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Talking the Walk:

Six Contours of an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation

by

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SUMMARY

Talking the walk is a pedagogically-oriented approach to theological reflection for formation. It rests on a premise: as we learn to walk our talk (practise what we preach), we must also learn to talk our walk (make meaning of experience). Not all theological reflection models explicitly mine this connection between formation and reflection, nor embrace the anthropological perspective it calls for. So this thesis answers the question: *What are the contours of an approach to theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation?* Talking the walk helps address a widely identified need for theological education to become more holistic and integrated, and encourages practical theology to move towards a theory–practice–persons paradigm.

Covenant epistemology provides the theoretical backbone of the research. Knowing is interpersoned, pledged, transformational, non-linear, unfolding and for *shalom*. It draws from normative, situational and existential domains. From this epistemological basis the research methodology interweaves postfoundational theology, action research and autoethnography. Talking the walk has a model and a method.

The model underpins the method and has three contours. *Trialogue* provides the method's dimensions and dynamics—a three-way, interdependent and unfolding conversation between spirituality and personhood, ministry in context, and wellsprings of theology. *Shalom* provides the method's longitudinal direction—God's fullness in Christ for the cosmos, communities and individuals, embodied in graces such as reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness. The *Emmaus Labyrinth* provides the method's design. Infused with the metaphors of walking and talking, it creatively juxtaposes the three movements in the Road via Emmaus narrative from Luke 24:13–49 with the three movements of the labyrinth to give the method its interlocking, threefold shape.

The method outworks the model and has three contours. In *contemplative conversation* we narrate experience then wend our way between clues drawn from the trialogue. With a patient listening we attend to the absence or presence of *shalom*, and the possibility of God in all things. In *imaginative discernment* we position ourselves to notice and name any patterns of convergence from that conversation. The imagination can catalyse discernment through imagery to discern the now, and vision to discern the not yet of *shalom*. In *courageous embodiment* the mystery of divine–human agency enables our discerned truths to live in the muscle as we receive God's encouragement in the face of inevitable obstacles. We effect courageous embodiment by cultivating *shalom* through concrete doing and practices that deepen. The method's three

contours dovetail with covenant epistemology's conception of knowing as integrating clues (contemplative conversation) to form a coherent pattern (imaginative discernment) and submit to its reality (courageous embodiment).

The thesis concludes with a summary of talking the walk and reflections on its practice, including its application in theological education, emerging theologies for reflection and formation, and its spiritually forming effect. This discussion is supported by a series of appendices which include a critical experience report template and examples, student feedback, and anecdotal evidence of talking the walk's impact beyond the theological education setting.

Key terms: Christian formation; theological reflection; theological education; covenant epistemology; spirituality, theology, ministry; trialogue; coinherence; *shalom*; Emmaus; labyrinth; walking, pilgrimage; contemplation; talking, conversation; imagination; discernment; courage; embodiment; cultivation.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and
2. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed Bruce Hulme

Date Monday December 7, 2020

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PUBLICATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION FOR FORMATION

This thesis explores six contours of an approach to theological reflection for holistic Christian formation for the theological education context. It rests on a premise:

As we learn to walk our talk, we must also learn to talk our walk.

'Actions speak louder than words' reflects a fundamental truth about the power of wholehearted, authentic living. There is a deep human desire to practise what we preach, to become who we are, to walk our talk. For followers of Jesus, integrity means embodying our core identity as the beloved of God in thought, passion and action in everyday life. To grow in such holistic and integral living is to walk in and towards the flourishing reflected in the biblical vision of *shalom*: God's fullness in Christ for the cosmos, communities and individuals, embodied in graces such as reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness.

Our journey, though, is hardly linear; as though walking a labyrinth, it moves forward but with meandering twists and turns, often feeling strangely circular, perhaps mysterious. Changing relationships. Arresting grief. A disgruntled church split over worship styles and oblivious to mission opportunities. The birth of a child. A visit with someone who is dying and has abandoned their faith. Unexpected financial pressure. A Bible story or theological concept, previously taken as given, now in troubling contrast to reality. Climate change. A local asylum seeker facing deportation. Preaching on a difficult passage. A nervous wait for results from the doctor. Leadership challenges in the workplace. Cultural misunderstandings. Scandals in the church. An unexpected opportunity. A parent with Alzheimer's. A breathtaking sunset. Systemic dysfunction that sees people trapped in homelessness. A teenage son's questions of sexuality and identity. A mundane job. #metoo, #BLM, or a global coronavirus pandemic that cripples nations' health care systems and economies, closes churches, and rewires life at a micro level.

Circuitously we wend our way through the marvel and mess of life's experiences—personal, communal, global—that change the course of our lives and ministries. Some stop us in our tracks. They ask for, even demand, a response. A longing to make sense of things arrests us. What has it all to do with God? And what is God doing with it all? The two disciples on the Emmaus road in Luke 24 experienced this. Shattered by the upheaval of Jesus' death, they groped for meaning as they walked and talked together; they could think of nothing else. As we encounter unexpected and unfamiliar terrain, it can be difficult to know our next steps of faith, let alone have

the courage to take them.

Our noblest self would want to respond with wisdom, authenticity, meaningful action and "a long obedience in the same direction."[1] But holistic and integrated living is far from automatic or easy, and with the struggle to make sense of things come experiences of deep dissonance. Peterson comments that

> We commonly become interested in spiritual formation when we realize that long after having completed our biological growth, we are still not "grown up," not mature. We find ourselves living lopsided, fragmented, and distracted lives, lurching from impulse to stimulus or stuck in some role or function. We find ourselves longing for a put-together life, integrated and wise, centered and whole.[2]

Living a centred, *shalom*-shaped life as we journey along our winding road, it turns out, is not particularly clear cut. Walking our talk is not straightforward. Nor are we always intentional or considered in how we connect faith and life. Sometimes the Bible offers clear and specific guidance, but frustratingly, we may discover, it is more like a story to live into than an instruction manual with neat answers for every situation. This invites continual reflection and wrestling to figure out the shape of walking our talk in practice. "Moving from 'what happened' to 'what it means' is not automatic," notes Kinast.[3] We do not necessarily learn by experience, as much as by reflecting upon experience.

So, we must develop the lifelong craft of and orientation towards theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation. This is what I mean by 'talking the walk'. To practise what we preach with courageous integrity, where actions align with core truths, we must practise listening conversation about the real stuff of our lives and our world, to imaginatively discern what those truths are in our particular context, and then courageously embody them in daily life. To authentically participate in God's *shalom* in the world, we must rehearse meaning-making that is attentive to a longitudinal, *shalom*-shaped pilgrimage.

We see this struggle for meaning-making in the somewhat labyrinthine dynamic of the disciples' encounter with Jesus on the 'Road via Emmaus' in Luke 24.[4] Listening conversation wends back and forth between them as they walk and talk. Reaching Emmaus is the centre of their

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[1] Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1980).

[2] Eugene H. Peterson, *Take and Read: Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 32.

[3] Robert Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), vii.

[4] In chapter four I contend that the story is better understood as the road *via* rather than *to* Emmaus to stress the importance of the return journey and the disciples' circuitous struggle to embody their new reality.

experience—an image-laden, 'aha!' moment where time stands still as they discern the risen Jesus. The twists and turns continue as they loop back to where they began in Jerusalem to embody their new reality together with the other disciples; excitement in telling of their burning hearts turns to stone-cold fear at the sight of Jesus, and then back to hope and joy with the encouragement of his resurrection presence, the assurance of God's divine plan, and the promise of the Spirit. Jesus' gift of courage transforms them for witness in the world.

The same invitation to reflection for formation is open to us. "The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being," says Socrates.[5] Parker Palmer puts it this way: "Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you."[6] Only as we develop the capacity to make faith-shaped meaning from the threads of various experiences—the events, issues and circumstances in our lives—may we more fully embody and be formed in what is good, beautiful and true within our particular tapestries.

As we learn to walk our talk, we must also learn to talk our walk.

Research Question

Learning to talk the walk is especially critical for ministry and leadership formation in theological education that seeks to be holistic and integrated. This is true whether students are training for conventional pastoral ministry roles, new emerging ministry vocations, or wanting to deepen their faith for life and work in other settings. Merely developing robust theology within minds, and shaping excellent ministry skills, is inadequate; students' own spiritual/personal formation in interdependent relationship with thought and practice is also crucial. Richard and Evelyn Hibbert argue that the "key to enhancing theological education is the intentional integration of knowing with being and doing, of theory with practice, and of theology with life and ministry."[7] Similarly, Ball's comprehensive study of undergraduates' experience of transformative learning in Australian theological education concludes that

> there is a widespread and strongly expressed desire for theological education to be holistic and integrated rather than being based on sets of content that are often disconnected from one another and from life beyond the classroom. Such integration will combine

[5] Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito, and Aristophanes' Clouds* (New York, NY: Cornell University, 1998), 92.
[6] Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 10.
[7] Richard Hibbert and Evelyn Hibbert, "Addressing the Need for Better Integration in Theological Education: Proposals, Progress, and Possibilities from the Medical Education Model," in *Learning and Teaching Theology Some Ways Ahead*, ed. Les Ball and James Harrison (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 107.

> cognitive, practical and affective elements … In total, it aims at a congruence of creed, conduct and character within the person of the graduate.[8]

How will such cognitive, affective and behavioural interdependence be nurtured? As Hibbert and Hibbert note, responses have varied, including: reassessing aims, purposes and modes of delivery, with more in situ/practical learning; curriculum integration to address the 'siloing' of disciplines; an increased emphasis upon affective/personal/spiritual domains in student learning; greater integration in life and ministry with faculty and students; problem-based learning; and learning from the medical model of education.[9]

Such measures are welcome. Yet still absent is a considered and developed approach to learning and teaching theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic and integrating Christian formation. Francis echoes this, contending that in the formation of reflective ministry practitioners

> we need to develop a genuine "trialogue" between practical or situational reflection, theological reflection and personal reflection which sees the ministry practitioner developing, not just the requisite skills for ministry, but a deep personal relationship with God which fuels and sustains ministry for the long haul. For such an integrated reflection to yield its ongoing fruit in the life of the ministry practitioner, there needs to be a recognition that merely *doing* reflection as a "one-off" or occasional exercise, will never be sufficient. What is required is an ongoing commitment to a lifestyle of *being* truly reflective.[10]

Theological educators, then, need accessible and rich ways of introducing theological reflection for formation to help students develop a lifelong orientation towards this craft. As Wood contends, this is what theological education ought to be about:

> The aim of theological education … is not to form Christians, but to form the habit of critical reflection on one's formation. It is not to mediate the content of the Christian tradition, but to equip one for theological reflection upon the Christian tradition. It is not to train in leadership skills, but to cultivate an aptitude for reflection on the quality of one's own and others' leadership as an instrument of the church's witness.[11]

In response to the need expressed by Ball, Francis and others, then, my research question

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[8] L. J. Ball, *Transforming Theology: Student Experience and Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Theological Education* (Preston, VIC: Mosaic, 2012), 125–26.
[9] Hibbert and Hibbert, "Addressing the Need for Better Integration in Theological Education: Proposals, Progress, and Possibilities from the Medical Education Model."
[10] Peter Francis, "Developing Genuinely Reflective Ministry Practitioners," in *Theological Education: Foundations, Practices, and Future Directions*, ed. Andrew M. Bain and Ian Hussey (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 198.
[11] Charles M. Wood, "Theological Education and Education for Church Leadership," in *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education*, ed. Jeff Astley, Leslie J Francis, and Colin Crowder (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 1996), 310; see also Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Francis Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, Second edition (Kindle version). (London: SCM, 2019).

is this: *What are the contours of an approach to theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation?*

My answer employs Esther Meek's covenant epistemology to develop talking the walk for sojourners making meaning along the way. The interdependent relationship of spirituality, ministry and theology shapes reflection for holistic formation as they walk and talk their labyrinthine trek along their own Road via Emmaus. Through contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment and courageous embodiment, their reflection forms them, communities and their world deeper in the good life of God: *shalom.* This approach, for the theological education context, is my original contribution to knowledge.

Research Question in Context

What is Theological Reflection for Formation?

Theological Reflection

Theological reflection centres on meaning-making through connecting experience and faith, and living the implications. Transformative learning theorist Mezirow explains that "meaning-making refers to a lifelong process of understanding the world and our relationship with it," and is "often associated with critical reflection and transformative learning."[12] Theological reflection as meaning-making, then, helps us make sense of life with particular reference to God and how the Spirit forms us, others and the world through that reflection. It might also be called pastoral reflection, ministerial reflection, spiritual reflection, reflective practice or praxis. The term 'theological reflection' and its use present difficulties. Foley summarises these, including theological reflection being mystifying and elusive, impractical and disconnected from life, unspecific yet demanding, not person-centred, inflexible, and exclusive.[13] I have chosen to work with it because of its prevalence in the literature and because despite these issues, it still communicates the fundamental orientation of reflection in relation to God (*theos*). At the same time, I have developed the nomenclature of 'talking the walk' to offer accessibility, evoke intrigue and convey an emphasis upon reflection and formation. This is similar to how others have opted for terms perhaps more inclusive and useable than theological reflection, such as 'making faith-

[12] Cited in Alison Le Cornu, "Meaning, Internalization, and Externalization: Toward a Fuller Understanding of the Process of Reflection and Its Role in the Construction of the Self," *Adult Education Quarterly* 59.4 (2009): 282.
[13] Edward Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions: The Turn to Reflective Believing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 10.

sense',[14] 'kingdom learning'[15] and 'reflective believing'.[16]

Theological reflection attends to what Farley describes as "one of the essential components of theology itself, the theological interpretation of situations."[17] It begins with lived experience, connects this to faith, and draws out practical implications for Christian living.[18] Howard defines 'experience' in three ways: as "practical wisdom gained through life," as "a source, process, or stage of human knowledge," or as "a way of speaking about reality."[19] Experience in theological reflection connects to all of these. Chapter two will consider how experiences that spark reflection might be more normative, situational or existential in nature. We might also understand experience in terms of *events*, *issues* or *circumstances*. This is neither neat nor comprehensive, but it can help students to identify something specific, personal and important to bring to theological reflection.[20]

It is not unusual for theological education students to expect their study to be primarily the acquisition of the data or noun-like 'what' of theology. This mindset is akin to an information approach to learning, symptomatic of what Meek calls the Western "defective epistemic default."[21] Theological reflection, then, is commonly (though understandably) misunderstood as 'reflecting on theology', the general interpretation of texts and traditions, or theology on a grand scale, like systematic theology. Its purpose is to apply universal truths to particular situations. Paver contends this misunderstanding is true amongst many academics as well and reflects the residual influence of Schleiermacher's theory-to-practice conception of practical theology.[22]

Graham et al. chart how this linear 'applied theology' approach to theological reflection has gradually developed over recent decades into "an altogether more integrated and dialogical

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[14] Robert Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense: Theological Reflection in Everyday Life* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999).
[15] David Heywood, *Kingdom Learning* (London: SCM, 2017).
[16] Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*.
[17] Edward Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis Seymour Mudge and James N Poling (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), 1.
[18] Robert Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?* (New York, NY: Paulist, 2000), 1.
[19] Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008), 79.
[20] Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, 2–3.
[21] Esther Lightcap Meek, *Loving to Know: Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 395. Meek's use of 'Western' here to broadly characterise an approach to knowing raises the issue of using terms such as 'East' and 'West' in general. Such terms carry their own semantic range for readers, and by their very nature can tend to generalise and homogenise. Yet I have chosen to use these terms because of their continued currency in the literature and for expediency in writing. Where possible I have nuanced their usage but without an excessive concern for how their usage might oversimplify or homogenise.
[22] John Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry: The Search for Integration in Theology* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 3, 7–22.

relationship between the practice of ministry and the resources of theological understanding."[23] Theological reflection, as the engine room of practical/contextual theology, is more concerned with the verb-like 'how' of all Christians (not just clergy) doing theology along life's journey. This sees theology

> as a human activity intending to bring practical perspectives faithfully into critical and creative interplay with divine horizons … a kind of 'practical wisdom' (or *phronesis*), which means having the wisdom to live well, reflecting on practice and learning from it.[24]

Veling highlights this when he contends that "practical theology … is less a thing to be defined than it is an activity to be done … Practical theology is more 'verb-like' than 'noun-like.' In many ways, we would be better to speak of 'practicing theology' rather than 'practical theology.'"[25]

Since theological reflection develops over a lifetime, we might understand it as what Barth called *theologia viatorum*, or 'theology on the way'.[26] "It means [that we are] committed to an unceasing movement from what is known to what is not yet known, to an active pilgrimage."[27] *Theologia viatorum* is *doing* theology, not just *inheriting* theology.[28] It is the theologising of travellers. Of wayfarers. Of sojourners. Theological reflection as *theologia viatorum* is rehearsing the talk of theology as we journey along the walk of formation.

Formation

Formation centres on "the construction of self and personal identity within the framework of a specific religious tradition"[29]—in this case, the Christian tradition. To this, I would also add, *corporate/communal* identity—formation is not only about the individual. It is about becoming, not just being, and thus intersects with human development in general. As Benner asserts, these are intertwined; the Christian journey is about becoming fully alive and deeply human.[30] The developmental language of Christian formation connects to other notions, including discipleship,[31]

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[23] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 171.
[24] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 277.
[25] Terry A Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 4.
[26] See Graham Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark: The Privilege of Participating in God's Ministry in the World*, Revised edition. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 55.
[27] Cited in Matthew Benfield, "Theologia Viatorum – Imperfect Theology," *Theologia Viatorum – Learning the Way*, n.d., https://www.theologiaviatorum.com/.
[28] Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 66.
[29] Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, "Formation in the Classroom," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 14.4 (2011): 361.
[30] David G. Benner, *Soulful Spirituality: Becoming Fully Alive and Deeply Human* (Grand Rapids, MI.; New York, NY: Brazos, 2011).
[31] μαθητής/*mathētēs.*

sanctification[32] and maturing.[33] Says Luther:

> This life is not righteous, but growth in righteousness; it is not health, but healing; not being, but becoming; not rest, but exercise; we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.[34]

Formation is often used interchangeably with *trans*formation,[35] though Ball notes subtle differences.[36] Formation has a longitudinal focus on the intended goal of change into a pre-determined shape; for example, formation into a competent priest or minister, or the formation of one's character towards Christlikeness. Paul addresses the Galatians: "My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ..."[37] Formation takes a long-range view. Transformation, though, centres more on the process of radical change itself into something that cannot be known previously with much precision. Paul encourages the Romans to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds."[38] Transformed into what? We do not know; the emphasis is upon the existential shift that occurs more than its goal.

Formation and transformation are intertwined. Experiences of transformation punctuate our Christian and human walk—encounters tattooed on our souls, whether ecstatic or painful, momentary or gradual—that bring about shifts in beliefs, behaviour and character. Collectively these make sense from a formational perspective of how and into whom the Spirit is shaping them over time. Transformation centres on the change 'from–to', whilst formation has the longitudinal journey in view.[39] When transformation comes into view, I will use '(trans)formation' to highlight this interconnection. Chiefly, though, formation is my focus since I desire to teach the craft of theological reflection within a broad, longitudinal perspective: the journey of self, others and world towards the now and not yet of God's good life of *shalom*.

Formation is also often used interchangeably with *spiritual formation*, or *personal*

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[32] E.g., Rom 6:19, 22, 2 Cor 7:1, Eph 4:24.
[33] E.g., 1 Cor 2:6, Eph 4:13, Phil 3:15, Col 1:28, Col 4:12, Heb 5:14, Jas 1:4.
[34] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Volume 32: Career of the Reformer II*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and George Forell (Saint Louis, MO: Fortress, 1958), 24.
[35] Rom 12:2, 2 Cor 3:18.
[36] Ball, *Transforming Theology*.
[37] Gal 4:19 (NRSV). Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations in this thesis are taken from the New Revised Standard Bible Copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.
[38] Rom 12:2.
[39] This is similar to McLaren's delineation between spiritual *experiences*—instances of heightened awareness of the transcendent—and spiritual *experience*—the daily journey of living and walking with God within which such instances sometimes occur. Brian D McLaren, *Naked Spirituality: A Life with God in Twelve Simple Words* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), 7–16.

formation. This presents two difficulties. Firstly, it can diminish the holistic nature of formation. The linkage is understandable; formation does focus on the identity development of the person, which connects strongly to foci of spiritual/personal formation such as relatedness to God, the affections, desires, character, authenticity, biography and personality. However, formation is broader than just these aspects of human development. Sometimes the emphases of spiritual/personal formation neglect (or even are highlighted in contradistinction to) cognitive or behavioural dimensions of formation; think of phrases like 'We need to move beyond the head to the heart!', or 'It's all about being, not doing!' I will contend we may better understand spiritual formation as one facet of formation, interdependently related to theological and ministerial formation. This must be the case if theological reflection for formation is to be both holistic and integrating.

The other problem is that spiritual formation can tend to focus on the individual at the expense of the communal. Formation is deeply personal, but it is never private; as I will argue, *shalom*-oriented formation sees individual formation deeply intertwined with communal and even cosmic formation. Therefore, I will tend to use formation and Christian formation interchangeably and use spiritual formation as a particular dimension of this phenomenon. This aids economy in writing and is not to suggest formation is only the domain of the Christian faith. Indeed, formation is a central concern for many if not all religions, and also pertains to broader aspects of human development. Muslim, Buddhist and indigenous spiritualities, and psychology, neuroscience and social sciences—such sources offer critical wisdom and enrichment for conversations around Christian formation. Commensurate with a postfoundational theology approach, I will engage with such sources as space allows. However, the limits of this project necessary preclude the detailed engagement each deserve in their own right.

Theological Reflection for Formation

In the context of this research, then, *theological reflection for formation* refers to *meaning-making from experience in relation to faith that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation oriented towards shalom.* This highlights the mutually conditioning relationship between reflection and formation.

Attentiveness to longitudinal perspectives of formation inform and shape the conversations, discernment and embodiment in the craft of theological reflection for formation. Experiences are not isolated and punctiliar, but rather part of a connected stream of experience.

Theological reflection is thus formed by both history and eschatology. In particular, meaning-making is inherently teleological; we interpret experience and cultivate our world according to our visions of the good. This thesis argues that *shalom* reflects the heart of God's good for the world, communities and individuals, and is thus an appropriate *telos* for theological reflection for formation.

In turn, theological reflection is itself a (trans)formational activity; our adventures in theological reflection upon life shape life itself. We may understand this in various ways. For instance, Le Cornu uses the frameworks of internalisation and externalisation to explain the existential change experienced through reflection.[40] She draws from educational theory to explain how meaning-making through reflection promotes the "construction of individual biographies, the growth of different forms of self, and a more subtle overall existential change"[41] through the process of internalisation.[42] This begins with a conscious awareness of an experience leading to the identification of its different facets and how the reflector relates to them. It then moves through three stages of reflection: surface knowing,[43] to deep knowing,[44] to tacit knowing.[45] The result is existential change, or (trans)formation.

Le Cornu's schema accords with Meek's covenant epistemology, which provides the epistemological platform for this research as outlined in my methodology.[46] Drawing upon and developing Polanyi's personal knowledge through subsidiary-focal integration,[47] Meek contends knowing is transformational, not just informational, because it is 'interpersoned'—a thoroughly anthropological endeavour that is relationally and covenantally constituted.[48] The knower struggles with forming coherent meaning through indwelling various subsidiary clues to see connections between them. Insight is not manufactured as much as received when a larger framework for meaning emerges, be it gradually or suddenly. Contact with 'the real' occurs

[40] Alison Le Cornu, "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 3.1 (2006): 11–36; Le Cornu, "Meaning, Internalization, and Externalization."
[41] "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," 11.
[42] Le Cornu, "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," 14; Le Cornu, "Meaning, Internalization, and Externalization," 285.
[43] Surface knowing is focused on the 'sign', the elements or information in view.
[44] Deep knowing is focused on the 'signified', desiring to look beyond the information to seek meaning through making connections.
[45] Tacit knowing is an inarticulable knowing where "external knowledge has been so absorbed into people's beings through the process of reflection that it is now part of them." Le Cornu, "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," 14.
[46] Meek, *Loving to Know*. See 'Methodology'.
[47] Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 4.
[48] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.

because now new vistas, previously unimagined, are opened. In coming to know, the knower is further questioned and expanded,[49] and in the process they are not only transformed, but transformatively known. If this is true for reflection and knowing in general, it is certainly so for *theological* reflection. We seek to know God as we explore an event, issue or circumstance, but in the process, we discover God intimately knows us. What Le Cornu and Meek both emphasise, Paul succinctly infers in his imperative to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."[50] Thus, theological reflection for formation is attuned to existential change because it views reflection as more than just a robotic exercise in problem-solving.

The theological reflection literature developed over recent decades has offered more critically systematised approaches aimed at concrete outcomes.[51] This is essential if it is to respond to Woodward and Pattison's charge that "practical theology will always be vulnerable to the criticism of impracticality or uselessness unless it can really demonstrate what it achieves and that it is not simply going around in ever-complexifying methodological circles."[52]

However, when the emphasis is upon rigour leading to results, theological reflection can be in danger of losing its relational, playful, beautiful, mysterious and fundamentally human character. Such emphases are particularly important when introducing theological reflection to students. They need to encounter ways in which theological reflection carries its own aesthetic, not just ascetic.[53] As Swinton explains, "theological reflection is ... not a 'technology' within which

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[49] With Meek, I will at times employ this phrase—'the real'—to interconnect knowing 'in general' with knowing God. Though not explicitly explained, Meek frequently uses 'the real' to emphasise the interpersoned nature of coming to know reality. 'Reality' is less a static 'thing' to be acquired, mastered or comprehended, and more a dynamic gift that reveals and apprehends. She employs notions of common grace and anticipative knowing (what Polanyi called "tacit foreknowledge of yet undiscovered things," cited in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 174) to affirm Frame's assertion that all knowing, in some way, is a knowing of God. So 'the real' reflects how knowing God, world and self are intricately connected. For Meek "this gracious prospect [that] you can be on the way to knowing something … makes sense of how a Christian can both know God and not yet know God, and of how an unbeliever can not know God, and yet know him. It makes sense of how, in coming to know God (or anything), you can experience surprising recognition and find yourself having been the one known. It makes sense [of how] the act of knowing prototypes the act of knowing God" *Loving to Know*, 175–176. This accords strongly with a contemplative worldview, discussed in chapter four, which affirms God as "above all and through all and in all." Eph 4:6.

[50] Rom 12:2. See also John Williams, "The Mirror of Learning: Towards a Theology of Reflection in Christian Education," *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* 15.1 (2011): 53–64, who argues that reflection is itself transformative because of its relational context.

[51] E.g., Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*; Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Francis Ward, *Theological Reflection: Sources* (London: SCM, 2010); James Woodward, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009).

[52] Cited in Le Cornu, "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," 12.

[53] This point is made by James Whitehead, "The Practical Play of Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis Mudge and James Poling (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), 36–54.

theological theory is applied to particular situations. It does not find its value in utility and effectiveness but in faithfulness."[54] He notes that while it does have a skilfulness to it, developed from practise and familiarity, this does not exist apart from the contemplative character out of which it operates. "If this is so," he concludes,

> then theological reflection might best [be] understood as a virtue which contributes to the development of Christian character which in turn enables approaches to exploring the Christian tradition which are faithful and transformative both to the theologian and to the particular situations and experiences she is examining.[55]

Whatever else theological reflection is or does, it is first and foremost a human activity that is inspired, animated and guided by God. Theological reflection for formation is not "satisfied with learning more about God but with leading a person more directly to encounter God."[56] It is not a vending machine for quick answers, but a spiritual practice in and of itself. True, theological reflection for formation involves technique and ascetic discipline. But this is only fruitful as far as it develops our muscle memory, knack or intuitive 'feel for the game'[57] for reflective, deep, wise, congruent, intentional living within the ever-flowing love, grace and work of the Trinity.

The conventional name for this shape for theological reflection is *habitus* which, as Ballard and Pritchard explain, "engages every part of the personality … it insists on keeping together mind and heart, for it is about the will and emotions. In other words, we are concerned with building spirituality."[58] *Habitus* connects to 'habit', but not in the sense of repetitive action without thought or intent. *Habitus* describes an orientation of one's whole being, a way of being in the world. Wood says *habitus*

> combines a sense of "capacity" with a sense of "disposition," as the treatment of wisdom as a *habitus* readily illustrates. Being wise takes more than a yearning to be wise, or a firm resolution to act wisely; a capacity for intelligent decision and action is also required. At the same time that capacity alone does not make one wise, for one may have the capacity and fail to exercise it. We would not say of a person (except in jest) 'He's very wise, he just never acts like it.' 'Being wise' entails exhibiting that wisdom fairly consistently in one's conduct; it is a matter of disposition or tendency as well as ability. Perhaps 'aptitude,' with

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[54] John Swinton, "Is Theological Reflection a Technique or a Virtue? Listening to 'Hidden' Voices," in *Theological Reflection - Conference Papers* (presented at the BIAPT Symposium: What is theological reflection?, Cardiff, UK: British & Irish Association for Practical Theology, 2004), http://www.biapt.org.uk/tr5.shtml.
[55] Swinton, "Is Theological Reflection a Technique or a Virtue? Listening to 'Hidden' Voices."
[56] Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, x.
[57] Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 79–80.
[58] Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society*, second edition. (London: SPCK, 2006), 74.

its combination of ‘ability’ and ‘inclination,’ comes closer now to conveying the sense of *habitus* than does ‘habit.’[59]

My preference, along with others,[60] is to view theological reflection for formation as a craft. A craftsman works at his trade with tried and tested tools, materials and processes. He consults with, learns and appreciates objective critique from others, yet develops confidence in bringing his own creativity, passion and self to the task. He never feels he has arrived; continual learning and growth create interest and intrigue in moving from simple to more nuanced projects. Both past experience and a vision of future projects inform his current work. Critically, he engages with his craft not because he ought to but because he loves to. His work is an expression of his unique character and self because a craftsman is a lover. Heidegger, speaking of a cabinet maker, contends that “relatedness to wood is what maintains the whole craft. Without that relatedness, the craft will never be anything but empty busywork.”[61] Because of this relationship, the craft itself is life-giving and meaningful, not just productive. This reflects the creative relationality of the Trinity in which theological reflection for formation finds its source.

Theological reflection for formation as craft helps hold an awareness of how models oscillate along various continuums, such as ascetic–aesthetic, science–art, technique–virtue, simplicity–depth, specific–general and individual–communal. George Box, an industrial statistician, asserted that “all models are wrong, but some are useful.”[62] Models are like stopping a propeller in full flight to examine the blades which are otherwise indistinguishable at full throttle. They can offer clarity, but also risk oversimplifying complex realities.[63] As Cameron et al. note, “the problem with all process models of experience is that they can be misunderstood as representing a rational, sequential and invariable patterning of reality,” whereas in practice theological reflection is usually “much more complex and messier than the model implies.”[64] Such messiness is in no small part due to how, as Le Cornu notes, people’s ways of believing, learning and doing

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[59] Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 87.

[60] Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*, Expanded edition. (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1995); Veling, *Practical Theology*, 15; Howard W Stone and James O Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, Third edition. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 29.

[61] Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.

[62] George E. P. Box and Norman R. Draper, *Empirical Model–Building and Response Surfaces* (New York; London: Wiley Blackwell, 1986), 424.

[63] This image is drawn from James Whitehead and Evelyn Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, Revised and updated. (Oxford: Sheed & Ward, 1999), 54–55.

[64] Helen Cameron, John Reader, and Victoria Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing: Pastoral Practice and Public Theology* (London: SCM, 2012), 7–8.

theological reflection vary greatly.[65] No theological reflection model accounts for all continuums, experiences or learning styles. Their value, rather, lies in offering a place to start and a way forward that is like "a good multi-purpose screwdriver [that] improves upon what weak fingers and fragile fingernails cannot do."[66] The notion of craft helps students engage in theological reflection for formation with an awareness of the invitations and limits of models while keeping various continuums in mind.

2 Corinthians 3:18 further enriches our understanding of the connections between reflection and (trans)formation:

> And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (NIV).
>
> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (NIV, 1984).

In 3:1–17 Paul has been contrasting the Israelites' muted and fearful access to the glory of God, obscured by Moses' veiled face, with the bold and unveiled approach now available to believers through and in Christ. In 3:18 he wonderfully accentuates the mysterious, continual, gracious, communal, revelatory, transformational and pneumatic dimensions of the process, particularly when we consider two of Paul's words: κατοπτριζόμενοι/*katoptrizomenoi* (to contemplate, reflect) and μεταμορφούμεθα/*metamorphoumetha* ('we are being transformed').

Κατοπτριζόμενοι, as illustrated in the variance of the two translations above, carries some ambiguity. This provides scope for a twofold interpretation, also present in the English word, 'reflection'. The first is a sense of beholding. The focus for reflection is τὴν δόξαν κυρίου, 'the glory of the Lord'—God's redemptive presence and ministry in Christ mediated by the Spirit that surpasses the glory of the old covenant (3:7–11). τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι can mean to gaze upon, concentrate upon or contemplate God's glory, the wonder of his presence and purpose (as per NIV translation). Theological reflection for (trans)formation is a beholding of who God is in our midst and what God is doing; it is a spiritual practice because such contemplation occurs face to face with the Trinity. However, the phrase can also convey the idea of reflecting back, mirroring or imaging God's glory (as per NIV 1984 translation). Something of the glory of God's new

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[65] Le Cornu, "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," 24–27.
[66] Mueller, cited in Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 46.

covenant in Christ is now being played out or mirrored in our own lives. Reflection, then, is both a *contemplation upon* and *imaging of* God's person and glorious salvific work.

By parsing μεταμορφούμεθα, Smail notes three aspects of the outcome of reflection as a (trans)formative process.[67]

Firstly, the tense is *present continuous*. Our formation through reflection is ongoing and layered. Engaging in theological reflection around a particular aspect of our spirituality, theology or ministry experience is not an isolated, neatly packaged process; it is a life-long craft honed through continual practice.

Secondly, the voice is *passive*. There is no 'we are transforming ourselves'; rather, our (trans)formation through reflection is a wondrous and mysterious gift of God's grace. Theological reflection is often difficult and strenuous, painful and disorienting. Hope, however, lies in its pneumatic character. Ultimately formation through reflection comes not from our own spiritual, theological or ministerial competence or acumen,[68] but "from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Finally, the verb is *plural*. Reflection for formation is both intrapersonal and interpersonal, reflecting the way that formation towards *shalom* is not just a private affair but also has communal and cosmic dimensions. We always undertake the theological task in the presence of the community, past and present. Smail likens it to the light of Christ in the centre of a circle surrounded by all who would receive and follow him, holding up mirrors. He shines and radiates the Father's glorious love which by the Spirit we receive and then reflect outwards. Our reflection is imperfect, and it requires the community of glory to image the glory of God's love in Christ fully.[69]

Theological reflection for formation, then, is an ongoing, graced, and relational craft of meaning-making from experience that is attuned to and nurturing of a long-term pilgrimage of faith in and towards *shalom*.

Why Develop an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation?

Keeping 'You' in the Picture

Humans do theological reflection. *Persons*—not machines. They have unique stories, bodies,

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[67] *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians* (London; Sydney; Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), 24–36.
[68] Cf. 1 Cor 3:4–6: "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."
[69] Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 28.

relationships and personalities. And being *theo*logical reflection, they are persons with some degree of spiritual experience of and orientation towards the divine. So, the existential experience of faith in the context of unique identity and personhood is a critical, indeed unavoidable conversation partner in theological reflection. Spirituality and personhood have an important voice in the conversation.

This, however, is not always obvious or emphasised. For instance, Thompson et al. devote the first six chapters of their study guide to theological reflection introducing definitions and models, the Scriptures in theological reflection, the experience of the *kairos* moment and the *chronos* of daily practice.[70] Only at the end of their section on elements and resources do they address theological reflection and personality, helping students explore different facets of selfhood in the reflective process. They begin chapter seven by saying: "So far we have kept 'you' out of the picture, discounting the huge impact the emotions and personality of the practitioner will inevitably have on the process." While (they assert) we can still do theological reflection, "better results will follow if allowances are made" for individual differences. With a sense of inevitability and resignation, they contend that the subjectivity of one's "personality, emotions and learning style will be present anyway," thus bringing with it "a danger that what is asserted as objective truth may be the result of unacknowledged personal bias or distortion."[71] Attending to self in theological reflection, then, is focused on limiting the damage subjectivity is bound to cause by skewing theological knowing. Elsewhere they assert that prayer and theological reflection—or specifically, *Progressing Theological Reflection* (PTR)—"are distinct and not at all substitutes for each other," and that "PTR has a lot to receive from prayer, and a lot to offer it."[72] Their emphasis is thus upon a complementary but separate relationship between reflection and prayer. The overall sense is that theological reflection can involve spirituality and personhood, perhaps with mutual benefit, but only with judicious care.[73]

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[70] Judith Thompson, Stephen Pattison, and Ross Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, Second edition. (London: SCM, 2019).
[71] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 133.
[72] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 122, 125.
[73] In the first edition of their work the authors assert: "Prayer and PTR are not the same. In prayer, the focus is on knowledge and love of God, and the means to that knowledge and love is life itself, and the understanding of life that scripture and tradition help to shape. In PTR the focus is on understanding our experience, and learning to act in the world more fully, deeply and reflectively in light of the God we believe to be revealed in creation, scripture and tradition. But these perspectives are complementary. Both in prayer and in PTR, God, the world and the believer are brought closer to one another." Judith Thompson, Stephen Pattison, and Ross Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection* (London: SCM, 2008), 118–19.

Others repeat this pattern. Stone and Duke keep their helpful chapter on spirituality and reflection at the end of their text; their emphasis throughout is upon theological reflection as thinking, but then almost as an addendum, prayerful and faith-ful integration is encouraged in the process to ensure theology isn't just an intellectual exercise.[74] Ballard and Pritchard emphasise theological reflection as the nexus between theory and practice;[75] only in the final chapter is a spirituality explored that might "be equal to the task" to support this dialect.[76] Likewise, though Green argues that spirituality, prayer and worship must underpin every part of theology, these are left to the last chapter; his activity and contextually focused approach is concerned to guard against theology being reduced to a 'personal walk with God' approach where prayer, supposedly, has little practical outworking.[77] While the Whiteheads assert that "regular prayer should be included"[78] and acknowledge that pastoral reflection "carries implications not only for ministerial education but for spirituality and personal maturity as well,"[79] personhood or spiritual themes are not explicit voices in their three-way conversation between experience, tradition and culture.[80]

My question is this: if theological reflection's nature is inherently anthropological—a wholly human and personed endeavour undertaken in the presence of the Living God, whether communally or individually—then how can we possibly be kept 'out of the picture' in theological reflection? How can we set aside our uniquely personed, existential, storied, 'identitied', vital, spirit-ed and bodied selves? The reality is that our own biographies, personalities, affections, bodies and so on are all in play in our meaning-making, whether we realise this—and attend to, even harness such aspects of our selves—or not.

This is a central tenet of talking the walk. Theological reflection is not just about connecting the tenets of theology with the realities of ministry contexts. Wolfteich contends that "any theology is impoverished when separated from the lived experience of faith and from critical study of that experience. Practical theology, if it is to be theology, must attend to spirituality and must

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[74] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 123–29.
[75] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, chap. 4.
[76] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, chap. 12.
[77] Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology*, Revised and updated edition. (London; New York, NY: Mowbray, 2010), 154.
[78] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 104.
[79] *Method in Ministry*, 74.
[80] For an example outside of the theological reflection literature, see Sharan B. Merriam and Laura L. Bierema, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013). Though they too include a chapter on spirituality and learning, it is clear—just from their title alone—that overall, learning is about the interface between theory and practice.

develop methods appropriate to that subject matter."[81] This insight cuts to the heart of what it means to know, reflect and make meaning as an essentially unified human being. Spirituality and personhood—intrinsically connected and collected together in this study as the 'you' of those doing the reflecting—must be more than just complementary but essentially separate addendums to theological reflection. They must provide an identifiable and legitimate voice in the conversation if theological reflection is to be both holistic and integrating.

Graham et al.'s conception of theological reflection as the "dialogical relationship between the practice of ministry and the resources of theological understanding" [82] represents the predominant conception in the current literature.[83] Hoeft says that "in practical theology, practice and theory are explored in their mutual relationship to one another."[84] Theological reflection is important, says Ward, because "everyone should and can think theologically about practice."[85] The real business of theological reflection seems to be the theory–practice dialogue where theology and ministry—thought and action, belief and behaviour, orthodoxy and orthopraxis—critique and shape one another.[86] I contend that theological reflection—and by extension, practical theology—needs to undertake a further, explicit shift towards a *trialogical*, *theory–practice–persons* interface.[87] Graham implies this in her consideration of practical theology as a form of action research, with reflexivity as a critical aspect:

> If practical theologians wish to add the tools of action research to their repertoire, they may have to address the question of whether it is appropriate to 'leave themselves off the

[81] "Animating Questions: Spirituality and Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 13.1 (2009): 122.
[82] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 171.
[83] See also Stephen Pattison, "Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection," in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, ed. Stephen Pattison and James Woodward (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 138.
[84] Jeanne Hoeft, "Assessment of Formation and Assessment as Formative," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 23.2 (2020): 75.
[85] Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), chap. 6.
[86] See also Pamela Cooper-White and Michael Cooper-White, *Exploring Practices of Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), § Introduction.
[87] By this I am not referring to an order for doing theology, but rather that the key interface in practical theology is trialogical, not dialogical. I consistently contend that any dimension of the trialogue is a valid starting point. I also use 'persons' rather than 'person' deliberately. Talking the walk is for individuals who must ultimately take responsibility for their own *habitus* of theological reflection. However, the plural 1) reflects the way in which individuals never, strictly, reflect in isolation, as per Meek's insistence that knowing is not only personed but rather interpersoned; 2) allows for communities to reflect collectively—a congregation or board or team can talk the walk along the Emmaus Labyrinth together, just as much as individuals; 3) explicitly counters the accusation that theological reflection for formation, with an emphasis upon/inclusion of spirituality and personhood, collapses into individualistic and overly subjective introspection; and 4) aligns with talking the walk's emphasis upon the importance of *listening with* in theological reflection.

page', or whether their own reflexivity within a given research context is necessary not only to understand the descriptive dynamics of a situation but as a form of attentiveness towards what Swinton and Mowat call 'God's redemptive practices'.

Broader reflective arts discourse resonates with this. For instance, Harvey et al. argue that

> reflection is a deliberate and conscientious process that employs a person's cognitive, emotional and somatic capacities to mindfully contemplate [on] past, present or future (intended or planned) actions in order to learn, better understand and potentially improve future actions.[88]

An emphasis upon theological reflection for formation can help to bring about this shift.

In this thesis, then, theological reflection for holistic formation pivots on the relationship between *theology*, *ministry* and *spirituality*. I use these three words as shorthand for *wellsprings of theology*,[89] *ministry in context* and *spirituality and personhood*. In the context of formation, how do they relate? Until now, I have used the common notion of integrating, but a richer idea developed in chapter two is that of a 'coinhering' relationship. Coinherence describes "things that exist in essential relationship with another, as innate components of the other."[90] So a coinhering theology–ministry–spirituality trialogue asserts each dimension is only itself in dynamic, unfolding and conversational relationship with the other two. If we are to develop "genuinely reflective ministry practitioners,"[91] then the pedagogical starting point is that, whether well-formed or otherwise, these *already* exist in dynamic, interdependent and forming relationship in the student. They are not independent entities that ought to be 'brought together' more through integration. Theological reflection for holistic formation contemplates and cultivates this extant, coinhering relationship.

Keeping 'you' in the picture is important not only for theological education students' holistic formation, but also those they will encounter and lead, and with whom they will theologically reflect. A fundamental goal is for Christian leaders to be able to help others do life-giving and formational theology, for themselves and with one another, in ways that nurture journeys in and towards *shalom*, whatever the context. A theory–practice–persons approach can

[88] Marina Harvey, Chris Baumann, and Vanessa Fredericks, "A Taxonomy of Emotion and Cognition for Student Reflection: Introducing Emo-Cog," *Higher Education Research & Development*.0 (2019): 3.
[89] I explain my choice of 'wellsprings' over the conventional 'sources' in the section *Listening Up to Wellsprings of Theology* in chapter five. It emphasises the interpersoned nature of coming to know and that theology is a life-giving fount that nourishes and feeds us, not a databank we access when we need information.
[90] Paul J. Spaeth, "The Concept of Co-Inherence In the Writings of Charles Williams," *The Inklings*, n.d., http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/inklings/coinheretance.htm.
[91] Francis, "Developing Genuinely Reflective Ministry Practitioners."

help theological reflection become more vital and accessible for disciples in all walks of life, not just for the seminary professor or trained Christian leader. Theology this way is not done at arm's length; it nurtures the essential and dynamic relationship in daily life between head, hands *and* heart. Graduates exposed to and disposed towards such holistic meaning-making can help others grow in it for themselves.

Moreover, it is not just 'you'—it is 'you-in-relationship', in community with fellow pilgrims. Thus, the necessary shift is towards theory–practice–*persons*, not just theory–practice–*person*. For the sake of both students and those they will lead and journey with, we must keep 'you–in–community' in the picture in a much more deliberative, trialogical and coinhering way. Talking the walk—one approach to theological reflection for formation—seeks to do this.

