This would tally with his statement that we should accept delivery of what we come to believe that we have received, and work with it.

There are two large sections of teaching, the “Sermon on the Mount” (Mt.5:1-7:29) and the “Sermon on the Plain” (Lk.6:17-49). The former is recorded as being given in the

context of a crowd, with the focus on his first four disciples (Mt. 5: 1). The latter is recorded as being given in the context of a crowd with the focus on the newly appointed twelve disciples (Lk. 6: 17). Much of the rest of the teaching is done in a wide variety of contexts in response to current issues. He assigns tasks to people which are uniquely tailored to them, while at the same time being absolutely impossible for that person to fulfill. For example after telling a familiar story of the Good Samaritan, he tells a man to live like that (Lk.10:29-37). He tells another man to go sell his property, give it away, and follow him (Mt.19:16-22). In the context of the Sermon on the Mount he advises people to not just live by the various laws which the Golden rule summarizes, but to dig deeper into the level of their intentions as well (Mt.5:21-48).

In handing out these various assignments, whether in general or in a tailor-made form particular to an individual, Jesus is trying to confront people with their inability to live up to even some semblance of decency. They are far too sure of themselves (Lk.10:29), so therefore do not even really understand the issue. He is content to hand out such assignments or delayed action stories (Mt.13:10-17), and turn people loose, as though he knows that once they admit their inability to carry out such assignments, they will be back with the real question on their agenda — how can one do that? I wonder whether the incident where Zacchaeus climbs a tree to watch Jesus pass by in a crowd is just such a second-round encounter. Jesus knows him by name, and the level of response on the part of Zacchaeus is quite advanced (he returns the money he stole, and changes his lifestyle as a tax collector) (Lk.19:2-10).

In short, I believe that the material contained in the gospel narratives indicates that Jesus lived interactively with the Father and both modeled and taught this behaviour to his disciples and others.

Question four: Is there any indication in the text as to the utility of Andrew Murray’s insights (into the possibility of an interactive relationship with God) outside of Jesus’ home community?

Local Training for Global Presence

The fabula which emerges amidst the four gospel narratives takes place within the larger framework of a cross-cultural mission (Mt.28:18-22). There is no doubt that Jesus’ understanding was that his work was global in nature, and that though he conducted his training and discipling program within the confines of his home culture, and restricted the activity of the people he was training to that cultural context (Mt.10:5-6) his parting instructions to them lifted that restriction, permitting them to operate in any cultural context (Mt. 28: 19).

At both the opening (Jn.2:14-22) and closing (Mt. 21: 12-13) of his ministry there are reports of his driving corrupt salespeople from the temple. Although the focus of both these reports tends to be on the corruption, Jesus himself states in the second instance that the temple is supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations [Mk.11:17]. In John’s account of the first instance, he tells how Jesus went on to compare his own body to the temple, saying, “destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up...”, to which John adds “...but he spoke of the temple of his body.” (Jn.2:19) In other words, as he pointed out to a woman shortly afterwards, (Jn.4:23-24) Jesus saw himself as being the “historical shift over point”

where people become the living temple where God lives, rather than there being a stone temple to which people travel. It may well be that in a delightful play on this imagery, Jesus pushes the disciples' cultural envelope during the Last Supper. He says, "in my father's house are many rooms, if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go in prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (Jn.14:2-3). This line is most frequently understood as a reference to life after death, but it may well refer to the cross-cultural mission which is about to break out from its culture of origin.

This breakout theme is portrayed in a telling vignette-incident which took place just before the Last Supper. Some Greeks had come to Jerusalem to worship at Passover time at this "house of prayer for all nations" (Jn.12:20 ff). The only problem was that they were not allowed into the temple to listen to Jesus who was preaching inside. They sent a message for him to come out and talk outside the temple. That message signalled to Jesus that his hour had come. Using the image of a grain of wheat dying in the ground in order that a plant can spring up with many kernels, he indicates that his death is meant to be just such a breakout point for the world (Jn.12:24).