Attending to the 'you' in doing theology connects to the objectivity–subjectivity continuum and the tense relationship between spirituality and theology in recent centuries.[92] Waaijman explains how spiritual theologies from the end of the 19th century most often presented a deductive and systematic exposition of dogma and historical sources to provide the normative application to the spiritual life. "Spirituality is viewed as the appropriation of a certain sphere of ideas or values."[93] From the 1960s, commensurate with theology's 'turn to the subject' (e.g., Rahner),[94] an inductive reaction arose with spirituality as "an initiation into the experience of faith"[95] of one's being and the Absolute, common to all yet uniquely experienced. Spiritual theology's centre of gravity thus shifted to "the awakening and development of this common substratum of experience."[96] The lived experience of faith became the context from which spiritual themes arose and were arranged. Spirituality was guiding theology, or else ignoring it altogether, with the rise of primordial and counter spiritualities.[97]

As such there exists amongst some a reticence to emphasise self in theological reflection at the risk of weakened theological engagement, insufficient critical thought and an overly subjective underestimation of the capacity for self-delusion.[98] Theological reflection is felt to be in danger of becoming "too subjective and, therefore, open to the whims of individualism and a spiritualizing of

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[92] Although the centuries old maxim *lex orandi lex credendi*—'the rule of prayer/worship is the rule of belief'—points to a much older discussion. See p. 101.
[93] K. Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven, Belgium; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003), 383.
[94] Michael J. Scanlon, "A New Turn in Theology: The Material Turn," *1* 24.4 (2011): 61–62.
[95] Truhlar, cited in Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 385.
[96] Truhlar, cited in K. Waaijman, "What Is Spirituality?," *Acta Theologica* 27.2 (2007): 3.
[97] Waaijman, "What Is Spirituality?," 5–12.
[98] E.g., Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 34, 97.

experience."[99] This is always a real possibility. As Hunter argues, however, "if this dimension of theological reflection is ignored, the likelihood of unconscious self-deception on individual and social levels is far greater."[100] It is more fruitful and human to engage with an honest befriending rather than denial of oneself; this enables accounting for and engagement with embedded biases and formative personal narratives relevant to the meaning-making process. As Paver asserts, theological reflection must allow for the necessity to

> speak, declare, uncover, own, embrace and acknowledge our own self-deceptions ... Self-deception has the goal of overcoming pain, embarrassment, self-contradiction, and the possibility that it is linked with power. The implications for theological reflection concern the challenge of finding the safe sacred place to reveal to our own selves and to others our self-deceptions that allow the Gospel to address us, and the Spirit to transform us.[101]

But even more than that, what happens in us *matters*. The Spirit indwells us. So, our lives have meaning and have something to say in reflection! Sublimating spirituality in the reflection process will only likely inhibit authenticity in our journey. It is difficult to talk your walk if that walk only supports theological reflection as an addendum, rather than contributes to it in a substantial, vital way. To navigate its way towards a theory–practice–persons paradigm, then, theological reflection must be undergirded by an epistemology that takes both subjectivity and objectivity seriously, not setting them in opposition to one another but rather recognising their mutual interdependence. It must *accredit*—not merely *compensate* for—persons in the epistemic act. This thesis draws upon covenant epistemology to do just that.

Related Literature

The six contours of talking the walk are beginning to emerge. We can set them within talking the walk's *model*—the key features and assumptions that underpin the method—and *method*—the interlocking movements that outwork the model.[102]

The three contours of the model are: a holistic and coinhering theology–ministry–spirituality trialogue, reflecting a theory–practice–persons paradigm; *shalom* as the longitudinal *telos* of cosmic, communal and individual formation; and the communal, non-linear design of the

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[99] *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 79.

[100] Colin J. Hunter, "Supervised Theological Field Education: A Resource Manual" (Evangelical Theological Association, Melbourne, 2003), 38.

[101] Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 71.

[102] This helpful delineation between model and method in an approach to theological reflection was first articulated by Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, chap. 1. See also Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 152.

(road via) Emmaus–labyrinth juxtaposition, replete with the guiding metaphors of walking and talking. Together these shape the method's three interlocking contours: contemplative conversation, which integrates spiritual, theological and ministerial clues; imaginative discernment, which notices and names any *shalom*-shaped patterns emerging from that conversation; and courageous embodiment, which submits to the reality of discerned truths through cultivating *shalom* in concrete doing and practices that deepen.

The research's theological education context gives talking the walk's model and method a pedagogical orientation. It seeks to be sensitive to various continuums upon which the craft of theological reflection operates. In light of talking the walk's contours and context, the following survey briefly reviews the literature relevant to theological reflection for formation.

Both reflection and (trans)formative spirituality are important emphases in McAlpin's *Ministry That Transforms: A Contemplative Process of Theological Reflection.*[103] Grounded in her sojourn with Catholic volunteers reflecting theologically on their work with refugees, her four-step process involves contemplating experience, analysing the context, reflecting theologically, and integrating spirituality.[104] Spirituality represents the embodiment of faith. She stresses the importance of spirituality not only as a distinct conversation partner but also in the process itself, insisting that "the practice of prayer and contemplation throughout the theological reflection process is vital."[105] Despite this emphasis, McAlpin does not explore the relationship between her components beyond the notion of correlation or critical conversation;[106] there are hints of a mutually interdependent, coinhering relationship between them, but this is neither explicitly named nor developed. Her focus is also on the experience of change in transformation rather than the longitudinal perspective of formation, so no overarching goal (such as *shalom* or the kingdom of God) is in view. Nevertheless, by highlighting the contemplative dimension of theological reflection, she eschews a purely technocratic approach focused chiefly on a pastoral response to a situation. McAlpin emphasises this in her language of response as 'conversion'; theological reflection attends to the spiritual centre of the minister which births authentic response. As such, she argues that "ministry lived full-heartedly and reflectively can … lead to a profound spiritual

[103] Kathleen McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms: A Contemplative Process of Theological Reflection* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2009).
[104] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 99–111.
[105] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 25.
[106] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 14.

transformation of the one who ministers."[107] That is, theological reflection is a (trans)formative process in that it helps realise the potential for 'conversion' in relationships with God, self and others, lying latent within each ministry encounter. Within the simplicity–depth continuum McAlpin's schema is also decidedly practical and comprehensible, potentially making it more accessible to theological students than other models which, though rich in potential for reflection, are often quite complex and intricate.

Graham, Walton and Ward's survey of seven approaches[108] employs the lens of theological reflection as practical wisdom (*phrónēsis*) or discipleship. *Phrónēsis* helps us live well in responding to the "challenges of Christian formation and nurture, of articulating corporate identity and the encounter between church and world."[109] Formation is particularly in view in "'Theology by Heart': The Living Human Document" which gives special attention "to the self and the interior life as the primary space in which theological awareness is generated and nurtured,"[110] particularly through personal writing and performance. Reflexivity in theological reflection thus affirms the importance of spirituality as a conversation partner. Despite this, the authors "hope the divisions between 'systematic' and 'practical' theology might begin to be closed"[111] through their exploration of theological reflection. There is no mention of a further divide between both systematic and practical theology, and spiritual theology. That is, theory–practice rather than theory–practice–persons remains the core paradigm from which theological reflection operates to address questions and problems since "theological reflection is essentially a practical task."[112] Practicality is essential but can inadvertently emphasise the functionality of praxis over the relationality of formation in theological reflection.

Of particular relevance in Kinast's survey of five styles[113] is spiritual wisdom, whose

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[107] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, ix.
[108] The seven discussed are: 'Theology by Heart': The Living Human Document; 'Speaking in Parables': Constructive Narrative Theology; 'Telling God's Story': Canonical Narrative Theology; 'Writing the Body of Christ': Corporate Theological Reflection; 'Speaking of God in Public': Correlation; 'Theology-in-Action': *Praxis*; and 'Theology in the Vernacular': Local Theologies.
[109] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, Introduction.
[110] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, chap. 1.
[111] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 445.
[112] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 67.
[113] See Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?* The five styles are ministerial, spiritual wisdom, feminist, inculturation and practical. Kinast's terminology of 'styles' is particularly helpful in highlighting the interplay between form and content—the *way* in which we engage in theological reflection influences the *core material* we engage with in the process, and vice versa.

proponents include Groome,[114] and Killen and de Beer.[115] In contrast to medieval and modern conceptions of theology as systems of doctrines confined to academic settings, "Spiritual wisdom," he explains, "refers to the original meaning of theology ... [as] the wisdom proper to the life of the believer."[116] It thus attends to holistic growth in reflection. Killen and de Beer's seminal work takes the whole person seriously by tapping into the realm of affect as a critical aspect of theological reflection with attention to feelings and the imagination in their model.[117] Rather than dismiss feelings as a gateway to dangerous subjectivity, they recognise their critical role because "our capacity to feel, to respond with our entire being to reality, is the essence of our human nature as enfleshed spirits."[118] Feelings provide essential clues in meaning-making, providing a springboard for generating images to work with that, in turn, lead to insight. Both the affections and the imagination are crucial for theological reflection as a holistic endeavour. Groome emphasises holism in his concern not just for epistemic knowing, but ontological being. He refers to 'epistemic ontology' to signal the unity of knowing and being in his philosophical underpinnings for religious education. He calls this the 'ontological turn' in pedagogy, mirroring the broader shift towards student-centred learning. This epistemic ontology, in part, necessitates helping students grow holistically in wisdom in the Christian faith by engaging with their 'being' as viewed through bodily, mental and volitional/spiritual lenses; all function in concert to form our experience of 'self'.[119]

Neither Groome nor Killen and de Beer highlight the non-linear nature of longitudinal formation towards a *telos* such as *shalom*, nor do they explore the coinherent relationship between dimensions of self in reflection. Foley, though, comes closer to the idea of coinherence.[120] In his 'reflective believing'—a reimagining of theological reflection to offer a hospitable avenue for mutually enriching meaning-making across faith traditions—he employs *perichōresis* to understand the non-hierarchical and interpenetrating relations between head, heart and hands. Because of his desire for theological reflection that builds bridges rather than walls, he does not identify a *telos* for reflection such as *shalom* or the kingdom of God, since this immediately excludes those not from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

[114] Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).
[115] *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2014).
[116] *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?*, 16.
[117] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 26–40.
[118] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 27.
[119] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 85–90.
[120] Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*.

Paver specifically explores theological reflection as a method of integration in the theological education context and gives significant weight to personal spirituality in the process, alongside engagement with culture and faith tradition.[121] His approach springs from his own experience of deep incongruity between the "personal, professional and faith dimensions of [his] life"[122] while involved in clinical pastoral education in a cancer clinic, then later, through his illness with cancer. The result is an adaptation of the transcendental model,[123] an approach built upon the assertion that the "knowing subject is intimately involved in determining reality's basic shape."[124] Here theological reflection begins not with focusing upon broad themes of the tradition, but very much upon one's personal experience fully located in the "context and culture of God's love in a person's life."[125] Paver acknowledges that the introspection inherent in this model, which in his case includes exploring the interaction and integration of various 'selves'—his cancer cells, self-deception, faith, theology, love for and from his wife and family, a deep appreciation of the Eucharist etc.—is in danger of overt subjectivity.[126] Having an identifiable *telos* connected to the broader purposes of God—for instance, *shalom* or the coming of the kingdom—may help address this. In any case, though, the result is not just altered pastoral action, as with ministerial-oriented models, but the transformation, or indeed transcendence, of self. Paver attends more to the particular experience of transformation than the collective, longitudinal perspective of formation. His emphases are helpful, however, in seeking to address "the way other models neglect inner experience and spirituality."[127]

Ingram's DMin thesis notes this neglect too, particularly in the peer supervision groups in Fuller Seminary's field education program. Her impetus is to "restore unity to the triad of theology, spirituality and ministry practice" in the holistic formation and praxis of students, which is "the essential core of field education, indeed theological field education."[128] In the history of theological education, the marginalisation of spirituality, imprisonment of ministry practice to pragmatism and clericalism, and dislocation of theology from its contextual and spiritual moorings

[121] Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*.
[122] *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 2.
[123] Paver develops his transcendental model from the work of authors such as Bevans, Longeran, and especially McFague. See Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 66.
[124] Bevans, cited in Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 66.
[125] *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 78.
[126] *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 79.
[127] *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 66.
[128] Gwen A. Ingram, "Integrating Spirituality, Theology, and Ministry Practice in Field Education at Fuller Theological Seminary" (Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 2007), 181.

have fractured this unity. For Ingram, this necessitates a return in theological education to a formation focus for training students (in contrast to the reason-driven university model). This return is well served through reflective practice, with field education as the ideal space in which this formation might take place so that Fuller might more fully realise its stated goal of "helping students develop into spiritually mature reflective practitioners who can maintain their integrity and competency in ministry."[129] She stresses that

> field education cannot *create* students who are spiritually mature reflective practitioners, but it can *teach* a method of reflection in practice, *model* reflective practice through supervising mentors and theological reflection group facilitators, and *form* students through engaging them in communal reflective practice.[130]

'Spirituality' in Ingram's project is not just concerned with the student's relationship with God but is also closely entwined with their practice of ministry. A 'tripolar' model for spirituality is therefore employed, attending to the relations of integrity and solidarity with others and the student's practice of ministry (outward); the student's relationship with God (upward); and the student's personal transformation which shapes character (inward).

To an extent, Ingram offers a helpful response to Francis' call for "a genuine 'trialogue' between practical or situational reflection, theological reflection and personal reflection."[131] However, her model clearly angles towards a seminary/pastoral ministry context.[132] 'Ministry experience'—meaning vocational, pastoral ministry—is the starting point for theological reflection. A coinhering trialogue, by contrast, sees issues of theology or personal/spiritual experience as equally valid, indeed important ways into the reflective process for any Christian. Apart from the notion of spiritual maturity, Ingram doesn't articulate a theology, including the *telos*, of formation. She advocates for an 'outside-in' approach that seeks to bring together or balance the spirituality–theology–ministry triad through integration; a coinhering perspective, however, works 'inside-out' on the basis that in the student they are already vital dimensions of each other. This difference reveals itself in that despite her desire to restore the unity of the triad

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[129] Ingram, "Integrating Spirituality, Theology, and Ministry Practice in Field Education at Fuller Theological Seminary," 1.
[130] Ingram, "Integrating Spirituality, Theology, and Ministry Practice in Field Education at Fuller Theological Seminary," 2.
[131] Francis, "Developing Genuinely Reflective Ministry Practitioners," 198.
[132] Of course, Ingram is not alone in this emphasis. E.g., classically, Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, and most recently, Jim Wilson and Earl Waggoner, *A Guide to Theological Reflection: A Fresh Approach for Practical Ministry Courses and Theological Field Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020). My concern is that theological reflection loses its currency for laity when it is explicitly framed as an activity for those training in pastoral ministry.

by including the 'missing piece' of spirituality, her understanding of theological reflection still centres on a theory–practice interface—the integration of beliefs and actions—that is spiritually supported, enriched and authenticated.

Finally, while the Emmaus Road story in Luke 24 does feature in some approaches—for example, Cameron,[133] Cooper-White and Cooper-White[134] and Hunter[135]—it remains underdeveloped as an evocative resource to guide those learning to do theological reflection for formation. In particular, the conventional ending at verse 35 rather than 49, and emphasis upon 'to' rather than 'via' Emmaus, means the importance of the return journey and the struggle to embody discerned truths is not fully appreciated. Furthermore, the labyrinth is primarily a tool for personal, spiritual reflection, but as an archetype for both formation and the reflection process itself, it is surprisingly absent in the theological reflection literature. Nor, apart from a sermon by Rothaus,[136] does it appear to have been juxtaposed with the Emmaus Road narrative and mined for the riches this marriage offers.

Summary

Why develop an approach to theological reflection for formation? Because theological reflection, so central in ministerial training, is an activity full of human character that necessitates a shift from a theory–practice dialogue to a theory–practice–persons trialogue. Keeping 'you' in the picture through theological reflection for formation can play a part in helping theological education become more holistic and integrating. The survey above identifies a gap in the related literature in this regard. In response, this thesis develops an approach to theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation towards *shalom*, which is the *telos* of the gospel.

Methodology

This study is my theological reflection upon theological reflection. It develops a model and method in and of itself. Thus, my research methodology resonates with talking the walk's central thrust, and in doing so, demonstrates the very holistic and integrated character for which the project

[133] Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 11–15.
[134] Cooper-White and Cooper-White, *Exploring Practices of Ministry*.
[135] Hunter, "Supervised Theological Field Education: A Resource Manual," 26–30.
[136] Kyndall Rae Rothaus, "Labyrinth to Emmaus" (Sermon presented at the Covenant Baptist Church, San Antonio, TX, 4 May 2014), http://covenantbaptist.org/2014/05/06/labyrinth-to-emmaus/.

argues.

To address my research question—*What are the contours of an approach to theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation?*—my approach interweaves three methodologies commensurate with a theory–practice–persons paradigm, undergirded and facilitated by core facets of *covenant epistemology*.

Covenant Epistemology

Esther Meek lays the groundwork for covenant epistemology in *Longing to Know*,[137] expounds it in *Loving to Know*[138] and popularises it in *A Little Manual for Knowing.*[139] Meek argues that "we take as a paradigm, of all acts of knowing, the unfolding, covenantally constituted, interpersonal relationship."[140] This emboldens talking the walk as an approach for theological reflection characterised by pledged and unfolding holistic formation (walking), and interpersoned reflection through conversation (talking). The following aspects of covenant epistemology provide a touchstone throughout the study.

Our Western Default for Knowing is Defective

Meek critiques the Western "defective epistemic default."[141] It malforms our assumptions about knowing and is identifiable by seemingly irreconcilable dichotomies: knowledge vs. beliefs, facts vs. interpretation, reason vs. faith/emotion, theory vs. application/practice, objective vs. subjective, mind vs. body. This forces a false choice between objectivity/foundationalism/ positivism on the one hand and subjectivity/non-foundationalism/constructionism on the other.

At its extreme, the first epistemic set renders the real as passive—'nobody's home'—because knowledge is ultimately static, fixed data, a bunch of ones and zeros and nothing more. Knowledge is reduced to that which can be isolated, articulated and mastered—'factoids'—and is merely impersonal information. The second epistemic set, in its extreme, renders the real as non-existent—there can be no reality because knowing is only ever one's own construct and hermeneutic. Thus, in the epistemic default knowing is either ultimately impersonal, since the tainting self must be abstracted (as much as possible) in the knowing act, or only ever a product of

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137 Esther Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2003).
138 Meek, *Loving to Know*.
139 Esther Lightcap Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014).
140 Meek, *Longing to Know*, xiv.
141 Meek, *Loving to Know*, 395.

one's self and contextually coloured lenses.[142] The real is either passive or non-existent.[143]

> Our inherited paradigm, Meek contends, distorts what knowing actually is, such that
>
> even when we are going about knowing humanly, what we have been trained to see blinds us to what we are actually doing, which is actually working. It leads us to deemphasize the most important parts of the knowing event, rather than cultivate them.[144]

In this the Western defective epistemic default cuts against the grain of our humanness; that is what Meek contends covenant epistemology can help heal.

Knowing is (Polanyi's) Subsidiary-Focal Integration

Meek's vision is for a third way—an epistemic therapy that seeks to transcend, transform, even heal the dichotomies. Covenant epistemology draws heavily from and extends Michael Polanyi's 'personal knowledge' epistemology, characterised by subsidiary-focal integration.[145] Meek's summary of subsidiary-focal integration, as expounded in her earlier work *Longing to Know*, is that "knowing is the responsible human struggle to rely on clues to focus on a coherent pattern and submit to its reality."[146] Any knower, drawn by the desire to know, begins by struggling to explore and connect an indeterminate number of subjectively available clues. While some are articulable, many are tacit. In Polanyi's words, "*we know more than we can tell*."[147] Though essential in the knowing act, these clues nevertheless serve a greater purpose of integrating to reveal something larger, something new otherwise inaccessible to the knower. That is, they function as *subsidiaries* to pattern a *focal awareness* of what the knower seeks: the known, or the real. This contact with

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[142] Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 1.
[143] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 99.
[144] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 7.
[145] See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Corrected edition. (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago, 1962), vii. "I regard knowing as an active comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill. Skilful knowing and doing is performed by subordinating a set of particulars, as clues or tools, to the shaping of a skilful achievement, whether practical or theoretical. We may then be said to become 'subsidiarily aware' of these particulars within our 'focal awareness' of the coherent entity that we achieve. Clues and tools are things used as such and not observed in themselves. They are made to function as extensions of our bodily equipment and this involves a certain change of our own being. Acts of comprehension are to this extent irreversible, and also non-critical. For we cannot possess any fixed framework within which the re-shaping of our hitherto fixed framework could be critically tested.

Such is the *personal participation* of the knower in all acts of understanding. But this does not make our understanding *subjective*. Comprehension is neither an arbitrary act nor a passive experience, but a responsible act claiming universal validity. Such knowing is indeed *objective* in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality; a contact that is defined as the condition for anticipating an indeterminate range of yet unknown (and perhaps yet inconceivable) true implications. It seems reasonable to describe this fusion of the personal and the objective as Personal Knowledge."
[146] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.
[147] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago, 2011), 4.

the real is objective in that an indeterminate range of prospective implications, previously hidden, open up for us. We also see, retrospectively, that the clues we worked with—and even the initial questions—are transformed in their meaning beyond what we could possibly manufacture.

We can view subsidiary clues in three interlocking domains: world (situational), lived body (existential), and directions or authoritative guides (normative). These domains characterise the different ways in which various clues tend to contribute to knowing, yet they cannot be strictly distinguished; each pervades and is pervaded by the other two. In other words—I would say—their relationship is coinherent.[148]

Meek offers reading as a helpful example.[149] I presume you, a knower, are reading this thesis. My ideas are what you seek to know, and reading is a key act in your knowing. The 'world' you are exploring is my thesis; your 'body' includes your eyes, cognitive faculties, attitude, interest, memory and everything else associated with the act of meaning-making through reading; and the 'normative words' are the conventions of reading and language learnt from childhood. When reading, your attention is not on the various letters and punctuation marks forming words and paragraphs on each page, how your body is functioning to enable you to read, or the rules for how language works. These things all function subsidiarily in service of bringing my thesis' ideas into focus. Yet those very keystrokes, bodily functions and language conventions are essential; without them, you cannot know any of my ideas. As a knower, your subsidiary awareness serves your focal awareness upon that which you are coming to know. In the knowing act, attention moves *from* the sentences—not *to* them—as through their coherent integration, the known becomes clear. Think also of the colloquialism, 'joining the dots', meaning that through connecting various vital subsidiary clues, the bigger picture crystallises. Magic eye puzzles, where an initial focus upon a 2D pattern gives way to a coherent 3D image appearing, is another helpful example Meek offers.[150]

Thus, Meek argues that subsidiary-focal integration allows us to "reconceive knowing in such a way that we accredit the knower's active contribution to knowing, while doing the same for the active contribution of the known—that is, the real."[151] Subjectivity and objectivity are mutually conditioning.

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[148] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 76.
[149] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 49.
[150] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 46–51.
[151] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 90.

Knowing is Interpersoned

Knowing, then, is far from distant and impersonal—such an approach is dehumanising. Rather, Polanyian epistemology affirms to Meek that knowing is "*fraught with intimations of the personed—actually, of the interpersoned* … Knowing displays telltale features that could only be present if *a person, or persons in relationship, is, or are, in the vicinity*."[152] 'Interpersoned' knowing moves "from third person to second person, from objectifying pronouncements to person-to-person conversation that asks, listens, and receives discovery as grace."[153] As such, drawing from Buber, knowing centres on an I-You encounter.[154] One such sign is reciprocity; in the knowing act, we do not *achieve* insight as much as *receive* it. We are not masters of what we discover; knowledge is gifted to us by the known and is thus fundamentally gracious. We do not comprehend truth, as much as find ourselves apprehended by it. And in coming to know, we find ourselves further questioned, challenged and expanded. In this way, the interpersoned is manifest in the reciprocity between the knower and the known, and the transformation that occurs in that knowing exchange. Meek explores this interchange in the language of dance and *perichōresis*,[155] together with the notion of stewardship that accompanies responsible knowing within the context of such a relationship.[156]

Meek sees "knowing as evolving via conversations on the way."[157] Conversation is the key way such transformational exchange occurs, and so knowing is most enriched when we engage with others who are also on the way in the knowing journey. She exemplifies conversational knowing by developing *Loving to Know* itself as a series of unfolding conversations, not only with Polanyi but also with others within and beyond philosophical circles.[158] She explains that conversation

> is a deep, meditative listening, which indwells the authoritative guidance of another, an encounter intensified by a passionate readiness to understand and be changed. I come away from each conversation with another piece of a whole picture that I am trying to apprehend and flesh out … The progress is not linear as much as it is repeatedly unfolding and transforming … I think that this is the way all knowing unfolds, that it is the way

[152] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.
[153] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 40.
[154] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 395; see chapter 9.
[155] Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 12.
[156] Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 6.
[157] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 397.
[158] These include Michael D. Williams, Lesslie Newbigin, Parker Palmer, John Macmurray, Martin Buber, and James Loder.

> knowing *should* be seen to unfold, and that it holds a clue to the heart of what knowing is about.[159]

Knowing is a non-linear, conversational, knowing-with.

Covenant is Meek's metonymy[160] or shorthand for the interpersoned: "interpersoned relationship is itself covenantally constituted, no matter how casual or intimate the relationship. I incorporate a notion of covenant *as* relationship."[161] Specifically, covenant is *pledged* relationship, which is what all responsible knowing involves. She points to Parker Palmer's insight that *truth* descends from *troth*; we betroth our whole selves in knowing because we love that which we seek without ever claiming to have exhausted its riches. Knowing is far from a cool hunt and gather for information; our longing to know is pivotal for the vector upon which it sets us. Desire is important.

In the process, knowing is not just transformative; it is being transformatively known.[162] Says Palmer: "To know truth is to allow one's self to be known as well, to be vulnerable to the challenges and changes that any true relationship brings."[163] This graced and transformational nature of knowing, in the context of pledged, covenantal relationship, is perhaps what is most surprising about the act of knowing. "It is not the knower who is in the driver's seat, but rather the yet-to-be-discovered reality. The real discloses itself, in its own time and way. And when it does, it is grace."[164]

Knowing is On the Way

In knowing the knower not only draws upon and moves *from* an indeterminate number of tacit clues as subsidiary-focal integration occurs. The movement is also *towards* the known in which the knower encounters an indeterminate number of tacit possibilities for further exploration. Knowing opens up, rather than nails shut. Discoveries themselves become "pregnant with future prospects."[165] This is what characterises Polanyi's epistemic realism—that when something is known and we encounter the real, our world explodes with new possibilities, rather than contracts

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[159] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 35–36.
[160] A metonymy is part of something larger that it points to. When we see a friend's new car and quip, "Nice wheels!", we do not mean *just* the actual wheels on the car—we mean the entire car itself. Yet the car does in fact have wheels as an essential component. Meek affirms covenant as the norm of the larger reality of the interpersoned reality to which it refers. Meek, *Loving to Know*, 180.
[161] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.
[162] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 63.
[163] Palmer, cited in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 40.
[164] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 37.
[165] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 97.

to mere proof statements.[166]

As such, all knowing is unfolding and, in Newbigin's words, "on the way."[167] Its timbre is formational, pilgrimed, longitudinal and exploratory, for "human knowing unfolds in a journeyed trajectory."[168] Knowledge is discovery not (just) explanation, (trans)formation not (just) information.[169] Meek explains that in reinstating the importance of anticipative and tacit knowing in subsidiary-focal integration, Polanyi subverted the conventional focus of knowing upon 'having arrived' through the explicit mastery of facts:

> Discovery—the first knowing, when we are moving from unknowing to knowing—rather than explanation is the more appropriate setting in which to find characteristic features of knowing, Polanyi believed. So it is appropriate to begin by speaking of acts of *coming* to know. It helps the discussion of knowing to being in a different place from the idea of knowledge as statements.[170]

Covenant epistemology offers a radical affirmation of our half-knowing, groping about for clues, puzzling and angst at being on the road to knowing whilst and not yet having 'arrived'. This is all as important as what we can articulate. "To say that knowing is being-on-the-way-to-knowing is to accredit the journey as itself epistemic."[171] As such, covenant epistemology affirms confidence over certainty. Meek explains that

> there is something about interpersonal knowing that helps us past the two-dimensionality of the epistemic default. Knowing a close family member person to person seems to transcend the either-ors, or merge them, or transform them. One need only consider the way we would approach the matter of knowledge in interpersonal relationship. It is not certainty so much as confidence. There is plenty of indeterminacy in truly understanding another person. To believe otherwise is the height of obnoxious presumption. But such knowing is palpable.[172]

Knowing, then, draws the knower in living more fully and confidently into the real without diminishing mystery, ambiguity and paradox in that knowing. "It is our privilege to invite the real respectfully, with solid hope of its surprising disclosure."[173] Knowing as 'on the way' is thus imbued with grace and gift; "you can be on the way to knowing something. You have to be on the

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[166] This is the focus of Esther Lightcap Meek, *Contact with Reality: Michael Polanyi's Realism and Why It Matters* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).
[167] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 36.
[168] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 423.
[169] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 419.
[170] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 68–69.
[171] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.
[172] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 88.
[173] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 87.

way to knowing things if you are ever going to make discoveries."[174] It is quite okay to half-know; that is the wonder of being human.

Knowing is for Shalom

Finally, covenant epistemology's metonymous reference to the interpersonal means knowing's purpose is *shalom*, because "the goal of human exchange with the world is not exhaustive certainty but dynamic, mutually healing, communion."[175] Knowing as information aims for results, performance, mastery, success, power and wealth. Knowing as interpersoned and loving transformation seeks wholeness, relationship, joy and peace.[176] "Seeking the *shalom* of the world is what we have always been called to do," says Meek. "Knowing should heal—both the knower and the known. It should bring *shalom*, rather than curse."[177] Acts of knowing and receiving the 'Aha!' of insight precipitate the release, satisfaction and peace that accompany the resolution and wholeness of things coming together. Knowing—for both the knower and the known—brings healing. And in the reciprocity of knowing, the communion of *shalom* is experienced. As such, "great lovers make great knowers."[178]

Key facets of covenant epistemology summarised here provide a robust and enriched epistemological grounding for my research methodology. They bolster and enable a weaving together of postfoundational theology, action research and autoethnography. Together these resonate with Meek's subsidiary domains of word–world–body and reaffirm a theory–practice–persons paradigm for doing theological reflection for formation.

Postfoundational Theology

Covenant epistemology seeks to heal and transform the foundational–non-foundational dichotomy. This intent resonates strongly with a postfoundational approach to theology. Postfoundationalism is "sensitive for both the danger of relativity and subjectivity in a multiverse rationality and of the rigidity and false claims of the universal rationality."[179] It takes the individual's personal and local context for reflection seriously, and yet also "points creatively beyond the confines of the local community or culture toward a plausible form of cross-contextual

[174] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 175.
[175] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 400.
[176] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 91.
[177] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 473.
[178] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 40.
[179] J.C. Müller, "Postfoundational Practical Theology for a Time of Transition," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 67.1 (2011): 4.

and interdisciplinary conversation."[180] That is, it seeks to walk 'a third way' between relativism/non-foundationalism, and positivism/foundationalism.

Kärkkäinen explains that in postfoundational theology, "theologians cannot simply presuppose the truth of the Christian tradition but must be concerned in an ongoing way with the question of the truth of their central assertions."[181] To do this task well, theology "must engage in continuous ecumenical and interdisciplinary dialogue."[182] I develop my theology this way through engagement with bibliographic and conversational research methods from a variety of sources. I draw from my discipline (practical theology), field (Christian theology), educational setting (Protestant Evangelical, liberal arts) and denominational heritage (Lutheran), yet also seek a "transversal rationality" beyond these domains. I also draw from biblical studies, systematic theology, and Catholic, Reformed and Eastern perspectives.[183] Moreover, fields such as philosophy, social science, social work and psychology also have a voice. This approach requires an awareness of and willingness to change my own perspectives through an openness to other viewpoints drawn from both within and beyond Christian discourse. Such is the formational and conversational nature of theological reflection for formation.

Action Research Praxis

Covenant epistemology also addresses the theory–practice divide in the defective epistemic default, where knowledge is only rationally proven theory statements, to be physically and practically applied. Instead, for Meek, "knowing is action; theory is always embedded in responsible, active, interpersonal context, and only makes sense in that context. 'Truth' unlived is not truth. All truth is bodily lived."[184] This accords strongly with an action research praxis—an 'enacted-truth' methodology grounded in the mutually conditioning theory–practice dialogue through intentional enquiry into and evaluation of one's work as it unfolds. Indeed, authors such as Graham, and Swinton and Mowat, argue practical theology itself may be conceived as a form of action research, with an emphasis upon practical wisdom (*phrónēsis*) arising from reflecting and

[180] Sung Kyu Park, "A Postfoundationalist Research Paradigm of Practical Theology," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 66.2 (2010), http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/849/1047.
[181] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 1:48.
[182] Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 1:12.
[183] Müller, "Postfoundational Practical Theology for a Time of Transition," 4.
[184] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 413.

theorising *in situ*.[185] McNiff suggests three motivators for an action research approach.[186]

The first is improving one's practice. Action research has a pragmatic edge. I teach at Tabor College of Higher Education in Adelaide, Australia,[187] in the faculty of Ministry, Theology and Culture (MTC). MTC students are predominantly Caucasian, though ethnic diversity is increasing. They are usually committed Christians from mainline, Protestant Evangelical and Pentecostal backgrounds, though theological and ecclesial variety is increasing. And commonly they are interested in professional ministry-oriented vocations, though these continue to stretch beyond conventional pastoral ministry roles.[188] I have taught *Formation* and *Theological Reflection* annually since 2009, both of which are core units for most MTC students. This experience provides a key action research context, especially through my complete restructure of the *Theological Reflection* unit in 2018 with further refinement over 2019-2020 to reflect the evolving shape of this research. With each cycle, the research has brought greater depth to my teaching, and teaching and writing for students have forced greater clarity in my research, providing a guardrail against abstraction. Each has refined the other. The final chapter features examples of student critical experience reports, student feedback and other applications of talking the walk, which add illustrative value to the research's central findings. The refinement of my own pedagogy also shapes the research. Drawing from Shaw,[189] I ask myself, 'Does my teaching make affective connections? cognitive sense? practical difference?' I try to keep these questions close to the surface in my writing as well.

The second is generating theories about learning and practice. With 'knowledge' traditionally viewed as the arena of theorists, McNiff contends this often dissuades practitioners

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[185] Elaine Graham, "Is Practical Theology a Form of 'Action Research'?," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 17.1 (2013): 148–78; John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, Second edition. (London: SCM, 2016), chap. 9.
[186] Jean McNiff, *Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2017), 3.
[187] Tabor was established as a Bible college in 1979, with roots in the Pentecostal Christian Revival Crusade church (now CRC Churches International). It has now developed into a multidenominational liberal arts institution with an emphasis upon training for the community professions. Tabor has campuses in Adelaide and Perth, offering certificate through to masters level awards: ministry, theology, divinity, spiritual direction, intercultural studies, TESOL, and international health and development in the faculty of Ministry, Theology and Culture; youth work, counselling, music and creative writing in the faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences; primary and secondary teacher education in the faculty of Education; and pastoral care and chaplaincy, mental health, community services, youth work, counselling, education support and business in the faculty of Vocational Education and Training. See www.tabor.edu.au; Lorraine Beard and Dennis Slape, *The Tabor Miracle: The Pioneering Years of Tabor College (1979-2005)* (Adelaide: Dennis Slape, 2008).
[188] For instance, chaplaincy, lay work in church or parachurch settings, and cross cultural work.
[189] Perry Shaw, "Bridging Classroom and Life in Theological Reflection" (presented at the ANZATFE Biannual Conference - Pedagogical Practices for Formation, Morling College, Sydney, 2017), https://www.anzatfeassoc.com/2017-conference.

from theorising, when their voice is much needed.[190] The Australasian theological education context urgently needs practitioners' voices. In their analysis of theological publications using Boyer's four categories of scholarship, Dewerse and Taylor note a distinct paucity of output in the fourth domain—that of the scholarship of teaching and learning—in comparison to the other three.[191] Conferences, workshops and networking with peers interested in this domain provide another important action research context.[192] This research contributes to this perceived gap in the literature.

The third motivator for action research, says McNiff, is contributing understanding for self, others and the world. While talking the walk is developed with theology and ministry students in mind, it has also seeped into other contexts where people desire a more authentic embodiment of their faith through meaning-making. Indeed, serendipitous conversations beyond the classroom contribute significantly to the research; incorporating the labyrinth, for example, arose from conversation during a Churches of Christ pastors' retreat. Equally stimulating is the dinner table question: "What's your thesis about again, dad?" Explaining and enacting talking the walk in our home, with a group of pastors, in a short course for laypeople, through incidental conversation, with industry peers in a workshop—these contexts for action research are as significant as the classroom. That is how subsidiary-focal integration works.

Autoethnographic Texture

Finally, covenant epistemology affirms knowing as personed and unfolding. "Polanyian epistemology," explains Meek, "centrally affirms the personal in knowing. It also suggests that we may tap into the knower's full personhood epistemically."[193] Theological reflection is a thoroughly graced activity that we do from our unique selves, and therefore centred on a theory–practice–

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[190] McNiff, *Action Research*, 3.

[191] Steve Taylor and Rosemary Dewerse, "Researching the Future: The Implications of Activist Research for Theological Scholarship" (presented at *Wondering about God together. Research-led learning and teaching*, Sydney College of Divinity, Sydney, 2017), 5–11. Boyer's four categories are the scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, and of teaching and learning. Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, First edition. (Princeton, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 1997). Research on the pedagogy of theological reflection has received attention in the UK context, for example: Roger L. Walton, "The Teaching and Learning of Theological Reflection: Case Studies of Practice" (Doctoral, Durham University, 2002), 9, http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1746/; Stephen Pattison, Judith Thompson, and John Green, "Theological Reflection for the Real World: Time to Think Again," *British Journal of Theological Education* 13.2 (2003): 119–31.

[192] These include conferences and publications from the Australia New Zealand Association for Theological Field Educators, the Sydney College of Divinity, the Australian College of Theology and the Australian Christian Higher Education Alliance.

[193] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 96.

persons interface. Thus, as a *person-in-relationship* on the way to knowing—not a machine mastering impersonal data—I take "the risky and responsible commitment that is an essential ingredient in knowing; the necessary reliance upon informal, tacit, skilled, hunches to orient and navigate toward impending discovery."[194] If knowledge is only impersonal information, then one might expect this research to be a solely linear, ascetic argument. But if knowing is indeed fraught with intimations of the interpersoned, then a human and aesthetic tenor might also legitimately be present. Indeed, the research journey itself has been somewhat labyrinthine—a winding towards what I have been trying to get to the heart of as I struggled to connect subsidiary clues, and then a winding back out towards integrating these clues in a focused articulation of what has gifted itself to me. Stories, images and poetry feature because they *move* me along that journey, as much as do rigour and critical argument.[195]

Thus, knowing as personed not only allows for an element of autoethnography; it requires it. I write as a white, male, middle-aged, Western, privileged and educated researcher and teacher in theological education. I am happily married with five children living in the suburbs of Adelaide, Australia. Frequently I long for reconnection to my rural roots and connection to the land. I appreciate my formation in Lutheran contexts including an emphasis upon the scandalous grace of the gospel, and yet am significantly reshaped and enriched through engagement with others beyond my theological and ecclesial patch. I have been formed and practice as a spiritual director and grown through the gifts of contemplative spirituality. I am deeply troubled and perplexed by suffering—my own and of others—in light of God's promise of *shalom*. I am melancholic and ordered in my personality, prone to over planning and categorising life, and yet in later years have developed an appreciation for the aesthetic and spontaneous.

These subsidiary clues—and many others—shape how I think of theological reflection in some way. Yet aspects of my personal story *are* subsidiary, in service of greater focal awareness. This posture reflects Spry's assertion that reflexivity in autoethnography is not for its own sake; it is only fulfilled and enriched in relation to the other as a collective endeavour. Citing Madison and Conquergood, she searches "for the labour of reflexivity that will lead us to a band of Others … a kind of reflexivity that is wilfully about the social—about the self-made gloriously and ingloriously

[194] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 95.
[195] Often more aesthetic, evocative resources are formatted in a 'blue box'.

through Others."[196] In this way, the autoethnography in this research is not just personed, but *inter*personed. As such, relevant elements of my own story—sourced through journal entries and personal stories—provide texture to the research.[197] I weave my interpersoned adventures of talking and walking into the fabric of the thesis as it unfolds. The intent is to keep the research human, aesthetic, gritty and grounded, but always in service of the Other.

Together, postfoundational theology, action research praxis and autoethnographic texture resonate with Meek's three interlocking domains for subsidiary clues—word, world and body—to bring talking the walk into a coherent whole. The normative word is postfoundational theology developed through bibliographic and personal conversations. The situated world is an action research praxis with Tabor students and others through shared stories and wrestles in learning and teaching theological reflection for formation. And an existential, lived-body awareness is found in autoethnographic textures drawn from my perceptions, story, spirituality and personhood as I talk my own walk. By interweaving these three methodologies I reinforce and maintain the integrity of the very theological method I am proposing.

Outline

PART ONE: Model

Part one explores the three contours of talking the walk's *model*—the key features and underlying assumptions that found the method. The contours of talking the walk's model are trialogue, *shalom*, and the Emmaus Labyrinth.

Chapter two considers the dimensions and dynamics of theological reflection for formation in a spirituality–ministry–theology trialogue. The trialogue's merits are supported by correspondence with threefold models in the theological education literature, pedagogical pragmatism in light of complex anthropologies, and resonance with normative–existential–situational domains of knowing central to covenant epistemology. I expound and enrich this trialogue by a wide-ranging survey of other resonating threefold expressions. In keeping with a postfoundational theology approach, I draw these from a variety of sources both within and beyond Christian discourse. From this survey, I then explore the dynamics between the trialogue's dimensions. The notion of coinherence emerges as a richer and more anthropologically faithful

[196] Cited in Tami Spry, "Autoethnography and the Other: Performative Embodiment and a Bid for Utopia," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2017), 628.
[197] cf. the way in which Meek uses "texture" in *Loving to Know*, xv.

alternative to the popular notion of integration. The reality of liminal spaces and the unfolding nature of reflection and formation further suggest *coinhering* as a more helpful adjective. Trialogue, then, characterised by the coinhering nature of conversation, provides the dimensions and dynamics of talking the walk's model, and the first contour.

Chapter three proposes *shalom* as talking the walk's interpretative lens. Formation implies a vector, so what are we being formed in and towards through theological reflection? Since teleology informs how we make meaning and shape life accordingly, this is an inherently cultural question.[198] Christlikeness is the most conventional *telos*; growth towards our unique selfhood in Christ is also frequently suggested. Though theologically rich, these answers do not always serve theological reflection for formation well. They need exegeting to foster more explicit connections to formation beyond ourselves, towards the mission of God in the world. So, I explore *shalom* for this purpose. *Shalom* is God's fullness in Christ for the cosmos, communities and individuals, embodied in graces such as reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness. It is both now and not yet, so the *telos* is the walk both in and towards *shalom*. I survey various aspects, including the multifaceted, glocal, embodied and hopeful nature of *shalom*, and conclude by proposing theological reflection as a cultural liturgy—a ritual of ultimate concern—that shapes us in and towards the good life of *shalom*. *Shalom*, then, provides the direction for talking the walk's model, and the second contour.

Chapter four explores the Emmaus Labyrinth as talking the walk's design. Design is important because any approach to theological reflection needs pedagogical appeal and utility. The Emmaus Labyrinth does this through metaphors and resources that invite whole-person engagement and offer a simple threefold shape. I begin with exploring walking and talking as rich metaphors for the pilgrimed and conversational nature of theological reflection for formation. I then suggest a creative juxtaposition of two resources replete with these metaphors to provide the architecture for the method. First, the three movements in the Road via Emmaus story in Luke 24:13–49 ground the design in Scripture. The extension to verse 49 emphasises the road *via* rather than *to*, because the return journey to Jerusalem—including the struggle to embody the new reality—is just as important as the journey to and revelation at Emmaus. Second, the three movements of the labyrinth capture something of the non-linear and circuitous nature of both our

[198] I will explore culture as not just a context among others that influences meaning-making, but, more fundamentally, as a coping mechanism for navigating life with efficacy and meaning, and what we make of the world—its meaning and its shaping—according to visions of the good.

human pilgrimage and our meaning-making. Labyrinths have broad appeal as physically enriched tools for reflection. A good design also reinforces its underlying approach to knowing. The Emmaus Labyrinth reinforces key aspects of covenant epistemology, such as the interpersoned, pledged, transformational, non-linear and unfolding nature of knowing. Its three movements also dovetail with knowing as "the responsible human struggle to rely on clues to focus on a coherent pattern and submit to its reality."[199] Walking and talking along the Emmaus Labyrinth, then, provides the guiding metaphors and design for talking the walk's model, and the third contour.

PART TWO: Method

Part two explores the three contours of talking the walk's *method*—the interlocking movements that enact the model. The contours of talking the walk's method centre on three interlocking movements: contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment, and courageous embodiment.

Chapter five explores contemplative conversation—"the responsible human struggle to rely on clues"[200]—along the Emmaus labyrinth's inward journey. Contemplative conversation begins by pledging to attend to a significant experience (event, issue or circumstance) and narrate it as best we can. Conversation flowing from the narration then emerges. It is contemplative based on the possibility of God's person and presence in any given experience; our task is to wake up to this reality. This is enriched by the Aboriginal quality of *dadirri*—a deep, patient, holistic and still listening. Our talk draws its clues from the existential, situational and normative domains of the trialogue. We *listen in* to spirituality and personhood, *listen out* to ministry in context, and *listen up* to wellsprings of theology. As a coinhering trialogue, the conversation is labyrinthine and non-linear, meandering to and fro between interdependent clues. This requires pledged effort, and often feels like fumbling with the half-known; such is tacit and anticipative knowing. Contemplative conversation, then, provides the first movement for talking the walk's method, and the fourth contour.

Chapter six probes imaginative discernment—"the responsible human struggle … to focus on a coherent pattern"[201]—at the Emmaus labyrinth's receptive centre. Discernment's various modes suggest its rightful place is at the heart of reflection. However, its interpersoned and gifted nature means it cannot be coerced with predetermined checklists. Learning to position ourselves

[199] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.
[200] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.
[201] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.

on discernment's path is a more fruitful approach. We do this by befriending its phenomenology (recognising what it is like to discern) and developing discernment etiquette (practising good manners for inviting the real). The imagination can play a catalytic role here. Imagery can help make sense of the now and vision *shalom* in the not yet. In considering any discernment that has emerged from contemplative conversation and an engagement with the imagination, we name our truths with a fallible confidence that recognises our discerning is always evolving. This frees us to name not only our trialogue-shaped assertions but also any lingering, liminal questions. Imaginative discernment, then, provides the second movement for talking the walk's method, and the fifth contour.

Chapter seven explores courageous embodiment—"the responsible human struggle to … submit to [a pattern's] reality"[202]—along the Emmaus labyrinth's outward journey. Embodiment centres on praxis and the cultivation of what has been contemplated as a participation in our cultural mandate. This struggle to let discerned truths live in the muscle invites an exploration of the mystery of divine–human agency using systematic theologies and a series of pedagogically appealing images. The inevitable obstacles to embodiment make it a non-linear journey, requiring the gift of courage. Jesus' interaction with the trembling disciples in the last part of the Road via Emmaus story suggests three ways we might receive the encouragement we need. The chapter's conclusion focuses on cultivating *shalom* in self, others and world, through concrete acts of doing and practices that deepen, including theological reflection itself as a cultural liturgy. Courageous embodiment, then, provides the third movement for talking the walk's method, and the sixth and final contour.

PART THREE: Practice

The thesis concludes with a final chapter exploring talking the walk in practice. After a summary of talking the walk's key features, I employ the trialogue to structure commentary on key learnings and argue for the significant of the research. This discussion is supported by a series of appendices including a critical experience report template and three examples, student feedback, and applications of talking the walk beyond the theological education context.

[202] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.

PART ONE: MODEL

CHAPTER TWO
TRIALOGUE

All knowing has three correlative aspects or perspectives:
the existential, the normative, and the situational.

Esther Meek[1]

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Mark 12:29–30

Theology (the head), spirituality (the heart) and mission (the hands) ... need each other in the sense that they nurture each other, and each is integral to the expression of the others.

Dennis Hollinger[2]

Talking the walk's model is concerned with the key features and underlying assumptions that underpin the talking the walk's method (part two). Its focus is the what and why of theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation. The model has three contours, the first of which is explored in this chapter. Outlining the dimensions and dynamics of theological reflection for holistic formation, it centres on a coinhering, three-way conversation, or *trialogue*, between spirituality and personhood, ministry in context, and wellsprings of theology.

A central tenet of this thesis is that theological reflection for formation cannot just be an arm's length interplay between theory and practice, thought and action, theology and ministry, text and context. Rather, it is a human endeavour that is thoroughly personed, existential, spiritual and charactered. It contemplates and cultivates our whole-person pilgrimage of formation in and through conversational meaning-making. This is because, as covenant epistemology asserts, knowing is itself shot through with the personed—in fact, the *inter*personed. Knowing is not about accessing and mastering static, limp data. Rather, knower, knowing and known relate together in a dynamic, generous exchange. There is *giving* and *receiving*, as though persons are in the vicinity. When I learn a new piece on my guitar, for instance, I sense its gift to me. Even as I become more accomplished at its performance, its new chords, phrasings and rhythms open up different vistas altogether. Healthy human knowing, of any sort, is like that.

[1] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 162–63.

[2] Dennis Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands: Bringing Together Christian Thought, Passion, and Action* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 32–33.

This is why Meek uses *covenant* as a metonymy[3] for personhood as the broader context for epistemology. Covenant reflects pledge, relationship, trust and mutuality. Theological reflection is a particular form of knowing: connecting experience and faith, and living the implications. Therefore, it is at its best, flourishing self when practised covenantally. And talking the walk, as one particular proposal for theological reflection for formation, aims to do just that. As such, its dimensions and the dynamics between them will be covenantal in character. In particular they will reflect a 'youness' that resonates strongly with a theory–practice–persons paradigm as introduced in chapter one. My labyrinthine journey of interest in researching this very topic is a case in point.

I cut my teeth in congregation-based ministry over fifteen years in various Lutheran and ecumenical contexts. During the last five of these I also studied theology and ministry at Tabor, before beginning as a lecturer there in spirituality, formation and theological reflection. At some point over that whole period, I began noticing in myself, others and the literature an array of triads of interacting dimensions within Christian formation and discipleship. I was fascinated by their distinctiveness yet relatedness. They had diverse forms and contexts, wide-ranging terminologies and distinct emphases, and yet strong resonances with one another. At some point, a three-way relationship between spirituality, theology and ministry emerged as a helpful interpretive framework for my observations. As I pondered my own faith, life and ministry journey through this lens, it brought my pilgrimage of formation into sharp relief. My changing theology, especially as I studied, impacted my relationship with God; ministry experiences deeply challenged my strongly held theological views; the ebb and flow of spiritual vitality seemed to hinder or encourage fruitful ministry. When my life felt undone, these three seemed fragmented, while their congruence was often accompanied by a greater sense of wholeness and fruitfulness, even in difficult circumstances.

A strong yearning began to emerge: to live more fully into the present richness of God in each dimension and become more attentive to what seemed to be a conversation-like interplay between them. I now see them as more than a *triad*; they are a *trialogue*. Triad or triangle implies a relationship between the three, whereas trialogue communicates something of that relationship's dynamism. Conversations—at least, quality, listening-centred conversations—are themselves interdependent, mutually enriching, (trans)formative, and can start anywhere. I identify that unfolding relatedness as *coinhering*, an idea discussed later in this chapter.

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[3] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 180.

In hindsight, this yearning pointed to a deeper longing for integrity, wholeness and fruitfulness beyond the mere productivity of my ego. Ironically, it dawned on me that theological reflection—the subject area I had begun to teach!—was the very practice and disposition that could help tend to that yearning in my life and those of my students. Thus, this thesis and the opportunity to dig deeper through a scholarly process was birthed not only from the desire to teach theological reflection more effectively but more fundamentally, from a deeply personal longing.

This account shows the personed nature of coming to know. One extreme of the Western defective epistemic default assumes self ought to be managed and limited, if not jettisoned altogether, to mitigate interference with the quest for knowledge as objective truth, identified in proof statements. The other extreme says that self is all there is, effectively rendering the real as non-existent.[4] The Polanyian approach of subsidiary-focal integration, however, asserts that this personed tenor in responsible knowing is what opens our access to truth as persons.[5] "Our creaturely situatedness is not a flaw or shortcoming, but rather what it is to be human," says Meek.[6] Moreover, attentiveness to the tacit, half-knowing of subsidiary clues is central in guiding us towards a focal pattern that contacts the real. Although that focal pattern is much more expansive than the clues, it is also totally reliant upon them.

That is why covenant epistemology encourages us to attend to desire and "practice blowing on the coals of our care," because "caring invites the real."[7] This study is my theological reflection upon theological reflection for formation. Beginning with this chapter on trialogue, where my interest began, it is my attempt to blow upon the coals of my care, fashioned by my own convenantally constituted adventure in coming to know. By responsibly stewarding the clues subsidiarily available to me—those listed above, plus many more of which I am unaware—I am attempting to map out talking the walk as an emerging focal pattern. For years I have groped with a palpable sense of half-knowing that I was onto something just beyond me yet (trans)formative even as I reached for it. That sense has sustained my interest. I now see how it was not an inferior short-coming compared to certain, provable 'facts', but an essential component of my knowing journey. The outcome, including this thesis, has not been to grasp that 'something', as much as to

[4] See Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 1.
[5] See Meek, *Longing to Know*, chap. 16.
[6] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 410.
[7] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 33.

be grasped by a reality far more expansive than I imagined. Thus, talking the walk itself aims to be conversational and pilgriming, rather than a stationary and definitive last word. It is a work—a conversation—in progress.

This chapter, then, explores the dimensions and dynamics of talking the walk's first contour, trialogue: a tridimensional, coinhering conversation between spirituality, ministry and theology.

First, I justify my choice of the trialogue's dimensions and expand their meaning through considering similar expressions. Justification of knowledge claims is often drawn from corresponding evidential support, workability, and coherence with other knowledge claims.[8] I contend a tridimensional framework corresponds with the theological education literature, is pedagogically pragmatic in light of more intricate anthropologies, and resonates with covenant epistemology. It is also enriched by surveying other resonating threefold expressions from a wide variety of sources. The intent is not to squeeze these into the trialogue through rigid alignment, to produce an allegorised theory of everything. On the contrary, their unique features colour and deepen how we might understand spirituality, ministry and theology, thus enriching what the trialogue brings to theological reflection for formation.

Second, exploring the three dimensions in this way helps us consider the dynamics between them. A consideration of integration, coinherence and liminality leads to *coinhering* as a concept that captures the rich and unfolding interdependence between theology, ministry and spirituality. Trialogue, then, is the first contour of talking the walk, and this chapter's original contribution to knowledge.

Dimensions in Theological Reflection for Formation: Trialogue

Why Explore Formation as Tridimensional?

Correspondence: The Theological Education Literature

The first reason for expounding threefold models for Christian formation is because they are so widespread in the theological education literature.[9] Addressing the concern of fragmentation commonly present in theological training institutions is as pressing as ever. Commentary around

[8] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 419.

[9] Whilst most models for formation in theological education surveyed below have three key dimensions, some (e.g., Edgar, Mayes, Shaw) do have four. What is being sought is *resonance*, rather than *direct correlation*, and these models provide helpful ways of framing how formation is understood in theological education.

this issue invariably reflects upon various dimensions of formation for students and the history of their disintegration. For instance, while theological education in the monastic setting interwove prayer and worship, the study of Scripture and the Church Fathers and Mothers, and practical work and service, the influence of the Enlightenment exacerbated what scholasticism had begun—the schism of the mutually interdependent relationship between theology, spirituality, and practice. The result was the emergence of models of theological education with particular emphases, described in various ways. Perhaps most helpfully, Edgar, building on the work of Kelsey[10] and Banks,[11] sketches four models now common in (at least, Western) theological education: 'Athens'—personal formation in the academy, with knowing God more than knowing about God transforming the individual; 'Berlin'—ministerial training in the university, with theology as a rigorously tested body of theory with practical application to build up the church;[12] 'Jerusalem'—practical, missional embodiment in the wider community, with theological education as a subset of mission to convert the world; and 'Geneva'—formation through the confessions within the seminary, with the knowing of and enculturation within the tradition as the primary tool for knowing God.[13] Edgar encourages institutions to employ this typology as a self-assessing framework for strengths and weaknesses and in developing a more integrated and rounded curriculum.[14] In viewing the four types from a broad perspective, a key implication is that theological education needs to address the whole person, rather than focus primarily on personal and spiritual growth, or theological acumen and critical thinking, or practical/pastoral skills and missional living. There have been multiple attempts to address this.

For instance, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education's *Manifesto on the Renewal of Theological Education* identifies the need for holistic integration in student experience, asserting that

> our programmes of theological education must combine spiritual and practical with academic objectives in one holistic integrated educational approach. We are at fault that we so often focus educational requirements narrowly on cognitive attainments, while we hope for student growth in other dimensions but leave it largely to chance … We must

[10] David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).
[11] Robert J. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).
[12] cf. Schleiermacher's 'theory-to-practice' approach.
[13] Brian Edgar, "The Theology of Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29.3 (2005): 208–17.
[14] See also Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 185.

> blend practical and spiritual with academic in our educational programmes, and thus equip the whole man [*sic*] of God for service.[15]

Mayes, writing from the UK context, seeks to redress the rift by expounding the dynamic of prayer in learning.[16] He notes the development of four types of formation articulated post-Vatican II in Pope John Paul II's vision for Catholic priestly formation: human (emotional stability, personality, psychology, sexuality, relationships), intellectual (cognition, theological and philosophical reflection, engagement with the Scriptures and Church Fathers), pastoral (participation with Christ as minister and Good Shepherd, including ministerial and leadership skills), and spiritual (maintenance of communion with God, especially devotional practice and prayer in all its diversity).[17] While each formation type is esteemed, Mayes notes the distinct lack of exploration of their interrelatedness, and so suggests human, intellectual and pastoral formation as expressions of, and all integrated by, spiritual formation at the centre:

[Diagram removed due to copyright restriction. See footnote for original source.]

Figure 1: *Interplay between aspects of formation* by Mayes[18]

The distinct divisions in Mayes' diagram convey the image of a pie, perhaps giving the impression of equal but distinct pieces. Unfortunately, this obscures the dynamic interrelatedness for which he is arguing. However, having spiritual formation at the centre does helpfully affirm the spiritual nature of all human, intellectual/theological and pastoral formation.

Shakespeare's dissertation researches the spiritual development of Salvation Army ministers in the UK.[19] She posits a conceptual framework for ministerial training that fosters holistic spiritual formation within an activist, missional organisation. The key outcome of her research is the emergence of a symbiotic 'blending' of (rather than a balance between) knowing (understanding our faith), being (who we are in connection with God) and doing (the practical implications). She calls for "a method which can help to make explicit the connections and

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[15] ICETE (International Council for Evangelical Theological Education), "ICETE Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education," *ICETE - International Council for Evangelical Theological Education*, 1990, http://icete-edu.org/manifesto/.

[16] Andrew D Mayes, *Spirituality in Ministerial Formation: The Dynamic of Prayer in Learning* (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales, 2009).

[17] *Spirituality in Ministerial Formation*, 40, 44–45.

[18] Mayes, *Spirituality in Ministerial Formation*, 175.

[19] Karen Shakespeare, "Knowing, Being and Doing: The Spiritual Life Development of Salvation Army Officers" (Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology diss., Anglia Ruskin University, 2011), http://core.kmi.open.ac.uk/download/pdf/363620.pdf.

illustrate the mutual dependence between the three elements,"[20] suggesting the concept of reflective practice as a way to encourage officers "to pay attention to the trajectory of the three foci … and to make specific links between them, identifying connections, gaps, over-emphases, and resolutions."[21] This is a means to "not rely solely upon any one aspect but upon the symbiotic relationship between them which shapes lives, engenders growth and fosters *habitus,* a way of being in the world."[22] Shakespeare does not explore the mutual relationships between the three elements or the nature of such reflective practice. Moreover, her choice of 'being' is perhaps not overly helpful. 'Being' can be a broad category for the human existential as a whole (in which case, are not 'knowing' and 'doing' also included within 'being'?); it may also carry a static sense (in contrast to, for instance, 'becoming'), which does not adequately express the dynamism of formation. Doing may also lack a sense of purpose and intentionality intrinsic to formation; growth in the Christian journey needs to be about more than just activity, lest we become rocking horse Christians—lots of busyness and movement, but little progress! Nevertheless, her framework provides a helpful explicit connection of tridimensional formation and reflection.

In North America, several authors propose tridimensional frameworks for Christian formation. Foster et al. suggest that three types of apprenticeship shape the theological education enterprise: practical knowledge (requiring hands-on engagement as a condition for knowing), cognitive knowledge (requiring analytical thinking), and normative knowledge (developing role and identity, and the formation of dispositions). They state that "learning in the formational sense is a process by which the student becomes a certain kind of thinking, feeling, and acting being."[23] Thompson argues that human formation underpins the three pillars of Christian formation: spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral/apostolic formation.[24] Steele understands faith in terms of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy.[25] He notes that these "are interrelated aspects, none of which can stand alone as a definition of faith … It is these three aspects braided together in dynamic relationship to make a strong rope."[26] Wood asserts that there are three distinct, though

[20] Shakespeare, "Knowing, Being and Doing," 139.
[21] Shakespeare, "Knowing, Being and Doing," 139.
[22] Shakespeare, "Knowing, Being and Doing," 142.
[23] Charles R. Foster et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and the Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 8–10.
[24] Cameron M. Thompson, *Handbook of Human Formation: A Resource for the Cultivation of Character: Essential Foundations of the Art & Science of Human Formation for University, College, and Seminary Staff* (Acropolis Scholars, LLC, 2014), 4–5.
[25] Les L. Steele, *On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 101–5.
[26] Steele, *On the Way*, 102.

inseparable, components central to the Christian education enterprise: 'education in the Christian faith', 'education in Christian life', and 'education for ministry'. He notes their interrelatedness:

> These three components are closely interdependent … Understanding the Christian faith requires training in Christian life, and vice versa; and neither is possible apart from some initiation into the practice of Christian witness, both corporate and individual. Nor is the third a possibility without the other two. Receiving the Christian witness and being formed by it; understanding that witness and one's own place in it, so as to affirm it for oneself; and coming to bear witness, to share the community's distinctive ministry, are all three ongoing, interwoven elements of Christian existence.[27]

Jones discusses the formation of future leaders within the context of how church, seminary and society relate, arguing for a more collaborative venture rather than a linear race where they pass the 'baton' (the student) from one to the other. The strengths of all parties are needed to work together to develop leaders with integrity in three key areas for formation—beliefs, desires, and practices—which share complex, interdependent interactions.[28]

In the Middle East, Shaw charts the journey of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) in Lebanon, which underwent a major curriculum review from 2008. He contends that while the rhetoric of 'head, heart and hands' is common in theological schools, the primary focus is on the mind.[29] Thus, a key feature of ABTS's desire for a more holistic and integrated approach was the insistence that all learning and teaching attend to the 'ABCs' of multidimensional learning domains: affect (values, attitudes, emotions and motivations), behaviour (action and concrete experience), and cognition (the development of complex thinking skills, beyond a mere transmission of information).[30] To ABC, Shaw adds D—disposition—which stems from the interrelations between them:

> … positive attitudes motivate students to think more carefully and take risks in action; experience changes beliefs and attitudes; and right thinking provides guidelines for evaluating both emotions and behaviour. The concert of the ABC of learning works together to form the disposition (D) of the student.[31]

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[27] Wood, "Theological Education and Education for Church Leadership," 306.

[28] L. Gregory Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 185–205.

[29] Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* (Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2014), 69.

[30] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, chap. 4.

[31] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 76.

Shaw depicts this as follows

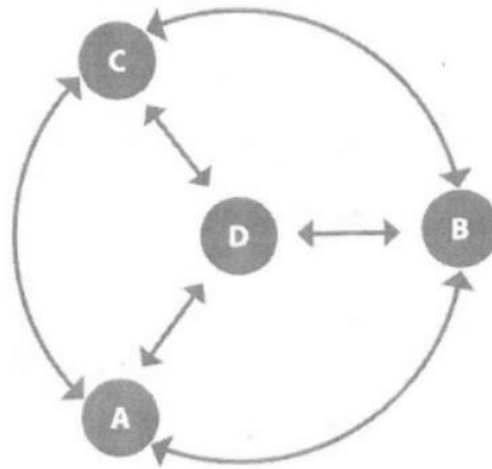

Figure 2: *The interface of learning dimensions* by Shaw[32]

Having disposition as the central goal echoes the notion of *habitus* in theological reflection; as each element is nurtured, the student develops an orientation towards holistic growth. There is also more dynamism conveyed here than in Mayes' diagram, with the arrows between each dimension indicating mutual influence. However, the elements can still be isolated from each other. Shaw also places the emphasis more upon balancing the learning dimensions to avoid distortions in a student's disposition, rather than attending to and harnessing their dynamic interdependence. Seeking balance can imply a lack of movement; development in Christian formation means models need to convey more than just a desire for equilibrium.

In the Australian scene, Banks contends for a missional-apprenticeship approach to theological education in which students need three things: induction into a set of practices (intellectual, personal, and vocational), formation of a set of attitudes (centred on a hunger for authentic relationship with God, self and others), and development of genuine understanding (of the Christian tradition, and also of the surrounding culture). He asserts that

> these attitudes, understandings, and practices—which is just another way of talking about personal formation, theological reflection, and ministry development—form an inseparable threefold cord that requires knitting together in the most effective way.[33]

As with Steele and Wood above, the interwoven threefold cord image reminds us that a student's formation is most robust when we view the dimensions as inseparable. For Banks, the most effective context for these to be woven together vitally is learning-in-ministry, rather than

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[32] This figure is taken from Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 76. langhamliterature.org. Used with permission.

[33] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 226.

learning-for-ministry or learning-alongside-ministry. A play impacts most when first rehearsed and performed, and then studied and reflected upon, rather than the other way around. Similarly, he argues that students integrate practices, attitudes and understandings best when concrete missional experience within the community of faith is the key focus, rather than these aspects in and of themselves.[34] Moreover, this reminds us that formation goes way beyond the student's years of formal study; keeping attitudes, understandings and practices woven together is a lifelong journey.

Hockridge notes that "it is generally agreed that theological education is concerned with more than cognitive learning; it involves not only knowing, but also doing and being."[35] Her study into formation in online education in Australian theological education identifies distinct types of formation emerging from the understanding of educators which include personal/spiritual, ministry/pastoral and intellectual/academic formation.[36] Ball, as noted in the opening chapter, investigates student experience in Australian theological education in light of the common claim that institutions provide a transformative learning experience. To restate, one of his four key conclusions was that

> there is a widespread and strongly expressed desire for theological education to be holistic and integrated rather than being based on sets of content that are often disconnected from one another and from life beyond the classroom. Such integration will combine cognitive, practical and affective elements and will involve the development of character and values as well as knowledge and skills.[37]

For Ball, this integration has two aspects: vocational (what we might call the 'exterior life'), and personal (what we might call the 'interior life'). While he offers no in-depth commentary upon the interrelation between the elements, he nevertheless concludes that the holistic integration of learning and life in theological education, in total, "aims at a congruence of creed, conduct and character within the person of the graduate."[38]

Australian theological educator Nancy Ault contends that theological reflection "requires the astute identification of emotional landscapes, a theological engagement and critique with

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[34] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 226–27.
[35] J. Diane Hockridge, "An Investigation of Understandings and Practices of Formation in Distance and Online Australian Theological Education" (Unpublished paper, 2012), 4.; her choice of 'being' and 'doing' attracts the same critiques directed at Shakespeare, discussed earlier.
[36] 'Enculturation' was a fourth type of formation identified, referring to students imbibing the ethos and way of thinking and behaving in accordance with the institution's graduate attributes. It wasn't widely recognised in the literature or among participants.
[37] Ball, *Transforming Theology*, 125–26.
[38] Ball, *Transforming Theology*, 125.

emerging images and insights and an awareness of the bodily and material world at different levels of engagement."[39] I also restate Francis' challenge to which this thesis responds, that in the formation of reflective ministry practitioners

> we need to develop a genuine "trialogue" between practical or situational reflection, theological reflection and personal reflection which sees the ministry practitioner developing, not just the requisite skills for ministry, but a deep personal relationship with God which fuels and sustains ministry for the long haul.[40]

This brief survey suggests that within the theological education literature, particularly that which addresses the issue of fragmentation, there are ample global examples of writers and institutions who view the holistic and integrated formation of students through a threefold lens. Head–heart–hands. Intellectual formation–personal formation–pastoral formation (integrated by spiritual formation). Knowing–being–doing. Cognitive knowledge–normative knowledge–practical knowledge. Orthodoxy–orthopathy–orthopraxy. Faith–life–ministry. Beliefs–desires–practices. Cognition–affects–behaviour. Understanding–attitudes–practices. Creed–conduct–character. Whichever way we might express the dimensions, there exists a strong degree of resonance between them. This correspondence with the theological education literature, then, strongly supports a tridimensional approach in theological reflection for formation.

Pragmatics: Simplifying Dimensions of Formation in Anthropological Perspective

Action research continually rubs the intricacies of theological reflection up against the realities of trying to teach it. Goldkuhl explains that "pragmatism is concerned with action and change and the interplay between knowledge and action. This makes it appropriate as a basis for research approaches intervening into the world and not merely observing the world."[41] In this sense, pragmatism does not abandon considered and robust reflection in favour of a crass 'what works' approach. Rather, its value lies in that "it invites us to think clearly about *practical consequences*: it proposes that a thing is meaningful if it leads to certain practical outcomes that have value, that make a measurable difference, in concrete human experience."[42] A pragmatic pedagogy, then, provides the second reason for expounding a tridimensional approach.

There are certainly more nuanced and complex models for the formation of theological

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[39] Nancy Ault, "Theological Reflection: Moving from the Implicit to the Explicit," *Pacifica* 26.3 (2013): 304.
[40] Francis, "Developing Genuinely Reflective Ministry Practitioners," 198.
[41] Göran Goldkuhl, "Pragmatism vs Interpretivism in Qualitative Information Systems Research," *European Journal of Information Systems* 21.2 (2012): 135–46.
[42] Graham Buxton, *An Uncertain Certainty: Snapshots in a Journey from "Either-Or" to "Both-And" in Christian Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 112.

education students than those noted above. For example, one Jesuit model notes six interrelated dynamics of formation.[43] Lowe and Lowe frame holistic formation as a 'personal ecology' of six mutually interdependent dimensions.[44] Chandler works with seven facets,[45] while the multi-authored volume, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Formation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, explores no less than ten.[46] Volumes such as Manenti et al. *Formation and the Person: Essays in Theory and Practice*[47] further assert this complexity. Such variance and intricacy reflect the complex anthropology of Christian formation; our shaping is ultimately much more nuanced than a simple threefold framework. Hence, although this research is not an in-depth study of human nature, it is important to set the discussion within the wider discourse on anthropology.

Kyle's comprehensive and multi-disciplinary work on anthropology and spiritual formation seeks to understand humans' makeup from theological and scientific models.[48] This is important, he says, if our attempts at programs for formation are to be of most benefit.[49] First, he surveys key Western theological anthropologies—from the Scriptures, to Augustine and Maximus the Confessor, to Aquinas and Luther, to Kant, Barth and Rahner—to identify seven common elements of human nature for a Christian-based theological anthropology: physicality, affect, cognition, Divine connection, integration, relationships and distortions.[50] Three broad theories of change emerge. First, the *nature of change:* formation involves becoming united with the Divine, a journey undertaken over time, and transformation that is holistic, affecting every part of human

[43] Interiority, psychosexual and affective integration, conversation, critical thinking, universal perspective, and discerned action. Joon-ho Chae SJ et al., "Forming a Contemplative in Action: A Profile of a Formed Jesuit for Asia Pacific" (presented at the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines: Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, 2011), 3, http://sjapc.net/sites/default/files/profile_of_a_formed_jesuit_jcap_workbook_110823-2_with_appendix5.pdf.

[44] Physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral and spiritual. Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, *Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age: Spiritual Growth through Online Education* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 17–18.

[45] Spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health and stewardship. Diane J Chandler, "Whole-Person Formation: An Integrative Approach to Christian Education," *Christian Education Journal* 12.2 (2015): 314–32; Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014).

[46] Spiritual and relational, emotional, psychological, suffering, scriptural, ethical, theological, sacramental, vocational and physical. Diane J. Chandler, ed., *The Holy Spirit and Christian Formation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[47] Alessandro Manenti, Stefano Guarinelli, and Hans Zollner, *Formation and the Person: Essays in Theory and Practice* (Leuven; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007).

[48] Eric J Kyle, *Spiritual Being & Becoming: Western Christian and Modern Scientific Views of Human Nature for Spiritual Formation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

[49] Kyle, *Spiritual Being & Becoming*, xiv.

[50] Kyle, *Spiritual Being & Becoming*, chap. 1. Notably absent in this list is the notion of the 'soul'. This is because Kyle found the term's usage varied so widely, including: the undivided wholeness of the whole self; a separate component connected with both the body and God; a person's volition; and the affective dimension of human experience.

existence. Second, the *necessary supports of change:* a variety of factors nurture formation such as contemplation, Scripture, ethical living, self-reason, knowledge, community and education, and most significantly, God/Christ/the Spirit as the author and perfector of faith. Finally, the *stages of the journey:* whether as a gradual transition from old to new, or more particular identifiable steps, formation is marked by a maturing along the way.[51]

Kyle then surveys some commonly held views of researchers in various scientific disciplines.[52] Here he is more cautious regarding finding commonality because of the different foci and methodology of each field. Nevertheless, he does identify the following factors in human nature: physiological, cognitive-affective and (for some) super-conscious aspects; the enduring, well-ordered but also malleable and potentially ever-changing nature of these aspects; the need for integration and harmony; the centrality of context (e.g., environment, cultural, social); and the importance of historicity (e.g., genetic, cultural, social).[53]

Kyle synthesises these two perspectives to develop his own (quite complex) general theory of human nature and model for spiritual formation. However, his emphasis is upon method rather than result. He does not insist upon his model as *the* unified theological anthropology that solves all deficiencies of previous understandings. Indeed, given the incredibly intricate and complex, even mysterious nature of human beings, all anthropologies will have their strengths and weaknesses, and thus must carry with them a sense of provisionality. The important thing, says Kyle, is attention to the processes employed. This allows readers, aware of the dimensions and dynamics of Christian and human formation gleaned from both theology and science over the centuries, to develop models appropriate to their own context and needs.

This emphasis on provisionality and contextual appropriateness is crucial. Kyle's work reminds us of the complexity of anthropology and formation. A threefold model cannot sum up every dimension of a student's formation and will necessarily be provisional and limited. Pragmatically, however, it may offer greater accessibility for holistic reflection and formation than a more comprehensive yet intricate model. That is to say: pedagogy provides the pragmatic rationale for employing a somewhat reductionist model to reflect upon what is ultimately a

[51] Kyle, *Spiritual Being & Becoming*, 53–55. Kyle's predominantly Western perspective means Eastern anthropological insights are absent. Typically these might include a greater emphasis upon community with the individual only viewed in terms of the collective, and perhaps greater hesitation to isolate aspects of human nature in the first place.
[52] These include trait-dispositional, biological, neuroscientific, psychodynamic-motivational, behavioural-conditioning, phenomenological-humanistic, social-cognitive, and transpersonal-parapsychological.
[53] Kyle, *Spiritual Being & Becoming*, chap. 2.

complex and wonderful mystery. Kyle's synthesis promotes the consciousness and inclusion of a variety of anthropological elements not immediately obvious in a threefold approach, without diminishing its usefulness.

Indeed, as Pattison et al. have noted, complex models for theological reflection often bear little ongoing fruit for students within and beyond their study; they tend to inoculate against, rather than nurture, a love for doing theology.[54] This is a key reason why many theological educators prefer a simplified threefold structure. Shaw, for instance, readily acknowledges the complexity of human learning and the wide variety of learning models and taxonomies, but explains that ABC(D) was chosen by ABTS as a guiding framework not because it was necessarily more complete than other models, but because of "the relative simplicity and understandability of [the] model, its widespread influence, and its ready applicability to theological education."[55] This reflects a heuristic approach, not only for Shaw's example but also those surveyed above from the theological education literature. Tridimensional models such as these do not claim to be holistic in terms of covering every aspect of formation. Rather, they have emerged as a 'rule of thumb' for a rounded view of formation, because of their workability in teaching and learning. That has also been my experience.

Resonance: Covenant Epistemology's Three Domains for Subsidiary Clues

A third factor reinforcing the trialogue is its strong resonance with covenant epistemology's domains of knowing. As summarised in chapter one, Meek suggests three interlocking sectors from which we draw subsidiary clues: lived/felt body, directions or authoritative guides, and the surrounding world or environment. She develops these from the work of Reformed theologian John Frame who argues that God is known covenantally through existential, normative and situational perspectives.[56] These domains characterise the different ways in which various clues tend to contribute to knowing, yet they cannot be strictly distinguished; each pervades and is

[54] Pattison, Thompson, and Green, "Theological Reflection for the Real World"; see also Pattison, "Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection," 135–45; Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 13; Pippa Ross-McCabe, "Straw for the Bricks at Last? Theological Reflection under the Common Awards," *Practical Theology* 13.4 (2020): 413–26.

[55] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 69–70.

[56] See, in particular, Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 6. Knowing as Stewardship. Since Meek published *Loving to Know* Frame has developed this further in John M. Frame, *Theology in Three Dimensions: A Guide to Triperspectivalism and Its Significance* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017). See also Joshua Chase Davis, "An Analysis of James KA Smith's Theology of Christian Spiritual Formation in Light of John Frame's Triperspectivalism" (MTh Thesis, Denver Seminary, 2019).

pervaded by the other two.[57]

Meek sees these three reflected elsewhere, including key ministries in the Old Testament,[58] the Persons of the Trinity,[59] and in key aspects of ethics[60] and epistemology.[61] Ethics, epistemology and metaphysics, in turn, provide three central branches of philosophy. She even notes that "not only does knowing have three dimensions; it is itself one of the three dimensions. The other two are doing and being—the real, and the good and right."[62] As she says, "this triangle is both evocative and complex."[63]

Yet the normative, existential and situational domains for knowing are also commonplace and able to be understood quite simply. As I taught my son Micah to ride a bike, he sought to integrate my guiding, norming words ("Try to keep your speed up, it will make balancing easier!"), his bodily experiences of new sensations (legs pedalling, handlebars wobbling, stomach churning), and the particular environment he was navigating (a potholed driveway outside my mum's home).[64] Coming to know in any situation is always like this, Meek contends; "the triad recurs in reality because reality is shot through with the interpersonhood of covenant relationship … [Knowing] always involves all three dimensions. Every epistemic act has all three."[65] That is, the three in concert indicate something deeper about how dimensions or perspectives of interpersonal relationship—and therefore reality and knowing in general—work.

This helps explain why my encounter with these domains felt like coming home; the trialogue resonates strongly with what Meek suggests. The *existential orientation of spirituality and personhood* centres on the unique experience of the Spirit of God in both transcendence and

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[57] For Frame the fundamental distinction between Creator and created means God is covenant Lord, and can only be known as such. This is expressed in two ways: in the transcendence of God's normativity and authority to lovingly speak into being and thus constitute the created's 'is-ness'; and in the immanence of God's steadfast, gracious presence to sustain and flourish that very 'is-ness' in loving relationship. This means that the "heart of it all is knowing God as Lord, knowing the covenant Lord, being in relationship with the Lord of all … The goal of knowing God is *friendship*." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 154.
[58] Prophets communicated God's authoritative word, priests mediated God's abiding presence, and kings governed God's loving rule in the world.
[59] The Father is the giver of the divine and authoritative word, Jesus is the incarnation of the divine in the world, and the Spirit is the divine presence within us.
[60] Goal, motivation and standard.
[61] Knowing's criteria, objects and virtues.
[62] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 160.
[63] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 159.
[64] One of the great attractions of Meek's work is her capacity to communicate profound truths about knowing through commonplace examples. My example here (and others like it in this thesis) are inspired by the way she does this. For example, she tells of her own adventures as a child of learning how to ride a bicycle through indwelling or 'climbing into' her father's instructions. Meek, *Loving to Know*, 71.
[65] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 155–56, 159.

immanence. God is Lord, and speaks from, *within us.* Moreover, her emphasis upon felt body sense in this domain further affirms the intrinsic link between spirituality and body, countering the common Cartesian split between spirit and matter. Spirituality is a thoroughly embodied affair which interfaces with the world through *situated, ministry in context*. God is Lord, and speaks from, *around us.* Such ministry participates in the ongoing work of Christ in our surrounding environment. Our situatedness is thus affirmed not as a flaw that inhibits access to 'objective truth', but rather a necessary part of our theological reflection endeavours that move us towards wisdom and insight in encountering the Spirit's revealing person and work. Both the embodied experience of spirituality and the situatedness of ministry receive direction from and speak into the *normative guidance of theology.* God is Lord, and speaks from, *beyond us.* Theology tells of the larger story of God within which we find ourselves and contribute to, and through which the Spirit brings revelation and insight to our lived, concrete lives that we cannot know by ourselves.

It also explains why other models for theological reflection, working from a simplified framework, also resonate strongly. For example, the Whitehead's approach works with a three-way interface between experience, tradition, and culture,[66] while Pattison's critical conversation trialogues between the beliefs, assumptions and ideas of the reflector, the Christian tradition, and the contemporary situation under examination.[67]

A theology–spirituality–ministry trialogue, then, is simply one further framework that arises because of the deeper, embedded constitution of the interpersonal, relational nature of reality. The knowing endeavour—what I am shaping for my theological education context as theological reflection, but which equally may take other forms—thus inevitably finds resonance with covenant epistemology's trifold domains of knowing.

We observe dynamism and interdependence here. For Frame, the normative–existential–situational are perspectives, not parts; to look at one is to see the whole from one aspect, and thus, each perspective is equally important and interdependent. Meek explains:

> All knowing is knowing God's word or law, knowing self, and knowing world. All knowing has three correlative aspects or perspectives: the existential, the normative, and the situational. [Frame] talks of these avenues of knowing as being 'perspectivally related.' Each has the same 'content,' seen from a different perspective. He even says they are identical. Frame wants to hold the perspectives together even though he distinguishes between them. They are not so identical that it isn't critically important to see that no one of them reduces to another. If knowing is through and through normative, it is also through

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[66] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*.
[67] Pattison, "Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection."

> and through about the world, and through and through about me. He is explicit: it doesn't matter where you 'start' on the triad. He maintains that the perspectives are equally ultimate, equally important, and equally mutually dependent: each needs the other two to be what itself is. This is what it looks like to take seriously that God, the covenant Lord, is Creator, and we and the world are his creation."[68]

Similarly, Meek contends that the "dimensions are distinguishable but never separable."[69] In combining Frame's triad with Polanyian subsidiary-focal integration, she 'triangulates' between them in a perichoretic manner towards a coherent pattern.

Two points stand out. Firstly, as explored later in this chapter, the interrelations of the normative–existential–situational domains in covenant epistemology reflect the dynamics identified in chapter one as coinherence. This is precisely where I arrived at in teasing out my own trialogue, and why I think 'trialogue' and 'trialoguing' are richer terms than 'triad' and 'triangulating': they communicate the unfolding, interpersoned nature of conversation. The other is that such coinherence means any one of the dimensions can provide a starting point for knowing. Accordingly, I encourage students to consider theological issues, deeply personal/spiritual experiences, or ministry-in-context situations as equally valid starting points in theological reflection. We will give more attention to this in chapter five when we consider the entry points for contemplative conversation.

Summary

The trialogue's correspondence with the theological education literature, its pedagogical pragmatism, and its resonance with covenant epistemology, provide solid justification for using a tridimensional framework in theological reflection for formation. In justifying a tridimensional approach, characteristics of ministry, theology and spirituality have begun to emerge, particularly in considering alignments with heuristic expressions in the theological education literature, and covenant epistemology's three interlocking domains of knowing. We can now colour the trialogue further by exploring—though not exhausting—other examples of tridimensional expressions from both within and beyond Christian discourse. The best approach here is to notice and ponder points of alignment and resonance, rather than force strict correlations.[70]

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[68] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 162–63.
[69] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 155–56, 159.
[70] Searching for *direct correlations* tends to force rigid connections between spirituality, ministry and theology and the aspects within these models that aren't necessarily there, or that don't line up neatly. Expounding *strong resonances*, on the other hand, allows learning and teaching spiritual, ministerial and theological formation to be nuanced, textured and deepened, rather than inflexible and constricted.

Exploring Resonating Threefold Expressions

Biblical Anthropologies

What insights can we draw from the Scriptures? Here we must avoid proof-texting or trawling the Bible for neat and distinct anthropological categories that are not necessarily there. As Scobie notes, many biblical scholars assert that "nowhere ... does the Bible present a systematic, theoretical discussion of anthropology."[71] Even still, Scripture offers considerable insight. So, a suggestive rather than rigid approach is appropriate.

In considering anthropological terminology in Scripture, the Shema[72] provides a useful locus, with humans called to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength, and others as themselves. The key thrust of the Shema, of course, is not to present a neat dissection and analysis of human nature into parts, but rather to call for loyalty to and love for YHWH in every dimension of one's existence in the light of divine sovereignty, outworked in love for neighbour. Biblical anthropological language reflects the human person as a unified entity viewed from different perspectives, not as a composition of various parts able to be examined in isolation from each other. As Benner contends,

> body, soul and spirit are not independent faculties of persons but different ways of seeing and describing the whole person. The biblical emphasis in discussions of the nature of persons is first and foremost on their essential unity of being.[73]

Body and soul, mind and heart, flesh and spirit; these are not things we have as much as different ways of describing who we are.[74]

Nevertheless, McKnight is one writer comfortable with using the Shema to encourage rounded discipleship in terms of three dimensions.[75] "The *Jesus Creed*," he writes, "is about loving God with the heart, soul, mind and strength–with the entire person. In short, Jesus is calling us to total surrender: personally (heart and soul), mentally (mind), and physically (strength)."[76]

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[71] *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1968), 655.
[72] Deut 6:1–9 and expanded by Jesus in Matt 22:37–40 and Mark 12:29–31.
[73] David G. Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 52; see also Richard J Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008), 122; and Tracey C. Greenwood and Teresa Delgado, "A Journey Toward Wholeness, a Journey to God: Physical Fitness as Embodied Spirituality," *J Relig Health* 52.3 (2013): 943.
[74] For further affirmations of this perspective see Benner, *Care of Souls*, 22; Meek, *Longing to Know*, 112; Charles H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 656.
[75] see also Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 113–64, esp. 157.
[76] *Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others*, Kindle edition. (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2009), 203.

McKnight describes each of these aspects as ‘faith’s friends’:[77] Faith’s friend of the heart: persisting in kingdom truths; Faith’s friend of the mind: affirming kingdom truths; and Faith’s friend of the body: acting on kingdom truths. He expounds these dimensions in the pericope of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:25–30) who knows (‘mental faith’) that Jesus can heal her daughter, acts (‘physical faith’) on this knowledge by going to him, and persists passionately (‘heart faith’) when challenged by Jesus, which he commends.

Given the various nuances of the Shema’s terms, which often contrast with contemporary usage, holding too firmly to such a schema becomes problematic. For instance, Scobie[78] shows that while ‘heart’,[79] the motivational core of one’s inner life, can be associated with volition, emotions and desires,[80] it is also frequently linked with the intellect, rationality, understanding, memory, thinking and decision making. These are notions which today might commonly be associated with the ‘mind’,[81] and which also connect in the NT with *nous* as the seat of reason.[82] ‘Soul’,[83] etymologically fraught with difficulty, can convey a person’s vital and total self, or life, and in this sense has some overlap with both ‘spirit’[84] and ‘heart’. This is especially evident in the poetic parallelism evident in passages such as Ps 84:2[85] and Prov 2:10–11,[86] the former of which also mentions ‘flesh’[87] (the human body as a whole) thus connecting physicality with ‘soul’ and ‘heart’.

This fluidity means we cannot draw neat lines in the *Shema*, nor in other examples from the text as noted by Woodbridge[88] and Hollinger.[89] These allow for but certainly do not assert

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[77] *Jesus Creed*, 185–90.
[78] *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 656–59, 677–79.
[79] OT: לב/*lēv*; NT: καρδια/*kardia.*
[80] E.g., 1 Sam 1:8; Prov 15:13; Deut 20:8; Ps 22:1; Rom 1:24.
[81] E.g., Is 42:25; Job 34:10; Dan 7:8; 1 Sam 27:1; 2 Cor 4:6; Rom 12:2.
[82] E.g., 1 Cor 14:14–15.
[83] ‘Soul’ is commonly translated from נפש /nephesh (OT) and ψυχή/psychē (NT), though not always appropriately, according to Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 654.
[84] OT: רוח/*rûach*; NT: πνεῦα/*pneuma*.
[85] “My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God” (Ps 84:2 NRSV)
[86] “... for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul” (Prov 2:10 NRSV)
[87] בשׂר/*bâśâr*.
[88] Woodbridge expounds the formation of orthodoxy, orthopathy and orthopraxy in Isaiah’s call narrative (Isaiah 6:1–8): Isaiah receives the revelation of the truth of God’s holiness, to which he responds with a contrite confession, and a willingness to actively serve as YHWH’s messenger. “Living Theologically – Towards a Theology of Christian Practice in Terms of the Theological Triad of Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy and Orthopathy as Portrayed in Isaiah 6:1–8: A Narrative Approach,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 66.November (2010): 5–6.
[89] Hollinger notes a three-way dynamic in a number of texts. For example, in Proverbs 19:1–3, the integration of the phrases “walking in integrity”, “desire without knowledge” and “the heart rages against God” assume action, thought

tridimensional anthropologies. That said, the Shema's terminology does affirm affective, cognitive and physical dimensions as all involved in loving God. If anything, the breadth and overlap of these terms demonstrate their interdependence, affirming the essential unity of the human person as previously noted.

Theologically, the person of Jesus provides the definitive picture of what it means to be human. His spiritual vitality and sense of self emanate from his reception of and response to the Father's love in the Spirit. This love is expressed uniquely in the context of his own story[90] and nurtured through a variety of formational practices. Jesus' Spirit-illumined theological understanding of God's story—begun in creation, played out through Israel, and culminating in his mission—is shaped by a life-long considered and disciplined engagement with the Hebrew Scriptures in the context of the worshipping faith community, past and present.[91] His ministry of bringing the kingdom of God in the Spirit's power to those whom the Father gives him is one of love, compassion, vulnerability, rebuke, justice, forgiveness and emancipation that changes the trajectory of their stories radically.[92] Jesus, who himself from a young age "grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and all the people,"[93] calls his disciples to love God with the various dimensions reflected in the Shema as the pattern for and essence of holistic formation, because that is indeed his very own worldview and *modus operandi*.

Thus, in various dominant strands of biblical anthropologies, holistic Christian formation is multidimensional with an emphasis upon the essential unity of the human person. It does not assert the dimensions of the trialogue as a complete anthropology, but it does allow for them.

Truth–Beauty–Goodness (The Classic Virtues of Philosophy and Theology)

Truth, beauty and goodness, arising from ancient philosophy and theology, are often identified as

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and passion as all integral to faithfulness to YHWH. Similarly, he sees these dimensions reflected in Hosea's indictment of Israel (4:1–2) which refers to faithfulness/loyalty, knowledge of God, and various sinful actions. The Levite priest is extolled in Malachi 2:4–8, for he revered God, spoke true instruction, and walked with God in integrity and repentance. In Romans 1:20–32 Paul describes the destructive progression from futile and darkened thinking (1:21, 25a), to wayward passion (1:24–26a), to debased actions (1:26b–32); similarly, in Ephesians 4:18–19 he ties together darkened understanding, hardness of heart, and reckless sensuality and greed. He also calls Timothy to an active ministry of teaching solid doctrine, the aim of which is "love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5). Hollinger also points to Titus 1:13–16 and 2 Peter 1:3–11 as further examples. Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 143–59.

[90] E.g., his baptism, Mark 1:10–11.

[91] E.g., as a child at the temple, Luke 2:41–52.

[92] E.g., with the woman at the well, John 4:4–30.

[93] Luke 2:52 NLT.

‘the transcendentals’—the three ultimate values or virtues.[94] Truth centres on the real or normative, with strong links to the cognitive domain and the philosophical field of logic.[95] Beauty “pleases the eye of the beholder” (Thomas Aquinas[96]); it animates, lifts and enlivens, and centres on the affective domain and philosophical field of aesthetics. Goodness manifests beauty and truth in service of others and the world; it therefore concerns the behavioural domain, and the philosophical field of morals, or ethics. Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians reflects these three classic virtues: “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”[97]

The relationship between truth, beauty and goodness is often viewed as interdependent.[98] “Classical thinkers,” comments Horner, “understood these three values as bound together in a dynamic unity, as ultimately *one*: truth is good, goodness is beautiful and so on.”[99] Smith comments:

> Beauty, goodness, and truth are, like the Trinity, of one essence. When all three—beauty, goodness, and truth—are aligned, you are dealing with reality at its deepest level. It resonates in your heart, where transformation takes place. If you bump up against truth, for example, it’s also likely to be good and beautiful. They refuse … to be separated from one another. The transcendentals of beauty, goodness, and truth are not merely ideas, concepts, or speculations at the whim of our tastes. They are at the heart of reality.[100]

Truth, beauty and goodness enrich the trialogue. Theology is concerned with the norming nature of truth; spirituality is the breath and animation of life that moves us, especially in close association with the affections and aesthetics; and ministry is behaviourally and ethically oriented in service of others and world. The relationship between the classic virtues also reflects something of the interdependence of the trialogue.