In short, I believe that a case can be made for the two concepts to which Andrew Murray draws attention being part of the overall collection of teaching which Jesus intended his disciples to pass on both to their own home culture and to any other nations into whose midst they might find themselves "having gone". That is, that the interactive relationship he sought with people of his home culture was intended to be for all people, and if as and when

his disciples found that someone from any culture had been “given to them” to disciple, they might just want to share that little bit of good news with him or her.

Part 5-Significance

Chapter 10- The Application of the Findings in the Areas of Community, Economic, and Business Development

Community development, economic development, and business development are like three legs on the stool (Rounds 2000) when one considers the tasks involved in moving communities forward in the rural area. Each of these areas can be approached in a variety of ways. The significance of the findings from this study will be considered under these three headings.

A. Community Development

The Possibility of Mutual Feeding

My interest in investigating the degree of biblical support for Andrew Murray's insights into Jesus' teaching on an interdependent life with God, has its roots in the zeitgeist which captured my imagination and to which my time and resources have been committed over the years — the renewal of the Protestant Church in rural Canada. To me, ministry *is* community development, and the Christian Church, at its best is both the context of personal and interpersonal growth, and an agent for change within a community.

At the present time the Protestant Christian Church on the prairies is under extreme stress which I believe could be relieved to a great extent if the two great branches of this

Institution were enabled to feed and support and empower each other. I believe that the findings from this research, which indicate a strong biblical base for Andrew Murray's insight, will go a long way towards bridging the gap between these two divisions of the Protestant Christian Church, enabling this mutual assistance to take place. As church members work through the implications and dynamics of Christ's invitation into an interactive life with him, and find themselves moving into a healthier relationship with people from a different religious perspective, they will then be able to be of greater assistance within their own communities in helping others to work through similar dichotomies. Such an activity of empowering people and building community cohesion is the very essence of community development work.

Lowering Of the Fear Factor

If Andrew Murray's observations provide any meaningful bridge piece between liberal and conservative religious perspectives, it is because they allow both liberals and conservatives to move from permitting the other view to considering its possible utility. His observations enable them to entertain insights and perspectives of the other group without having to give up aspects of their own perspective which they consider critical to their life. Insights from the other religious perspectives are needed, desired, and critically essential. The genius of Murray's contribution is that he noticed the *inter-dependent* nature of the relationship into which Jesus is calling us, rather than a dependent or independent relationship. When viewed from the perspective of the angle diagram model, his ideas bridge the gap between the liberal and conservative religious perspectives. It is almost as though we as human beings are more concerned about having to give up hard-won territory in our own hearts and minds than we are about any particular view that somebody else might hold. That is, it is easier to entertain new

insights if they build upon thoughts which we already hold, than if new thoughts must displace the old.

Conservative Christians, those for whom “letting go and letting God” are central to their way of life, and those for whom the miraculous intervention of God is particularly worthy of praise seem far more concerned about any diminishing of this reality, than they are about the presence and/or impact of the resources, power, and free-will built into life in the human dimension. Andrew Murray’s insights into Jesus’ teaching about an interdependent life with God, opens up the human dimension of life for them, while acknowledging that God is the active and powerful agent in life, quite capable of carrying out what they was regard as “miraculous interventions”. When Jesus asked the blind man, “what are you actively willing that I do for you?” Jesus remained the active agent. He didn’t ask the blind man to fix himself, nor did he call in local medical personnel. He simply said, “I can do this for you.” What Andrew Murray is drawing our attention to, is that God still wants to be actively involved in our lives, and that he wishes to bring to all of life’s situations his extra power, his extra resources, and his extra guidance.

What Andrew Murray’s insights about an interdependent relationship with God add to the thinking of the conservative group’s perspective, is the human reality, but they do so in a way that does not detract from God’s involvement. What Murray is in effect drawing to their attention is that God wants to do all sorts of things in their lives, and that in order to facilitate his doing that, he periodically would like to get them to do “this or that”. In other words, Andrew Murray is pointing out that God would like to work together with them, interdependently, rather than doing everything for them. It is for this reason that Jesus asks the blind man

how willing he is to live with both the process and results of being healed. What Andrew Murray is pointing out to people with a conservative religious perspective, is that God asks us the same question constantly: “what are you actively willing that I do for you?”