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[94] David A Horner, *Mind Your Faith: A Student’s Guide to Thinking & Living Well* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 190; Howard Gardner, *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed: Educating for the Virtues in the Age of Truthiness and Twitter* (New York, NY: Basic, 2012), 1.
[95] Horner, *Mind Your Faith*, 191.
[96] Saint Thomas (Aquinas), *Aquinas: Summa Theologiae, Questions on God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 58.
[97] Phil 4:8.
[98] Steve Turley, *Awakening Wonder: A Classical Guide to Truth, Goodness & Beauty*, ed. David Diener (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic, 2015), chap. 2; James Bryan Smith, *The Magnificent Story: Uncovering a Gospel of Beauty, Goodness & Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 6.
[99] Horner, *Mind Your Faith*, 190–91.
[100] Smith, *The Magnificent Story*, 11.

Beliefs–Desires–Practices: Formational Integrity in Baptismal Catechesis (Augustine of Hippo)

Jones looks to the early centuries of Christianity to promote the formational integrity of beliefs, desires and practices in developing contemporary Christian leaders. Over the two years of baptismal catechesis, all three areas were addressed:

> Beliefs were nurtured through Scripture study and homilies. Desires for the fullness of Christian faith were encouraged, for example through the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that catechumens encountered as they were successively invited into Christian worship and dismissed from it. Simultaneously, catechumens were guided into Christian living by mentors, through whom, as Augustine proclaimed in one of his sermons, "Christ is announced through Christian friends." As the apprenticeship continued, it was presumed that the catechumens' patterns of life would exhibit—albeit often slowly and painfully—transformations of thinking, feeling, and living.[101]

Drawing from this early model Jones notes how "our lives are shaped by the complex interrelations between what we do, what we think, and what we passionately want."[102] He points to Paul's description of existential fragmentation in Romans 7 to demonstrate this: sin's bondage is shaped by the mutual reinforcement of "corrupt habits of activity, confused and even wrong convictions, and distorted desires."[103] By contrast, integrity in the Christian life sees our desires redirected towards God, false understandings let go in favour of discerning truth, and actions reshaped for faithful living. Thus, the interrelations of desires, beliefs, and practices mean that attention to one inevitably affects the others:

> For example, in order for me to redirect my desires toward God, I need help in challenging wrong beliefs about the importance of money and the problem of greed. I also need to begin to live in ways that separate me from practices that reinforce consumerist impulses and convictions grounded in greed.[104]

In exploring baptismal catechesis in the early church, he also claims that "the rich interplay of belief, desire, and practice in catechetical instruction encouraged deeper theological reflection and more faithful social witness in other ways."[105] Beliefs, desires and practices resonate strongly with the dimensions of the trialogue and the relations between them.

Prayer–Study–Work (Benedictine Rule)

In the Benedictine Rule, as with other monastic traditions, prayer, study and work shaped the

[101] Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," 195.
[102] Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," 189.
[103] Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," 189.
[104] Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," 189.
[105] Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," 201.

rhythms of daily life in community. Writing on the notions of balance, proportion and harmony in the Rule, de Waal comments:

> St Benedict insisted that since body, mind and spirit together make up the whole person, the daily pattern of life in the monastery should involve time for prayer, time for study and time for manual work. All three should command respect and all three should equally become a way to God …
>
> A vision of relatedness binds the parts together into a harmonious whole … It can be particularly well seen in the pattern of daily activity, the alternating rhythm which holds the main elements of the monastic day together. The monk moves between praying and studying and working with his hands, going in turn from chapel to library to kitchen or farm. The Rule imposed checks and balances as one activity succeeds another.[106]

Importantly, it is this vision of relatedness that sees balance only as a means to a greater goal: "The ideal of Benedictine equilibrium is not an end in itself. It is a means for total integration, the transforming of the whole man or woman so that a more complete experience of God becomes possible."[107] It is illuminating to think of ministry in terms of work. "My Father is always at his work to this very day," says Jesus, "and I, too, am working."[108] This frames ministry as participation in Jesus' ongoing work—our working with God—and of equal importance with spirituality as prayer, and the application of study central to theology. These perspectives further enrich the trialogue.

Lex Orandi–Lex Credendi–Lex Vivendi (Catholic, Orthodox and Mainline Protestant Liturgics)

The Latin phrase *lex orandi lex credendi*—the rule of prayer/worship establishes the rule of belief—has a long history in liturgics,[109] and finds most currency in Catholic, Orthodox and mainline Protestant (especially Anglican) traditions. From a grammatical viewpoint, as noted by Wainwright, "it is equally possible to reverse the subject and predicate and so take the tag as meaning that the rule of faith is the norm for prayer: what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed."[110] In one form or another, many liturgical arguments (and power struggles!) across the centuries have concerned whether worship or doctrine has the 'upper hand', though it is now widely recognised that each informs the other. Although *lex orandi lex credendi* is

[106] Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*, Second edition. (Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 1999), 70, 76.
[107] de Waal, *Seeking God*, 78.
[108] John 5:17 (NIV).
[109] This phrase is based on a saying of Prosper of Aquitaine - *legem credendi lex statuat suplicandi* ("the law of praying established the law of believing"), sometimes abbreviated *lex orandi, lex credendi* ("law of praying, law of believing"). Sermon 57:7, *Patrologia Latina* 38:389.
[110] *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (London: Epworth, 1982), 218.

the most common phrasing, *lex vivendi* (the rule of living) is often added to this maxim.[111] *Lex vivendi* enriches an understanding of ministry, connecting it to a whole-of-life living out of one's faith, and not just explicitly religious activities. Saliers[112] and Irwin[113]—among others[114]—argue for its inclusion in response to the deficiency of faith characterised by worship and theology alone, without attention to its ethical/ministerial embodiment. Anderson, writing more broadly on the connection between worship and Christian identity, comments:

> Saliers and Irwin argue that not only is there a relationship between prayer and belief, but also between prayer, belief and living. While throughout the church's history Christian prayer and theology has variously influenced each other, they have become a "churchly" practice disconnected from worldly action. Saliers and Irwin press us ... to see the connection between the practices of prayer, belief, and ethical action.[115]

The *lex orandi–lex credenda–lex vivendi* trialogue alerts us to the intertwining nature of prayer, belief, and living in the Christian journey.

Oratio–Meditatio–Tentatio [Anfechtung] (Luther)

How should one study theology? What makes a good theologian? Luther's response, drawn from the example of King David in Psalm 119, is the threefold disposition towards God, centred on the scriptures, of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio.*[116] *Oratio*: as David repeatedly prays that God would teach, lead, show and instruct him,[117] we pray for humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit as teacher and revealer, rather than our own reasoning and wisdom. Such humility is a core spiritual posture. *Meditatio*: David's persistent meditation upon God's word and commandments through speech, song and hearing shows how we too should continually indwell the scriptures—like a cow

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[111] Some would add *lex agendi*, i.e., the law of doing or action.

[112] Don E. Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7.2 (1979): 173–89. Saliers actually employs *lex agenda* – the law of ethical action. The sentiment, however, is the same.

[113] Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1994), 55–56.

[114] See also: Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 152; Don E. Saliers, E. Byron Anderson, and Bruce T. Morrill, *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God: Essays in Honor of Don E. Saliers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998), 124; Linda Kulzer, *Medieval Women Monastics: Wisdom's Wellsprings* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 311; David DeSilva, *Sacramental Life: Spiritual Formation Through the Book of Common Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 125; Pierrer de Cointet, Barbara Morgan, and Petroc Willey, *Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2008), 33; Gerald O'Collins, *Living Vatican Two* (New York: Paulist, 2006), 59; Theodore Rebard, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi," *Crisis Magazine*, 27 November 2018, https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/lex-orandi-lex-credendi-lex-vivendi.

[115] E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 28.

[116] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works Vol. 34, Career of the Reformer IV*, ed. Lewis William Spitz, trans. Robert R. Heitner, ed. Helmut T Lehmann (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg, 1960), 283–88.

[117] E.g., Ps 119:26–28, 33.

chewing its cud[118]—for the gift of theological understanding. *Tentatio*: David's lived experiences of suffering, especially at the hands of his enemies, test his insights and return him again and again to God's promises, confirming how the anvil of ministerial experience hammers out our faith. God communes with us in difficulty, rather than extracts us from it. Here Luther uses the German word *anfechtung* which, as Scaer contends, evades direct English translation; concepts of spiritual assaults, temptations, trials, afflictions and tribulations are all included.[119] The relationship between all three is cyclical. Through *oratio* God kindles our desire for *meditatio* upon divine promises; captured and illumined by God's Word we are sent into the world to experience *tentatio*; and it is these very testings, afflictions and trials that provide the touchstone of faith to drive us back to the humble seeking of God in *oratio*.

Nicol argues that Luther distinguishes his approach from monasticism's *lectio divina*, in which through reading, meditation and prayer, one progresses towards contemplative union with God.[120] Luther's emphasis is phenomenological, rather than result-oriented, because the Christian life is *vita passiva*—the receptive life—rather than *vita activa* (the active life) through works, or *vita contemplativa* (the contemplative life) through speculation.[121] That is, the *oratio–meditatio–tentatio* trialogue is *descriptive* of how God forms us through the Scriptures amidst earthly realities, rather than *prescriptive* of how we might ascend to meet God in heavenly bliss through prescribed steps. For Luther, then,

> the *telos* of the Christian life on this side of the Last Day is not a beatific beholding of the divine but suffering under the cross, which conforms the one who meditates on the Scriptures to the image of Christ crucified.[122]

Thus, "these three rules carry a formational and spiritual component,"[123] and this orientation towards the receptive life in prayer, meditation and the touchstone of lived experience fosters attentiveness to the gracious presence and working of God in all three intersecting

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[118] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works Volume 9: Lectures on Deuteronomy*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1960), 136.
[119] David P. Scaer, "The Concept of Anfechtung in Luther's Thought," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47.1 (1983): 15.
[120] Martin Nicol, *Meditation Bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1984), 19, 91 as cited in John W Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes A Theologian?," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66.3 (2002): 257.
[121] John W Kleinig, "Luther on the Practice of Piety," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 48.3 (2014): 172–85; Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 21–27.
[122] John T Pless, "Luther's Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio as the Shape of Pastoral Care for Pastors," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80.1–2 (2016): 38.
[123] Matthew David Rosebrock, "The Highest Art: Martin Luther's Visual Theology in 'Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio'" (Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary, Center for Advanced Theological Study, 2017), 7, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1874346964/abstract/D566F1B80FAC457APQ/1.

domains. God alone is the author and perfecter of our spiritual, theological and ministerial formation.

Orthodoxy–Orthopraxy–Orthopathy (Methodist/Pentecostal/Missional Church Formation)

In quite different spheres of the church, we find another resonating trialogue: orthodoxy–orthopraxy–orthopathy, or right (or literally 'straight') doctrine, right action, and right affection. The addition of orthopathy to the other two in the 1970s[124] is rooted in a natural articulation of Edward's discussion of the religious affections, and Wesley's concern with heart religion, set with doctrine and praxis.[125] Some Pentecostal theologians embrace this trialogue, such as Land who essentially links theological reflection—"this theological task"—with the process of fostering integration between the three dimensions:

> God who is Spirit creates in humanity a spirituality which is at once cognitive, affective and behavioral, thus driving toward a unified epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. To speak of and long for the full realization of this reality is the privilege and pain of Christian theology ... This theological task demands the ongoing integration of beliefs, affections and actions between the three.[126]

Frost and Hirsch, from the emerging-missional stream of the church, affirm this movement towards integration in arguing that "it is in the nexus between orthopraxy, orthopathy, and orthodoxy that a true and full appreciation of God is to be found."[127] For them, this paradigm represents a more Hebraic and rounded way of knowing God, especially given the relational emphasis upon knowing in contrast to the more intellectual conception of knowledge in Greek thought. As noted earlier, Steele sees these three in dynamic relationship braided together as a strong cord, linking them also to belief/behaviour/attitude, or cognitive/physical/emotion aspects of faith, to form a holistic understanding of faith.[128] Elsewhere, authors such as Stevens[129] and Woodbridge[130] expound this paradigm as a true and holistic approach to living theologically.

We should not use the normative emphasis implicit within orthodoxy–orthopraxy–

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[124] See Henry Knight, "Consider Wesley," *Catalyst Online: Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives for United Methodist Seminarians*, 2009, http://www.catalystresources.org/issues/294knight.html.
[125] cf. Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 147–49.
[126] Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, Second edition. (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield, 1994), 41.
[127] Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 157.
[128] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 102–5.
[129] R. Paul Stevens, "Living Theologically: Toward a Theology of Christian Practice," *Themelios* 20.3 (1995): 4–8.
[130] Woodbridge, "Living Theologically – Towards a Theology of Christian Practice in Terms of the Theological Triad of Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy and Orthopathy as Portrayed in Isaiah 6:1–8: A Narrative Approach," 1–6.

orthopathy—that there is *a* right, correct or standard theology, spirituality and ministry—to minimise elasticity, risk and mystery in formation. While orthodoxy seeks to name that which is consistent with the revelation of God in Christ, it can also precipitate suspicion and accusation that seeks to identify who is right and wrong—in and out—and stifle theological adventure. Orthopraxy may imply there ought to be one correct way of acting or ministering, that does not account for the complexities engendered by differing contexts. Likewise, orthopathy may not convey the myriad ways we as individuals, with our various spiritual temperaments, experience and express affection from and for God.[131] All of this requires educators to teach pastorally. The approximate nature of the theological task and subsequent need for malleability can be unsettling and requires gentle encouragement to embrace it. Williams' encouragement to consider orthodoxy as "a landscape to inhabit with constant amazement and delight of the discovery opened up," rather than "a set of obligations to sign up to"[132] should apply to orthopathy and orthopraxy as well.

Cognitive–Affective–Behavioural Domains of Learning (Bloom, Krathwohl, Harrow)

The connection between holistic learning in education and holistic formation is a natural one. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to how the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) developed their curriculum around affective, behavioural and cognitive domains of learning.[133] Though domains of learning are multifaceted, interdependent and complex, together these three continue to offer a widely influential model for holistic learning,[134] even if cognition continues to hold

[131] Students whose spirituality has been influenced by a strong emphasis upon God's sovereignty, for instance, may struggle to see how anger towards and questioning of God could be considered 'right affection', despite the witness of Job or the lament Psalms.

[132] Rowan Williams, "To What End Are We Made?," in *Who Is This Man?: Christ in the Renewal of the Church*, ed. Jonathan Baker and William Davage (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), 11.

[133] Identifying each dimension in this way can lead to an unhelpful compartmentalisation which contemporary neuroscience challenges, e.g., Joseph E LeDoux and Richard Brown, "A Higher-Order Theory of Emotional Consciousness," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS*, *PNAS Plus* 114.10 (2017): E2016–25. Indeed, my emphasis upon coinherence in this thesis, including between cognition, affect and behaviour, seeks to reinforce innate relationships between the three rather than a segmented approach. However, these terms are commonly employed heuristically as a 'rule of thumb' that many find helpful when thinking about their learning holistically.

[134] E.g., Merriam and Bierema, *Adult Learning*, 25; Helen Beetham and Rhona Sharpe, eds., *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age: Designing for 21st Century Learning*, Second edition. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); William M. Kondrath, "The Affective Domain and Ministerial Formation," in *Proceedings Documents* (presented at the The 31st Biennial Consultation, San Juan, Puerto Rico: Association for Theological Field Education, 2011), 87, http://www.atfe.org/Resources/ProceedingsPDFs/ATFE_booklet_31st.pdf. See also Terry Mayes and Sara de Fratis, "Technology-Enhanced Learning: The Role of Theory," in *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age: Designing for 21st Century Learning*, ed. Helen Beetham and Rhona Sharpe (New York; London: Routledge, 2013), 17–31. They identify associationist (learning as behaviour), cognitive (learning as construction of knowledge and meaning), and situative (learning as social practice with a focus on meaning, purpose and identity) as the three key areas for learning.

primacy in many educational settings, including theological education.[135] They first emerged in the education literature from the mid-twentieth century,[136] beginning with Bloom's taxonomy for cognitive learning,[137] which was later revised by Anderson and Krathwohl.[138] Subsets of cognitive thinking move from simpler (remember, understand, apply) to more complex forms (analyse, evaluate, create).[139] Theology, or Christian thought, draws heavily upon the capacity for critical thinking involving cognitive forms such as these.

The affects include attitudes, values, desires, motivations, pledge, character and emotions,[140] as well as more tacit and intuitive aspects of knowing. Krathwohl et al. developed a taxonomy for the affective domain. Though they found it more difficult to structure than the cognitive taxonomy, they managed to identify the progression of receiving, responding, valuing, organisation and characterisation.[141] The movement towards character points towards the processes of internalisation and externalisation. Something becomes a part of you and moves you at the tacit, deep inner level of 'heart and soul', such that it then characterises who you are and how you interface with others and the world. This connects strongly to the language of spirituality.[142]

Taxonomies for the behavioural domain (also identified as psychomotor or kinaesthetic) emerged in the early seventies from authors such as Harrow,[143] Simpson[144] and Dave.[145] Their focus is upon different aspects of physical learning,[146] pointing more generally to how through the body, we learn how to act or perform particular tasks in direct contact with our environment. The

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[135] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 67–69.
[136] Leslie Owen Wilson, "Three Domains of Learning: Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor," *The Second Principle*, 2014, https://thesecondprinciple.com/instructional-design/threedomainsoflearning/.
[137] Benjamin S. Bloom, David R. Krathwohl, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (London: Longmans, 1956).
[138] Lorin W. Anderson et al., *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Abridged edition. (New York, NY: Pearson, 2001).
[139] Wilson, "Three Domains of Learning: Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor."
[140] Wilson, "Three Domains of Learning: Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor."
[141] David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook II: Affective Domain* (New York, NY: David McKay, 1964).
[142] E.g., "Spirituality is a way of living life from what is believed in faith." McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 8.
[143] Anita J. Harrow, *A Taxonomy of the Psychomotor Domain: A Guide for Developing Behavioral Objectives* (New York, NY: David McKay, 1972).
[144] Elizabeth J. Simpson, *The Classification of Educational Objectives, Psychomotor Domain* (Washington, DC: Gryphon House, 1972).
[145] R.H. Dave, "Psychomotor Levels," in *Developing and Writing Behavioral Objectives*, ed. Robert J Armstrong (Tucson, AZ: Educational Innovaters, 1970), 20–21.
[146] For instance, Harrow's taxonomy identified reflex movements, fundamental movements, perceptual abilities, physical abilities, skilled movements and nondiscursive communication. Harrow, *A Taxonomy of the Psychomotor Domain*.

situated nature of the behavioural domain, whether psychomotor or kinaesthetic, reflects the contextual nature of ministry in which we engage through our bodies with the world and people around us as a participation in the ongoing ministry of Christ.

The relationships between cognitive, affective and behavioural domains are complex and non-linear. A theory–to–practice paradigm assumes that we think something through and then modify behaviour accordingly. Sometimes this is the case; however, as social psychologist Myers notes, "we are likely not only to think ourselves into a way of acting but also act ourselves into a way of thinking."[147] The affects motivate behaviour and shape thinking but are also influenced by them. For the trialogue, this reiterates the interdependent relationship between theology, spirituality and ministry.

Body–Mind–Will (Groome)

The literature survey in chapter one briefly noted Groome's call for an 'ontological turn' in religious education. The result is an epistemic ontology where the dimensions and dynamics of one's whole being are engaged in learning.[148] Working from a phenomenological rather than metaphysical perspective, he identifies bodiliness, mind and will/spiritual as three aspects or 'selves' we experience that each source agency and identity within the one, unified being or person. Although functioning symbiotically in concert with one another, they each, in turn, are identifiable.

We experience our being as 'body-subjects'—that is, our bodies are not objects or containers for the 'real me' because there is no self apart from the embodied, situated, physical self. Our bodies thus incarnate the context for how the mental and volitional operate. This does not mean, though, that the body only serves them; Groome asserts that 'bodied wisdom', in holistic education, is just as vital as mental or spiritual wisdom. Embodied learning has implications for teaching theological reflection in ways that do not focus on the intellect alone.[149]

We also experience our being as able to engage thoughtfully, sensibly and intelligibly with life to construct meaning and make decisions about ourselves and our world which, moved by our

[147] Cited in Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 167. Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 73 points to the work of Festinger as the beginning point for recognising this. See Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Anniversary edition. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957); Leon Festinger, Henry W Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group That Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).
[148] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 85–90.
[149] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 87–88.

will, prompt physical agency accordingly. Groome says this occurs through our mental capacity to remember, reason and imagine so we can appropriate the truth about ourselves and our world through symbols and, especially, language. Through this externalisation we "represent our 'world' to self and others; our language, in turn, shapes us and how we perceive our 'world'."[150]

Finally, we experience our being through our volition. This is our self which animates or enlivens us, and thus, says Groome, may also be designated as spiritual. 'Soul' is another notion which, though now out of favour in many fields, "is still a rich term for the spiritual aspect of us that we readily recognize in our consciousness as the 'heart' that gives us passion, desire, commitment, relationality, and 'will' for life."[151] As such our spiritual or volitional aspect connects closely to the affections, though naturally, these have bodily and mental prompts as well.

Groome's paradigm informs how ministry interfaces with others and our world through our bodies, theology engages our mental capacity to reflect and construct meaning, and spirituality reflects the animating and enlivening that moves us, particularly through our affections. Functioning in concert together, body–mind–will are sources for agency and identity in our experience of being, and further elucidate the dimensions and dynamics of the trialogue.

Head–Heart–Hands (Hollinger, Foley)

Another more recent resonating trialogue has been that of head–heart–hands, of which Hollinger offers a substantial exposition.[152] 'Faith of the Head'[153] emphasises the cognitive dimension of discipleship, being primarily concerned with beliefs, doctrines and the transformation of our thinking. 'Faith of the Heart'[154] centres on "feelings, passion, affections and deep spiritual experiences"—the knowing of God "in a deeply personal, living, dynamic fashion."[155] 'Faith of the Hands'[156] stresses that the pivotal point of authentic Christian discipleship is action and doing, which embodies faith in practical realities like "witness, service, justice and acts of mercy."[157] He views Christian life through the lens of each aspect, discusses the resultant fragmentation when we give one more emphasis than the other two, and argues not only for balance but also for

[150] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 89.
[151] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 89.
[152] *Head, Heart, and Hands*; see also Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 31–33, who to these three add the fourth dimension of "habits."
[153] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 17–21.
[154] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 21–26.
[155] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 21.
[156] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 26–32.
[157] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 27.

integration and mutuality:

> When they join in symphonic concert together, we recognize that the head, heart and hands are not distinct parts, but three intersecting dimensions of our whole being ... I am not attempting just to argue that we need theology (the head), spirituality (the heart) and mission (the hands) ... rather, [they] need each other in the sense that they nurture each other, and each is integral to the expression of the others.[158]

Although he discusses the dynamics of this mutual nurture in some detail, Hollinger employs the term 'theological reflection' only in passing in the sense of 'reflecting upon theology' (the dynamics of faith of the head)[159]; he does not mean the process of integration between all three. However, Foley employs head, hands and heart—interchanged with orthopathy, orthopraxis and orthodoxy—to explore different dimensions of 'reflective believing', an approach to theological reflection that seeks to be generous, hospitable and inclusive.[160] In considering the entwined and interactive strands of orthopathy, orthopraxis and orthodoxy, he points to the perichoretic dance of empathy and mutual regard of the Trinity. "Both the mobility and lack of hierarchy in [*perichōresis*] are particularly attractive for me when thinking about the interplay of thinking, acting and feeling."[161] The use of 'heart' in head–heart–hands may be problematic given its ambiguity in Scripture (as discussed earlier), which is quite different from common contemporary usage. Still, it affirms a holistic approach to formation and utilises terms that for some, might be more accessible than theology, spirituality and ministry.

Spirituality's Coinherence with Psychology–Theology–Ministry (Nouwen)

A winsome feature of Henri Nouwen's writings[162] is his ability to articulate rich and honest insights into three essential relationships: between one's self, others, and God. These feature, for example, in works such as *Reaching Out*[163] and *In the name of Jesus*.[164] Nouwen scholar Hernandez expounds their mutuality by surveying the breadth of Nouwen's writings through a coinherent

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[158] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 32–33.
[159] E.g., *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 69, 176.
[160] Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, chap. 4.
[161] Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 70.
[162] And also, perhaps one of the reasons why he is such a popular author among those in Christian ministry ... see Jackson W. Carroll, "Pastors' Picks: What Preachers Are Reading," *Christian Century*, 2003, 120:31. Nouwen was listed as a first choice of authors for Catholic and mainline Protestant clergy.
[163] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York, NY: Image, 1986). His three movements are 'Reaching out to our innermost self'—from loneliness to solitude; 'Reaching out to our fellow human'—from hostility to hospitality; and 'Reaching out to our God'—from illusion to prayer.
[164] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989). His three movements for Christian leaders, which include 'From relevance to prayer', 'From popularity to ministry', and from 'Leading to being led', all mirror in some ways one's relation to God, others, and oneself.

model:

> For Nouwen, all these four key arenas—*spirituality*, *psychology*, *ministry*, and *theology*—commingle with one another in dynamic reciprocity ... Such interrelationships represent what I call coinherence—that is, a "full and mutual sharing of one thing in the complete reality of the other"—referring to entities that are distinct yet inseparable from each other.[165]

Spirituality for Nouwen "encompasses the entire arena of one's existence,"[166] within which psychology, theology and ministry are operative and relating coinherently. Hernandez's choice of coinherence to describe how Nouwen viewed their relation anticipates a discussion of this concept in the next section; it points to the fact that no one facet is its full self unless in dynamic relation to the others.

Befriending My Story–Your Story–God's Story (Narrative Theology/Epistemology)

Finally, narrative theology (and more broadly, narrative epistemology), which developed in the late twentieth century, deepens the trialogue—each dimension may be befriended as story.[167] Robinson's *Gossiping the Gospel*,[168] for instance, equips laity for evangelism by learning how to engage our story (that of the church), your story (that of the person/persons being engaged with), and The Story (God's story). Tabor's curriculum paradigm[169] in the Faculty of Ministry, Theology and Culture also reflects this in three key formation domains—engaging God's story,[170] engaging our stories,[171] and engaging others' and the world's stories[172]—which are bound together by a fourth learning domain—engaging stories together.[173]

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[165] Wil Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen: A Spirituality of Imperfection* (New York: Paulist, 2006), 2.
[166] Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 14.
[167] I first came across the notion of befriending in this way in Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 9. They speak of "befriending the tradition."
[168] Ian Robinson, *Gossiping the Gospel: Leader's Manual* (Sydney, NSW: Uniting Church in Australia (NSW), Board of Mission, 1991). This was later developed as "Makes You Wonder," *Makes You Wonder*, n.d., http://makesyouwonder.yolasite.com/.
[169] Unpublished, internal document.
[170] Theological and critical thinking formation through holistic learning in the Christian Scriptures and interpretation, Christian history, and Christian thought, in conversation with broader societal and interdisciplinary discourse for faithful and effective discernment and proclamation.
[171] Spiritual and personal formation through holistic learning in: discipleship, spiritual vitality and practices; self and identity, affect, suffering, wounds, desires; meaning, hope, vocation, giftedness; character and dispositions; mental, emotional, physical, social wellbeing; becoming fully alive and deeply human.
[172] Ministerial and missional formation through holistic learning in: culture; incarnational, local and global contextualisation; relationally-shaped skills for caring, sharing faith, and working with cultural diversity; innovative servant-leadership for missional communities; best practice, professional standards, industry-connected.
[173] Reflective formation through holistic learning in: praxis, the reflective arts and method in meaning making; cultural intelligence; theological reflection through contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment and courageous embodiment for shalom-shaped life and vocation.

A narrative approach asserts that our lives are not abstractions; we live them in story, which is "immediate, concrete, relational, personal."[174] It is difficult to remain detached from story because, by its very nature, it beckons involvement. Plot and perspective, conflict and character, setting and theme—these uniquely underpin the way we construct and make meaning of life. This suggests a strong connection between spirituality and befriending my story because both are fundamentally existential.

Similarly, contextually sensitive ministry invests in an attentive engagement with your story—the person, people, community and world before us. To minister without befriending another's story is to do violence to the complex web of experiences that have shaped their beliefs, identity and behaviour, and risk working on assumptions that may well prove faulty.

Narrative theology asserts that the Scriptures are understood not as a series of propositions awaiting extraction but a unified drama to befriend and live into.[175] Thus, theology as story becomes a "verbal [act] of hospitality,"[176] leading us not "to see God in our stories but our stories in God's. God is the larger context and plot in which our stories find themselves."[177] Wittwer takes this further in arguing that God's story *is* my story.[178] This intertwining points to how God's, others' and our narrative are interdependent.

Summary

These resonating expressions—and many others besides[179]—enrich our conception of the trialogue's dimensions. Theology is coloured by a covenantally constituted exploration of normative beliefs and understandings—particularly (but not only) through the story of God in the

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[174] Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006), 41–42.
[175] Roger E. Olson, "Narrative Theology Explained," *Roger E. Olson*, 2016, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2016/01/narrative-theology-explained/.
[176] Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005), 5.
[177] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 44.
[178] Tanya Wittwer, "God's Story Is My Story: The Application of a Narrative Epistemology to Preaching" (Department of Theology, Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law, Flinders University, 2011), http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/178626215.
[179] This survey is by no means exhaustive. Missiologists like Murray and Drane explore the dynamics between belonging, believing and behaving. Stuart Murray, *Church after Christendom* (Wayneboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 9–66; John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry, and Christian Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008), 82–92. There is resonance in Peterson's three angles of pastoral attentiveness to God in Scripture, spiritual direction and prayer. Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). Hollinger notes further resonances within education (Pestalozzi, Gardner), social psychology (Myers, Allport) and philosophy (Thomas Aquinas, Polanyi). *Head, Heart, and Hands*, chap. 9. Also suggestive is Aristotle's three modes of rhetorical persuasion—ethos, pathos and logos—in Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, Ingram Bywater, and Friedrich Solmsen (New York, NY: Modern Library, 1954).

Scriptures and the community of faith (tradition). It always has an unfolding, approximate nature, is contextually situated, and draws strongly (but not only) upon cognition and the capacity for careful, critical thought. Spirituality is coloured by an exploration of the existential experiences of immanence and transcendence, particularly in prayer and worship, but also in the heart and soul of the affects and our personhood: desires, wounds, personality, character, volition, attitudes and senses of identity. Spirituality is intrinsically relational. As breath, it connects with our deepest animating life force, and yet is also thoroughly bodied, and for that matter, ordinary and thoroughly storied through particular events, circumstances and relationships. Spirituality "provides an operational paradigm around which a person's life is structured"[180] in relation to what is ultimate. *Christian* spirituality, then, concerns daily life in harmony with the animating Spirit of God.[181] Ministry is coloured by our situational, cultured and contextual engagement with the stories of others and the world around us. It is a service-oriented working with and participation in Jesus' ongoing ministry through the Spirit, for *shalom*. Ministry is behaviourally and skills focused, practical and concrete. We grind it out in the realm of testing amidst the realities of suffering and delight, complexity and change.

To reiterate: the point is not to try and establish a threefold pattern of everything, nor argue for rigid correlations. A postfoundational approach does not co-opt multidisciplinary perspectives to bolster one's own predetermined view, but rather allows them to challenge and deepen it in service of ongoing conversation. Such resonances, then, ought to be held somewhat lightly to enrich rather than straitjacket the trialogue, allowing these various threefold expressions to retain their integrity. In the trialogue, we are working with a heuristic. It is a rule of thumb, a suggestive paradigm, that can be helpful in theological reflection for holistic formation, without claiming to be comprehensive. That said, the significance here is that the dimensions and their dynamics surveyed relate not only to Christian formation and discipleship but even more fundamentally, to something essential about being human.

Dynamics in Theological Reflection for Formation: Coinhering Trialogue

How might this exploration of resonating expressions and their inner movements lead to and inform the dynamics of the trialogue? We see in them both particularity and relatedness at play—

[180] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 300.
[181] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 300, 302.

what I have, to this point, posited as *coinherence*. I now take a closer look at this idea in contrast to the popular concept of *integration*. I also consider how coinherence interfaces with *liminality*. This paradox—how can dimensions of formation that are coinherent also be fragmented?—suggests that a shift from *coinherence* to the more unfolding notion of *coinhering* is appropriate.

Integration

In the so-called 'theological education debate'[182] of recent decades, writers frequently identify fragmentation in student experience as a key challenge. This is a key driver behind Farley's seminal work.[183] Although his proposal is couched in the language of 'unity', 'integration' is more common.[184] Cahalan, writing in the context of integration and theological education, defines integration as "the bringing together of distinct entities or parts and in the process the creation of something new, a wholeness that exceeds the sum of its parts."[185] The idea here is the creation of synergy or symbiosis.

In terms of student experience, there are two common forms of dis-integration: between disciplines (the so-called 'siloing' between disciplines within the curriculum), and between the curriculum as a whole and the life of the student. Addressing the first issue is not a key concern of this dissertation, although I will make some comment in the final chapter as to how insights from my research inadvertently helped shape a curriculum paradigm for our faculty as we engaged in a reaccreditation process, just as I was completing this thesis. Talking the walk is, however, chiefly concerned with the second issue, in helping students explore faith and life in ways that form them holistically. Ball's assertion, which is worth restating, reflects both aspects:

> There is a widespread and strongly expressed desire for theological education to be holistic and integrated rather than being based on sets of content that are often disconnected

[182] Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 1.

[183] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

[184] E.g., Kathleen A. Cahalan, "Integrative Learning for Practical Wisdom," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 36.0 (2016), http://journals.sfu.ca/rpfs/index.php/rpfs/article/view/452; Nancy Ault, "Assessing Integrative Learning and Readiness for Ministry: Can There Be Common Ground?," in *Learning and Teaching Theology Some Ways Ahead*, ed. Les Ball and James Harrison (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2015), 81–90; Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 67–72; Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*; Kathleen A. Cahalan, "Integration in Theological Education," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, paperback ed. 1. publ. (Chichester, K: Blackwell, 2012); Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*; Rhonda White, "Integrating Theory and Practice in Ministerial Education" (DMin, Charles Sturt University. School of Theology, 2006), http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/7760033?l-format=Thesis&q=%22theological+reflection%22&c=book&versionId=8941550; Wesley Carr, *The Pastor as Theologian: The Integration of Pastoral Ministry, Theology and Discipleship.* (London: SPCK, 1989); Mary Ellen Sheehan, "Theological Reflection and Theory-Praxis Integration: An Experience with the Case Study Method," *Pastoral Sciences* 3 (1984): 25–38.

[185] Cahalan, "Integration in Theological Education."

> from one another and from life beyond the classroom. Such integration will combine cognitive, practical and affective elements …. In total, it aims at a congruence of creed, conduct and character within the person of the graduate.[186]

Ball's desire to combine cognitive, practical and affective elements resonates with Nouwen's perspective, according to Hernandez, on integrity within the *Shema*:

> Integrity is what the Love Commandment is about: loving God with our mind, heart, and strength – bringing together the aspects of our *knowing* (orthodoxy), our *being* (orthopathy), and our *doing* (orthopraxy) in an integrated fashion. Like an unbreakable chain, integrity speaks of the connectedness of *head* (belief), *heart* (feeling), and *hand* (action).[187]

'Combining', 'connecting' or 'the bringing together' of distinct entities or parts, even if the result is synergistic or symbiotic, suggests a meeting and melding of entities that are otherwise quite able to exist independently. Theological education—supposedly—needs to bring together the theology to be learned, real-life contexts for ministry, and the personal lives of the students.

However, to imply spirituality, ministry and theology can even exist independently at all belies a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of theological reflection and formation. Doing theology is, after all, an essentially *human* activity, and as such the dynamics of theological reflection, carried out by particular persons in particular contexts, need to be viewed through an anthropological or formational lens. Groome's assertion above reflects this; as theological educators "our teaching should reflect an 'ontological turn' to engage all the dimensions and dynamics of human 'being' and be epistemic in that it turns participants to the consciousness that arises from their whole 'being' as agent-subjects located and related in time and place."[188]

What many of the expressions just surveyed suggest is that spirituality, ministry and theology cannot exist as their true or full selves apart from one another. Biblical anthropology affirms the mutuality of affection, behaviour and cognition in the interplay and overlap of terms such as heart and mind, soul and spirit, flesh and body. The *lex orandi–lex credendi–lex vivendi* maxim is not a linear formula, but a dynamic interchange of belief, worship and living. While Luther lays *oratio–meditatio–tentatio* out in that particular order, it is nevertheless cyclical. For Frost and Hirsch, the point of the co-dwelling of orthopraxy–orthopathy–orthodoxy is the very

[186] Ball, *Transforming Theology: Student Experience and Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Theological Education*, 125–26.
[187] Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 70.
[188] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 85.

nexus of discipleship where "a true and full appreciation of God is to be found."[189] As Hollinger contends, "theology, spirituality and Christian practice can never be separated."[190]

Aside from the models surveyed in the previous chapter, other authors affirm this interdependence in various ways. Browning argues against "the widely held assumption that theory is distinct from practice. All our practices, even our religious practices, have theories behind and within them."[191] In discussing the need for pastors and counsellors alike to ensure they integrate psychology and spirituality in their practice of soul care, Benner concedes that "one of the flaws of this integration metaphor is that it assumes two things that are basically separate can, by creativity and effort, be connected. This misses the point that they are already connected."[192] In *Desiring the Kingdom*,[193] Smith challenges the dominant view in education of humans as primarily thinking things or receptacles for ideas, which sees learning more concerned with *in*formation than formation. Instead, students are desiring, imaginative and liturgical animals who are shaped by their participation in cultural practices that pull them towards a vision of the good life. Blue and Wood argue strongly for the mutually formative relationship between pastoral character and pastoral practice.[194] According to the ancient Eastern Orthodox maxim, the true theologian is the one who prays, and the one who prays is the true theologian. Brown argues against the "great fallacy" of the separation between spirituality and social action in highlighting the interdependence of the three phrases within Micah 6:8:

> We do not have *three different assertions* being made, but one assertion being made in *three different ways* … We cannot talk compellingly about any one of the three phrases until we have talked about all three of them; and yet by the time we have talked about all three of them, it is sufficient to talk about any one of them, since we now perceive that includes the other two. Put visually: To act justly = to love tenderly = to walk humbly with God … Any starting point will do, so long as it is clear that the starting point will make no sense until its meaning includes the other concerns as well.[195]

Research into neuroscience and formation provides further insights in this regard.

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[189] *ReJesus*, 157.
[190] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, 187.
[191] Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 6.
[192] Benner, *Care of Souls*, 14.
[193] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009).
[194] Charles M. Wood and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011).
[195] Robert McAfee Brown, *Spirituality and Liberation: Overcoming the Great Fallacy*, First edition. (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1988), 69–70.

Neuroscientist Steven Rose argues that "affect and cognition are inextricably engaged in all brain and mind processes,"[196] and questions how "the metaphorical division between heart – or gut – and head remains embedded in present-day neuroscience, with its insistence on dichotomising between cognition and affect."[197] Hay cites the work of Damasio, a neuroscientist, who

> has shown convincingly that there is an unbreakable link between thinking and feeling. His finding undermines the assumption, current at least since the time of Descartes, that the mind is divorced from the body and bodily feeling. Thinking and feeling are inseparable, to the extent that standing back from feeling, in favour of cold detachment, is actually damaging to the full use of reason.[198]

Like Smith (above), Strawn and Brown challenge the traditional conception of education as "information acquisition" based on a dualistic body/mind anthropology, where the body is merely a receiver of information which the inner computer of the brain/mind ('hardware/software') processes and then outputs back through the body. They point to emergent models of personhood "which understand persons as emerging from, but never separate from, embodied and socially embedded life."[199] One such model is embodied cognition, where we "think and learn, not through noting and manipulating abstract concepts (i.e. information processing), but by interacting with the world in and through our bodies."[200] Here, doing shapes becoming and thinking.

The point is this: the student does not come to theological study as a blank slate, ready to receive set theology from their lecturers and readings, compute it, and then plug it into so-called 'real life'. As unified human persons, they already live real life and participate in embedded and embodied practices that dynamically interact with and shape their desires and ideas. This means they are already theologians with ideas about God, pray-ers shaped by their many and varied experiences, and theory/theology-laden practitioners whose formation cannot help but reflect mysterious, dynamic intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. In other words, spirituality, ministry and theology are intrinsically connected, because our very humanity is inherently holistic. This insight must shape pedagogies for theological reflection if theological education is to take

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[196] Steven Rose, *The Future of the Brain: The Promise and Perils of Tomorrow's Neuroscience* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 2005), 103.
[197] Rose, *The Future of the Brain: The Promise and Perils of Tomorrow's Neuroscience*, 194.
[198] David Hay, *Something There: The Biology of the Human Spirit* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), 186.
[199] Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown, "Christian Education as Embodied and Embedded Virtue Formation," in *Neuroscience and Christian Formation*, ed. Mark A Maddix and Dean Gray Blevins (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2017), 89.
[200] Strawn and Brown, "Christian Education as Embodied and Embedded Virtue Formation," 90.

student-centred learning seriously, and if theological reflection has indeed shifted, as Graham et al. suggest, towards valuing the existing experiences of the reflector.[201]

Thus, in learning and teaching theological reflection for formation, clearly there is something richer and more mutually dynamic at play than just bringing together, combining or balancing the trialogue's three dimensions, as though they exist independently otherwise. The strength of integration language lies in its accessibility, and the connection to the idea of integrity in the Christian life. Unwittingly, however, it can fail to challenge students' common expectation that theological study is about the acquisition and application of data, reflective of Schleiermacher's theory-to-practice approach. Instead, students need to befriend their *own* extant theological, spiritual and ministerial journeys, in hospitable and discerning conversation with others, as their starting point for doing theology on the way.

Coinherence

To this end, the concept of *coinherence* (or *co-inherence*) offers a helpful alternative. While perhaps less an accessible term for students than the idea of integration, it offers a richer conceptualisation of the interdependent reciprocity between spirituality, ministry and theology. As mentioned in chapter one, coinherence describes "things that exist in essential relationship with another, as innate components of the other."[202] It is perhaps most famously connected with Charles Williams, one member of the famed Inklings group (together with JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis). Williams adopted the term from Patristic theology's conception of mutual indwelling within Trinitarian relations to conceive of coinherence as the goal for all relationships—thus his formation of *The Companions of the Co-inherence*.[203] Newman describes how coinherence

> holds true across the full range of Christian doctrine—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the communion of saints. In the Incarnation, Christ dwells in Mary's womb even as Mary dwells in Christ's heart; and the divine and human natures of the God-man coinhere so completely that divine attributes can be ascribed to the man Jesus and human traits to the Godhead.[204]

I maintain that coinherence conveys the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of multiple dimensions of existence within one person (or one community of persons). This differs from *perichōresis*, which refers to the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of multiple persons

[201] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 212.
[202] Spaeth, "The Concept of Co-Inherence In the Writings of Charles Williams."
[203] Barbara Newman, "Charles Williams and the Companions of the Co-Inherence," *Spiritus; Baltimore* 9.1 (2009): 1.
[204] Newman, "Charles Williams and the Companions of the Co-Inherence," 6.

sharing one dimension of existence.[205] At this point I diverge from Meek who applies *perichōresis* to the three domains for knowing.[206] Others have employed coinherence in this way to some degree. As noted earlier, Hernandez uses coinherence to describe how Nouwen understood spirituality, psychology, ministry, and theology to

> commingle with one another in dynamic reciprocity … Such interrelationships represent what I call coinherence—that is, a 'full and mutual sharing of one thing in the complete reality of the other'—referring to entities that are distinct yet inseparable from each other.[207]

George states that as editors of *For All The Saints*,[208] he and McGrath wanted authors to address the disjunct between Evangelical theology and spirituality. "As several of the contributors note, we were interested in overcoming this dichotomy through the coinherence of sound evangelical theology and genuine Christian spirituality. This is what we meant by 'coinherence': the full and mutual sharing of one thing in the complete reality of another."[209]

While the repeated emphasis in that volume is upon redressing the dichotomy between heart and mind, Dawn is one contributor who frames it as a *trichotomy*. She is concerned about our artificial compartmentalisation of dimensions of faith, and the bifurcation between spirituality and ethics, ethics and theology, and theology and spirituality. She contends for their mutual interdependence by employing the metaphor of the body, with "doctrine/theology as the bones of the body, of spirituality as the enfleshment in a way of life, and ... ethics as the reaching out from

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[205] Technically, *perichōresis* expresses the mutual interpenetration of the Trinity's three persons (*hypostases*) who share the same nature or existence (*ousia*, singular). The dynamics of the trialogue, however, centre on the mutual interpenetration within one person (*hypostasis*) sharing multiple interdependent dimensions of existence *(ousia*, plural). This phenomenon is more accurately described as coinherence. Nevertheless—and understandably—some do use *perichōresis* to describe the trialogue's dynamics, e,g., Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 70; Meek, *Loving to Know*, 348–49; Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 41.

[206] Meek contends that the knower's triangulating between normative, existential and situational domains is akin to a perichoretic dance, since each mutually enriches and changes the other in service of forming a focal pattern for knowing. In this regard, I sense Meek tends to tie *perichōresis* too closely to the idea of dance, perhaps confusing it with *perichŏresis*, and consequently builds a significant aspect of her thesis too strongly around this faulty connection—though she does also affirm the notion of interpenetration as well. While dance *can* capture something of the Trinity's perichoretic inner relations, *perichōresis* does not directly imply or mean dance. As Humphrey explains: "The word that [St. John of Damascus] and others use to describe this mystic phenomenon [of particularity-in-unity of Trinitarian inner relations] is *not* the Greek word for "dance" (*perichŏresis*, with a short "o"), despite numerous assertions concerning the etymology of the word. That choreographical word *is* used in the ancient texts of the encircling movement of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1, whose wheels revolve around as they move in concert. But for our Triune God, another word is used (*perichoresis* with a long "o"): this is a word that implies a far deeper spiritual intercommunion than a mere inter-weaving dance!" Edith Humphrey, *Ecstasy and Intimacy: When the Holy Spirit Meets the Human Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 92–93.

[207] Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 2.

[208] Timothy George and Alister McGrath, *For All the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

[209] George and McGrath, *For All the Saints*, 3.

that enfleshment."[210] The idea of coinherence does not feature in her article, but the connection to the coinherence of spirituality, ministry and theology is clear: no one of these can be 'brought together' any more than can our bones, flesh and moving body, which all necessarily grow and develop in vital relationship—or equally, suffer at the hands of any one's pathology. In this way, coinherence offers a richer understanding of the trialogue's dynamics of interdependence than terms like integration, combining, bringing together, or balance.

Liminality

A coinherent trialogue suggests that ministry, spirituality and theology exist in mutual and dynamic relationship with one another; each dimension is itself in relation to the other two. A spiritually attuned life fuels vital ministry and a disposition for receiving theological understanding. A robust theology of a gracious God sees freedom and intimacy experienced in prayer and self-concept, and vulnerable and sacrificial ministry to and with others. Contextually grounded ministry shapes an empathetic character and spawns engaged theological grappling with how God works in the world. The converse is also true. Skewed theology impedes healthy spirituality and well-thought-through ministry. Poor ministry practice withers the soul and clouds theological thinking. Spiritual pathologies twist theologies towards self and sap life from ministry practice. Coinherence means characteristics of one dimension are always contributing to and reflected in the other two in some way.

There is, however, a paradox at play: when is this ever the case, where we experience such a complete congruence or alignment between all dimensions, whether for good or for ill? Coinherence rings true inasmuch as humans, with deeply interconnected and interdependent aspects of being, are an essential unity. Yet it can inadvertently imply direct and complete correlations that do not account for the fragmentation we commonly experience. A central dimension of being human is that there are gaps, contradictions, disjuncts, and points of incongruence between our spirituality, theology and ministry. Drane contends that "it is the lack of integration of [behaving, belonging and believing] that lies at the heart of much *angst* being experienced by so many people today."[211] Bauder notes the results of fragmentation between

[210] Marva Dawn, "Practiced Theology-Lived Spirituality," in *For All the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality*, ed. Timothy George and Alister McGrath (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 139.
[211] Drane, *After McDonaldization*, 90.

orthodoxy, orthopathy and orthopraxy,[212] and Shaw, the imbalance between affective, behavioural and cognitive learning dimensions.[213] Such gaps provide impetuses for reflection and conduits for (trans)formation and growth. In this sense, coinherence does not quite capture the dissonance we experience and the possibility of becoming.

This disjunct goes by various terms or phrases. It is the 'gap' between faith and experience that can become a sacred space if one is willing to let go of firmly held opinions and be willing to entertain new possibilities.[214] It is a 'blurred encounter'—"a pastoral situation in which boundaries are likely to be crossed and where the Christian will likely need to make a judgement as to the appropriate course of action."[215] The equilibrium between us and our world is ruptured by a 'conflict in context' which prompts us to scan for solutions to try and restore coherence; this searching could last for seconds, or years.[216] Profound conflicts might be an encounter with 'the void'—experiences of suffering that drag us out of the two-dimensionality of ego and surrounding world and confront us with our fragility, contingency and threat of non-being.[217] Paradoxically, "the experience of the void proves graciously to be a pathway to centeredness in the Holy."[218] 'Convictional knowing' provides a theological lens—the Spirit opens our eyes to the reality of sin and death within and around us, the limitations of our human situation, and our need for rescue.[219]

Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah to call out hypocrisy: "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."[220] "But be doers of the word," chides James, "and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."[221] Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night with his burning questions; the Rabbi's claims and actions have disrupted his world. "But we had hoped that he

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[212] "Orthodoxy without orthopraxy is the dead faith James described. Orthodoxy without orthopathy is dead formalism or even legalism. Orthopraxy without orthodoxy is undirected pragmatism or innovation. Orthopraxy without orthopathy is dead Pharisaism and hypocrisy. Orthopathy without orthodoxy is sheer enthusiasm or fanaticism. Orthopathy without orthopraxy is sentimentalism and pure emotionalism." "Conserving Ordinate Affection," 2009, http://conservativechristianity.wordpress.com/2009/03/.

[213] "An imbalance between the learning dimensions creates distortions in the disposition: a focus on the affective domain leads to ignorant pietism; a focus on the behavioural domain leads to empty technical excellence; a focus on the cognitive domain leads to the pride and irrelevance that are endemic among many theological graduates. Excellence in theological education will recognize the need for a holistic balance which will lead to the healthy dispositional formation of the emerging leaders entrusted to our care." Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 76.

[214] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, chap. 5.

[215] Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 17.

[216] Loder, as explained in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 124.

[217] Loder, as explained in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 274–81.

[218] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 279.

[219] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 281–84.

[220] Matt 15:8.

[221] Jas 1:22.

was the one to redeem Israel," the forlorn Emmaus Road disciples tell their companion.[222] Peter, puzzled by a spiritual vision that conflicts with his theological categories, ends up ministering amongst Gentiles; the result is a radically reworked theology of the gospel's inclusivity.[223] These reflect dissonance within the trialogue—the mystery and ambiguity of incongruences between our normative guides, surrounding world, and lived body experience.

The notion of liminality aptly connects to such gaps, blurred encounters, conflicts, voids and convictions. The *limen*, from which liminal comes, literally means threshold—it is the border, the boundary, the line over which we cross.[224] Liminality points to how we find ourselves on the cusp, passing through, at a fork in the road, in the middle, betwixt and between, caught in our own Easter Saturday. Other images include disorientation,[225] exile,[226] the trapeze,[227] and the tomb.[228] We are unable—or do not want—to return to our previous spiritual, theological or ministerial reality, but neither do we yet know the way forward. Such liminal spaces are grist for the mill in theological reflection, because they touch our points of care, draw upon our formation hitherto, and make room for the Spirit's (trans)forming work of *shalom* within and around us.[229] Our experiences of liminal spaces are wide-ranging.

Adventurous Spaces

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See footnote for original source.[230]

Sometimes liminal spaces are adventurous and energising. Mayes observes that

> the liminal spaces into which Jesus leads us are places of radical unmaking and unlearning – uncomfortable spaces where we're called to be utterly vulnerable to God, and from which we will re-enter the world quite changed, even converted! The *limen* is the threshold, the place of departure, a springboard into a fresh way of doing things."[231]

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[222] Luke 24:21.
[223] Acts 10–11.
[224] Andrew D Mayes, *Beyond the Edge: Spiritual Transitions for Adventurous Souls* (London: SPCK, 2013), x.
[225] Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 25–45.
[226] Dan Fleming and Peter Mudge, "Leaving Home: A Pedagogy for Theological Education," in *Learning and Teaching Theology Some Ways Ahead*, ed. Les Ball and James Harrison (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 79.
[227] Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, 16.
[228] Anne Franks and John Meteyard, "Liminality: The Transforming Grace of in-Between Places," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 61.3 (2007): 218.
[229] As Ault contends, "theological reflection engages a person in a liminal space between unknowing and knowing, between what is implicitly known and explicitly expressed." Ault, "Theological Reflection," 304.
[230] Michael Leunig, *When I Talk to You: A Cartoonist Talks to God* (Sydney South, NSW: HarperCollins, 2014), 48.
[231] Mayes, *Beyond the Edge*, ix–x.

Like new wineskins,[232] liminal spaces open new ways of thinking with God, dwelling with God, working with God. Theological reflection for formation can open up new possibilities and energise us for their exploration and embodiment.

Necessary Spaces

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[233]

As part of healthy human and Christian formation, liminal spaces are transforming, renewing and—as Rohr contends—very necessary:

> We have to allow ourselves to be drawn into sacred space, into liminality. All transformation takes place there. We have to move out of "business as usual" and remain on the "threshold" (*limen*, in Latin) where we are betwixt and between. There, the old world is left behind, but we're not sure of the new one yet. That's a good space. Get there often and stay there as long as you can by whatever means possible. It's the realm where God can best get at us because we are out of the way. In sacred space the old world is able to fall apart, and the new world is able to be revealed. If we don't find liminal space in our lives, we start idolizing normalcy. We end up believing it's the only reality, and our lives shrivel.[234]

Discontent often births liminal spaces. Theological reflection can attune us to the deadwood in our lives and reorient us for growth that comes from necessary pruning.

Broken Spaces

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[235]

At the same time, Rohr's quote ought not tempt us to romanticise liminality. Anyone who has been unceremoniously thrust into a liminal space—the death of a loved one, a dryness in prayer, a troubling pastoral situation, a long-held theology no longer tenable—will testify to how difficult, unsettling and painful it can be. Such transition spaces become

> a testing process of undoing and remaking. The place of liminality … becomes a place of ambiguity and confusion as one world is left behind – one thought world—and things are shaken up before one can re-enter society with a different perspective.[236]

Liminal spaces are often hard to inhabit; they can feel like storms, deserts, deep seas.

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[232] Matt 9:14–17, Mark 2:18–22, Luke 5:33-39.
[233] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 16.
[234] Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2003), 155.
[235] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 38.
[236] Mayes, *Beyond the Edge*, ix–x.

Theological reflection for formation can bring comfort, hope and healing amidst the realities of human brokenness.

Paradoxical, (Trans)Forming Spaces

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[237]

As Mayes points out, though, "it is precisely here that the person clarifies his or her sense of identity and purpose—things are discovered in the liminal zone that can't be found in the routines of normal life."[238] And this points to the many conflicting sensations liminality brings: terror and excitement; exposure and enclosure; being drained and energised; confusion and illumination; lostness and being found; pain and healing; isolation and common human bonds. As a place of paradox, then, the liminal space

> is discomforting but strangely renewing. In the experience of dislocation we find ourselves. Deconstruction leads to reconstruction. In the time of exile and spiritual homelessness we rediscover the heart's true home."[239]

Liminal spaces are paradoxically seedbeds for death and new life—that is, for (trans)formation. Theological reflection for formation is a safe place to sit with and explore the paradoxes, and in doing so, allow the possibility of change to take root.

Coinhering Trialogue

Liminality, then, provides a critical linkage between theological reflection and holistic formation. Its very nature beckons (or propels!) us into meaning-making, helping us pay attention to fragmentation as God's invitation to grapple with experience holistically. Moreover, it provides the space where the Spirit can (trans)form our ministry, theology and spirituality. As such, it is more accurate to speak of a *coinhering* trialogue in theological reflection for formation, than a *coinherent* trialogue.[240] Even if our experience is not one of liminality, coinhering more generally aligns with the pilgrimed and labyrinthine nature of spiritual, theological and ministerial formation. A coinhering trialogue reflects the nature of quality conversation; in listening and

[237] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 25.
[238] Mayes, *Beyond the Edge*, ix–x.
[239] Mayes, *Beyond the Edge*, ix–x.
[240] This shift finds resonance in the way Cahalan et al. deliberately speak of integrating rather than integration in *in situ* learning in theological education. Kathleen A. Cahalan, Edward Foley, and Gordon S. Mikoski, eds., *Integrating Work in Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017). It is also reflected in the way Nouwen, as much as he constantly affirmed a spirituality of integration, also fully embraced a spirituality of imperfection. See Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 2–3.

speaking each contributor contributes to and shapes the others' contributions, but never in a way that is static and complete without room for growth. The conversations within and between pilgrims are always becoming, always coinhering, as are their journeys. A 'coinhering' trialogue retains the intrinsic mutuality and interdependence between human dimensions of theology, ministry and spirituality, and is thus both richer than integration, and technically more accurate than *perichōresis*. Yet it also points to the reality of liminal spaces and fragmentation, and our becoming as we are transformed by the Spirit into Christ's image from one degree of glory into another.[241] As pilgrims who walk and talk together, we are living paradoxes who are always 'on the way'—deeply unified, yet always being (trans)formed. This reflects the mystery of how "it is possible both to be human and be not yet fully human."[242]

Conclusion

In considering dimensions and dynamics of theological reflection for holistic formation—birthed from my own story but developed beyond it—this chapter posits a spirituality–theology–ministry trialogue as a helpful heuristic framework. This reflects an explicit and needed shift in practical theology to a theory–practice–persons paradigm, commensurate with covenant epistemology's espousal of knowing as interpersoned. The trialogue receives robust support from correspondence with the theological education literature, pedagogical pragmatism in light of more intricate anthropologies, and resonance with covenant epistemology's existential, normative and situational domains of knowing. My survey of a diverse range of resonating threefold expressions from within and beyond Christian discourse further enriches our understanding of each dimension of the trialogue, which will be particularly helpful when exploring talking the walk's fourth contour in chapter five, contemplative conversation. The survey is also valuable in considering the dynamics between the three dimensions. Discussion of the notions of integration, coinherence and liminality suggests spirituality, theology and ministry are interdependent yet always becoming in conversation. Thus, a coinhering trialogue—or simply, trialogue—is talking the walk's first contour. Because I have stressed the (trans)formational, 'on the way' nature of the trialogue in theological reflection for formation, a question naturally arises: towards what direction is formation oriented? That is the focus of talking the walk's second contour in chapter three.

[241] 2 Cor 3:18.
[242] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 275.

CHAPTER THREE
SHALOM

We may know for shalom. With every knowing venture we may invite it and contribute to it.

Esther Meek[1]

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

Luke 24:36

Shalom is the management of the abundance of creation so that everyone can participate in the neighborhood.

Walter Brueggemann[2]

The notion of becoming reflects the importance of (trans)formation in theological reflection. Talking the walk as a covenantal endeavour is always on the way, an exploratory coming to know that reflects the unfolding character of relationships. In the same way that covenant epistemology asserts knowing as transformation and not merely information,[3] theological reflection is more than just problem solving or arriving at the 'correct' answer. We are changed as we encounter the living God in our reflection endeavours because covenantally constituted knowing emphasises dynamic realities such as pledge, love and relationship. Thus "human knowing unfolds in a journeyed trajectory."[4] Along the winding road of our pilgrimage, the Spirit lovingly melds together particular instances of *transformation* in our beliefs, behaviour and character to fashion our *formation* longitudinally. The nomenclature of '(trans)formation' underscores the intrinsic connection between the two.

This emphasis evokes natural and important questions: (trans)formation … towards what? What directs the journey of our becoming? Towards what goal or *telos* does the Spirit form us? And how does theological reflection for formation partner with God in this work? These questions orient chapter three. In contrast to knowing as information and mastery, covenantal knowing has its genesis in pledge, love, discovery and transformation. Similarly, Meek argues, the end or goal of knowing contrasts to that typified by the defective epistemic default:

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[1] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 91.
[2] Walter Brueggemann, *Shalom, Order, Chaos and Sin*, The Work of the People (Cypress, TX, n.d.), https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/shalom-order-chaos-and-sin.
[3] Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 5; see especially "Texture 3: Knowing as Transformation, Not Information", 131-142.
[4] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 423.

> A knowledge-as-information approach is about results. Performance. Control. Outcomes. Success. Power. Wealth. Consumption. The loving-in-order-to-know approach … is about results of a noticeably different sort. If we love in order to know, we know for shalom. Resolution. Healing. Relationships. Joy. Peace.—*And* better outcomes ... We may know for shalom. With every knowing venture we may invite it and contribute to it.[5]

We may know for *shalom.* This epistemic vision of 'the good life' "brings knowing into line with all that is enjoined in the cultural mandate, which calls all humans to covenant mediation, stewardly action in the world to bring it to its full flourishing in presentation to God."[6] Talking the walk, as a particular expression of covenantally constituted knowing, has this goal of *shalom* in mind. Along our meandering and circuitous road our steady compass is the eventual restoration, wholeness and communion of all things. Sojourning together towards that true north, we discern invitations along the way to join in God's flourishing work, already begun in Christ. Such attentive response is the purpose of theological reflection for formation, and why as a craft or *habitus* it is so fundamental to becoming more fully human.

This chapter, then, explores *shalom* as the *telos* of theological reflection for formation. I begin by exploring our culturally fashioned teleological nature; it shapes the future visions we aim for and thus influences how we interpret present experience. I then consider the conventional goal of Christian formation of 'selfhood in Christ'. Does this *telos* service theological reflection for formation well? I argue that it needs exegeting and fleshing out into a vision faithful to its essence, yet more concrete and expansive, lest it become vague and myopic. *Shalom* helps in this regard. I draw out the multifaceted, 'glocal', embodied and hopeful nature of *shalom* to show how I think it serves theological reflection for formation more effectively. I conclude by connecting this vision of flourishing back to teleology, culture and formation by positing theological reflection for formation as a fundamental 'cultural liturgy'—a ritual of ultimate concern—for the good life of *shalom.* The craft of theological reflection for formation is perhaps one of the most important cultural forming practices we can develop as Christians if we are to fulfil our mandate for faithfully stewarding our lives, communities and world.

Shalom as the *telos* of theological reflection for formation, then, is the second contour of talking the walk, and this chapter's original contribution to knowledge. [7]

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[5] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 91.
[6] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 474.
[7] Significant portions of this chapter have been developed from Bruce Hulme, "A Vision for the Good Life: Shalom as a Telos for Christian Formation in Teaching Theological Reflection," in *Wondering About God Together: Research-Led Learning & Teaching*, ed. L. Ball and P.G. Bolt (Sydney: SCD, 2018), 140–61.

Teleology, Culture, and Theological Reflection for Formation

Royal weddings are not often remembered for great theology; the focus is usually upon the fairy-tale romance, pomp and ceremony, paparazzi and the celebrity guest list. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding, though, was an exception. For a few minutes at least, American Episcopal priest Bishop Michael Curry subverted the norm. Those expecting a sentimental and placid sermon were in for a surprise; Curry began with the couple, but soon moved beyond them:

> Love is not selfish and self-centred. Love can be sacrificial, and in so doing, becomes redemptive. And that way of unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive love changes lives, and it can change this world. If you don't believe me, just stop and imagine. Think and imagine a world where love is the way.
>
> Imagine our homes and families where love is the way. Imagine neighborhoods and communities where love is the way. Imagine governments and nations where love is the way. Imagine business and commerce where love is the way. Imagine this tired old world where love is the way. When love is the way—unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive.
>
> When love is the way, then no child will go to bed hungry in this world ever again. When love is the way, we will let justice roll down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever-flowing brook. When love is the way, poverty will become history. When love is the way, the earth will be a sanctuary. When love is the way, we will lay down our swords and shields, down by the riverside, to study war no more.
>
> When love is the way, there's plenty good room—plenty good room—for all of God's children. Because when love is the way, we actually treat each other, well ... like we are actually family. When love is the way, we know that God is the source of us all, and we are brothers and sisters, children of God.
>
> My brothers and sisters, that's a new heaven, a new earth, a new world, a new human family.[8]

No doubt the stark contrast between the reserved norm and Curry's animated delivery raised eyebrows; he was, after all, a black American preacher in the most English of institutions. But at a deeper level, he disrupted expectations. A focus on the couple gave way to an expansive vision for the flourishing of individuals, communities and world. This cultural vision of *shalom*—what Charles Taylor termed a "social imaginary"[9] of a future 'good life'—infuses the biblical narrative. Isaiah and Micah see the nations' weapons of destruction converted into gardening tools for cultivation,[10] Jesus tells of an estranged father and son embracing,[11] Paul imagines

[8] Maquita Peters, "Bishop Michael Curry's Royal Wedding Sermon: Full Text Of 'The Power Of Love,'" The Two-Way, *NPR.Org*, 20 May 2018, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/20/612798691/bishop-michael-currys-royal-wedding-sermon-full-text-of-the-power-of-love.
[9] As explained in Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 65–71.
[10] Isa 62:1–4; Micah 4:3.
[11] Luke 15:11–31.

creation set free from its bondage to decay,[12] and John looks forward to a new heaven and a new earth where "death will be no more."[13] Martin Luther King's words ring in our ears: "I have a dream!" But social imaginaries are not just biblically shaped. They come from politicians' campaign slogans, billboards on the drive to work, and banks rewarding loyalty with increased credit limits. Social imaginaries infuse our lives.

Why do they capture our attention and speak so powerfully? Because they articulate visions of the good that tap into our teleological nature.[14] It is not as though formation is an option. For good or for ill, we are always on a vector towards an imagined something—'easy street', the next gadget, reconciled relationships, the kingdom of *shalom*. As creatures of intent, we are always aiming somewhere. Instinctively our lives arc along trajectories towards various visions of the good, whether we can articulate these (as do advertisers, politicians, biblical writers or preachers), or know of them only at a more tacit level. As Reuschling contends, "our lives will be orientated around what we love and what we view as good."[15]

The concept of *culture*, though complex and contested,[16] is pivotal in understanding the mechanics of how these formational visions of the good shape the interpreting of experience. 'Culture' is sometimes narrowed to ethnicity (often conveyed in 'multicultural'), trends and fads (so-called 'pop-culture') or the arts (what refined, 'cultured' people engage with for leisure).[17] Sometimes it is conveyed as a sort of monolithic something[18] 'out there' in society—a force that surrounds and influences us.[19] A more nuanced definition from communication scholars West and Turner sees culture as "the shared, personal, and learned life experiences of a group of individuals

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[12] Rom 8:21.
[13] Rev 21:1–4; cf. Isa 65:17–19.
[14] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 52–55.
[15] Jeannine K. Brown, Carla M. Dahl, and Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation about Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 128.
[16] Veling contends that "it is easy to become more confused than enlightened when seeking to get a handle on this word. Part of the problem is that we are swimming in culture; it is like an ocean surrounding us, as water surrounds a fish. Or it is like the air we breathe. Or it is like a lens we see through, without us consciously noticing that we are wearing spectacles. Or it is like something entirely normal or "natural" to us, even though to a person of a different culture it may seem quite strange and foreign." Veling, *Practical Theology*, 159.
[17] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 17.
[18] As Crouch critiques: "We talk about 'the culture' even though culture is always cultures, plural: full of diversity, variety and history." Crouch, *Culture Making*, 10.
[19] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 71. The Whiteheads' model of theological reflection was ground-breaking in that it explicitly identified culture as a key consideration in theological reflection, in conversation with tradition and experience. However, in doing so it inadvertently tended towards reinforcing this concept of culture as something 'out there'. Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*.

who have a common set of values, norms and traditions."[20] These societal systems or ways of operating, each with their own teleologies or visions of the good, shape an individual's meaning-making. When it comes to doing theology then, 'culture' is conceived as one 'context' among other contexts that are worthy of consideration. For instance, I might consider the effect of particular *cultural contexts* (e.g. 'Australian culture', 'Adelaide culture', 'Lutheran culture', 'Tabor culture', 'Hulme-family culture') alongside *other contexts* (e.g., historical, geographical, ethnic, religious, socio-political contexts) when doing theological reflection upon an experience.[21] In this sense, a 'cultural context' transcends and is external to—but bears significance influence upon—the individual meaning-maker.

An emphasis upon theological for formation, though, invites a deeper consideration of culture as itself a central *mechanism within* meaning-making, not just as one *context* among others *that influence* meaning-making. As Lane contends, culture "is not only the influence that shapes our behavior and values, but it is the lens through which all of life is seen and interpreted."[22] As individuals we all have our own operational culture or cultural lenses—themselves shaped by various contexts—that make living possible and meaningful. In this sense, culture is "a complex, integrated coping mechanism"[23] or "strategy for survival"[24] we employ to navigate life with meaning and efficacy, to use Kraft's definition. As individuals, not just as communities, we *all* have complex and integrated coping mechanisms shaped by myriad contextual factors, both personal and environmental, that we learn over time.

Critically, then, culture is not only an influential, external force—a *cultural context* amongst other contexts—but more fundamentally, a central mechanism in theological reflection for formation. We each make meaning through our cultural lenses, and in turn, as cultural agents,

[20] "The values of a culture are its standards and what it emphasizes most. Norms are patterns of communication. Traditions are the customs of a culture. These values, norms, and traditions affect our interpersonal relationships within a culture. It's almost impossible to separate values, norms, and traditions from any conversation pertaining to intercultural communication." Richard West and Lynn H Turner, *Understanding Interpersonal Communication: Making Choices in Changing Times* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011), 82.

[21] E.g., This is the perspective of Bevans, who says that "reality is not just 'out there'; reality is 'meditated by meaning,' a meaning that we give it in the context of our culture or our historical period, interpreted from our own particular horizon and in our own particular thought forms." Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Revised and expanded., Faith and Cultures Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002), 4.

[22] Patty Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 35.

[23] Kraft defines culture as "a complex, integrated coping mechanism, belonging to and operated by a society (social group), consisting of: 1. concepts and behavior that are patterned and learned; 2. underlying perspectives (worldview); [and] 3. resulting products, both nonmaterial (customs, rituals) and material (artefacts)." Charles Howard Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 39.

[24] Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 38.

cultivate (or 'culture-make') ourselves and our world in response to that interpretation. We see this quite powerfully in Crouch's insightful idea that "*culture is what we make of the world*."[25] He draws out a lovely double-meaning in this phrase. One is about interpretation, reflection, contemplation—what *sense* we make of the world ('What did you make of that?' we might say to a friend after watching a movie together). The other is about creation, formation, cultivation—what we *fashion* from the world we have been given. And in both senses, what we make of the world is teleological in character. We contemplate and cultivate with enculturated social imaginaries of what we think we and our world should be formed towards. Such innate visions of human flourishing—of the good, of our preferred future, of what we deeply desire—are intrinsic to the cultural lenses with which we view the world to navigate daily life and make something of it. So, from where do these pictures come? How do they become the cultural lenses through which we interpret life?

Philosopher James KA Smith contends that in the course of daily life we participate at a bodily level in enculturating rites and practices, whether they be 'sacred' or 'secular'.[26] Frequently, he contends, these are provided by the Western consumerist culture. Some are 'thin' and hold little sway in the trajectory of our identity formation. But others are 'thick' and value-laden—what Smith calls "cultural liturgies," or "rituals of ultimate concern."[27] Through our participation in these cultural liturgies, imaginings of the good are reinforced to situate our desires and actions:

> Because our hearts are orientated primarily by desire, by what we love, and because those desires are shaped and molded by the habit-forming practices in which we participate, it is the rituals and practices of the mall—the liturgies of mall and market—that shape our imaginations and how we orient ourselves to the world. Embedded in them is a common set of assumptions about the shape of human flourishing, which becomes an implicit *telos*, or goal, of our desires and actions. That is, the visions of the good life embedded in these practices become serendipitously embedded in us through our participation in the rhythms and rituals of these institutions.[28]

Smith banks heavily on the primacy of affect hypothesis,[29] asserting that "we are fundamentally noncognitive, affective creatures."[30] Helpfully, he wants to redress the

[25] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 23–24.
[26] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*.
[27] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 85–88.
[28] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.
[29] This was developed in the 1980s in social psychology. For instance, see R. B. Zajonc, "Feeling and Thinking: Preferences Need No Inferences," *American Psychologist* 35.2 (1980): 151–75; Sheila T. Murphy and R. B. Zajonc, "Affect, Cognition, and Awareness: Affective Priming With Optimal and Suboptimal Stimulus Exposures," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64.5 (1993): 723–39.
[30] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53.

overemphasis upon cognition in learning and formation (as per *cogito ergo sum*—Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am') and paucity of attention given to affect through embodied practices, especially in Christian higher education.[31] That corrective is much needed, and indeed commensurate with my enthusiasm for attending to affect, spirituality and personhood in learning and teaching theological reflection—a theory–practice–persons approach.

Despite attempts to argue otherwise,[32] however, Smith's commitment to the primacy of affect needlessly tends towards a fractured anthropology—the very rift he is trying to heal—because of his reluctance to affirm reciprocity between affect and cognition. Smith is *lex orandi, lex credendi* all the way, and rarely the reverse.[33] This does not give proper credence to ways in which cultural liturgies are themselves inevitably shaped by ideas and worldviews. Indeed, he cannot help but say as much when he talks (in the quote above) of 'sets of assumptions' that inform various cultural liturgies in the first place, or elsewhere in connecting visions to thinking.[34]

Nevertheless—whether we are pulled forward by spiritual impulses and affect, theological worldviews and conceptions, embodied actions, or some mysterious and interdependent melding of all of these—the key point is that enculturated social imaginaries are part and parcel of theological reflection as meaning-making. We are "orientated by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and that picture governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions."[35] For Christians, then, eschatology is not an abstract doctrine merely obsessed with the mechanics of how it will all end.[36] Eschatology is brought to life—in *every* sense—because it becomes animated and anchored in the present as much as in the future.

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[31] See especially Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, chap. 6.

[32] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 10–16.

[33] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 34.

[34] "A lot of what drives my behavior is my sense of being attracted to and drawn to and pulled towards a vision of what I *think* is the good life, less a matter of my thinking through, 'This is what I ought to do.'" James K. A. Smith, "Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation" (presented at the January Series, 2010, Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin College, 2010), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9p5Wp7ao9g Italics mine.

[35] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53.

[36] In using the term 'eschatology' here I am pointing to God's future, ultimate goal of the consummation of all things reconciled under Christ, and how that bears upon present life. My emphasis is not upon the mechanics or ordering of future events. As Buxton comments: "The concept of eschatology is an ambiguous one. In its original formulation it referred to the four *eschata*, or last things, in a chronological sense: death, judgment, heaven and hell. However, as Ingolf Dalferth reminds us, these things are not just 'last': they are, by virtue of their ultimacy, the 'greatest'. So [as Dalferth states], 'eschatology is not simply an appendix to dogmatics which describes some future events that are in principle beyond our present life and knowledge. It discusses the fundamental normative orientation of our present life in terms of its final end and ultimate points of reference.' Thus it is more appropriate to define eschatology as that which expresses the *goal* of all creation, human and physical, rather than specific, identifiable *eschata*." Graham Buxton, *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 111.

This means theological reflection for formation is not only concerned with looking backwards. ‘Reflection’ readily implies a retrospective orientation, for contemplating prior experience is the starting point for attentiveness to the Presence and Person of God in our journey. Typically, we begin theological reflection with what happened. Yet an emphasis upon a longitudinal perspective in formation means we also ‘reflect forwards’, as it were. As Kierkegaard asserted: “life must be understood backwards ... but … lived forwards.”[37] Thus history and eschatology, together, offer insight into our present formation. Teleology—specifically, eschatological imagination—also matters in theological reflection for formation. As such, it seems strange to me that eschatology is not more explicit in approaches to theological reflection. For if, as Shaw argues, theological education should be oriented towards the missionary character of God,[38] then the approaches to theological reflection which shape its curricula should be so as well.

If our teleology influences our meaning-making so strongly, then it surely needs constant recalibration. For our ideas of the good life easily get bent out of shape. I use the phrase ‘the good life’ deliberately, even provocatively. Its popular understanding connects with the Western cultural narrative of a frantic striving for financial security, status, sexual gratification on demand, owning the latest gadgetry, sipping a cocktail at an island resort, or always being happy. Sine terms it “the good life of the Global Mall.”[39]

Though we might readily agree with Mackay that this is a hollow vision,[40] we may be surprised at how much it subtly malforms our meaning-making. If my vision of the good life is about getting ahead, then that will colour my discernment towards self-centred comfort. If it is staying out of trouble and playing it safe, that will colour my discernment towards self-preservation. Equally, it may take religious forms. If the good life is shunning myself to try and discover God’s perfect ‘plan A’ for my life, that will colour my discernment towards a fearful second-guessing of the divine mind. If it is pleasing a demanding God, being noticed by others, living someone else’s life and not my own, getting into heaven, being a ‘good Christian’—these will colour my discernment towards a life of performance and trying to measure up. Theological reflection with a skewed vision will tend towards constriction and malformation of some sort.

[37] Alexander Dru, ed., *The Journals of Kierkegaard* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 89.
[38] Perry W. H. Shaw, “Holistic and Transformative: Beyond a Typological Approach to Theological Education,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40.3 (2016): 209–10.
[39] Tom Sine, *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 71–92.
[40] Hugh Mackay, *The Good Life* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2016).

Cultural intelligence, then, helps unmask and subvert such visions of the good life to then allow for recalibrating against a biblical eschatology, a homecoming to the "good life of God."[41] This plumb line is characterised well by the notion of *shalom*. *Shalom* is the performance of the gospel of the kingdom at a fundamental and concrete level. It frames reflection upon particular and localised formation within the expanse of the divine purpose, and in turn facilitates hopeful living expressed in thought, passion and action commensurate with that purpose. But before we can consider *shalom* as such a *telos*, we must first explore conventional goals for Christian formation, and consider how well they serve theological reflection for holistic formation.

Conventional Goals for Christian Formation

Towards what is Christian formation aimed? Most authors emphasise our formation into Christ's image, or towards Christlikeness. Mulholland's definition is representative: "[Spiritual formation is] a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others."[42] Frequent emphases include character traits and the 'inner life' (e.g., fruits of the Spirit), the Holy Spirit's work within us, the role of community in formation, and the outcome of mission/service to others and the world. Supporting passages include Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 4:19; Eph 4:11–16; Col 1:28, 3:9–10; 1 John 3:2. As Benner contends, Christian formation is the journey of becoming more fully human,[43] and in Christ we find the *true* human being—living secure as the Beloved of God, reciprocating that love to the Father, and ministering that love in the Spirit to the world with servant-shaped authority.

This *telos* of formation into Christ's image necessarily points to our creation *imago Dei* and participation in the perichoretic, hospitable life of the Trinity. Reuschling explains:

> We are and will always be becoming in relationships, understanding our true selves as we understand all that God is in trinitarian relations. The wholeness and completeness of these divine relationships are settled yet open to the world without losing anything; and because they are, they provide the *telos* for what we are to become. We too can become open to the Other without losing anything in the ways that reflect the relationships of the

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[41] Sine, *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time*, 95–109.

[42] M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 12. Or, Adnams: "Christian spiritual formation is the transformative movement towards being conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God and service to others, in this life and the one to come." Louise E. Adnams, "Pilgrimage: A Paradigm for Spiritual Formation," *McMaster Journal of Theology & Ministry* 12 (2010): 134–35.

[43] Benner, *Soulful Spirituality*.

> Trinity. In fact, it is only by openness to the Other that we can gain understanding necessary for being and becoming.[44]

Reuschling surmises, then, that “there is so little about me that has anything to do with me apart from others.”[45] As Hall asserts, being means being-with.[46] Formation, therefore, is fundamentally relational, and thus, communal.

Others, however, also point towards our authentic and unique selves. My first spiritual director sometimes signed off his emails to me: “Blessings on your one and magnificent life.” This phrase often arrested me; it took some time to accept and live out of its profound truth. A focus upon our formation into Christlikeness in the context of community should not diminish the uniqueness of Christian formation. Becoming like Christ does not mean, in some twisted way, becoming less of oneself. Nouwen sees growth in Christlikeness as growth in the authenticity of Jesus rather than his particular lifestyle: “When the imitation of Christ does not mean to live a life like Christ, but to live your life as authentically as Christ lived his, then there are many ways and forms in which a man *[sic]* can be a Christian.”[47] Imitation language, frequently tied so closely with the *telos* of formation, needs to be qualified, or nuanced. Else, it presents problems. It can emphasise *copying* rather than *participation*. True, Paul does call the Corinthian Christians to imitate him just as he imitates Christ.[48] However, he sets this within a much greater thrust of being or abiding in Christ, and walking and living in the Spirit, rather than trying to copy Christ (such that one’s selfhood disappears). Imitation can also promote futile comparisons. Am I *more* like Christ today than I was yesterday? *Less* like Christ? Am I more like Christ *than you*? How do I measure it? It is also futile because I am not a first-century Palestinian man, and the Jesus of the Scriptures was not a twenty-first-century Australian!

Imitation language can imply that as we become more like Jesus and ‘more godly’, we become less like ourselves and ‘less human’. Pitting these against one another is not a healthy vision for ‘life to the full’ at all. Sweet explains:

> There are three alternatives for living a unique Christian way of life. One is to imitate Jesus; two is to follow Jesus’ principles, whether found in his teachings or in his stories; three is to be in such a relationship with Christ that you begin to share his life, his Spirit, and his

[44] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 121.
[45] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 121.
[46] Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 116.
[47] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York, NY: Image Books, 1979), 99.
[48] 1 Cor 11:1; cf. 1 Cor 4:16.

> presence: “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.”[49]

He draws on historian von Harnack to contend that the idea of disciples imitating Jesus developed only in the twelfth century.[50] Imitation language, he contends, inadvertently leans towards either idolatry or ‘porn piety’. Idolatry harkens back to Adam and Eve wanting to be ‘like God’; instead, as ‘The Second Adam’ Jesus showed us how to be truly human as per our original design. Says Sweet: “The whole message of Jesus’ life was not ‘Let me show you how to be more spiritual.’ Rather, it was ‘Let me show you how to be authentically human.’”[51] Alternatively, pornography is about professional faking, so being ‘like Jesus’ is porn piety—a mechanistic spiritual impersonation of ‘the real thing’ without authentic relationship. “And the more we try to impersonate, the more skanky our spirituality and the more burlesque our beliefs.”[52]

Instead, Sweet argues:

> We are not called to be an imitator of Jesus, but an implanter and an interpreter of Jesus for the world in which we find ourselves. We are not called to mimic the Messiah, but to manifest Christ in the world.[53]

His conclusion, then, is incisive for Christian formation: “Don’t be like Jesus. Let Jesus be himself in you, making you into your true self. Don’t be an ‘imitator’. Be the real deal.”[54]

I see this tension sometimes when students are dismissive of exploring their unique selfhood, particularly when invited to ponder their desires honestly. ‘It’s not about what I want; it’s all about what God wants’ is the reply. Phrases like “[Jesus] must increase, I must decrease,”[55] “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me,”[56] or ‘rid me of myself’[57]—a line in a popular contemporary worship song—become mantras that justify avoiding oneself. Such reticence may reveal an embedded theology that equates self-knowledge with self-centred navel-gazing, or perhaps at a

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[49] Leonard I. Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church: Missional, Relational, Incarnational* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 110.

[50] “It is much to everyone’s surprise (and sometimes anger) when I tell them that this notion that disciples are to ‘imitate’ Jesus in our daily lives was not developed until the twelfth century. Even the famous fifteenth-century classic *The Imitation of Christ* is based less on examples from Jesus’ life than on natural law and common virtues. The great German church historian Adolph von Harnack contended that ‘the imitation of Christ in the strict sense of the word did not play any noteworthy role, either in the apostolic or in the old Catholic period.’” Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 110.

[51] Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 111.

[52] Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 111.

[53] Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 110.

[54] Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 110–11.

[55] John 3:30.

[56] Gal 2:20.

[57] Brooke Ligertwood, *Lead me to the Cross* (Sydney: Hillsong Music Publishing, 2006).

deeper level, a fear of what such self-examination may reveal.

Whatever the reason, an aversion to exploring one's selfhood can engender a bland and generalised vision of Christian formation. Students are not freed to map their inner geography through the befriending of their biography. This hinders the task of daily, *particular* living and discernment of how the Spirit is manifesting the life and character of Christ within the unique context of *their* story. Benner comments:

> We should never be tempted to think that growth in Christlikeness reduces our uniqueness. While some Christian visions of the spiritual life imply that as we become more like Christ we look more and more like each other, such a cultic expectation of loss of individuality has nothing in common with genuine Christian spirituality. Paradoxically as we become more and more like Christ we become more uniquely our own true self ... deep knowing of God and deep knowing of self always develop interactively. The result is the authentic transformation of the self that is at the core of Christian spirituality.[58]

The capacity for self-differentiation, then, is central to holistic Christian formation. It affirms deep communion with the other, without a distorted diminishment of oneself, as the context for healthy growth.[59] McDonald frames this as the "lifetime interaction between the pull of surrender and the drive of autonomy … that forms the very bedrock of growth" [60]—a dialogue leading into wholeness that is never complete. We see this dynamic, for instance, in Job's relationship with God as his story progresses. Healthy reflexivity and self-understanding fosters not self-obsession, but instead the possibility of greater integration and flourishing, and thus communion with God and others. As McHugh contends, "self-discovery is not the ultimate end of listening to your life; love is."[61]

Ps 139 reflects this unique-self-in-communion. The Psalmist marvels at his particular formation, from the womb right into adult life, in light of how thoroughly God knows him, which in turn opens him further to knowing God. Historic Christian writings also affirm the symbiotic nature of self-knowledge–God-knowledge. Saint Augustine recognised the difficulty of drawing close to God without knowing oneself.[62] Meister Eckhart contends that "no one can know God who does

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[58] David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 31.
[59] See Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 11: Knowing and Healthy Interpersonhood: Conversation with David Schnarch.
[60] Patrick McDonald, "Bedrock Elements of Spiritual Growth," *Human Development: A Publication of the Jesuit Educational Center for Human Development* 17.1 (1996): 37.
[61] Adam S McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 179.
[62] See Augustine's argument regarding self-examination in Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York, NY: Penguin, 1964), bk. VII, chap. X. Frequently Augustine is cited as saying, "How can you draw close to God when you are far from your own self? Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee." E.g., P Pourrat, *Christian*

not first know himself."[63] Catherine of Siena sees self- and God-knowledge intertwined: "Knowledge of the truth comes through self-knowledge; not pure self-knowledge, but seasoned and united with the knowledge of me in you."[64] Thomas à Kempis asserts that a "lowly knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God than deep searching of man's learning,"[65] while Teresa of Avila thinks most difficulties in the spiritual life stem from a lack of self-knowledge.[66] Calvin famously begins his *Institutes* by saying wisdom "consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other."[67]

In more contemporary writings, Merton's idea of 'true self' rests on a similar goal: "to discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him."[68] Palmer argues that vocation comes not from an external voice demanding I be someone I am not, but rather "from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfil the original selfhood given to me at birth by God."[69] Scazzero contends that emotional and spiritual health are intrinsically linked; the journey towards authentic selfhood can only unfold through the self-knowledge–God-knowledge pairing.[70]

This interplay reflects the paradoxical dynamics and tension in Christian formation between relatedness/interdependence/connectedness, and particularity/autonomy/uniqueness. Each polarity is necessary to reinforce the other. For Balswick et al. this is expressed in 'reciprocating self' as the *telos* of Christian formation, flowing from the perichoretic relations of the Trinity:

> Particularity and relatedness co-occur because their relatedness is characterized by perfect *reciprocity* where the three live with and for each other … To live as being made in the image of God is to exist as reciprocating selves, as unique individuals living in relationship with others. We then assert that developmental teleology, the goal of human development

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Spirituality from the Time of Our Lord Till the Dawn of the Middle Ages (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1922), 291. However, this seems to be a paraphrase that has taken on a life of its own as a supposed quote that is not in Augustine's extant writings.

[63] Cited in Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2003), 45.

[64] Cited in Thomas McDermott, "Catherine of Siena's Teaching on Self-Knowledge," *New Blackfriars: A Review* 88.1018 (2007): 641.

[65] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent, 2015), 5.

[66] St Teresa of Avila, *Complete Works St. Teresa Of Avila* (London: Burns & Oates, 2002), 209.

[67] Jean Calvin and Ford Lewis Battles, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 15.

[68] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1972), 36.

[69] Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 10.

[70] Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible To Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*, Updated edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins, 2017), chap. 4: Know Yourself That You May Know God.

> as God intends, is the reciprocating self. To live according to God's design is to glorify God [by living and acting] as a distinct human being in communion with God and others in mutually giving and receiving relationships.[71]

The relationality of this reciprocating self is reflected, for example, in Paul's imperative: "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."[72] Falsehood against neighbour stems from falsehood in self; it acts from the old self and not from the grace of God. Paul's 'old self' seems akin to Merton's 'false self': a living in the illusion of existence "outside the reach of God's will and God's love—outside of reality and outside of life."[73] Conversely, formation (or in Paul's language, renewal) into the image of our Creator is the new or true self being freed to become who we uniquely already are. Formation into both Christ's image and our own skin are thus intrinsically connected. They are two sides of the same coin, and Jesus' insistence that those who lose their life for his sake will truly find it is the paradoxical pivot upon which that coin spins.[74]

A Vision for the Good Life: *Shalom* as a *Telos* for Christian Formation

Christian formation, then, is the Spirit's ministry of our becoming our unique self-in-communion in Christ; an outworking of that which God works within.[75] This is a rich teleology for Christian formation. However, when teaching the craft of theological reflection, it needs exegeting so students can make particular connections which foster formation, hope and embodiment towards that *telos*. Reflecting upon growth in Christlikeness can too easily be characterised by vague generalisations: 'How can I be more patient, more prayerful, more loving, more kind, closer to God? What would Jesus do?!' Moreover, students' theological reflection upon their unique selfhood can become myopic, losing sight of a more expansive vision. How does theological reflection help them locate their reciprocating self within the thrust of God's great story and realign their enculturated visions of the good life? Theological reflection needs to help students understand their formation beyond a mere 'me-and-Jesus' personal self-improvement project. It needs a goal that is not only local to us, but also global and beyond us. That is, it needs a 'glocal'

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[71] Jack O. Balswick, Pamela Ebstyne King, and Kevin S. Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 31.
[72] Col 3:9–10 (TNIV).
[73] Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 36.
[74] Matt 10:39, 16:25; Luke 9:24.
[75] Phil 2:12–13.

telos.[76]

A pragmatic pedagogy also necessitates that a *telos* for Christian formation be suitable for teaching and learning: rich, evocative and biblically and theologically robust, yet succinct, accessible and useable for students and educators. Moreover, commensurate with the trialogue explored in chapter two, it needs to reflect and illustrate the coinhering dynamics between my story, God's story, and your/the world's story.

Shalom meets these criteria well. While *shalom* as a *telos* does not explicitly appear in any theological reflection models that I am aware of, Reuschling, a Christian ethicist, does make the connection:

> *Shalom* … as the wholeness that God intends for all that is created in the good image of the trinitarian God … reflects a consonance between who we are, what we are becoming, what we love, and how we live. *Shalom enables us to interpret and reflect on the episodes of our lives*,[77] and it informs and directs our actions to establish 'an approved pattern of our lives.' What we care about, how we view life, what narrative we choose to live by (or which narrative chooses us), and how we perceive God's ultimate purposes are moral matters and crucial for our conceptions of wholeness. Our lives will be orientated around what we love and what we view as good.[78]

Talking the walk seeks to graft Reuschling's assertion—that *shalom* provides an interpretative lens for faithful living—into an approach to theological reflection for formation. In light of the Psalmist's and Peter's encouragement to "seek peace [*shalom*], and pursue it,"[79] what then is the nature of this *telos* we are to pursue? I suggest that *shalom* is multifaceted, glocal, embodies the gospel of the kingdom, and engenders hope.