Liberal Christians, those for whom taking hold of life is of critical importance, and those for whom the power, resources, and freewill which God has built into life are particularly worthy of praise, seem far more concerned about any diminishing of this reality than they are about the presence and/or impact of the power of miraculous interventions in a spiritual dimension. Andrew Murray’s insights into Jesus’ teaching about an interdependent life with God, open up the spiritual dimension of life for them, while acknowledging the critical role that a strong, mature, and independent will plays in a healthy interdependent life with God. This group becomes quite uneasy when the role of the human will, the power which is built into the universe, and the resources at our disposal are underplayed at any time. What Murray is saying to this group is that God expects human beings to bring to the equation their active and willing participation (freely given), and all the power and resources at their disposal. However, he also draws attention to the fact that God never intended people to live a full and abundant life simply by splashing about in the shallows of the amount of power, resource, and wisdom that he built into creation in the beginning, magnificent as those things are. The implication of Andrew Murray’s insights into Jesus’ teaching on an interdependent life with God is that the power, resource, and freewill which God built into the universe at the time of creation was done in order to facilitate and enable an “abundant” interdependent life with him, should we so choose, and an “acceptable” independent life without him, should we choose that.

That Dismantling of the United Church of Canada?

One of the problems with taking twenty-six years to come up with a pioneered paradigm, is that the zeitgeist train has moved on down the tracks one or two stations. The spirit of the times is no longer focused on church renewal, but has long since moved on to issues of relationship and human sexuality, and even now may be moving on to a new station, perhaps related to the issues surrounding globalization. The danger of bringing insights such as those of Andrew Murray into the discussion once the zeitgeist train has moved off to a new station, is that the workers, such as myself, who do the long-term work on the complex issues of an older zeitgeist, can find themselves inadvertently addressing their contributions to a church and world which no longer exist. The world moves on.

However, as noted earlier, resolutions of complex problems central to any zeitgeist usually have a long-term applicability to those working on a subsequent zeitgeist and/or living in a new world-space. Hirschman's insights, which arose from his reflections upon issues central to that zeitgeist in which The Second World War was the focus, are hugely beneficial to those of us working on the later zeitgeists of institutional church renewal, issues of relationship and human sexuality, and now, globalization. Andrew Murray's insights into Jesus' teaching about an interactive life with God rather than a active or passive life in relation to him have huge implications not only for the renewal of the institutional church, but also for those working on the zeitgeists which precede and succeed it.

The United Church of Canada may well have been merely a loose federation of liberal and conservative churches and/or liberal and conservative Christians, assembled along the diagonal line on the angle diagram (Figure 9). They may never have truly melded into a new entity, and the dismantling of that reality may be what in fact we are witnessing today as we

see that institution separate out into its constituent parts. However, I believe that some of us who grew up within that institutional milieu came away with an appreciation of the blessings of both groups' perspectives. I believe that further study of the nature of this uniquely Canadian phenomenon would prove useful in addressing the complex issues surrounding relationships between those holding liberal and conservative life views.

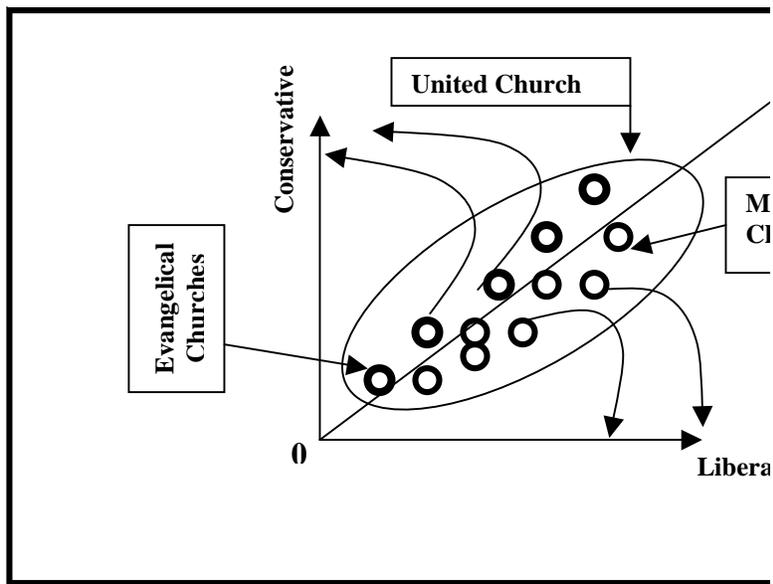


Figure 11. The United Church of Canada as a loose federation of churches, now splitting off into its constituent parts.