***Shalom* is Multifaceted**

Often translated 'peace', *shalom*[80] is a multifaceted Hebrew word that means much more than just tranquillity or the absence of conflict. Rooted in notions of completeness or wholeness—the

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[76] 'Glocal' is a neologism that describes the intimate connection between local and global contexts. See Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, Theory, Culture & Society (Unnumbered) (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 24–44; Rick Love, "Following Jesus in a Glocalized World: Bearers of Blessing Among Neighbors and Nations" (presented at the Renewal of Your Mind: Imagining, Describing, and Enacting the Kingdom of God, Seattle, Washington: Society of Vineyard Scholars, 2011), ricklove.net/wp-content/.../Following-Jesus-in-a-Glocalized-World-Rick-Love-2.pdf.

[77] Emphasis added.

[78] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 127–28.

[79] Ps 34:14; 1 Pet 3:11.

[80] שָׁלֹם/*shalom*.

verb *shālēm* means 'be complete, be sound'[81]—*shalom* can convey "health, security, well-being, and salvation as well as peace."[82] 'Flourishing' might be our best equivalent in the English language. "Shalom is God's dream for the world as it should be: whole, vibrant, flourishing, unified," says Moore.[83] "The fundamental idea is totality," states Harris. "Anything that contributes to this wholeness makes for *shalom.* Anything that stands in the way disrupts *shalom.*"[84]

Shalom, then, is a biblically rooted social imaginary of holistic flourishing where everything within and between us, God and all creation, is put to rights through Christ, freeing us to become our true selves-in-communion. This is what formation towards selfhood in Christ looks like in its richest sense. As both Brueggemann[85] and Barker[86] note, *shalom* is not captured by a single word or idea; it carries different nuances for different biblical contexts. For the sake of usability in theological reflection for formation, however, I have drawn from Frost's three motifs for "breathing *shalom*,"[87] and added another, to offer four facets of *shalom* as holistic flourishing: reconciling relationships, justice and righteousness, beauty and creativity, and paschal wholeness.

Reconciling Relationships

Shalom is a gracious gift which God cultivates in and through his creation. It is God who declares to the people of Israel, "I will give you *shalom* in the land,"[88] and it is God who, in the Aaronic

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[81] Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 881.
[82] Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 881.
[83] Osheta Moore, *Shalom Sistas: Living Wholeheartedly in a Brokenhearted World* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2017), 30.
[84] Douglas James Harris, *Shalom! The Biblical Concept of Peace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1970), 14.
[85] Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom*, Second edition. (New York, NY: United Church, 1982), 27.
[86] P.A. Barker, "Rest, Peace," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 689.
[87] Michael Frost, *Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), chap. 5. Authors have sought to distil *shalom* in various ways. For instance, Yoder identifies material wellbeing, relational justice, and integrity. Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, & Peace*, Reissue edition. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 10–16. The *Center for Transforming Communities* uses an acrostic to help faith communities experience and express six 'threads' of *shalom*: S – systemic and sustainable change; H – healing, health, harmony and wholeness; A – asset-based community development; L – love for God, self, and neighbor; O – organized for direct action; M – multicultural, multifaith collaboration. Center for Transforming Communities, "Why Shalom?," *Center for Transforming Communities*, 2017, http://www.ctcmidsouth.org/why-shalom-. Milton identifies "regeneration, identity and destiny." Grace Milton, *Shalom, the Spirit and Pentecostal Conversion: A Practical-Theological Study* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 208. Moore centres her '*shalom* sista manifesto' in relationship with God, self, others and world through twelve commitments: 1. We are invited 2. We are beloved 3. We are enough 4. We will see the beauty 5. We will rest 6. We will choose subversive joy 7. We will tell better stories 8. We will serve before we speak 9. We will build bridges, not walls 10. We will choose ordinary acts of peace 11. We will show up, say something, and be still 12. We will be peacemakers, not peacekeepers. Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, chap. 3.
[88] Lev 26:6; cf. Ps 4:8, 29:11.

blessing,[89] is asked to grant the recipients the divine blessing of *shalom*. Such promises and prayers reflect its covenantal nature, with the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel even referring to a "covenant of peace [*shalom*]."[90]

Thus, as Scobie notes, while persons can experience *shalom*,[91] the Old Testament emphasis is predominantly communal and relational rather than individual.[92] As Moore emphasises, "Shalom is about wholeness in every possible relationship we could have—with God, with ourselves, with the people in our lives, and with the world."[93] That means God's *shalom* is also for those who do not yet know its reality. *Shalom* is missional. Surely there was surprise at Jeremiah's words to the exiled community in Babylon as recorded in chapter 29. God's people hoped for a word of deliverance from the surrounding evil. That is indeed God's promise, with plans for their "welfare [*shalom*] and not for harm,"[94] but not before seventy years as settled residents where they are to "seek the welfare [*shalom*] of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare [*shalom*] you will find your welfare [*shalom*]."[95] Similarly, Jesus sends his disciples out as bringers of peace to wherever they visit,[96] and couples his blessing of peace with his commission to the disciples as sent ones.[97] Thus Frost argues that a missional seeking of the *shalom* of the 'city' is the church's core purpose.[98]

As such, reconciliation is a key facet of *shalom*, for where communion is fractured between individuals, communities, nations, creation or with God—as it most surely is—there can be no peace. God's gracious gift of the forgiveness of sins, then, is at the heart of *shalom. Shalom* is about holistic flourishing in relationships through the reconciling work of God.

Justice and Righteousness

This relational emphasis shines a spotlight on the abuse of power as a common inhibitor of *shalom*. God is harsh towards those who would proclaim "Peace! Peace!" where there is none.[99] Brueggemann asserts that the summons to the well-off and powerful to responsible stewardship

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[89] Num 6:24–26.
[90] E.g., Is 54:9–10; Ezek 34:25, 37:26; see also Num. 25:12. Cf. Is 52:7; Jer 32:36–41.
[91] E.g., Ps 55:18; Prov 3:2; 1 Sam 1:17, 25:6.
[92] Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 882.
[93] Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, 52.
[94] Jer 29:11.
[95] Jer 29:7.
[96] Lk 10:5–6.
[97] Jn 20:21.
[98] Frost, *Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church*.
[99] Jer 6:13–14.

means *shalom* cannot be caged, with concern only for their own holiness and wholeness: "They are the ones held accountable for *shalom*. The prophetic vision of *shalom* stands against … all "separate peaces," all ghettos, that pretend that others are not there … Religious legitimacy in the service of self-deceiving well-being is a form of chaos. *Shalom* is never the private property of the few."[100]

As such, righteousness and justice link closely to *shalom*. Isaiah lays out the vision for a king who reigns in righteousness. "The effect of righteousness will be peace [*shalom*]," declares the prophet, "and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever."[101] Conversely, where justice is absent, there can be no *shalom*;[102] hence Plantinga's definition of sin as "culpable shalom-breaking."[103] This means *shalom* carries with it not only attention to and promotion of God's righteousness, goodness and wholeness; it calls for active resistance against anything that disrupts wellbeing in a person, community, nation or creation. In this sense, *shalom* is certainly neither passive nor tranquil. "While shalom brings peace, it is also active and alive," contends Moore. "Peacemakers are not pliable, passive, or permissive. Peace is fierce—it has to be, because violence and discord won't go down without a fight."[104] In a somewhat counterintuitive utterance, Jesus warns: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."[105] *Shalom* disrupts. As Buechner comments, "the contradiction is resolved when you realize that, for Jesus, peace seems to have meant not the absence of conflict, but the presence of love."[106]

Such passionate intent stems from the covenantal and pledged character of *shalom*. Jewish scholar Abraham Heschel notes how we see this clearly in two contrasting images for justice.[107] The predominant image in the Western world is often called the 'Goddess of Justice'; a blindfolded woman holds a sword and a set of scales. In presiding, she sees neither victim nor perpetrator;

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[100] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 21.
[101] Is 32:17.
[102] E.g., Jer 6:13–14,16:5; Is 59:8; Zech 8:16.
[103] Cornelius Plantinga Jr, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, UK: Eerdmans, 1996), 14.
[104] Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, 32. Similarly, Claiborne et al. comment: "Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. It is about a revolution of love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free." Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 382–83.
[105] Matt 10:34.
[106] Frederick Buechner, *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2004), 307.
[107] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 271–76.

impartiality demands her protection from connection to either. Judgement is according to the precision of the law—a universal and static ideal for measuring the evidence. Clinical fairness means everybody gets their due, achieving perfect balance. "The image of the scales conveys the idea of form, standard, balance, measure, stillness."[108]

Contrast this to the image in Amos 5:24 (NIV): "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" Justice and righteousness are a raging, surging, unfailing torrent, with God as its source. "The image of the mighty stream expresses content, substance, power, movement, vitality."[109] This stream brings life, cleansing and wholeness. *Nothing* is at rest, because God is never at rest while *shalom* is absent or opposed. Our concept of justice might be fairness because everyone agrees it is a reasonable idea, but God's justice is entirely relational. That is because *shalom* is rooted in divine *pathos*—God's deep compassion for all creation, which compels action. God is upset at the disruption of *shalom*, not because a universal law is broken, but because persons-in-relationship are hurt.[110] Because God loves, God sees. And because God sees, God acts. *Shalom* is about holistic flourishing through God's covenantal work of justice and righteousness.

Beauty and Creativity

Reuschling connects relationally oriented justice to the whole of creation:

> God's justice is about restoring the wholeness of *shalom*, in right relationships between God and humans, between fellow human beings, and between humans and other parts of the created order …
>
> Justice … is the active participation in the goodness of God based on the grand vision of *shalom* … Justice involves working toward establishing and maintaining harmony, wholeness, and righteousness within the entirety of the created order.[111]

The inclusion of all creation in this eschatological vision, where the lamb and the lion lie down together,[112] challenges the anthropocentricity common in much contemporary eschatology. *Shalom* is ecological; it reminds us to pair together our creation *imago Dei*[113] and *imago mundi*,[114] for Christian formation is not just a human affair. Our future in God intertwines with the created order—united, everlasting, and thoroughly physical.

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[108] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 275.
[109] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 275.
[110] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 275.
[111] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 138–39.
[112] Isa 11:6.
[113] Gen 1:27.
[114] Gen 2:7.

This union connects God's future of *shalom* to our fundamental calling in Genesis 2:15 to be creative culture-makers of beauty that nurture community. "*Shalom*," says Brueggemann, "is the management of the abundance of creation so that everyone can participate in the neighborhood."[115] God creates out of pledged love, within the setting of a garden—an oasis for both enjoying intimacy and cultivating the surrounds for its flourishing. Benson notes how "from cultivation comes culture; the divine plan was always for us to spread out and construct a God-centred city."[116] Even if the salvation story of Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 never occurred, there would still be movement and growth: from a garden in Gen 1–2 to a holy city or collection of gardens in Rev 21–22. Beauty and creativity arising from intimacy are central to *shalom.*

For now, this world groans, waiting to birth the new creation.[117] As Wright contends, "the beauty of the present world has something of the beauty of a chalice, beautiful in itself but more hauntingly beautiful in what we know it's meant to be filled with."[118] Our purpose, then, includes noticing and creatively nurturing echoes of beauty in the world-still-coming. We create to help fill that chalice. As co-creators and co-workers, we dwell in intimacy with God through artistry, creativity, fecundity and the cultivation of *shalom* in the world using our gifted selves. Intimacy and cultivation, security and significance, love and purpose: this fundamental twin calling of all people is much of what our creation *imago Dei* and *imago mundi* mean*.* Christian formation orients towards working creatively together for holistic flourishing within the context of divine-human-creation relationships.

Shalom thus affirms and participates in the Creator's gifts of beauty and creativity. This connects with Paul's command to attend to whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise[119]—such things reflect the aesthetic nature of *shalom*. Holistic flourishing, then, invites celebration, wonder and awe, gratitude and enjoyment, and joyful obedience to God's summons to proper management and generous stewardship; that is, participating in our cultural mandate of *shalom*-making.[120]

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[115] Brueggemann, *Shalom, Order, Chaos and Sin*.
[116] David Matthew Benson, "Schools, Scripture and Secularisation: A Christian Theological Argument for the Incorporation of Sacred Texts within Australian Public Education" (Thesis, The University of Queensland, School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, 2016), 82, http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/234157827.
[117] Rom 8:19–23.
[118] N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2008), 234.
[119] Phil 4:8.
[120] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, chap. 2. Claus Westermann, "Peace (Shalom) in the Old Testament," in *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, trans. W Sawatsky (Louisville, KY: Westminster; John Knox, 1992), 16–48.

Paschal Wholeness

Scobie notes the strong continuity between *shalom* and *eirēnē* in the New Testament. "We must expect a strong carryover from the OT understanding with its connotations of wholeness, health, salvation, and harmonious relationships."[121] Indeed, the LXX uses *eirēnē* to translate *shalom*. Hence the various associations of *eirēnē* with Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection affirm *shalom* as ultimately Christocentric. Christ is, after all, the Davidic messiah who is the 'Prince of *shalom*';[122] the punishment and wounds he bears bring *shalom* and healing.[123] Christ himself is our peace, who reconciles us to himself and each other[124] and gives us his peace.[125] This gift comes through the breath of the Spirit,[126] as foreshadowed in Isaiah's vision in which the Spirit is poured from on high to bring justice and righteousness, and thus, *shalom*.[127] In this, *shalom* reflects the grand eschatological vision in Isaiah 65 of the new heavens and the new earth coming together as one, pointing forward to the eventual harmony of all things.

Such a lovely vision of wholeness, though, can be deceptive. Isaiah 52:1–12 speaks great comfort and hope to the broken people of God. In 52:7 the messenger runs into the city, with beautiful feet, to proclaim good news—*gospel*—of *shalom*:[128] redemption and salvation are coming! God reigns and is putting things right! But how does this kingdom of *shalom* come? Through the faithful servant of Isaiah 52:13–15 and Isaiah 53, whose exaltation comes via kenotic suffering. This accentuates the significance of the gospel proclamation of God's kingdom—the reign of redemption, salvation, *shalom*—entering Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, not Caesar's mighty warhorse.[129] *Shalom's* Christocentric nature inevitably ties it to the Paschal Mystery—the rhythm of Christ's suffering and death, rising and ascension.[130]

Because *shalom* connects so strongly with holistic flourishing, it is easy to equate it directly with general conceptions of wellbeing and wholeness. These, however, may not adequately

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[121] Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 904. C.f. T. J. Geddert, "Peace," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 604.
[122] Is 9:6.
[123] Is 53:5.
[124] Eph 2:14–16.
[125] Jn 20:22; cf. Jn 14:27.
[126] Jn 20:21–22.
[127] Is 32:15–17.
[128] בָּשַׂר/*bâśar*.
[129] Matt 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–11, Luke 19:28–44, John 12:12–19.
[130] Surprisingly, the connection between *shalom* and the Paschal Mystery seems relatively unexplored. Protestant authors such as Harper do connect *shalom* to death and resurrection cycles, but she misses the riches the depth of understanding that Catholic writers convey regarding Paschal spirituality. See Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2016), 202.

wrestle with and incorporate the paradox of suffering and death as intrinsic to a biblical vision of flourishing.[131] I am not just talking about resilience in the face of adversity, or finding the strength to push through with comfort from God's presence. I am pointing to suffering, brokenness and death being intrinsic to new life, as counter intuitive as this feels for living well. For the disciples looking on at the cross, aghast at its horror, human flourishing is surely an abhorrent interpretation. Yet here is God glorified; here is the fount of *shalom*. In gospel accounts of resurrection appearances to the disciples, Jesus' greeting of *shalom*—"Peace be with you"—is paired with invitations to see and touch the wounds of his hands, feet and side.[132] "Very truly, I tell you," says Jesus,

> unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.[133]

God's deep *pleasure*, Paul tells us, is to reconcile *all things* to Godself through the cosmic Christ "by making peace through the blood of his cross."[134] The paschal nature of *shalom* asserts that one cannot skip to the flourishing of the empty tomb without passing through the barrenness of Calvary. *Shalom* is the cry of the helpless from their precarious position of survival and desperation, not just the cry of praise from those who feel like "more than conquerors."[135] Any account of theological reflection for formation in and towards *shalom* that is somehow not grounded in a theology of the cross will inevitably come up short, lest flourishing be only ever seen as just making things better.

Paschal wholeness does not provide a theodicy that glibly seeks to justify suffering, give it a reason, or forgo the struggle for justice because suffering is somehow good. *Shalom* as paschal is not a licence to wield Romans 8:28 without any pastoral sensitivity. It is, instead, a call to recognise the human mystery that (trans)formation in and towards the wholeness of *shalom* often involves rather than removes loss and pain. "Wholeness—human and spiritual," says Boyer, "is a lifetime process of getting better at dying and rising. In other words, wholeness is a lifetime

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[131] See, for instance, Peter Kaldor, *Spirit Matters: How Making Sense of Life Affects Wellbeing* (Preston Vic.: Mosaic Press, 2010), 67–69. Here wellbeing centres on the promotion of critical aspects such as general, physical and mental health, happiness and satisfaction with life, self-esteem, optimism, growth and purpose, and relational wellbeing. Amidst the general emphasis upon increasing these indicators, there is no framework for how pain and suffering might be intrinsic to wellbeing, other than the implication that it ought to be minimised or coped with.
[132] Luke 24:36–40; John 20:19–20.
[133] John 12:24–25.
[134] Col 1:19–20.
[135] Rom 8:37.

process of transformation."[136]

Shalom as paschal wholeness frames our participation in the kenotic suffering of Christ[137] as central to spiritual vitality and authenticity.[138] Paschal spirituality reminds us that Jesus did not save us *from* death; he is the God who walks us *through* death, through our many deaths. That is intrinsic to the structure of being human. Participating in the paschal rhythms of Christ, then, is how God works holistic flourishing in us.[139] Boyer explains:

> Uniting the paschal mystery of Jesus to our own paschal mystery plunges us into the deeper truth that 'wholeness involves both surrender and action, grace and will, mutuality [between the person and God] …, and embodies the presence of freedom.' We become whole (and holy) 'by truly entering into engagement with the world, with others, [and] with God' through suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and the gift of the Spirit. That's paschal mystery spirituality, and it is God-infused throughout our lives if we but take the time to awaken to its truth.[140]

Theological reflection for formation wakes us up.

I once experienced this powerfully when on a three-day, silent, directed retreat. Preoccupied with ongoing house renovations, I drove to the retreat centre in the country with a sense of agitation. I felt I could not afford to be away from everything, and that I was tracking well enough with God and within myself—why was I wasting this time being away?

Regardless, I gave myself to the process; that much I had learnt from some years of this annual practice. About a day in, while casually pondering an inventory of my life, I journaled about some significant, dysfunctional relationships when suddenly and without warning the floodgates opened. I was tossed about in turbulent waters of rage, anguish, indignation and sadness—deep sadness—at what had happened and was still happening. At what God had allowed! At my own sinful part in it all. I felt a raw and naked honesty that surely would have remained fully clothed and hidden had I given over to my desire to cancel the retreat and stay home selecting door handles for our new kitchen. In that place of vulnerability, Nouwen's words spoke deeply:

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[136] Mark G. Boyer, *Christ Our Passover Has Been Sacrificed: A Guide through Paschal Mystery Spirituality: Mystical Theology in The Roman Missal* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), xix.
[137] Phil 3:10-11.
[138] E.g., Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 4:13.
[139] Rolheiser offers a beautiful shape to this mystery: 1. Name your deaths (Good Friday); 2. Receive your new life (Easter Sunday); 3. Grieve what you have lost and adjust to the new reality (40 days waiting); 4. Do not cling to the old, let it ascend and give you its blessing (Ascension); 5. Accept the spirit of the life that you are in fact living (Pentecost) Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, Reissue edition. (New York: Image, 2009), 141–65.
[140] Boyer, *Christ Our Passover Has Been Sacrificed*, 129.

> My own pain in life has taught me that the first step to healing is not a step away from the pain, but a step toward it. When brokenness is, in fact, just as intimate a part of our being as our chosenness and blessedness, we have to dare to overcome our fear and become familiar with it ... The deep truth is that our human suffering need not be an obstacle to the joy and peace we so desire, but can become, instead, the means *to* it.[141]

Later, after working with my spiritual director, I reflected in my journal:

> Embracing and befriending my brokenness and pain—this is the core of what it means to touch the mystery of my humanity. It is the lived reality of the Paschal Mystery, participating in the sufferings of Christ. Like a seed that cannot produce unless it first dies, or like a branch that cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine and is pruned—so I cannot become my fully human, mysterious and wonderful self in my own unique and particular contexts apart from naked vulnerability and entering into Christ's suffering and death.[142]

Only from that space was I able to receive Easter Sunday's new life, adjust to what was, let go, and receive the Spirit for living more fully amid my ongoing pain as a conduit for *shalom* rather than resentment and regret.

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[143]

It is difficult to account for the various fruits of *shalom* borne through that painful, spiritually (trans)formative retreat—in my marriage and parenting, in my teaching and spiritual directing, in my journeying with others in their suffering and the shape of my wordless prayers for them. It is a 'broken-wholeness' that keeps giving as I continue to cycle through it. I experienced Parker Palmer's truth that

> wholeness does not mean perfection: it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life. Knowing this gives me hope that human wholeness—mine, yours, ours—need not be a utopian dream, if we can use devastation as a seedbed for new life.[144]

"In the Kingdom of God," writes Moore, "brokenness is beautiful, and wholeness comes when we lean into our breaking."[145] While that in no way justifies or diminishes the anguish, or even makes it go away, it helps me live with integrity with what Moltmann calls the "the open wound of life in

[141] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved; Our Greatest Gift: Two Inspiring Classics in One Volume* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), 75–77.
[142] Personal journal entry.
[143] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 87.
[144] Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 5–6.
[145] Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, 54.

this world."[146]

Shalom as paschal wholeness, then, helps guard against a theology of glory that would only ever view flourishing as perpetual growth without loss. Paschal wholeness helps us reframe life's little deaths, as well as the big ones, as a daily, lived and real participation in Jesus' own suffering and rising. It helps us courageously listen for and befriend the rhythms of death and resurrection in ours and others' lives,[147] continually attending to the question: Will such deaths be terminal or paschal? To live them paschally is to walk—albeit with a limp—in and towards the holistic flourishing of *shalom*.

Summary

This brief précis suggests *shalom* is a rich, broad and malleable social imaginary for God's new creation that might function powerfully as a *telos* in theological reflection for formation. God's *shalom* is holistic flourishing for all: gracious, reconciling, missional, just, active, creative, ecological, Christocentric, pneumatological, paschal, whole, (trans)formative. As a *telos* for theological reflection for formation, then, it is faithful to selfhood in Christ, yet offers a more concrete and expansive vision. To walk in and towards reconciling relationships, justice and righteousness, beauty and creativity, and paschal wholeness is to walk in and towards the holistic flourishing of *shalom*.

Shalom is Glocal

In what arenas does God outwork *shalom*? Here Brueggemann provides a helpful threefold structure of *shalom* at the cosmic, communal and individual levels, which resonates with the threefold shape of the trialogue.[148]

Firstly, Brueggemann points to its most inclusive dimension: the cosmic vision of God's grand story, that of *shalom* encompassing all reality.[149] "*Shalom* is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation."[150] God's meta, eschatological purposes for all creation—wholeness, well-being, flourishing, right relationships, justice, compassion, reconciliation, harmony, beauty—are captured and served well by "the controlling vision of

[146] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 49.
[147] Jean Stairs, *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), chap. 3. The Soul's Rhythm: Death and Resurrection.
[148] These also align with the assertion by Thompson et al. that theological reflection brings transformation at global, institutional and personal levels. *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 158.
[149] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 17–18.
[150] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 16.

shalom."[151] *Shalom* reflects the overarching theme of 'God's story', the metanarrative which frames our theological understanding of God's person and action.

The second dimension is social: *shalom* is outworked at the *historical-political-communal* level.[152] "The origin and the destiny of God's people is to be on the road of *shalom*."[153] The relationality of *shalom* provides the impetus, agenda and lens of reflection for our interactions with the stories of those around us—our family, neighbours, faith communities, work colleagues, global neighbours, and indeed, all of creation. *Shalom* is our ministerial frame of reference for engaging in 'your story'.

The third dimension—though more assumed than specifically discussed in Scripture—is individual, that of *shalom* persons.[154] The cosmic and social dimensions set the context for the unique and individual experience of *shalom*. This existential capacity for receiving and participating in *shalom* is at the heart of Christian spirituality. The lived experience of *shalom*, in all its richness, is the grounding and vision for 'my story'.

The relationship of *shalom* across each of these arenas—cosmic, social, personal—is coinhering. The primary means for God's cosmic vision for *shalom* is through human communities. Human communities experience *shalom* as it is dynamically present and expressed in persons. Individual persons, as image-bearers of God, have a part to play in God's cosmic vision. As such, *shalom* exhibits the coinhering nature of Christian formation.

Thus, *shalom* provides a *telos* for Christian formation that is faithful to the interlocking pilgrimage of God's story, your story and my story. It is richly ingrained in our remembrance and imagination of God's story for the cosmos, reflects the purposes of God in the story of the particular person/community/environment before us in any given encounter, and taps into the work of the Spirit in our own story. As a *telos* for formation, *shalom* is theologically commensurate with growth towards our unique self in Christ, yet offers a more expansive lens for reflecting upon experience in terms of one's spiritual, theological and ministerial formation. It keeps our daily, incremental acts of participation in divine reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness connected to God's pleasure "through [Christ] to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."[155] In this way, *shalom*

[151] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 16.
[152] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 18–19.
[153] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 16.
[154] Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision*, 20–21.
[155] Col. 1:19–20.

provides a thoroughly glocal *telos* in theological reflection for formation.

***Shalom* Embodies the Gospel of the Kingdom**

This glocal *telos* is reflected in how *shalom* fits with the central biblical themes of the gospel and the kingdom of God. 'Gospel' is a good news announcement—a heralding—that a king has defeated enemies and thus reigns. Isaiah 40:9 and 52:7 proclaim YHWH's reign in the return of Israel to Zion from exile, and *euangelion* in the Greek world referred "to the announcement of a great victory, or to the birth, or accession, of an emperor."[156] Against this background, the gospel of Christ, as Wright contends, is the good news that *something has happened*: a new era—commonly called the kingdom of God—has begun in the crucified and resurrected Messiah.[157] The Kingdom is *God's culture*—what God 'makes of the world' (how God sees it and fashions it) at cosmic, societal and individual levels. Will that culture of the kingdom look the same in every time and every place? No. Various contexts mean it will manifest differently. That is the task of contextualisation. But God's reign does have hallmarks—the breadth of concrete expressions of *shalom*—and it comes not through military, political or economic might, but the paschal-shaped ministry of Jesus. He comes not as a general on a warhorse, but as servant-king on a donkey, weeping that "the things that make for peace" go unrecognised.[158] The gospel proclaims what such things are; *shalom* acts them out.

So, *shalom* is not *an idea similar to* gospel or kingdom, but rather *the embodiment, practice or performance of* the gospel of the kingdom—the good news announcement of the reign of (the) Christ. "Shalom is the breadth, depth, climate, and smell of the Kingdom of God,"[159] or more succinctly, "the culture of the Kingdom of God."[160] *Shalom* encapsulates a social imaginary for the gospel of the kingdom because it depicts what that flourishing reign of the Messiah looks like: relationships reconciled through the divine largesse of forgiveness; justice and restoration for the poor and marginalised; beauty and creativity that cultivates (culture-makes) for the blessing of all; the paschal wholeness, flourishing and transformation that results.

This conception helps us more fully understand our formation, and indeed the gospel, in communal and cosmic levels beyond just 'Jesus and me'. The gospel of the kingdom is inclusive of

[156] N. T. Wright, *What St Paul Really Said* (Oxford, UK: Lion, 1997), 42–43.
[157] N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 176.
[158] Luke 19:28–42.
[159] Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, 31.
[160] Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, 43.

and fully commensurate with *ordo salutis* (the 'order of salvation'), but not simply equated to it; reflective of one's justification by faith, but certainly not *limited to* or *only about* personal salvation.[161] Luther's question which has shaped so many years of my journey—'How can I come before a righteous God?'—can no longer dominate the landscape of Christian formation. Though critical, it must be properly ensconced within a bigger question: 'How is God's loving reign, graciously received and expressed as *shalom*, renewing a broken and hurting world through communities of interdependent individuals—even me?' Such a teleology for holistic Christian formation, then, is surely

> not simply a theology we salute on Sunday but a new reason to get out of bed on Monday—a new 'cultural' vision of the good life and better future that reflects God's loving purposes for a people and a world.[162]

***Shalom* Engenders Hope**

Finally, because of its eschatological nature, *shalom* engenders hope in and towards the good life of God, the ultimate fulfilment of cosmic, communal and individual journeys. God *is* at work, we *are* headed somewhere, and *shalom* is what it looks like. This is not hope as wishful thinking, like longing for nice weather, or hope as optimism, based on the odds. Nor is it just holding out amidst difficulty because things will surely get better or longing to escape reality to be teleported elsewhere. This is Christian, eschatological hope: living the now, animated and directed by a confidence in God's not-yet. A pilgrim's destination aids attentiveness to each step taken and those of fellow sojourners. As Wright asserts, "our future beyond death is enormously important, but the nature of the Christian hope is such that it plays back into the present life."[163] Hope bridges the future to the now.

Such confidence comes from what has already occurred: the life, death and—in particular—resurrection of Christ. We look forward from the present by looking back. Peter praises God because "he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."[164] As Pannenberg asserts, this event is proleptic.[165] Like reading a book that is out of sequence with the final chapter placed partway through, Jesus' resurrection is a foretaste of what is coming: uninhibited *shalom* forever. For now, that reign is like a 'movie

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[161] Wright, *What St Paul Really Said*, 41.
[162] Sine, *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time*, 95.
[163] Wright, *Simply Christian*, x.
[164] 1 Pet 1:3.
[165] George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), 151–52; Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 143–46.

trailer', a foretaste[166] with the resurrected Christ as its first fruits.[167] We get glimpses of the new creation, a *shalom*-shaped heaven gloriously merging with our broken world, but only "fitfully, mysteriously, and partially."[168] It is painful and slow. Still, resurrection is the eschatological event that interprets all history, gives it direction, and engenders daily hope.[169]

For our teleology of Christian formation, then, this inaugurated eschatology means our walk is both *in* and *towards shalom*—both now and not yet. God graces us with *shalom* yet calls us forward to it. 'On earth as it is in heaven' is not a fanciful wish for God to wave a magic wand; it is a plea to wake us up to how we are being shaped for *shalom*, and to join the Spirit in its manifestation in our midst, even as we ache for its fullest expression still to come. And theological reflection helps us wake up. Theological reflection helps us discern where *shalom* is coming to fruition, where it is being resisted, and how we might imaginatively participate in the Spirit's cultivation of *shalom* in and around us. Says Nouwen:

> The marvelous vision of the peaceable Kingdom, in which all violence has been overcome and all men, women, and children live in loving unity with nature, calls for its realization in our day-to-day lives. Instead of being an escapist dream, it challenges us to anticipate what it promises. Every time we forgive our neighbor, every time we make a child smile, every time we show compassion to a suffering person, every time we arrange a bouquet of flowers, offer care to tame or wild animals, prevent pollution, create beauty in our homes and gardens, and work for peace and justice among peoples and nations we are making the vision come true.
>
> We must remind one another constantly of the vision. Whenever it comes alive in us, we will find new energy to live it out, right where we are. Instead of making us escape real life, this beautiful vision gets us involved.[170]

In both monumental and incremental ways, our response to that discernment becomes a participation in individual, communal and cosmic formation towards what has already begun in the resurrected Prince of *Shalom*.

A Cultural Liturgy for the Good Life of *Shalom*

I can now address the core concern of this chapter: What *telos* does the Spirit form us in and towards, and how does theological reflection for formation partner with God in this work? I

[166] Frost, *Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church*, 29–31.
[167] 1 Cor 15:23.
[168] Wright, *Simply Christian*, 185.
[169] 1 Cor 15:20, 23.
[170] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: Reflections for Every Day of the Year* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996), December 11.

propose that, at a fundamental level, theological reflection for formation functions as a cultural liturgy for the good life of *shalom*.

Earlier I argued that we are teleological creatures. Our lives orient towards various social imaginaries of what we desire and understand as being good, worthy and fulfilling—'the good life'. I explored culture as what we make of the world, central to which are preferred visions of flourishing. These provide lenses through which we interpret current experience to navigate our lives towards such visions. Culturally intelligent theological reflection thus identifies and challenges our embedded social imaginaries. It cultivates an eschatological reorientation and re-forming towards the good life of God as the goal of formation. Conventional goals of Christian formation—becoming our unique self in Christ—are not negated or contested, but rather exegeted and grounded in positing *shalom* as a biblically faithful social imaginary for the *telos* of Christian formation. It remains, then, to frame theological reflection for formation in terms of Smith's helpful concept of a 'cultural liturgy' to string together the key threads of this chapter.

Smith contends that

> our habits are formed by practices, and such practices can be either thin or thick. Thick practices are identity-forming, *telos*-laden, and get hold of our core desire—our ultimate love that defines us in some fundamental way … Our thickest practices constitute and function as *liturgies.*[171]

By making this distinction, Smith seeks to give weight to the concept of liturgies—whether 'secular' or 'sacred/religious'—as rituals oriented towards significance:

> I want to distinguish liturgies as *rituals of ultimate concern*: rituals that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of the good life, and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations.[172]

In reframing liturgy this way, we can recognise a wide variety of embodied rituals—work, leisure, shopping, study, explicitly religious practices or otherwise—that innately position us towards particular visions of purported flourishing.

And for Smith, there is essentially only one right and proper cultural liturgy for Christians. The social imaginary of the kingdom of God is embedded firmly within the bodily practices of historic Christian corporate worship. Our habitual practice of acting out the divine drama in public worship shapes our loves and desires, which in turn renews our minds and formulates our ideas.[173]

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[171] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 85.
[172] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 86.
[173] See especially Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, chap. 4: From Worship to Worldview: Christian Worship and the

There is a central truth to this. In bread and wine, we taste the paschal gift. In confession and forgiveness, we receive the peace of reconciliation. In song and the proclaimed word, we hear and respond to God's voice of love, and the summons and sending to live lives of *shalom* together for the sake of the world. However, as far as I am aware, Smith does not propose any other cultural liturgy that orients us towards the good life of God. "Worship is the arena in which we encounter God and are formed by God in and through the practices in which the Spirit is present—centering rituals to which God makes a promise (the sacraments)."[174] As far as cultural liturgies are concerned, it is public worship or bust.

Smith's conviction presents two problems, both of which are addressed by theological reflection as a fundamental cultural liturgy for *shalom*. The first is that it confines our (trans)formation in and towards *shalom* to whatever regular gathering we attend. This typified the first 35 years of my Christian formation, mainly in Lutheran context. God graciously met me in word and sacrament on a Sunday, and I was encouraged to pray and read my Bible the rest of the week to supplement that rhythm. But apart from application points towards the end of the sermon, I often floundered at knowing how to connect Sunday with Monday to Saturday. Ninety minutes once a week cannot be the only cultural liturgy in which we participate that shapes us towards the good life.

Some of Jesus' key interactions of shalom-shaped meaning-making occur in the public worship setting,[175] and Sabbath worship with the people of God formed part of his regular rhythms as per any devout Jew. But how many more occurred elsewhere in the cut and thrust of daily life: as conversations emerged whilst sandals slapped along dusty roads; as food and wine flowed in the homes of close friends, cynical Pharisees, questionable sinners, and at raucous weddings; as Jesus and his band plucked grains of wheat, caught fish, and fed people's bellies and souls.

What if theological reflection was not just a 'tool' learnt in seminary to appease the lecturer, or be dusted off when a pastoral crisis arose? What if, instead, theological reflection for formation were to function as a 'cultural liturgy'—a deeply forming ritual of ultimate concern

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Formation of Desire; also, this is the major thrust of Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*. I maintain that in seeking to redress overly cognitive orientations to Christian life and worship—an important corrective—Smith unnecessarily fractures affect and cognition in formation by insisting so rigidly upon this one way ordering of *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

[174] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 152.

[175] E.g., Jesus in Luke 4:14.

“that affectively and viscerally train[s] our desires”, to use Smith’s definition?[176] What if theological reflection for formation were to serve with similar ‘liturgical’ effect and power as a ‘work for the people’ (the literal meaning of λειτουργία), emphasizing the interpersoned, covenantally constituted and (trans)formative nature of knowing for *shalom*? That is what talking the walk as a craft or *habitus* is: God’s forming work of a disposition in us for interpreting our culturally laden experiences through the lens of *shalom* and being shaped in and towards *shalom* through that interpretation.

The second problem is that we risk buying into a stark sacred–secular divide if we imply that cultural liturgies in the ‘secular’ realm are necessarily malformational from a Christian perspective and that we only—or at least primarily—meet God in a church service. Herdt makes this very critique of Smith’s approach.[177] To do so is to limit the creativity of the Spirit, who is at work both within and beyond the church. We can be more adventurous in terms of practices within the broader culture that have the power to shape us towards Jesus’ kingdom of *shalom*. And theological reflection for formation is the fundamental way we discern them, particularly with a contemplative posture that listens closely for *missio Dei,* the ‘is-ness’ of God in all of life.

Theological reflection for formation, then, is a staple cultural liturgy for daily life, complementary to the divine drama of Christian worship and attentive to the movements of the Spirit in the world.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how theological reflection for formation, as a particular expression of covenantally constituted knowing, is for *shalom.* An emphasis upon formation takes a longitudinal perspective in meaning-making, not only regarding where we have come from but also towards a *telos* of where we (desire and think we) are headed. Central to our operative culture—our coping mechanism, or what we make of the world—is an orientation towards visions of the good life. Such visions, or social imaginaries, shape how we navigate and interpret life. These need recalibration against the good life of God through theological reflection upon experience. While the conventional goal of selfhood in Christ provides a rich teleology for Christian formation, this needs exegeting and expanding if it is to keep theological reflection attuned to concrete

[176] James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids,: Baker, 2016), 32.
[177] Jennifer Herdt, “The Virtue of the Liturgy,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Madden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 538.

participation in God’s grand vision of the good life.

Shalom offers such a *telos.* It is a multifaceted vision for holistic flourishing through reconciling relationships, justice and righteousness, beauty and creativity, and paschal wholeness. *Shalom* operates glocally at cosmic, communal and individual levels. It embodies or expounds the culture of the gospel of the kingdom. And it engenders hopeful living through an inaugurated eschatology, grounded in the Christ event. Theological reflection for formation in and towards the good life of *shalom*, then, offers powerful cultural liturgy—a ritual of ultimate concern—that daily attunes us to invitations for participating in the social imaginary of God’s loving rule, and (trans)forms us in and towards that *telos* in the process.

Thus, *shalom* is talking the walk’s second contour, building upon and orienting the trialogue as its first. What needs developing in talking the walk’s model, then, is an architecture for talking the walk’s method. Approaches to theological reflection tend to be fairly conceptual, but pedagogically this is not always helpful; students appreciate something imaginative and evocative yet accessible into which they can latch onto and live. That is the focus of talking the walk’s third contour in chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR
EMMAUS LABYRINTH

To take seriously that all knowing is coming-to-know, that it is an unfolding relationship, means that we see ourselves as pilgrims, so to speak—on the way.

Esther Meek[1]

And [Jesus] said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?'

Luke 24:17

The labyrinth reminds us that the quickest path to our destination is not always the best.

Sally Longley[2]

The central nerve of this dissertation is theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation. Talking the walk is for any wayfarer who would seek to live more wholly, meaningfully and *humanly*—both into their own skin, and something bigger than themselves. This intent shapes the first two contours of talking the walk's model. Trialogue is a useful heuristic for the dimensions and dynamics of reflection for holistic formation, and *shalom* provides its biblical, flourishing direction. What is now needed is a clear and engaging design. This chapter, which looks ahead to talking the walk's method, asks: what shapes its architecture? Two considerations inform this question.

The first is pedagogical. Talking the walk is oriented towards theological reflection for whole-person formation. This includes affect and body, not just cognition. In addressing the general malaise in theological education, Shaw notes that learning which makes an emotional connection contributes to integrative, transformative and deep learning. "Strong emotions lead to strong connections in our memories."[3] Because of the essential unity of the human person, involving the body also contributes to and reinforces transformative learning. It is at this level of

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[1] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.

[2] Sally Longley, *Walking the Labyrinth as the Beloved in John's Gospel* (Warriewood, NSW: Sally Longley, 2015), 14.

[3] Shaw, "Bridging Classroom and Life in Theological Reflection," 4–5. He also contends that deep learning *makes sense*, with understandable language and concepts that connect to students' past experience with some ease, and that it has *practical significance*, since "ultimately students will only make an effort to remember material if they believe that it is important enough to do so." Shaw, "Bridging Classroom and Life in Theological Reflection," 5. Sadly, students have not always rated their encounters with theological reflection highly on these aspects, as Pattison et al. attest. Surveying a group of new ordinands about their experiences of learning theological reflection, they surmised that the interviewees' perceptions "pointed to a general feeling in this group that concepts and methods of TR as understood and taught in training are, at best, irrelevant to the ministry of newly ordained clergy. At worst, they seem to be a diminishing, humiliating, anxiety-provoking academically inspired irrelevance that helps to devalue and 'strip' people of their own reflective skills and identity." Pattison, Thompson, and Green, "Theological Reflection for the Real World," 123.

affectivity and embodied learning that models for theological reflection often come up short. Kinaesthetic and affective participation usually give way to intellectualised steps and diagrams. Theological reflection for formation needs metaphor and muscle, not just cognition and concept.

The second is epistemological. Since covenant epistemology accredits half-knowing as real and essential aspects of discovery, knowing is a non-linear journey. "To say that knowing is being-on-the-way-to-knowing," says Meek, "is to accredit the journey as itself epistemic."[4] And since covenant epistemology asserts knowing as interpersoned, we may see "knowing as evolving via conversations on the way."[5] In other words, conversation is central to how knowing progresses and (trans)formation occurs along a non-linear, unfolding journey with other knowers.[6] Moreover, covenant epistemology's conception of knowing as "the responsible human struggle to rely on clues to focus on a coherent pattern and submit to its reality"[7] offers valuable insight into how knowing 'works' as the method unfolds. Understanding the mechanics of knowing can enhance a sense of agency in reflection.

This chapter, then, develops the 'Emmaus Labyrinth' as the architecture for talking the walk's method that invites whole-person engagement, and is commensurate with covenant epistemology. First, I explore walking and talking as suggestive metaphors for formation and reflection that carry the method. 'Walking' is grounded in the embodied and located journey that God walks slowly with us. 'Talking' is grounded in contemplative conversation that attends to God who listens tenderly to us. Importantly, both metaphors invite physicality; we can literally talk and walk, in learning how to talk the walk.

I then suggest these metaphors find a natural home in two resources for reflection which, when creatively juxtaposed, structure the method. One is the Road via Emmaus narrative in Luke 24:13–49. The two disciples' search for *shalom* through meaning-making with the risen Christ plays out through contemplative conversation (to Emmaus), imaginative discernment (at Emmaus), and courageous embodiment (back to and in Jerusalem). It is the road 'via' rather than 'to' because the return journey of embodying their new reality (including verses 36–49) is just as significant as their conversation and discernment. The other resource is the labyrinth, a patterned

[4] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.
[5] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 397.
[6] "The progress is not linear as much as it is repeatedly unfolding and transforming … I think that this is the way all knowing unfolds, that it is the way knowing *should* be seen to unfold, and that it holds a clue to the heart of what knowing is about." Meek, *Longing to Know*, 35–36.
[7] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.

tool for reflection via walking a circuitous and non-linear path. It too has a threefold shape which may be expressed as releasing (along the walk inwards), receiving (in the centre), and returning (along the walk outwards). The labyrinth provides a powerful archetype for both the reflection process and our formation journey.

When overlayed together, the Emmaus Labyrinth enfolds multiple elements of theological reflection for formation. Pedagogical possibilities for aesthetic, kinaesthetic and cognitive engagement emerge. Moreover, its non-linear and conversational emphases reinforce key tenets of covenant epistemology, and its threefold shape dovetails with three aspects within Meek's definition of knowing.

The creative construct of the Emmaus Labyrinth, then, is a simple yet rich threefold design for talking the walk's method. Building upon the first two contours of trialogue and *shalom*, it provides the final contour of talking the walk's model, and this chapter's original contribution to knowledge.

Walking

There are many biblical motifs connected to Christian formation, including biological birth and growth,[8] maturing,[9] living stones,[10] and renewal.[11] Walking is my primary metaphor for formation because it is richly ingrained within the biblical narrative and Christian tradition. Its use may well present challenges for students who struggle to or cannot walk, and certainly any approaches to teaching, including physical exercises, require sensitivity in this regard. That said, walking as a motif is powerful in exploring Christian formation in how it connects to life themes such as journeying, pilgrimage and movement. 'Life is a journey' is certainly a cliché, but we cannot assume its truth is well known and embraced. The vision of walking out our lives has fallen on hard times.

[8] Gal 4:19.
[9] Eph 4:11–13.
[10] 1 Pet 2:5.
[11] Rom 12:2.

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[12]

"Nothing can be loved at speed"—yet modern society seems infatuated with speed. Modern transportation has profoundly affected our experience of walking. While "walking is the best way to go more slowly than any other method that has ever been found,"[13] an obsession with efficiency means we constantly look for quicker trips via the most direct route. The art of sauntering, as Thoreau called it,[14] seems increasingly hard to cultivate. Who has time for regular, attentive strolls? Who even wants to? As Holt observes, to be 'pedestrian' is to be "dull and unmotivated."[15] As such we have lost touch with the speed of walking and the earth which carries us.

'The world is charged with the grandeur of God' by Gerard Manley Hopkins removed due to copyright restriction. See footnote for original source.[16]

Gerald Manley Hopkins' reflection upon the industrial revolution is true for us still: His lament is that when our shod feet are numb to the road upon which we trample, we miss the grandeur of God. "We live in the description of a place and not in the place itself," says Stevens.[17] We also lose touch with ourselves, like Mr Duffy in Joyce's novel *The Dubliners* who "lived a short distance from his body."[18] In the process we become more like tourists than pilgrims. A tourist approach to the journey of faith wants the thrills of the highlights, quick information, souvenirs and the most direct route to the next site.[19] Where the pilgrim participates, the tourist observes.[20] To borrow from Buber, a tourist takes an 'I-It' approach to life,[21] set on functionality and achievement. The person, the community or world experienced are 'its'—problems to be solved to get to the next thing.[22] Walking is never simply for its own sake.

[12] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 53.
[13] Gros, cited in Simon Carey Holt, *Heaven All Around Us: Discovering God in Everyday Life* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 91.
[14] Henry D. Thoreau, *Walking* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside, 1914).
[15] Holt, *Heaven All Around Us*, 92.
[16] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Selected Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Bob Blaisdell (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2013), 20.
[17] Wallace Stevens, cited in Belden C. Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 22.
[18] Cited in Longley, *Walking the Labyrinth as the Beloved in John's Gospel*, 15.
[19] Benner, *Soulful Spirituality*, 125; Charles Foster, *The Sacred Journey: The Ancient Practices*, ed. Phyllis Tickle (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 109.
[20] Lauren Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Practice*, Revised and updated. (New York, NY: Riverhead, 2006), 35; see also Michael Barnes and Jayne Hoose, "Tourists or Travellers? Rediscovering Pilgrimage," *The Way: Review of Contemporary Christian Spirituality* 39.1 (1999): 16–26.
[21] Martin Buber and Ronald Gregor Smith, *I and Thou* (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018).
[22] Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 34.

Our 2017 family adventure into Central Australia began as a holiday but became more pilgrimage-like once we encountered the magnificent, breathtaking Uluru. Postcards and holiday shows over the years had set me up for a tourist experience—Uluru was a box to tick. That changed at my first glimpse of the huge rock; I was mesmerised. Standing at its base I took a photo of the sign that greeted us, struck by its profundity:

Figure 3: Sign at the base of Uluru, Northern Territory[23]

High winds prevented any ascent that day, but we had already decided not to climb even if we could have.[24] Our choice was not only for reasons of respect for the land's custodians; the

[23] Photo mine.
[24] The option to climb Uluru was removed from October 2019.

deeper magnetism of connection over conquering also pulled us. The view from the top may have been spectacular, but the physical demands would surely have taken every bit of focus to get up and back safely; meaningful talk and a full appreciation of the beauty would have been difficult. Instead, while some whizzed past on hired electric segways, our family sauntered around the 10km base walk for over 4 hours, stunned at the cut of the rock's red ochre against the azure blue of the sky. Often, we stopped to touch it. Conversation intermingled naturally with silence as we marvelled the subtle changes unnoticeable from the top or driving past at speed. We returned the following day to encounter something altogether different—cascading torrents after a flash storm. In that experience, I felt a kinship with the sentiment of poet Mary Oliver: "When death comes, I don't want to end up just having visited this world."[25] The Psalmist's promise rang true: "Blessed are those … whose hearts are set on pilgrimage"[26]—literally, "whose hearts are the highways."[27]

It is that sort of pilgrim *connection with* rather than tourist *conquering of* the journey—being led to our footpath, to the slow path—that typifies a formational approach to theological reflection. A Lutheran context shaped my teenage and young adult faith formation, where the emphasis was often upon mastering correct doctrine. What I struggled with, looking back, was how to connect sometimes ethereal ideas to the daily, embodied steps of my particular path at an existential, authentic level. I have discovered that theological reflection for formation has much to offer in this regard.

Foster notes two features of Christian pilgrimage, at least in its most ideal form.[28] The first is its emphasis upon the journey, not just the destination. Pilgrims who have returned from a much planned and longed for journey—perhaps to the Holy Land—are often more inclined to recount their experiences along the way than what they found upon their arrival. The *shalom* of the new creation towards which we are walking is important, but our manner of walking here and now amidst its in-breaking, equally so. Walking as a spiritual practice, as Holt contends, "is not a practice of productivity, not even of transition, but one of presence."[29] This is true for formation as

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[25] Mary Oliver, "When Death Comes," in *New and Selected Poems, Volume One* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2004), 10.
[26] Ps 84:5.
[27] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 473.
[28] Foster, *The Sacred Journey*, 18–19.
[29] Holt, *Heaven All Around Us*, 92. This connects with Santmire's metaphors of migration to a good land, and of fecundity, in contrast to the dominating metaphor of ascent. Buxton summarises: "[Santmire] invites us to imagine that we are climbing a mountain. There are two alternatives that we are asked to consider as we make our way up the mountain: either we keep our gaze firmly fixed upwards, unaware of all around us as we journey towards the transcendent light above; on the other hand, we may choose to look around us as we make the journey, our eyes

pilgrimage.

The second is its constant push back against a gnostic, disengaged and other-worldly journey. Christian pilgrimage is a thoroughly embodied, participatory and non-tourist vocation. "Geography is simply a visible form of theology," says Levenson.[30] Conversely, as Peterson warns, "theology divorced from geography gets us into nothing but trouble."[31] That is to say: our theology of place matters in theological reflection for formation. Paulo Coelho, journeying across Spain along the famous Camino de Santiago pilgrims' trail, recounts the wisdom of his guide: "When you are moving towards an objective it is very important to pay attention to the road. It is the road that teaches us the best way to get there, and the road enriches us as we walk its length."[32] We are formed not just by our destination, but by contextual landscapes we inhabit along the way: familial, social, political, ecclesial, cultural, theological, geographical, and so on. These are pilgrimages within the pilgrimage. My own have included home to boarding school, fathered to fatherless as a young teenager, rural to urban, high school teaching to church-based lay ministry to adult theological education, single to married, years of unexplained infertility and early pregnancy loss to a father of five, Australia to Gallipoli for ANZAC Day, work in Canberra to study in Adelaide, annual trips to the family farm most summer holidays, black-and-white theology to more nuanced shades of grey, Lutheran to ecumenical contexts, activist to contemplative spirituality. All of these—and more—have shaped me and continue to form my meaning-making. Christians on the way are not gnostics floating above this tainted earth. Gravity dictates a continual connection between our steps and the ground beneath us, so we had better slow down and pay attention as we walk. "God lead us to our footpath … to the slow path."[33] Yes and amen.

The Scriptures reflect such a grounded and embodied view of Christian formation. Avrahami argues that we cannot impose the Western pentasensory model upon the Hebrew Scriptures; her careful study suggests at least seven senses, interconnected semantically and

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drinking in the beauty and glory of the mountain scenery. The first perspective – the metaphor of ascent – is predicated on a form of spirituality that takes us not just towards God, but away from nature. The second metaphor, that of fecundity, invites us into an awareness and appreciation of the rich goodness of creation, which Santmire couples with his metaphor of migration to a good land, an eschatological vision of promise that offers inspiration and hope in the midst of nature." Buxton, *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry*, 249.

[30] Cited in Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 22.

[31] Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, 77.

[32] Paulo Coelho, *The Pilgrimage* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 118.

[33] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 53.

associatively.[34] There is not only sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, but also kinaesthesia (or walking) and speech (or talking). Moreover, the concept of sense itself is too abstract, and more implied than explicit; instead, the emphasis is upon body parts such as eyes, ears, tongue, nose, hands, feet and mouth. She notes strong associative patterns between walking and hearing, sight and speech.[35] Walking characterised by hearing/seeing and speaking provides a key way for experiencing and making sense of the world on the move. This is true too for those who cannot walk but who, perhaps assisted by a wheelchair, move through the world. Whatever the mode, our physical movement

> is intrinsic to our perception of the world. Through our body's ability to interpret and adapt to our environment, we understand the world and our place in it. The past fifty years have seen a serious reconsideration of Cartesian dualism, with the realisation that our bodies and minds are not separate entities, but interdependent engines of the human experience. The walking body is our active interpreter of reality.
>
> Walking has even helped shape the narrative structures through which we understand our trajectory in life. Our earliest stories are, for many, the toddling expeditions we made as two-year-olds across the back gardens of our childhoods. Our most basic and enduring narrative arc is based on just such journeys; for 5 million years all literal journeys were taken on foot. We walk into our story.[36]

Solvitur ambulando[37] speaks further into this innate connection between walking and talking.[38] The ancient philosopher Zeno contended motion is illusionary since one can isolate a moving object into a series of motionless, discrete points in time—thus it does not move at all. His counterpart Diogenes did not argue back, but rather got up and quipped "*solvitur ambulando*"—'it is solved by walking'—as he strolled across the room.[39] True, taking a walk can afford insights through clearing the head, and abstract problems often have quite practical solutions. *Solvitur ambulando*, though, means more than these common truths. It references "a knowing that comes only to those who are actively engaged in the questions they are asking."[40] Trying to work out instructions for a new board game with our kids only gets us so far; before long someone says,

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[34] Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 109.
[35] Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture*, 75.
[36] Jono Lineen, *Perfect Motion: How Walking Makes Us Wiser* (Sydney: Penguin Random House Australia, 2019), 7.
[37] Often attributed to St. Augustine, *solvitur ambulando* is not found in his extant writings. Tim Ling, *Moving on in Ministry: Discernment for Times of Transition and Change* (London: Church House, 2013), 70.
[38] Regarding the intricate connection between walking and talking in philosophy and poetry, see Marc Shell, *Talking the Walk & Walking the Talk: A Rhetoric of Rhythm* (New York, NY: Fordham University, 2015).
[39] Thomas G. Long, *What Shall We Say?: Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2014), 115.
[40] Long, *What Shall We Say?*, 115.

"Let's just start playing, and work it out as we go." "Follow me" is Jesus' fundamental call to discipleship, and thus the engine room of formation, because the richest meaning-making arises from walking the path unfolding before us. Ultimately, Christian disciples walk the way, rather than ponder a philosophical system. Contemplation needs cultivation. Christian talking and reflection are critical but need—and only find—authenticity in the context of Christian walking and formation. Talking our walk makes deepest sense as we attempt to walk our talk. As Long contends, the most significant theological issues are 'solved by walking' in that "they are questions that yield the deepest insights when they are explored with the eyes of faith."[41] This reasserts covenant epistemology's core conviction that knowing is personed and situated, and does not occur at arm's length.[42] *Solvitur ambulando.*

Perhaps this is why 'walking' is so prevalent in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, הלך/*hâlak* ("to walk") is used both literally for movement, and figuratively for accompaniment, obedience and following after. God walks in the garden in the cool of the day,[43] Enoch and Noah walk with God,[44] and God calls Abraham to walk faithfully[45] and to plod across the length and breadth of the land given to him.[46] Israel's call to obedience, mission and pilgrimage are all framed as walking.[47] περιπατέω/*peripateō* ('to walk'), occurring some 96 times in the New Testament, has a similar dual usage. In the gospels, Jesus is a dedicated walker. He calls his disciples—who would come to be known as those of 'the way'[48]—to follow him both on foot and in life.[49] Luke focuses on Jesus' interactions on the road, while John's emphasis is more figurative, with Jesus exhorting his followers to walk in the light, not the darkness.[50] Paul commonly employs *peripateō* to communicate the embodiment of faith,[51] though this is sometimes obscured in English translations.[52] God prepares good works in advance for us *to do,*[53] and we should be wise in how

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[41] Long, *What Shall We Say?*, 116.
[42] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.
[43] Gen 3:8.
[44] Gen 5:24, 6:9.
[45] Gen 17:1.
[46] Gen 13:16–17.
[47] Deut 8:6; Pss 121:3, 122:1; Prov 4:26; Isa 52:7.
[48] Acts 9:2, 18:25–26, 19:23, 24:14, 22. Cf. Jesus as being 'on the way' in Luke's travel narrative e.g., 10:38, 13:22, 17:11.
[49] E.g., Mark 7:5; John 6:66, 8:12, 11:9–10, 12:35.
[50] E.g., John 6:66; 8:12; 11:9–10; 12:35. 1 John 2:7. See also 1 Jn 1:6–7; 2:6, 11; 2 Jn 1:4, 6; 3 Jn 1:3–4.
[51] E.g., Rom 6:4; 8:1, 4; 13:13; 14:15; I Cor 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor 4:2; 5:7; 10:2–3; 12:18; Gal 5:16; Eph 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Col 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1; 4:12; 2 Thess 3:6; 3:11.
[52] Most especially the NIV and NRSV.
[53] Eph 2:10.

we *conduct* ourselves towards outsiders,[54] careful in how we *live*,[55] and *live* by the Spirit[56]—these are all *peripateō*, about walking. The new creation will see the nations walking in the light of God's glory.[57] Walking is a key biblical theme in the human journey in this world with God and one another.

Most importantly, a theology of pilgrimage—our long walking after Jesus throughout life—is grounded in the God who walks slowly with us, just as Jesus drew near to and walked with the two going towards Emmaus.[58] God, says Koyama, is the 'three mile an hour God':

> God walks 'slowly' because he is love. If he is not love he would have gone much faster. Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It is 'slow' yet it is lord over all other speeds since it is the speed of love. It goes on in the depth of our life, whether we notice or not, whether we are currently hit by storm or not, at three miles an hour. It is the speed we walk and therefore it is the speed the love of God walks.[59]

God can call us to the slow and grounded way because that is Jesus' path of the incarnation. God's meandering with us—slowly, patiently, step by step—is the basis for understanding our walking with Jesus and one another in our particular landscapes. I remember once preparing for a weekend of camping with other families. Harried and under pressure to get everything packed, I snapped at my son Toby, blasting him for not helping—in the way only impatient fathers can do. The frostiness created was hardly a great start. But after we had arrived and settled in, a long walk together through the surrounding forest melted it all away, including my shame. I felt his hand slip into mine and conversation began to flow as together with God, we walked the speed of love. *Solvitur ambulando.*

As God leads us back to our footpath, we connect rather than conquer, seek relationship over results, become pilgrims more than tourists, enter mystery rather than achieve mastery. With unshod feet we once again feel the sacred ground beneath us, which gladly bears our traipsing after Jesus throughout our ordinary, magnificent journeys. We remember afresh that nothing can be loved at speed. As talk flows on the slow and attentive path of formation, it can help make sense of the journey.

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[54] Col 4:5.
[55] Eph 5:15.
[56] Gal 5:16
[57] Rev 21:23-24.
[58] Luke 24:15.
[59] Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God* (London: SCM, 2015), 6–7.

Talking

Talking—like walking—is a primordial impulse. We need not only to get places but also to communicate as we do so. To give voice is to utilise breath to externalise the internal; to talk is to express life. While talk is often functional to enable daily living, it is also our primary avenue for probing experiences at a deeper level to make meaning of our journeys. Such meaningful talk can be life-giving and life changing.

Yet if modern transport has deadened deep engagement in the journey, then equally modern communication has challenged our capacity for meaningful talk in the context of enriched relationships.[60] A telling photo circulating on the internet compares the 2005 announcement of Pope Benedict in St. Peter's Square with that of Pope Francis only eight years later. The first is a sea of heads; the second, a sea of phones held aloft.[61] The momentous changes within our lifetime to how we talk match the increased speed at which we talk. The result is the oft-touted paradox: though supposedly more connected, in many ways we are more isolated.[62] Millis observes:

> Many of us find that in our effort to maintain a breadth of connection, we compromise the depth of our connections. We often feel distracted, as we struggle to keep up with all the messages that fill our screens, unable to bring our full attention to any single encounter, let alone have ample time to reflect on them.[63]

Such outer freneticism invades our inner world, making it more difficult to connect with ourselves.

The bombardment of noise, options and information accompanying the ICT tsunami has challenged meaningful intra- and inter-personal talk.[64] We hear more but listen less. The 24/7 news cycle quarantines talk into sound bites that ricochet about in virtual echo-chambers. Social

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[60] E.g., Susan Greenfield, *Mind Change* (London: Rider & Co, 2014); Michael Harris, *The End of Absence: Reclaiming What We've Lost in a World of Constant Connection* (New York: Current Hardcover, 2014); Craig Detweiler, *IGods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2013); John Dyer and T. David Gordon, *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2011); Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic, 2011).

[61] Today Show, "How the World Has Changed: St. Peter's Square in 2005 and 2013," *Instagram*, 15 March 2013, https://www.instagram.com/p/W2BuMLQLRB/.

[62] E.g., Susan Maushart, *The Winter of Our Disconnect: How One Family Pulled the Plug on Their Technology and Lived to Tell/Text/Tweet the Tale* (North Sydney, NSW: Random House, 2010), 6; Amy Morin, "Here's Why the Internet Has Made Us Lonelier Than Ever," *Inc.Com*, 19 June 2018, https://www.inc.com/amy-morin/heres-why-internet-has-made-us-lonelier-than-ever.html.

[63] Diane M. Millis, *Conversation, the Sacred Art: Practicing Presence in an Age of Distraction* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2013), xv.

[64] E.g., Charles Hymas, "Social Media Is Making Children Regress to Mentality of Three-Year-Olds, Says Top Brain Scientist," *The Telegraph*, 5 August 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/05/social-media-regressing-children-mentality-three-year-olds-says/.

media algorithms "ensure our news feeds mostly support what we already believe"[65] and polarise public opinion in certain ideological directions according to the highest bidder.[66] In an era of Trump tweets and combative political discourse, talk seems as cheap as ever—not that facile discourse is a new phenomenon. "Two monologues," said Barth, "do not constitute a dialogue."[67] Bonhoeffer was tired of and repulsed by the self-centred banality of the talk he often witnessed by those who "simply want to talk about themselves, whether they tell the truth or not." He longed for something deeper. "The wish for a good conversation, the meeting of minds, is quite another matter; but there are very few people here who can carry on a conversation that goes beyond their personal concerns."[68] Perhaps the sheer volume and accessibility of words in an information communication technology culture accentuates the poverty of much of our talk today. If long, slow sauntering walks seem rare, then equally so are long, slow enriching conversations—both within and without.

While the dominant mode of theological method through the twentieth century was *correlation* between faith and experience, it sometimes tended towards a cool, rational distance.[69] The Whiteheads were among the first to develop *conversation* as a more animating metaphor, citing "its possibilities for interruption, disagreement and surprise,"[70] and this emphasis continues with authors such as O'Neill and Shercliff.[71] In theological reflection, then, we need a working theology of meaningful, attentive talk—talk as conversation—that might help us walk in and towards a fuller human experience of *shalom*.

Broughton frames conversation within a simple delineation of talking:

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[65] Anna Kelsey-Sugg and Skye Docherty, "Andrew Denton's Tips for Better Conversations," Text, *ABC News*, 22 May 2018, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-22/andrew-denton-conversation/9783504.
[66] E.g., see Jeff Orlowski, *The Social Dilemma*, Documentary (Netflix, 2020); Tunde Farago, "Is Google Politically Biased?," *Diggit Magazine*, 3 July 2019, https://www.diggitmagazine.com/articles/google-politically-biased.
[67] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Volume 3 - The Doctrine of Creation Part 2 - The Creature*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. H. Knight et al. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1960), 259.
[68] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Edhard Bethge (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 213.
[69] Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 39.
[70] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 4. Similarly, Killen and de Beer talk about 'genuine conversation' as "the discipline of exploring our individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions and perspectives, as well as from those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection, therefore, may confirm, challenge, clarify and expand how we understand our own experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living." Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 51.
[71] O'Neill and Shercliff "define theological reflection as a conversation between tradition, culture, experience and tradition. Gary O'Neill and Liz Shercliff, *Straw for the Bricks: Theological Reflection in Practice* (London: SCM, 2018), chap. 1.

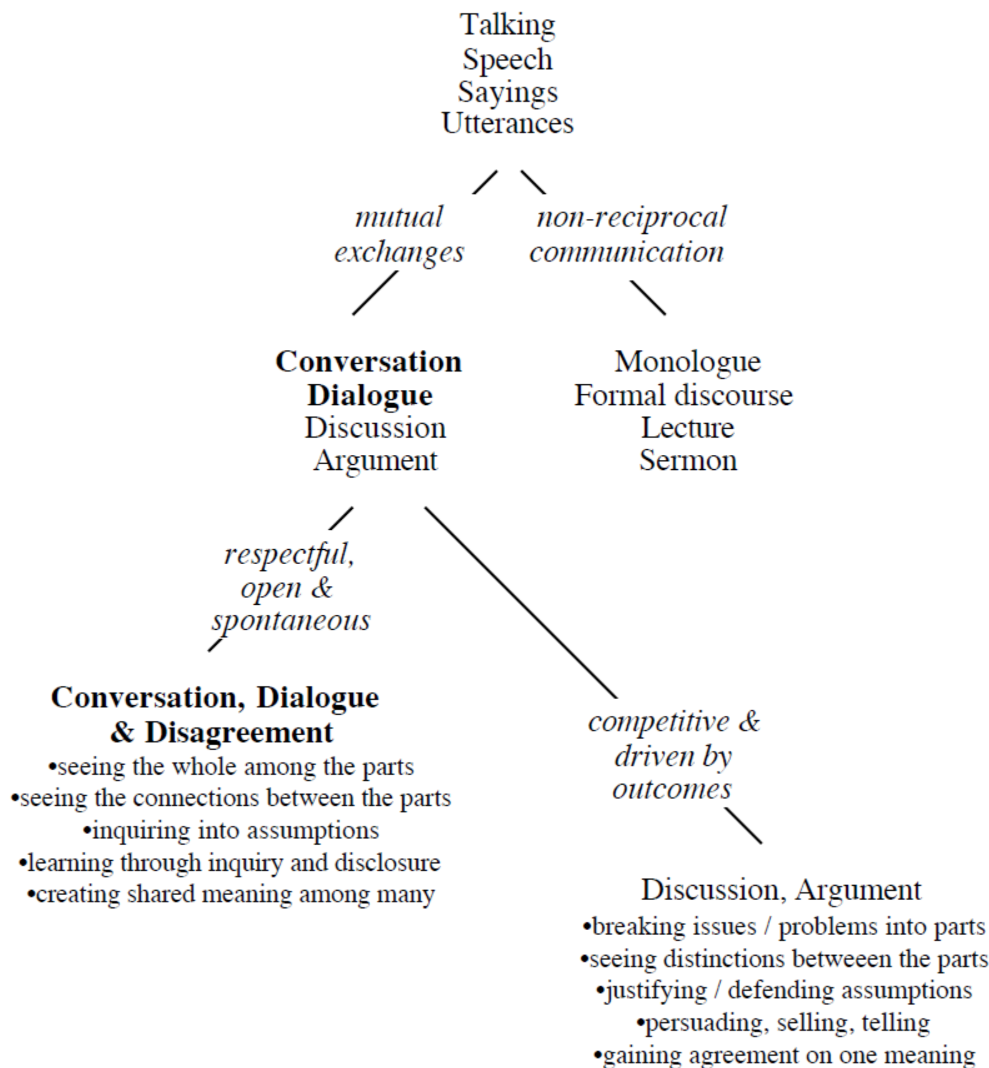

Figure 4: *Conversational Terminology* by Broughton[72]

Benner's matrix explores a debate–discussion–conversation–dialogue continuum against various facets of verbal interaction:

[Table removed due to copyright restriction. See footnote for original source.]

Figure 5: *Forms of Verbal Interaction* by Benner[73]

For Meek, conversations marked by mutual submission facilitate "interpersonal exchanges typified by deep, indwelling listening, and then by a response in which the thoughtful participant creatively melds insights gleaned with others previously acquired."[74] These expand us. Great

[72] Geoff Broughton, "Authentic Dialogue: Towards a Practical Theology of Conversation" (ThM, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 5. Used with permission.
[73] Benner, *Care of Souls*, 133.
[74] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.

conversations, says Millis, give us “the opportunity to learn about a reality far bigger than our own and to learn more about ourselves.”[75] Paver draws from Boys[76] to offer eight insights for conversation for theological reflection with students:[77]

1. In conversation one has partners, not adversaries
2. The sharing of ignorance should not be confused with conversation
3. Conversations permit us to bridge the gap between our world and another’s, and blur some of the boundaries of power
4. Lively conversations depend on students speaking in their own voice
5. To facilitate conversation, one needs to be comfortable with silence
6. Dialogue is not a mere method, it is a way of life
7. Conversation requires conversational partners
8. Conversation must allow for difference and otherness

This précis presents talk as verbal engagement that enlivens and (trans)forms through what Broughton identifies as key markers of authentic conversation: “mutuality, reciprocity, openness, respect.”[78] It points to modes of interaction that are less combative and bent on certainty, and more characterised by unfolding, interpersoned growth. Such conversation is coinhering, since no conversation partner is fully themselves apart from their unfolding relationship to the other(s). “The conversation of mutual exploration,” says psychotherapist Jordan Peterson,

> requires people who have decided that the unknown makes a better friend than the known ... [I]f you are meditating as you converse, then you listen to the other person, and say the new and original things that can arise from deep within of their own accord. *It’s as if you are listening to yourself during such a conversation, just as you are listening to the other person ...* In this manner, you both move towards somewhere newer and broader and better … you shed your skins, and emerge renewed.”[79]

Authentic conversations take on a life of their own because of the unique way in which conversation partners interact coinherently and are thus (trans)formed; each voice shapes the other, leaving none unchanged. The imperative is thus to grow not only in our capacity to talk our walk, but also as conversational partners who, being quick to listen and slow to speak, know how to companion others in their journey of meaning-making.

Developing the capacity for intra-personal conversation is as important as inter-personal

[75] Millis, *Conversation, the Sacred Art*, xvi.
[76] Mary C. Boys, “Engaged Pedagogy Dialogue and Critical Reflection,” *Teaching Theology & Religion* 2.3 (1999): 129–36.
[77] Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 39–40.
[78] Broughton, “Authentic Dialogue: Towards a Practical Theology of Conversation,” 88.
[79] Jordan B. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote for Chaos* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 254–55.

conversation. "Thinking," says Peterson, "is listening to yourself. It's difficult. To think, you have to be at least two people at the same time. Then you have to let those people disagree."[80] He likens this sort of internal conversation to creating avatars and giving them voices: "Thinking is the process by which these internal avatars imagine and articulate their worlds to one another."[81] Such reflexivity is the usual starting point for theological reflection. We learn to contemplate experiences that jar, intrigue, puzzle, disrupt and excite us. Internal questions emerge. "What's going on there? What was that all about? Why do I feel so ________ about this? What does my faith make of this?" Conversation follows as we allow different avatars to listen and speak. Trialogue, explored in chapter two, proposes three such avatars in coinhering, reflexive discourse: "What do I understand theologically, or normatively, about this situation? What does my ministry engagement in the situation say? What about my existential sense of self—my affections, body, spiritual vitality, biography and personhood? How do these voices clash? Shape each other? What emerges?"

Such internal trialogue is not easy as it "requires you to be an articulate speaker and careful, judicious listener, at the same time."[82] We can become proficient in it, but it only takes us so far, for "it takes a village to organize a mind."[83] So we often need to externalise with other sojourners—perhaps a friend, colleague, or peer reflection group. And then back within ourselves again. And so on. Each mode is critical, since both particularity and relatedness—as noted in chapter three—are essential in Christian formation.[84]

Mutual, reciprocal, open and respectful conversation—both intra- and inter-personal—

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[80] Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 241.
[81] Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 241.
[82] Peterson comments: "True thinking is complex and demanding … It involves conflict. So, you have to tolerate conflict. Conflict involves negotiation and compromise. So, you have to learn to give and take and modify your premises and adjust your thoughts—even your perceptions of the world … But you have to be very articulate and sophisticated to have all this occur inside your own head. What are you to do, then, if you aren't very good at thinking, at being two people at one time? That's easy. You talk. But you need someone who will listen. A listening person is your collaborator and your opponent." Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 241–42.
[83] Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 250.
[84] This is not dissimilar to Pattison's method, where 3 strands—the contemporary situation being examined; the beliefs, assumptions and perceptions provided by the Christian tradition; and the reflector's own ideas, beliefs, feelings, perceptions and assumptions—are brought together in 'critical conversation'. Thompson et al. summarise: "Keeping the three strands carefully distinct, the reflector, or group of reflectors, then enables a discourse to take place between the three strands, as if they were three different participants in a conversation. This method has the advantage of clarity and apparent simplicity. In practice it requires considerable discipline to retain the distinctive contribution of each of the three elements. As Pattison suggests, it may be helpful to imagine the three participants as three different people, or, in a group situation, to designate three different people to take on one role each and carefully keep to the role. For someone working alone, this could be more difficult, but it is still worth the effort." Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 63.

hinges on listening. “Listening comes first,” insists McHugh.[85] The more attentive the listening, the better the conversation—even if there is fundamental disagreement.[86] Though we know James’ reproach—“be quick to listen, slow to speak”[87]—we are not good at it. “The great majority of us cannot listen;” observed renowned psychotherapist Carl Rogers, “we find ourselves compelled to evaluate, because listening is too dangerous. The first requirement is courage, and we do not always have it.”[88] So we heed Jesus’ fascinating exhortation to “pay attention to how you listen.”[89] In theological reflection for formation, that ‘how’ is *contemplative* listening. This means more than merely adopting practices commonly associated with contemplation, such as silence, solitude and stillness—though often these can help. Instead, it is to grow in what McHugh[90] calls ‘the listening life’: being attentive and responsive to God already present and at work. “To contemplate,” as Holt contends, “is to look deeply into life in order to discern its truth;”[91] a sort of ‘connecting perception’. [92] McDermott explains:

> By ‘contemplative’ I am not referring to a deep mystical presence, but rather the kind of relationship with God in which you are able to notice what God is like and what God is doing, be affected by it, notice how one is affected, and respond to God out of that awareness.[93]

Contemplative listening—and thus, contemplative conversation—rests upon an orientation towards God as “over all and through all and in all.”[94] It eschews God as only ‘out there’, such that we need to bridge the divide somehow—be that through works, contemplative practices, affirming ‘correct’ doctrines, ‘accepting Jesus’ or ‘putting God first’. Classically the cross is placed as the bridge between—but even then, *that bridge still needs to be crossed*.

Instead, a contemplative orientation affirms that in the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus—the divine ‘YES!’ to all creation—the Triune God through the Spirit is already present in every facet of created existence, and all creation is caught up in the very life and communion of the Triune community. We are in God; God is in us. This is not to collapse the Creator/creation

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[85] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 9.
[86] Michael Yankoski, *The Sacred Year: Mapping the Soulscape of Spiritual Practice (How Contemplating Apples, Living in a Cave and Befriending a Dying Woman Revived My Life)* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 31.
[87] Jas 1:19.
[88] Cited in Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 245.
[89] Luke 8:18.
[90] McHugh, *The Listening Life*.
[91] Holt, *Heaven All Around Us*, 95.
[92] According to Grey as cited in Ault, “Theological Reflection,” 304.
[93] Cited in McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 10.
[94] Eph 4:6. See Stairs, *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction*, chap. 2. Contemplative Living: A Preventative and Restorative Approach.

distinctive, nor imply that all have responded to this reality. Clearly that is not the case. But it is to say that, from God's perspective, there is no relational absence from that which God has fashioned and redeemed in love. Not only so, for in Christ is found our—indeed, the universe's—definitive "YES!" to God. And so, John declares: "God is love."[95] "Know it well," says Julian of Norwich, "love was his meaning."[96] We live, move and have our being[97] in the cosmic Christ who, having reconciled all things to himself,[98] abides in us that we might abide in him.[99]

Contemplative conversation is wonderfully enriched by the Australian indigenous quality of *dadirri* from the Ngangikurungkurr people at Nauiyu (Daly River, NT).[100] Its first key facet is deep listening, as elder and educator Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr explains:

> *Dadirri* recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call "contemplation" … There is no need of words. A big part of *dadirri* is listening … The contemplative way of *dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again …
>
> In our Aboriginal way, we learnt to listen from our earliest days. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened ... We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting … There is no need to reflect too much and to do a lot of thinking. It is just being aware.[101]

Such awareness means slowing down, resisting Western society's infatuation with the instant. Ault contends that theological reflection "involves not only the artful asking of appropriate and useful questions but also an open stance of waiting, listening and discernment. Often what is discerned emerges within the liminal space where language comes to its limits of expression."[102] This is *dadirri*'s second emphasis: quiet, still waiting.

> Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course—like the seasons … There is nothing more

[95] 1 John 4:8.
[96] Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1978), 342.
[97] Acts 17:28.
[98] Col 1:15–20; 2 Cor 5:18–19.
[99] John 14:20, 15:1–4.
[100] *Dadirri* has become popularised through the work of Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr. See Dadirri Film Project, "Dadirri," *The Dadirri Film Project*, n.d., http://thedadirrifilm.com/what-is-dadirri. Here authors state that "Dadirri is being taught and discussed in Australian universities, schools, medical studies, spoken of at forums addressing education, health and indigenous issues. It has applications in trauma recovery, psychology, guidance through grief, emotional, spiritual and physical health." As far as I am aware, however, it has not been explicitly employed in an approach to theological reflection.
[101] Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, "To Be Listened to in Her Teaching: Dadirri: Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness," *EarthSong Journal: Perspectives in Ecology, Spirituality and Education* 3.4 (2017): 14.
[102] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 297.

important than what we are attending to. There is nothing more urgent that we must hurry away for.[103]

Miriam-Rose offers a powerful image for such attentive waiting. Her people are river folk, and the river cannot be hurried—only waited upon, listened to, and moved with. This informs the rhythm of theological reflection for formation: to listen patiently to the Spirit in the river of our experience, discern divine currents, and join with God's flow.[104]

Fostering a *dadirri*-like patient attentiveness to the real,[105] then, is at the heart of contemplative conversation. The question for the contemplative is not 'How can I find God? Invite God into my life? Put God first?' This approach typified much of my journey—and thus, approach to theological reflection—up until my mid-30s. My life was a pie, with various segments (work, family, relationship with God, study etc.), and I was forever trying to make my 'God slice' bigger—more church, more Bible, more praying, more ________. Over a gradual season of reading, retreating, and in particular, spiritual direction, I began to make a shift towards my life as a 'wheel'. God was the hub, the centre—holding it all, and to be noticed in all. A friend of mine captured this for me in a painting, which hangs above my office desk. My life's 'wheel' is the vine of John 15. The river of God's *shalom*, set within desert sand from central Australia, is its hub—the life source for fruit borne within and beyond me:

Figure 6: *Centred* by Leanne Stahl[106]

[103] Ungunmerr, "To Be Listened to in Her Teaching," 14–15.
[104] Miriam-Rose comments: "We wait on God, too. His time is the right time. We wait for him to make his Word clear to us. We don't worry. We know that in time and in the spirit of *dadirri* (that deep listening and quiet stillness) his way will be clear … There are deep springs within each of us. Within this deep spring, which is the very Spirit of God, is a sound. The sound of Deep calling to Deep. The sound is the word of God—Jesus." Ungunmerr, "To Be Listened to in Her Teaching," 15.
[105] See footnote 49.
[106] Leanne Stahl, *Centred*, Acrylic on canvas, 2013. Used by permission. Photo mine.

From this, a poem emerged:

Not First, But Centre[107]

Enough
putting God first
as though God
could be
put

I'm done
moving God up my list
helping the Divine
jostle for
position

No more
offering God a bigger slice
the pie, mine to divide?
which portion
is not yet
Seasoned?

God
not first
but centre
not put anywhere
but noticed everywhere

And so,
help me behold

Water
in desert heartland
Shalom
in all manner of things
Salt
in each slice
God
in the centre

[107] Bruce Hulme, "Not First, But Centre" (Unpublished, 2013).

A story from the saints of the early church supposedly goes like this:

"Help us to find God," the disciples asked the elder.
"No one can help you do that," the elder said.
"Why not?" the disciples asked, amazed.
"For the same reason that no one can help fish to find the ocean."[108]

'God cannot be put', and God cannot be found, because God is. "I am who I am."[109] This 'is-ness' or 'givenness' of God flips the questions around. Instead, the contemplative cries: 'Lord—wake me up! Enliven me to the divine dance, to your presence in this experience I bring to theological reflection. Focus my attention upon the real that already surrounds and indwells me, even amidst my pain and confusion!' "God rest us," they might pray with Leunig. "Rest that part of us which is tired. Awaken that part of us which is asleep. God awaken us and awake within us. Amen."[110] Here we find a kindred spirit with Saint Augustine: "I have learnt to love you late! You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself."[111] Waking up, beholding or taking "a long, loving look at the real"[112] is akin to the transformative practice of which Paul speaks: "And we all, who with unveiled faces *contemplate* [behold/reflect upon/gaze lovingly at/wake up to] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."[113] Contemplatives seek to awaken into this (trans)formative reality, rather than strain to traverse a gap that does not exist.

Talk as contemplative conversation, then, postures us not merely in terms of attentive, active listening. More profoundly, it enacts our pledge to encounter and respond to the gracious and surprising real, in all of life. Such a wager of trust is central—indeed, inevitable!—in how any approach to knowing works.[114] Pledge, passion, desire—these are at play for the scientist, the mechanic, the artist and the parent in their ventures in coming to know, as much as for the theological reflector. As such, Meek encourages us to "practice blowing on the coals of our care"—to rehearse attention to our pledge—because "caring invites the real."[115]

This invitational language means our coming to know in theological reflection for formation

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[108] Cited in Kathleen Hall, *Alter Your Life: Overbooked? Overworked? Overwhelmed?* (Clarkesville, GA: Oak Haven, 2005), 174.
[109] Ex 3:14.
[110] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 45.
[111] Augustine, *Confessions*, 231 (book 10, ch. 27).
[112] Walter J. Burghardt, "Contemplation: A Long Loving Look at the Real," *Church* Winter (1989): 14–18.
[113] 2 Cor 3:18. Emphasis added, and the bracketed words are from within the semantic domain, chosen by me.
[114] See especially Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, chap. 2. Pledge.
[115] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 33.

is not about mastery and comprehending, as much as it is about being mysteriously apprehended. This is the heart of talk as contemplative conversation. Certainly, we develop virtuosity in learning to indwell clues subsidiarily available to us such that discernment may occur and lead to a deeper embodiment. The trialogue frames such clues as normative theological guides, existential/bodily experiences of spirituality and personhood, or concrete features of contextual ministry *in situ*. Over time we learn how to faithfully 'handle' such clues for meaning-making—for example, reading the Scriptures in context, noting our capacity for self-deception, or attending to possible subterraneous cultural factors at play in a ministry situation. Such responsible stewardship is grist for the mill in theological reflection, and practical theology in general.

But contemplative conversation is less about 'From where can I *get* helpful knowledge for theological reflection?', than 'How might I *position myself* to best contemplatively notice and be apprehended by the real for which/Whom I am searching?' It is about getting better at "planting [ourselves] in the path of knowing,"[116] through skilful attention to the clues we have, to notice and respond to the gracious intrusion of the Other. To think of talk in this way leads to other facets of inviting the real in authentic conversation: patience and humility, availability and presence; listening over hearing, seeing over looking; differentiation and connection; openness to pain and a willingness to not solve; trust and obedience.[117] A whole vista opens up, not just for our talk in intentional theological reflection, but hopefully, in everyday life.

In a society where distraction and incessant monologuing seem commonplace, we long for talk that embodies mutuality, reciprocity, openness and respect. Contemplative conversation does this. But even more so, it is *pledged* talk that indwells the invitation, in de Mello's words, to "behold the One beholding you, and smiling."[118] Jesus' attentive questioning and listening to the Emmaus Road disciples models the God who is *for* us, drawing alongside to first listen tenderly to us as "the King who listens."[119] In such space we find ourselves graciously 'listened into speech'[120]

[116] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 454.
[117] Many of these are drawn from Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 15.
[118] Cited in Greg Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2010), 20.
[119] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, chap. 2.
[120] I first came across this phrase in my formation and training as a spiritual director. In that context I understand it to refer to being listened to with such depth, care and attentiveness that one finds oneself invited, safe and free, to authentically grope towards articulating what has hitherto remained buried or unexplored, whether because of fear, busyness or another reason. In other words, to move from the implicit to the explicit, from the tacit to the spoken. It seems highly appropriate to employ it to describe how God listens to us in theological reflection for formation, particularly through contemplative conversation through the interplay between various clues. This is the focus of

by the Spirit. That is, our capacity for authentic talk as contemplative conversation flows from experiencing God's unconditional positive regard. Such talk can then open the way into making sense of our walk, and gift us with the courage to keep plodding our path in and towards *shalom* with greater attentiveness, meaning and hope.

Walking and Talking

The motifs of walking and talking, then, are inextricably connected.[121] The Hebrew word *shema* attests to this: to hear the voice *is* to walk in obedience to it.[122] Talking and walking, reflection and formation, conversation and pilgrimage, meaning-making and growth, pondering and plodding, wondering and wandering; we talk as we walk, talk about our walk, and attempt to walk our talk. Pairing these motifs offers a simple yet rich way of exploring theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation in and towards *shalom.* Most especially, the invitation is to slow our embodied walking, as we listen contemplatively in our talking—for "nothing can be loved at speed."[123] Walking and talking are potent motifs because they help us become present in the moment to movements of/resistance to *shalom*: in ourselves, in others, in our world. What resources might make the most of these metaphors and organise talking the walk's method? The Road via Emmaus story and the labyrinth are charged with both; together, they offer an evocative framework that invites students to experience the slow work of God through meaning-making.

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chapter five. See Susan S. Phillips, *The Cultivated Life: From Ceaseless Striving to Receiving Joy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 161; Donna Schaper, *Sacred Speech: A Practical Guide for Keeping Spirit in Your Speech* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2003), 88.

[121] Shell has written extensively about this connection with a particular emphasis upon poetry and motion. He draws upon multiple sources to argue for walking and talking's intrinsic connection, including reflections upon Gen 3:8. The common translation is that Adam and Eve "heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden" (NRSV). But quite literally, he notes, it could be that "they heard the voice (qôl/*kol*) of the LORD God walking (hâlak/*ha*) in the garden." He comments: "The link with God or God's voice walking in the Garden of Eden, obvious in the Hebrew, is gone in the English, not so much because the European translators really dislike the term shofar, but because they do not catch the relationship between going and sounding, or walking and talking." Shell, *Talking the Walk & Walking the Talk*, 44.

[122] E.g., Deut 6:4.

[123] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 53.

Road via Emmaus

Figure 7: *The Road to Emmaus* by Daniel Bonnell[124]

Several authors note how the Emmaus Road story in Luke 24 offers a natural framework for meditation, spiritual renewal and theological reflection upon experience.[125] This is because, as Green notes, it "is structured in such a way as to call particular attention to the progression from lack of recognition to full recognition and to the means by which insight is gained."[126] In particular, the story is replete with themes common in ministerial formation, particularly in theological reflection and STFE,[127] such as: the centrality of experience for learning; narration and deep listening, with vulnerability and honesty; non-linear, conversational wrestling with the tradition;

[124] Daniel Bonnell, *The Road to Emmaus*, Oil on canvas, 2012, https://www.partnerlessons.com/new-products-4/the-road-to-emmaus?rq=emmaus. Used by permission.
[125] E.g., R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes: Volume IX- Luke-John*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 481; Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2001), 293; Hunter, "Supervised Theological Field Education: A Resource Manual," 26–31; Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 9–15; Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014).
[126] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 842.
[127] Supervised Theological Field Education.

recognition and discernment leading to (trans)formed understanding, disposition and action; the hidden and revealed presence of God in sojourning with others throughout the encounter.[128] Moreover, it interweaves the metaphors of walking and talking. So, the story aligns strongly with the emphases of talking the walk as an approach to theological reflection for formation.

Luke, as Croft notes, "is a profound theologian of formation."[129] His intent from the very beginning of Luke–Acts is to strengthen readers in what they have been *catechised*[130]—instructed and formed in (the) faith. The journey motif is prominent in this task. For instance, Jesus' interactions frequently occur while travelling along the road,[131] and travel frames the sending of the seventy-two,[132] the lost sheep and prodigal son parables,[133] Paul's conversion experience[134] and missionary journeys, and Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch.[135]

Geography is a key literary device uniquely employed by Luke to structure his two volumes: the gospel of Luke, and Acts.[136] After the preface, birth narratives and foundation for ministry (Luke 1:1—4:13), Jesus' ministry centres in the Galilee region (Luke 4:14—9:50). Jesus is then on the road for the next ten chapters in the travel narrative (Luke 9:51—19:44)—nearly 40% of volume I—with his face set towards Jerusalem.[137] Luke's refrain is that Jerusalem is the *centripetal centre* of Jesus' ministry,[138] culminating in his death, resurrection, ascension and giving of the Spirit (Luke 19:45—Acts 2:41). Volume II continues the catechesis of all that Jesus had begun to do and teach,[139] but Jerusalem now becomes the *centrifugal centre* of Jesus' ministry. Through the Spirit-empowered church Jesus 'stays' in Jerusalem until after the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, and then journeys back out—first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles—through Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.[140] In Luke–Acts, then, Jerusalem is the narrow point of the

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[128] Hunter, "Supervised Theological Field Education: A Resource Manual," 30.
[129] Steven Croft, "Chapter 1. How Do Adults Come to Faith: A Foundation for Catechesis," in *Rooted and Grounded: Faith Formation and the Christian Tradition*, ed. Steven Croft (London: Canterbury Press, 2019).
[130] κατηχέω/*katēcheō*, Luke 1:4.
[131] E.g., Luke 6:1; 7:1, 12; 8:27, 41; 9:37, 57; 10:38; 13:22; 14:1–2, 25; 17:11–12; 18:35; 19:1–2, 28–40.
[132] Luke 10:1–20.
[133] Luke 15:1–7, 11–32.
[134] Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–16; 26:12–18.
[135] Acts 8:26–40.
[136] G.R. Osborne, "Resurrection," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 682; Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," 480.
[137] Floyd V. Filson, "The Journey Motif in Luke-Acts," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. Ward Gasque and Ralph Philip Martin (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1970), 70. Culpepper notes how In Galilee Jesus "was constantly on the move, and from Luke 9:51 until 9:44 he is on the way to Jerusalem", a phrase repeated some 17 times. Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," 479.
[138] Luke 10:38; 13:22; 17:11; 17:33; 18:31.
[139] Acts 1:1.
[140] Acts 1:8.

hourglass, the halfway point of the pilgrimage before returning home, the centre of the labyrinth. And between Luke 19 and Acts 7, Jesus only ventures away from Jerusalem twice: first to Emmaus and back (Luke 24:1–49), and then to Bethany to ascend to heaven and 'back'—via the Spirit—at Pentecost (Luke 24:50—Acts 2:41).

Thus, the Emmaus Road story—set between cross/resurrection and ascension/ Pentecost—sits right at the heart of Luke's two volumes. It is his longest and perhaps most significant account of formational catechesis—a pilgrimage within a pilgrimage.[141] Conventionally it is sectioned as Luke 24:13–35, and subdivided into the conversation on the road to Emmaus (24:13–27), the table revelation at Emmaus (24:28–32), and the return to Jerusalem to the other disciples (24:33–35). The story's conventional title—'The Road *to* Emmaus'—frames that return as a sort of addendum to the story; 'to' clearly emphasises the conversation and revelation as the key parts of the story. Emmaus is where it is at.