Whether or not such studies are carried out, I believe, in the light of this investigation, that Andrew Murray's insights into Jesus teaching about interdependent life with God, merits consideration within the Protestant Church of the Canadian prairies, as a possible way of bridging the liberal conservative dichotomy within and between those religious perspectives. Resolving that dichotomy, or at least reducing the negative tension which surrounds it, could

help to renew the Protestant Christian Church on the Prairies, thereby enabling it to animate the communities of which it is part.

B. Economic Development

Wish List Tool Development

Joan Fitzgerald (1993 pp.128-129) addresses the critical role played by education in economic development, and the need to match skills with jobs. I believe that the research findings from the study, establishing that in the biblical narrative, Jesus was encouraging an interactive relationship between people and God, provides the basis for the continued development of an excellent academic advising and career counselling tool of the next few years. As this tool is developed, I believe that its utility in both educational settings and on the field and community development settings will increase. Any new tools which prove effective in the long run in terms of helping people to select appropriate career tracks early in life, or helping them get back on track when they fail or are forced into unemployment in our globalized economy, are all to the good in our resource-strapped rural economy.

It was with increasing unease that I continued to use the Wish List instrument once I became aware of the problems people were having in the later stages of its use. At the first and second levels, the instrument was serving a purpose as an excellent tool to help students articulate their primary life concerns, and to connect these concerns to the academic advising and career counselling needs with which such students approached me for assistance. Further, the instrument was of great use at its third level, as a means of opening up to students the claims of a variety of faith groups that there is a vertical dimension to life, which is available

to human beings, providing for us resources, power, and direction to assist us in our life journey. However, the problem which many students subsequently expressed of the frustration of “flip-flopping” between “taking hold” of their life (articulated during level one and two of the instrument) and “letting go” of their life and “letting God” provide the assistance they needed (articulated during level three of the instrument), became of increasing concern to me.

I had no problem leaving students at the end of level one and two of the instrument, knowing full well that many of them would experience a problem, quite likely within the following two years, when they found that they lacked the power and resource necessary to carry out their dream so well articulated in level one and two. I had no problem with this because level one and two helped them to get moving in life again; because they were not ready to hear about resources which they still felt they had in sufficient supply; and because I knew that there was still the third level of the instrument to introduce them to, if and when they should return for further assistance. I found it interesting to note how Jesus constantly used a similar approach, taking people at the stage of life they were at, and moving them one step further along the road, rather than feeling that he had to take them the whole distance at one time. It was interesting to notice during the exploration of the text how Jesus seemed to accelerate this growth process by giving people assignments which were tailor-made to their situation, but virtually impossible to carry out.

However, I was experiencing difficulty using the instrument with people at the third level, knowing that there was a blockage which many other people were already experiencing, for which I had no ready answer with which to assist them as and when they returned. I found the positive outcome of all four research questions assuring, because to me it substantiated Andrew Murray’s assumption that Jesus was already well aware of the problem people face at the end of “level three”, and had a solution for it. Andrew Murray’s insights draw attention to the interactive nature of the relationship

between Jesus and the Father in his own life, and the potential of their being such a relationship between all other people and God as well. It is the *interactive* nature of this relationship, rather than an active or a passive one, which is the significant contribution which Andrew Murray's insights bring to this problem. The practical nature of the two statements of Jesus, which Andrew Murray focuses upon, is doubly helpful in terms of building a fourth level on the Wish List tool. Such practical Biblical instruction should facilitate the addition of a fourth level to the model.

Andrew Murray's bridge piece being sustained by this hermeneutical text analysis, allows me to use the angle diagram model freely. I am now aware that the Wish List tool can be developed in such a way that it can continue to facilitate conversations with students facing the fourth level problem. A fourth level can be developed in such a way that the focus of responsibility for their exploring a resolution to the issue remains firmly on the students' shoulders. A key challenge in academic advising and career counselling is to provide sufficient information to open up new areas for students to explore, while at the same time encouraging students to do the actual exploration themselves.

It is also interesting to notice that both of Andrew Murray's insights emerge from events which took place in the last days Jesus' ministry, after his having spent two and one-half years in close company with his disciples. This may well indicate that the problem encountered at the end of level three of the Wish List instrument, may well be a problem commonly encountered later on in our maturation process. Stephen Covey comments, that in his experience, interdependence with other human beings is a stage of development which occurs after people move through stages of dependence and independence (Covey 1989 pp.185-203). The same may hold true with our interdependent relationship with God.

A Tool for Discussion Of Interdependence And Interaction Elsewhere

The concept of interactivity, to which Andrew Murray's insights draw attention, was configured on the angle diagram in relation to the diagonal trajectory. Even though this modeling of interactivity was created in order to facilitate a discussion of the relationship between people and God rather than amongst people, it may well be that a similar model might be adapted to facilitate discussion in other polarized situations. Perhaps the door into discussions of interactivity of any sort might be the simple shifting of models from a line graph to an angle diagram. It is interesting to note the use of a similar model on the Libertarian web site (The Advocates for Self-Government 2004), but their additional rotation of the model in order to maintain the left-right-right political spectrum of a line graph, which they find useful. Having this rotation moves away from an interactive resolution. With Andrew Murray's insights being sustained by the text, I find it easier to explore such model transference, when I know that the model, at least in this circumstance, now represents a resolved problem rather than an unresolved one.

C. Business Development

Perhaps the greatest practical significance of the findings of this research project are found in the area of business development. Andrew Murray's insights into Jesus' teaching about the possibility of an interactive relationship between God and people, rather than either an active or passive relationship reframes the issue of how we take our Christian faith out of the doors of the church on Sunday and apply it from Monday to Saturday.

When I entered the Master of Rural Development program, I had just come to the realization that the picture of normal Christian life which Jesus was holding out to us in the world of business and finance, was not that of either/or, but rather both/and. The picture which is usually presented to us in our society, is that we can go into the business world and have either success/prosperity or we can have righteousness but we can not have both. What I have come to realize is that Christ was saying that God wants us to have success/prosperity with righteousness. When placed on the angle diagram, success and prosperity would lie along the horizontal axis reflecting our capacity to take hold of life and rise up to its challenges. Righteousness would lie along the vertical axis, reflecting our growth in spiritual terms. What Andrew Murray opens up is a pair of Jesus' teachings which provide an on-ramp to the diagonal trajectory of success/prosperity *with* righteousness. Such a trajectory is made possible for us as human beings as we move into an interactive relationship with God.

In practical terms, what Andrew Murray draws to our attention, is Jesus statement to those of us who work in the business world,

- “What do you will that I do for you?” and
- “Whatsoever you come to believe, while in prayer, that you have received, ask for it / accept delivery of it, and it will be to you”.

I find these two statements challenging when viewed in the context of the diagonal trajectory. God offers to enter into an interactive relationship with us in such a way that his power, his resources, and his guidance interface with the power, and resources, and freewill which he built into the universe. This application of an interactive relationship with God in the

business world is a most intriguing concept, which invites further exploration. With the current catastrophic failure rate for new business start-ups (Gerber 1986 pp.1-2), Andrew Murray's observation about Jesus' wishing to interface our power, our resources, and our freewill with the power resources and guidance of God, makes for a stimulating new approach to small business development in the rural community. With the results of this research indicating a strong biblical base for Andrew Murray's insight, and the two very practical steps to moving into such an interdependent relationship with God being articulated, I believe that the way is now made clear to pursue this line of thinking in the future.

Personally, having crossed many borders in my life, my own approach to this research will likely be to tuck it away in my pocket, and rejoin the community as they move along from Alpha to Omega. For me it is sufficient to be aware of the results of this research, as I find it frees me up to operate in the here and now. I operate in all three areas of community, economic, and business development in my dealing with individuals. This research and its results have already proved to be extremely useful in enriching the contribution I am able to make each day, and I trust that they will continue to do so.

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