As Croft contends, however,

> in Luke's theology … Jerusalem is where the disciples are meant to be between Easter and Pentecost. To understand the Emmaus Road we therefore need to know that the two disciples when we meet them are travelling in the wrong direction.[142]

Thus, the minimisation of the return journey to Jerusalem is unfortunate. Luke 24:33–35, where the two rush back to Jerusalem to excitedly swap stories with the others of encountering the risen Jesus, makes the embodiment of this life-changing reality sound straightforward. But "while they were still talking about this" (24:36), they encounter Jesus again and become terrified. Luke still has something significant to say about the struggle to embody discerned truths. His interest in formation, use of geography and emphasis upon Jerusalem together suggest that expanding the return journey section to 24:33–49, which includes the two within the larger group, is a viable alternative.

For these reasons, I suggest that the conventional title 'The Road to Emmaus' is a misnomer—or at least, that it sells the story short. A favourable alternative is 'The Road to Jerusalem via Emmaus', or more simply, 'The Road via Emmaus'. This lessens the emphasis upon the discernment as the end goal, and instead setting it within the larger, formational concerns of how such discernment, through conversation, becomes embodied so that the gospel of *shalom*

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[141] Croft, "How Do Adults Come to Faith."
[142] Croft, "How Do Adults Come to Faith."

might spread to the ends of the earth.[143] All three foci of the story are equally significant. Together they provide the basic architecture of three interlocking movements in talking the walk's method.

1. Contemplative Conversation: From Jerusalem to Emmaus, walking and talking with the hidden Jesus (Luke 24:13–27)

The first movement of contemplative conversation begins with narration. As they walk, the two disciples talk "about all *these things* that had happened."[144] Narrating experience is a natural impulse when 'these things'—significant events, issues and circumstances—rupture or manifest *shalom* in our lives.[145] We want to unload, to release. Narration is our (re-)entry point into the liminal experience, mirrored in the disciples' on-the-way journey away from Jerusalem towards Emmaus. When we come to theological reflection we are not where we were, but not yet where we are going. The liminal space, frequently, is bodily felt—an uneasy sensation of uncertainty and unresolved tension yet wonder and anticipation. It is what Cameron et al. call a 'blurred encounter'.[146] What are these things saying? What do they mean for our core identity and response? What will help us find our way forward?[147] The disruptive mismatch of expectations in liminal experience has a magnetic pull towards meaning-making if we, like the two disciples, are willing to honestly and openly engage with God, one another and ourselves in reflection as a creative, exploratory space.

Out of narration, conversation emerges. As they walk and talk, Jesus draws near as an unrecognised Companion and asks about these things.[148] They come to a halt: how could he not know?[149] The murder of Jesus of Nazareth the mighty prophet, the dashed hopes, the reports of the empty tomb—it all tumbles out.[150] Oh, the irony; the Companion knows more than anyone![151] Even when he feels like a stranger to us or distant from all that consumes us, or when we think we know what is going on when actually, we do not—Jesus graciously draws near to walk with us and

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[143] Acts 1:8.
[144] 24:13–14, emphasis added.
[145] I borrow 'these things' from this passage as a shorthand way of referring to the experience we bring to theological reflection (as explained in chapter five). From this point forward I write the text plainly without italics (apart from occasional emphasis) or quotation marks.
[146] "A dialogic journey from 'encounter' to 'purposive threshold', the liminal space that can be revelatory of new insight." Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 11; they are drawing from the work of Reader and Baker.
[147] Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 11.
[148] 24:15.
[149] 24:17–18.
[150] 24:19–24.
[151] Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," 477.

patiently listen our journey into speech.

Perhaps this provides a clue as to why the disciples are kept from recognising Jesus.[152] Why does he not interrupt? "Ta-da! It is me! Turn around—let us go back and see the others!" Why not? Because as Rothaus suggests,

> You cannot beeline your way out of pain. There are no shortcuts to getting out of there. It takes a slow meandering. We need to tell how bad we hurt, how bad it looks, how lost we feel, how dismal it was and is and possibly ever shall be, world without end, amen. Jesus, being a man of sorrows, knows this, and so when he meets the men, he listens.[153]

Theological reflection, then, provides a safe space to tell it as best we see it. God is interested in relationship and formation, not just functionality and the neat resolution of these things that perplex us. God's companionship and listening are the theological basis for contemplative conversation that listens in, out and up for the trialogue's three voices.

There is an honest *listening in to spirituality and personhood*. As the disciples exercise emotional and spiritual literacy,[154] we map our inner geography and contemplate how our unique spirituality, personhood and pilgrimage play into our interpretation. There is also an empathetic *listening out to ministry in context*. As the disciples ponder the interactions of those involved[155] and the broader backstory,[156] we contemplate others in the experience, the interactions that occurred, and the broader cultural context. And there is a responsible *listening up to wellsprings of theology*. As the disciples listen intently to the Companion opening the Scriptures, we contemplate what our wellsprings of theology—the drama of Scripture, communal wisdom, robust thinking, gathered experience—contribute to our understanding of these things. In all voices, *shalom* can act as an interpretative lens. What inhibits *shalom*? What enhances it? This keeps theological reflection connected to the *telos* of formation.

Furthermore, *listening with others* undergirds contemplative conversation, and indeed all three movements of talking the walk. Such mutually enriching conversation is not necessarily passive or comfortable; the two not only talk[157] and discuss/search[158] but also literally hurl words

[152] 24:16.
[153] Rothaus, "Labyrinth to Emmaus."
[154] E.g., "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (24:21); "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (24:32).
[155] E.g., the women, the angels, and the other disciples (24:22–24).
[156] E.g., the murder of Jesus the prophet, who was the hope of Israel (24:19–21).
[157] 24:14: ὁμιλέω/*homileō*.
[158] 24:15: συζητέω/*suzēteō*.

at each other[159] when Jesus arrives![160] But it is real and passionate because in meaning-making we are blowing on the coals of our care. And so, we contemplate: What are our sojourning conversation partners noticing as we discuss these things?

Delineating aspects of contemplative conversation in this way does not mean divisions neatly happen in practice. Both the disciples' journey and their conversation loop and meander in a labyrinthine, non-linear fashion.[161] The point is not to segment neat sections, but rather to develop virtuosity in letting all voices of the conversation be heard and interact dynamically, so we might be attentive to receive any gifts of discernment that emerge from their threads coming together.

Contemplative conversation is the focus of chapter five.

2. Imaginative Discernment: At Emmaus, communing with and discerning the revealed Jesus (Luke 24:28–32)

From the context of conversation, the second movement moves towards discernment catalysed by the imagination. The disciples' walking and talking with the Companion has been honest, intriguing and confronting. But now as they approach their destination, Luke creates a tension: will the conversation's threads coalesce so that they recognise the Companion's true identity? Will their despair turn into joy? The Companion indicates his intention to keep travelling; following Jewish custom he will not force himself upon them, but rather wait for an invitation.[162] Attending to the desire that has stirred within, they strongly urge him to stay.[163] Jesus does not force himself upon us either,[164] so it is important in theological reflection to cultivate dispositions that help us remain with God and fellow sojourners amidst our blurred encounters, and place ourselves in the path of discernment.[165]

Jesus switches roles from guest to host.[166] In the same moment that he takes, breaks, blesses and shares bread, they recognise him, and he vanishes from their sight. It was Jesus all

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[159] 24:17: ἀντιβάλλετε πρὸς ἀλλήλους/*antiballō pros allēlōn*.
[160] Peter Liddell, "A Sabbath Day's Walk with Two Companions: Luke and Rembrandt," *Modern Believing* 60.4 (2019): 329.
[161] Rothaus, "Labyrinth to Emmaus."
[162] cf. Gen 19:2-3; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 849; Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," 479.
[163] 24:29.
[164] cf. Rev 3:20.
[165] See Barton, *Life Together in Christ*, 133–35. She draws out the power of 'staying' in a cultural milieu that is so transient and unwilling to remain in community for the long haul. Such transience marks the Church too in the way Christians struggle to commit long term to doing life, ministry and reflection with one another.
[166] Cf. John 2:1–12.

along![167] The mealtime setting—the place of fellowship, communion and relationship—is where Jesus makes himself known. Again, this reminds us of the relational and spiritual nature of theological reflection.[168] Theological reflection, as Swinton argues, needs to move from technique to virtue;[169] revelation and (trans)formation at the place of communion reinforces this orientation.[170]

Scholars argue as to whether Luke is referencing the sacred meal of the Eucharist,[171] or the ordinary, daily meal.[172] The ambiguity suggests that settings for discernment can vary, whether extraordinary and laden with obvious significance, or more simple and commonplace. So too, our experiences of discernment. The disciples' recognition is sudden and grand, though equally, discernment might be subtle and gentle. Just as the disciples' recognition is enhanced by looking back and noticing when their hearts burned,[173] discernment is also often retrospective. Where in our contemplative conversation were we moved, or did something 'click'? Discernment is also catalysed by Jesus' breaking of the bread, affirming how symbol, image and metaphor often help us join the dots to recognise the real. Most importantly, this scene frames recognition as a gift that we cannot force. The emphasis in discernment is upon receptivity.

As discussed in chapter three, the imagination also functions intuitively in our teleological vision of the good life. This vision shapes our interpretation of present experience. Thus, if *shalom* is our telos, it can function as an interpretive lens to discern a social imaginary of the kingdom for the situation under question, and our possible place in it.

And so, in imaginative discernment we might ask: How do the threads of the conversation come together? What makes our hearts burn? Is there an image that helps join the dots? What

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[167] This revelation of Jesus' identity through the breaking of bread echoes the revelatory effect of the feeding of the 5,000 (9:16; 9:20). The table formula also connects to the last supper (22:19), although presumably it was only the 12 who were present at that meal.
[168] Warren et al. highlight this in contending that "theological reflection…is not simply about becoming more adept at theological analysis or gaining a better understanding of Christian history or theology…theological reflection goes beyond analysis, leading the practitioner into a different relationship with God because of the new configuration between them that arises." "The Discipline and Habit of Theological Reflection," *Journal of Religion and Health* 41.4 (2002): 324.
[169] Or character, disposition, *habitus*.
[170] Swinton, "Is Theological Reflection a Technique or a Virtue? Listening to 'Hidden' Voices."
[171] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 614; Fred B. Craddock, *Luke: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 286–87; David Lyle Jeffrey, *Luke*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012), 286–87; Justo L. González, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 278; Wright, *Luke for Everyone*, 297.
[172] Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," 480; David E. Garland, *Luke*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 955; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 843.
[173] 24:32.

shape might God's *shalom* take, and what might our part in that be? What new questions arise? This articulation, however tentative, provides the basis for considering how any discerned truths might be embodied.

Imaginative discernment is the focus of chapter six.

3. Courageous Embodiment: From Emmaus to Jerusalem, (trans)formed for embodiment by the risen Jesus (Luke 24:35–49)

The third movement engages with the embodiment of discerned truths, animated by courage. Earlier the two disciples had insisted it was too late to be out on the road,[174] but so transformed and animated were they by their encounter, they depart "that same hour" [175] for Jerusalem. Travelling in diminished light, this was probably no safe journey; embodying discerned reality can be risky. They return to where they began. Geographically they have not gone anywhere! And nothing has changed; following Jesus is still dangerous for the disciples. In another sense, though, *everything* has changed. Their discernment has led to a completely new reality upon which they feel compelled to act. Revelation leads to transformation that animates embodiment and witness. It is tempting to stay at Emmaus and bask in the glow of insights received, rather than return to our circumstances which have not changed. Yet "knowledge is only a rumour until it lives in the muscle."[176] The way must be walked, not just talked; formation will atrophy unless we embody discerned truths arising from conversation. That is why theological reflection for holistic formation is so critical; it helps us travel *via* Emmaus—back to our Jerusalem—and not just *to*.

However, moving from discernment to embodiment is neither easy nor automatic.[177] Extending the passage to 24:49 aids a fuller reflection upon the struggle to live revealed reality. The two join the gathered disciples back in Jerusalem and swap stories of seeing the risen Jesus.[178] Hearts had burned. They share with excitement. Jesus shows up and offers *shalom*.[179] They are terrified. They doubt.[180] They are joyful. They are disbelieving.[181] Living discerned truth is not linear at all! What moves them to becoming worshipping and emboldened disciples in the final

[174] 24:29.
[175] 24:33.
[176] Saying attributed to the Asaro Tribe, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, cited in Brené Brown, *Rising Strong* (London: Random House, 2015), 7.
[177] Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*, 75.
[178] 24:33–35.
[179] 24:36.
[180] 24:37–40.
[181] 24:41.

ascension scene?[182]

It is Jesus' ministry of *en*-couragement—the giving or sowing in of courage.[183] Courage is not stoic bravery; in fact, it is grounded in a vulnerability and openness that only comes from being loved. Courage animates us to act, to show up, in the face of any number of inhibitors. It might overcome fear, but equally, misunderstanding, apathy, doubt or any number of things that prevent knowledge from living in the muscle. In touch and food, Jesus assures the disciples of his reality; he is more than a rumour.[184] In opening their minds to the Scriptures, he assures them of God's paschal plan of salvation.[185] In sending the Spirit whom the Father promised, he provides the animating power and hope to witness to Jesus' reconfiguration of these things:[186] a vision of repentance and forgiveness, through his death and resurrection, proclaimed to all nations.[187] Courage flings the gospel centrifugally outwards from Jerusalem through Jesus' embodied reality. Volume II—the Spirit's *act*ion or *acts* through the disciples—can now begin. We are pilgrims who continue this journey of Acts; we too need courage to embody discerned truths that further participate in this social imaginary of *shalom*.

Embodiment, though, is not just about doing; it also deepens. That is because of its sacramental character. God graciously meets us in new and fresh ways as we begin to walk our talk. In showing hospitality, we entertain angels; in offering cups of cold water, we meet Jesus. The embodiment of discerned truth is thus deeply (trans)formational, and as such, reaffirms the intrinsic connection between theological reflection and holistic Christian formation.

And so, in courageous embodiment, we might ask: How will we holistically embody *shalom* in any discerned truths or questions we have articulated? Where is courage needed to overcome what might inhibit that embodiment? Who can help? How are we being (trans)formed and deepened in our humanity through embodiment, and reflection in general? What practices—spiritual, ministerial, theological—will cultivate that formation? What new contemplative conversations emerge from this embodiment?

Courageous embodiment is the focus of chapter seven.

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[182] 24:50–53.

[183] The Greek preposition *en* means 'in' or 'within'. Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 147–48.

[184] 24:39–43.

[185] 24:44–47.

[186] 24:48.

[187] 24:47–49.

Summary

The Road via Emmaus, then, offers a threefold architecture for talking the walk as an approach to theological reflection for formation that is evocative, invitational, intrapersonal and Christocentric. Of particular note is how this account of (trans)formational catechesis for the two disciples is meandering rather than linear—a cyclical A→B→A' rather than a direct A→B. This reflects covenant epistemology's non-linear and unfolding emphases in our coming to know. In this, the image of the labyrinth further forms the three movements of the Road via Emmaus.

Labyrinth

Figure 8: Labyrinth on a Beach[188]

The labyrinth is an ancient spiritual reflection tool that invites an embodied experience of walking along a circuitous and non-linear path towards a central point and back out again. Labyrinths have many and various patterns, both simple and complex. Labyrinthine patterns occur naturally in all sorts of places—seashells, air and ocean currents, our fingerprints and the inner ear.[189]

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[188] Ashley Batz, *Rock Maze*, Photo, 2014, https://unsplash.com/photos/betmVWGYcLY.
[189] Sally Welch, *Walking the Labyrinth: A Spiritual and Practical Guide* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2010), 7.

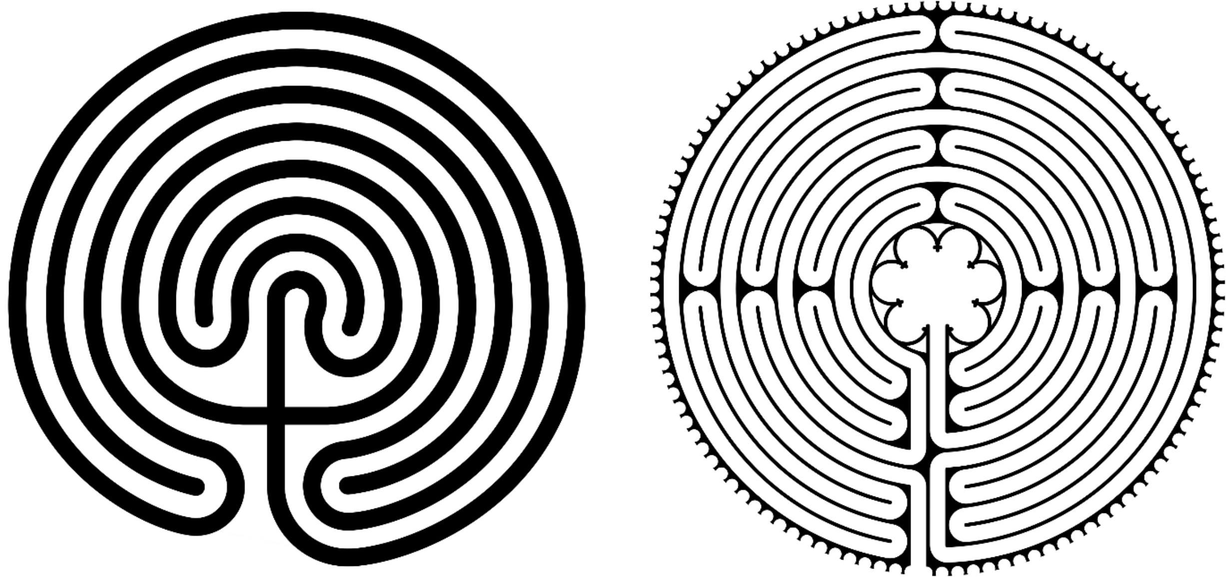

Figure 9: A Cretan 7-circuit labyrinth,[190] and Chartres 11-circuit labyrinth[191]

Though often interchanged, 'labyrinth' and 'maze' are not the same. A maze is *multicursal* and confounding; it has multiple paths forcing many choices, some of which lead to dead ends, and tests mental agility, memory and problem-solving. It may often involve hedges designed to obscure the endpoint. A labyrinth is *unicursal*; though it twists and turns there is only one pathway into the centre and back out again, and the centre is always in view. As you walk a labyrinth you may not know exactly where you are; often it will draw you close to the centre, only to fling you out to the edge again. You can, however, be confident that you are on either the path to the centre or on the way back out again. You cannot get lost in a labyrinth![192] As a metaphor for life, this difference is critical. As Candolini observes: "If life is viewed as a maze, every mistake is an unnecessary detour and a waste of time. If life is viewed as a labyrinth, then every mistake is part of the path and an indispensable master teacher."[193]

Labyrinths exist in many societies and religious/spiritual traditions across the world, on

[190] AnonMoos, *Cretan-Labyrinth-Round*, 2009, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cretan-labyrinth-round2.svg, licence Public Domain.
[191] Thurmanukyalur, *Chartres Approximation*, 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChartresApproximation.svg, reused under licence 3.0 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en.
[192] Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 50–52.
[193] Cited in Longley, *Walking the Labyrinth as the Beloved in John's Gospel*, 15. This does not negate the call to repentance—to turn around and walk a different way on the path that leads to life rather than to death (e.g., Matt 7:13–14). This is a daily occurrence. Instead it frames such changes in direction in our journey as unique and necessary twists and turns, at each step, within the broader perspective of our overall pilgrimage with the three mile an hour God. Nothing is wasted.

every continent.[194] Though much history of labyrinths is lost, scholars trace the classic Cretan 7-circuit design back to over 4,000 years ago.[195] Christians, never afraid to adopt and reinterpret myths and rituals from other traditions for their own purposes, began using labyrinths from around the fourth century. Popularity reached a height in the middle ages.[196] From around the twelfth century, the labyrinth became a substitute pilgrimage for those whose poverty or physical limitations prevented the journey to Jerusalem and back.[197] Perhaps the most famous from this time is the 11-circuit labyrinth in the nave of Chartres Cathedral, France. Labyrinths fell out of use during the 1600s until their resurgence of interest in the 1980s.[198] Through various movements and organisations,[199] labyrinths have since experienced a revival in popularity across the world as a tool for reflection, meditation and spiritual nurture. Their flexibility and universal appeal have led to installations in many settings, including retreat centres, hospitals, schools, and public spaces. Mostly, they are used for individual reflection, although there is metaphorical significance in how passing others on a labyrinth mirrors crossing paths with other sojourners walking their journey.

An Archetype for Formation

The labyrinth points to the circular nature of our journey in life and faith. Ignatian spirituality writer Margaret Silf ponders the life of her baby granddaughter, who in infant innocence begins life with complete trust, dependency and faith in the world around her. Life will become more complicated, Silf projects, as she grows up and encounters the wounds and pain of life. Faith will not be so simple; questions will arise, causing her to try and pin down how life and faith work. Then, as she grows older and wiser, Silf prays there will be a return to trusting faith; that in maturing her granddaughter will come to see how her wounds were not evidence of God's abandonment, but rather invitations into deeper experiences of mystery, healing and renewal.

[194] Welch, *Walking the Labyrinth*, 7.

[195] Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 46; Donna Schaper and Rev Dr Carole Ann Camp, *Labyrinths from the Outside In*, Second edition. (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2013), 2–3; Welch, *Walking the Labyrinth*, 8.

[196] Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 52–53; Welch, *Walking the Labyrinth*, 11, 19.

[197] Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, Revised and expanded. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 263.

[198] This renewed interest was largely sparked by Rev Lauren Artress of Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco. Having walked the Chartres labyrinth herself in the late 1980s, she was inspired to install one at Grace and go on to promote labyrinth construction and use through her organisation Veriditas. For her story, see Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*.

[199] E.g., Veriditas (https://www.veriditas.org/); The Labyrinth Locator (https://labyrinthlocator.com); The Labyrinth Society (https://labyrinthsociety.org/); Labyrinthos (http://www.labyrinthos.net/).

> The faith she has then will be simple again. But it will have a simplicity born of experience and reflection, a simplicity that looks back with gratitude on all she has seen and done and lived, a simplicity that is confident in trusting God for all that remains unseen, undone, and unlived …
>
> Having simple faith is simply to journey in trust, like a baby, but with the wounds and scars of an adult, like a man who died on a cross and who invited us to "become like children" (Matthew 18:3). When we follow him, we discover that his footsteps lead right back, full circle, to a whole new beginning.[200]

Our modern world teaches us efficiency and the most direct route. But in our formation, God does not seem to work in straight lines.[201] "Consider the work of God," says King Solomon. "Who can make straight what he has made crooked?"[202] We want to think that the Christian journey is A→B, here to there, a direct path along *The Pilgrim's Progress* towards the Celestial City.[203] Or perhaps, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,"[204] we expect a rather straightforward advancement from "one degree of glory to another."[205] The Western narrative of growth and progress feeds into this mindset. The Christian walk is indeed (trans)formative, but like any journey, rarely direct. As Cousineau contends,

> [w]e know all too well that few journeys are linear and predictable. Instead they swerve and turn, twist and double back, until we don't know if we're coming or going. The image of the labyrinth is an ancient symbol for the meandering path of the soul that goes from light into darkness and emerges once again out into light.[206]

"The labyrinth," notes Longley, "reminds us that the quickest path to our destination is not always the best."[207] Thus it has long been recognised as a profound archetype for this cyclical, non-linear path in life—a metaphor, pattern, emblem or walkway.[208] Moreover, the labyrinth resonates with the biblical narrative's broad sweep in the following way:

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[200] Margaret Silf, *Simple Faith: Moving Beyond Religion as You Know It to Grow in Your Relationship with God* (Chicago, IL: Loyola, 2012), viii–ix.
[201] Welch suggests this might be one reason why labyrinths fell out of favour in the modern era, but have regained some popularity with the advent of postmodern thought. *Walking the Labyrinth*, 12.
[202] Eccl 7:13.
[203] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988).
[204] Phil 3:13.
[205] 2 Cor 3:18.
[206] Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred*, Anniversary edition. (Berkeley, CA: Conari, 2012), 128.
[207] Longley, *Walking the Labyrinth as the Beloved in John's Gospel*, 14.
[208] Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion and Lauren Artress, *Praying the Labyrinth: A Journal for Spiritual Exploration* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1999), xi.

A→B *The Inward Journey* *Genesis–Malachi* *Creation–fall–Israel's story*	The pilgrimage begins with God and two humans in a garden, enjoying intimacy and fecundity. All things are created and held together in the cosmic Christ.[209] The journey winds inwards through the fall, Abraham's call to agency in YHWH's *shalom*, and the Moses-led baptismal exodus and sacrificial pulse of the temple—both paschal in nature. It follows the fortunes and failures of God's people: judges, kings, and hounding voices of prophets through the cycle of exile and return. They (sometimes) fulfil and (often) falter in their charge to be agents for YHWH's *shalom* to the surrounding nations. Yet the journey is headed towards the flourishing promise of YWHW's coming messiah.
B *The Receptive Centre* *Matthew–John* *The Christ event*	This salvific promise finds its focal point in the darkness and glory of the Christ-event. Incarnation/crucifixion/ resurrection/ascension exemplify YHWH's *shalom* overcoming sin, death and the devil, and enable the *shalom* mandate to become lived reality through Christ, the true Israelite. Like a "wheel within a wheel"[210] the Paschal cycle spins at the centre—the rhythm of human wholeness.
B→A' *The Outward Journey* *Acts–Revelation* *Early church–church history–contemporary context–the new creation*	The Christ-event reinterprets and enables the continuing journey of God's pilgrim people: a Spirited band of broken saints plodding after Jesus, witnessing to the *shalom* of the new creation. The sacraments embody the Paschal cycle; baptism initiates its daily lived rhythm, and the Eucharist remembers and foretastes its promise. The outward-bound Christian church—of the NT, history and today—finds continuity with the inward-bound OT people of God. We traverse along similar ground and respond in similar ways—still (sometimes) fulfilling and (often) faltering with God's *shalom* mandate. Yet in walking and talking the Good News of Jesus, we bear witness to the reign and rule of God's fierce love, already begun in Christ. The pilgrimage ends with God and the gathered nations in a city—an expanded collection of gardens. All things are renewed and consummated in the cosmic Christ.[211] Creation and new creation are thus connected yet differentiated. Both see Creator and creation connected in intimacy and fecundity, yet there is movement, expansion, flourishing and (trans)formation from one to the other.

Table 1: The Biblical Narrative as a Labyrinth

[209] Col 1:15–17.
[210] Ezek 1:16.
[211] Eph 1:8–10.

Thus, an A→B→A' form can be observed that is somewhat labyrinthine: cyclical and wending, rather than a straight and direct A→B. "We shall not cease from exploration," writes the poet T.S. Eliot. "And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."[212] This shape connects strongly with the Road via Emmaus story. The disciples end up in Jerusalem, where they began. And as Rothaus contends, their encounter is more like a meandering labyrinth swinging in and out than a straight road; the conversation twists and turns, with Jesus 'Aslan-like': hidden, revealed, gone, in plain view.[213] Reflection is a lot like that: non-linear and surprising, cyclical and familiar yet new. At times we think ourselves close to the heart of the issue, only then to be seemingly far away and more unclear than before. Then suddenly, almost without warning, we may arrive at the central truths to be acted upon. Further experiences prompt a re-entry into the cycle in light of past reflection. The labyrinth thus sets such reflection upon experiences within the larger longitudinal context of our winding journeys. God and God's creation, the Emmaus Road disciples, and Christian disciples who make meaning along the way: together we walk and talk a labyrinthine track.

Similar to the Road via Emmaus story, the labyrinth has three movements—the journey in, the centre, and the journey out.[214] There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth;[215] similarly, theological reflection is different for different people, and each reflective experience itself is unique. Labyrinth walkers and theological reflectors alike who enter the journey take their hopes for meaning-making seriously yet hold them lightly; one never quite knows how it will unfold. Thus, an openness to the process—to let it be what it is—is more important than getting each stage 'right'.

That said, a great attraction of labyrinth walking is the myriad ways the movements might be themed to provide guidance.[216] One longstanding approach draws from the so-called 'Threefold Path' in the Western mystical tradition: purgation, illumination, and union/incarnation,[217] which might be framed more accessibly as *release*, *receive* and *return*. These resonate with, nuance and enrich the three movements of the Road via Emmaus.

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212 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2014), 59.
213 Rothaus, "Labyrinth to Emmaus."
214 Although this may be expanded to also include a deliberate pause as one enters the labyrinth, and then again as one exits it.
215 Welch, *Walking the Labyrinth*, 5.
216 E.g., Travis Scholl, *Walking the Labyrinth: A Place to Pray and Seek God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014); Longley, *Walking the Labyrinth as the Beloved in John's Gospel*.
217 Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 28–31.

1. Journeying Inwards: Release

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See footnote for original source.[218]

The labyrinth's journey inwards, typically, involves release. Purgation is connected to the idea of purging, letting go or handing over. There is something of this in the two disciples externalising and unloading their story to the hidden Jesus as they plod the road together. Sometimes at the entrance to a labyrinth there might be something symbolic to carry in, like a stone. Through the twists and turns the walker reflects upon what that item might symbolise in their life, what bearing its weight has been like, and what it might mean to lay it down. With this letting go, the walker may come to an attentive orientation or quietness and waiting from which listening conversation may flow.

The journey of release is instructive for narrating and exploring experience. There is power in simply telling the story as an entry into listening conversation. As a spiritual director or supervisor in field education, I am often amazed, at the end of a session, how thankful the directee or student is for what I offered them. I feel like so little was given! However, merely holding the space in a safe, hospitable and attentive way is enough to lift a weight from weary shoulders. Like the Emmaus Road disciples, we can be honest, eschewing self-deception that claims either too much or too little for ourselves.[219] Release comes as we are listened into speech by the Spirit. When we feel heard, we are in a better position to receive.

2. At the Centre: Receive

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[220]

Emerging from the release in contemplative conversation, the labyrinth's centre is the place of discernment, illumination, or receiving. The path there can feel somewhat illogical; a labyrinth is not a predictable spiral to the centre and arriving there may almost be a surprise. An artefact might be placed in the centre to help facilitate that reception, like a bowl to hold a stone that has been carried. The imagination may play an important role here in discernment, just as the disciples' recognition came in the breaking of the bread. Discernment may arrive as a crystal-clear

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[218] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 66.
[219] This phrasing comes from Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 69–72.
[220] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 66.

insight, but equally, a small, shy truth. If a labyrinth experience is not well instructed it can be confusing should a walker, expecting something profound to occur, not seemingly receive anything. This is instructive more broadly for how discernment and the experience of coming to know are understood and taught. Perhaps what comes is not an answer or solution, but rather, a better idea of the question.

'What' is at the centre? Because of labyrinths' usage in a wide variety of settings, the answer will vary greatly. A contemplative approach reminds us of the centrality of God in all of life, and in particular, attentiveness to where God might be present. It might be a place of rest and acceptance. We might come to know ourselves better or discern core truths about our ministry contexts. In talking the walk, a central focus is discerning what inhibits and/or manifests *shalom*, and a possible future social imaginary. Whatever the case, receptivity emphasises the labyrinth's centre as a place of grace; presence to the moment attends to what might be gifted, rather than strains for insight. This reflects the gracious nature of knowing and placing ourselves in its path.

3. Journeying Outwards: Return

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[221]

The return journey outwards retraces the inward path to the centre, focusing on union with God in incarnating or responding to anything received. The walker ponders concrete steps for a more integrated, authentic life. Those more practically oriented may struggle with the idea and practice of reflection, feeling it too introspective—they are often eager to return. Others, though, love to linger in the centre, happy to be headed to or settled at their Emmaus centre of communion and revelation. The outward journey challenges this inclination. Much can be pondered, but will anything change? How will *shalom* be championed and manifest? "Walking the labyrinth is not about escaping into the center and leaving the world," say Schaper and Camp; rather,

> it is about experiencing Spirit in the center so that you can live in the world in a more blessed way. The labyrinth reminds you with every walk you take that your spiritual journey flows back and forth, from the outside to the inside, from the inside to the outside—both/and, not either/or.[222]

Just as the two disciples journeyed via rather than to Emmaus, the winding journey outwards returns us to our Jerusalem. This movement towards action or response is commonplace

[221] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 66.
[222] Schaper and Camp, *Labyrinths from the Outside In*, 63.

in theological reflection models.[223] My chosen term is embodiment. However, the labyrinth again reminds us of how difficult this can be. The twists and turns reflect the struggle often experienced to embody new realities, just as the disciples went from excitement to fear to joy to disbelief to action.

Talking the Walk Along the Emmaus Labyrinth

In the three movements of both the Road via Emmaus and the labyrinth, there exists much overlap and mutually enriching insight for theological reflection for formation. When juxtaposed as an 'Emmaus Labyrinth', a creative architecture for talking the walk emerges. The Road via Emmaus promotes communal sojourning and meaning-making, while the labyrinth tends towards personal reflexivity. Both are critical in theological reflection for formation. The Road via Emmaus is explicitly Christocentric with a natural appeal for Christians. The labyrinth has a more universal attraction, inviting spiritual reflection for those drawn to meaning-making, even if they are not (yet) familiar with or given to walking the way of Jesus. The Road via Emmaus beckons an affective and imaginative engagement with the story as one reflects on their journey. The labyrinth invites physicality in reflection, whether walked or traced with a finger on a piece of paper or a screen, to gain a muscled engagement with the twists and turns of reflection and formation. The Emmaus Labyrinth is thus infused with the metaphors of walking and talking and encourages holistic engagement.

Moreover, it resonates with covenant epistemology. It emphasises the pilgrimed, non-linear, interpersoned and conversational nature of coming to know. It also accords with the three movements of knowing as "the responsible human struggle to rely on clues to focus on a coherent pattern and submit to its reality."[224] Meek's use of 'clue', intriguingly, connects to the labyrinth in Greek mythology. Cousineau observes:

> Curiously enough, our word *clue* comes from the old word *clew*, the name given to the gold thread that Ariadne gave to Theseus so he might find his way through—and back—from

[223] E.g., "Pastoral response" in Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, chap. 7; "Enacting Faith-Sense" in Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*, chap. 4; "Invitation to new praxis" in Lartey's five-phase cycle, cited in Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 58; an emphasis upon "Practical" within Progressing Theological Reflection in Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 20.
[224] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.

> the heart of the labyrinth [to defeat the Minotaur]. That thin string we follow into darkness—our intuition, our hunches, our dreams—is our *clew*.[225]

Contemplative conversation relies on clues. It winds its way through the trialogue, responsibly weaving together threads that are often tacit and intuitively accessed. With coinhering mutuality and dynamism, the conversation twists and turns between the contextual ministry of the situation, the existential lived-body experience of spirituality and personhood, and the normative words from wellsprings of theology. Each need respectful attention and indwelling in turn, with particular consideration to where *shalom* is enhanced and/or inhibited.

Imaginative discernment focuses on a coherent pattern emerging from this conversation. The conversation's clues are critical, yet subsidiary; they serve the greater goal of encountering the real through their integration. The movement is always *from* the clues *towards* an emerging coherent focal pattern—received perhaps as recognition, insight, the gradual emergence of a 'small shy truth', further questions, or something altogether different. The imagination can facilitate this integration. An image or metaphor[226] can bring the conversation's threads together. Furthermore, a social imaginary of *shalom*[227] can help crystallise our place in a preferred future for the situation. As covenant epistemology asserts, in our knowing, we find ourselves known. This means that there is no controlling how we might receive the gift of such discernment. We can, however, practice discernment by inviting the real, getting in its path, and being attentive to its arrival.

Courageous embodiment submits to the reality of discernment—lives it, enacts it, embodies it.[228] Meek notes that "the human knower's exercise of profound responsibility involves him in submitting to the authoritative reality of the pattern he chose."[229] Such submission does not master the new reality, but rather enters the mystery of its indeterminate number of future possibilities and further questions. Knowing opens up, rather than nails shut. Discernment is about *contact* with reality, not *correspondence* to it; about *confidence*, rather than *certainty*.[230] The submission to and embodiment of reality, then, involves risk, choice and pledge, and is naturally challenged—whether because of doubt, fear, apathy, new clues previously unseen, or simply

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[225] Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*, 128.
[226] E.g., the breaking of the bread.
[227] E.g., the disciples proclaiming repentance and forgiveness.
[228] See especially Meek, *Longing to Know*, chap. 19.
[229] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 147.
[230] See Meek, *Longing to Know*, chap. 17.

because our character is bent and we get it 'wrong'. John the Baptist recognised Jesus,[231] yet still questioned.[232] Thus courage—the animating energy to act—becomes central to overcoming inhibitors to embodiment.

Highlighting the Emmaus Labyrinth's resonance with covenant epistemology can facilitate a sense of agency in the process and help pedagogically when introducing this craft to students. When we understand something of what is occurring in the knowing endeavour, it can develop our virtuosity when we are in the midst of it, and thus promote our active participation in the Spirit's (trans)forming work as we talk our walk.

Conclusion

This chapter rounds out the three contours of talking the walk's model. The first contour centres on dimensions and dynamics. Trialogue is a holistic and coinhering conversation between spirituality and personhood (the existential), ministry in context (the situational), and wellsprings of theology (the normative). The second contour explores direction. We walk and talk in and towards the *telos* of *shalom*: the flourishing of Christ for the cosmos, communities and individuals, embodied in graces such as reconciliation, justice, beauty, and wholeness.

The third contour—the focus of this chapter—provides the design for talking the walk's method. It is shaped by whole-person pedagogy and undergirded by covenant epistemology. Walking and talking are powerful metaphors for formation and reflection that invite participation in the rhythms of God's speed and speech. God sojourns slowly with us and listens tenderly to us. Through our shared walking and talking, we notice how the Spirit is shaping us holistically, in and towards *shalom.* Two resources, infused with these metaphors, provide the architecture for talking the walk. The Road via Emmaus offers an evocative and biblically grounded invitation to contemplatively talk with Jesus, imaginatively discern his presence, and courageously embody his reality. The labyrinth's broad appeal invites physicality that accentuates the circuitous and non-linear nature embedded in these movements through releasing, receiving and returning. Their natural threefold juxtaposition dovetails further with covenant epistemology's movements in coming to know: relying on clues in releasing, contemplative conversation; focusing on a pattern through receptive, imaginative discernment; and submitting to that pattern's reality in returning,

[231] Matt 3:11–16.
[232] Matt 11:3. See Meek, *Longing to Know*, chap. 21.

courageous embodiment.

Talking the walk along the Emmaus Labyrinth is thus laden with possibility, providing plenty of stimulation for those learning and growing in the craft of theological reflection for formation. But it also provides surprising simplicity. When presenting an overview to laypeople—perhaps in a one-off public lecture, or a short course over six weeks—I encourage those listening, if nothing else, to remember just three words:

Conversation. Discernment. Embodiment.

Stripped right back, these are enough to start and sustain us in the craft of theological reflection for formation. They are simple enough for my two youngest boys to remember and practise when we sometimes walk to school together. Yet no matter how mature and weathered we are in our journey, they are also inexhaustible in our walking and talking along the way. They lead us now into talking the walk's method, beginning with contemplative conversation. That is the focus of chapter five.

PART TWO: METHOD

CHAPTER FIVE
CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION

Knowing is the responsible human struggle | ***to rely on clues***
to focus on a coherent pattern
and submit to its reality

Esther Meek[1]

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them.

Luke 24:15

Start with the ground you know, the pale ground beneath your feet,
your own way of starting the conversation

David Whyte[2]

In the previous chapter, I rounded out talking the walk's model by proposing the Emmaus Labyrinth as the architecture for how we might talk our walk. This creative construct appeals to a whole-person pedagogy and resonates with key emphases of covenant epistemology. Charged with the powerful metaphors of walking and talking, it offers a simple yet rich pathway into theological reflection for holistic formation, in and towards *shalom*. I also argued that listening conversation—*contemplative* conversation—is the sort of talking that pilgrimed meaning-making needs. With a *dadirri*-like posture of patient attentiveness, we awake and live into the *shalom*-shaped presence of God in our walk as the Spirit listens us into speech.[3]

In this sense, contemplative conversation informs the entire enterprise of (trans)formational theological reflection. That said, it is also the first of three interlocking movements, or contours, of talking the walk's method. Though theological reflection for formation is a whole of life disposition rather than a technique, having steps to follow offers an embodied sense of what it is like. It gives students something to do, and educators, something to assess. Contemplative conversation is where the method begins.

This chapter opens with underpinnings for knowing along the Emmaus Labyrinth's inward journey as we rely on clues through contemplative conversation. I begin with *listening to these things*—the selection and narration of an experience for talking the walk. Building on resonating

[1] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13, formatting mine.
[2] David Whyte, "Start Close In," in *River Flow: New & Selected Poems*, Revised edition. (Langley, WA: Many Rivers, 2012), 362.
[3] See footnote 120. I explain this phrase more fully at the end of this chapter.

threefold expressions from chapter two, I then explore ways we might attend to the Spirit's voice in clues from each domain of the trialogue as we trek with fellow sojourners towards the centre. This invites our *listening in to spirituality and personhood*, *listening out to ministry in context*, and *listening up to wellsprings of theology*. Each mode of listening includes a summary for use in a critical experience report for students.[4] I conclude with reflections on how contemplative conversation 'trialogues', in non-linear fashion, back and forth between the particulars of subsidiary clues from each domain, and to the larger focal pattern their connections are forming as we approach discernment. Contemplative conversation thus forms the first contour of talking the walk's method and is this chapter's original contribution to knowledge.

Knowing Along the Inward Journey of the Emmaus Labyrinth

Along the journey towards the Emmaus Labyrinth's discerning centre, contemplative conversation has three epistemological underpinnings.

All Knowing Is a Coming to Know

Covenant epistemology, with its Polanyian tenor, insists that knowing is always on the way. This affirms our inarticulable, burning hearts sense of half- and not-yet-understanding as pivotal in the epistemic act. Without it, discovery would not be possible, because we would not be pulled forward by our pledge to know.[5] Thus, we encounter much needed grace "which offsets a misplaced sense of failure at being short of knowing."[6] We are pilgrims in our knowing, and we always will be. Affirming the journey and not just the destination normalises the sense of "distress, impatience, apprehension"[7] and grappling we feel when engaging in contemplative conversation. It allows us to recognise and befriend such feelings as part of the Spirit's (trans)formative work. "To say that knowing is being-on-the-way-to-knowing," says Meek, "is to accredit the journey as itself epistemic. In our journeying, there is a sense in which we are already living life on the terms of the yet-to-be-known."[8] This emboldens us to persist in taking responsible risks to make meaning of these things.

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[4] I have chosen the terminology of 'critical *experience* report' over the commonly employed 'critical *incident* report'. I want students to think more broadly about what they might bring to reflection beyond just an event or incident that has occurred. Framing experience as an event, issue or circumstance helps in this regard.
[5] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.
[6] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.
[7] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.
[8] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 472.

Coming to Know Is Non-Linear

In contemplative conversation we feel keenly the *responsible human struggle* of coming to know. That is because certain experiences in life and ministry thrust us into liminal spaces, and we cannot simply let them slide. Through such experiences, the Spirit plants deep within us a tacit desire for further exploration—what Meek calls, "the longing to know."[9] Yet that longing collides with our not-yet-knowing—even, not-yet-knowing *how to go about* knowing. We start somewhere—*anywhere*—with the clues immediately at our disposal. Initially, their connection may feel opaque. Fuelled by desire and guided by an anticipative sense of half-knowing, we persist back and forth until eventually the *shalom* of release arrives, be it an 'Aha!' moment or perhaps a gradual dawning. The clues' interconnections have become transparent, providing a focal pattern for knowing. Until that happens, though, our knowing often feels unsettled, half-baked, and very non-linear.[10]

Such talk is the 'release' of the Emmaus Labyrinth's inward journey. Contemplative conversation unpacks the experience and explores possible meanings as it wends its way in towards discernment. It interweaves various *clews*[11] with a pledged hope that insight might emerge. The Emmaus Road disciples and their Companion pull at all sort of threads as they walk and talk: the Companion's questioning and tender listening; the disciples' arresting despair; the releasing narration of these things regarding Jesus' ministry, death and reported resurrection; the broader context of Israel's story; the Companion's chiding of the disciples and exposition of God's paschal plan for *shalom* from the Scriptures. Nearing Emmaus, the two have an inarticulable, burning-hearts sense of being on the cusp of knowing. The disparate threads are somehow weaving together. Following this sensation, they urge the Companion to stay. This action leads them to the meal table: the place where the real is made known in the breaking of the bread. The

[9] Meek, *Longing to Know*.

[10] I have this bodily sense of unease and anticipation almost every time I sit down to write this thesis. Though I am developing skill in academic writing as my research progresses, beginning each chapter is still a unique challenge as I move between various clues at my disposal. These include the ideas already gathered, the chapter's purpose within the whole, the voices of my supervisors and other wise guides, and the half-formed thinking I hope to now develop and articulate. Other less obvious factors are also critically at play, like my current state of health and wellbeing, my technological competence, and my writing environment. At times I pause to specifically and carefully attend to or indwell some of these clues. Then I return to the whole, and then to another clue—back and forth. Other clues are subsidiarily employed of which I am not even aware. There is a science to it, yes, but also an art, as I move towards what I long for: 'Aha! The chapter is coming together! *This* is what it is about!' I am no longer focused on the clues, but upon the knowing their integration has afforded, which I then embody in writing and editing until I feel the satisfaction of completion. Meek expresses something similar in *Longing to Know*, 472.

[11] See footnote 225.

walking and talking that brings them to that point of discernment, though, is neither straightforward nor clinically ordered.

Coming to Know Relies on Clues from the Trialogue

Covenant epistemology offers a framework for contemplative conversation. Body, world and word—or the existential, situational and normative—are interlocking domains from which we might draw clues for knowing. In chapter two, I framed these as a trialogue: spirituality and personhood, ministry in context and wellsprings of theology.[12] They participate interdependently in the reality of one another, yet with liminal gaps in between. Their relationship is always becoming—*coinhering* rather than *coinherent*. I enriched the trialogue by surveying various resonating threefold expressions. My intent is not to pin down spirituality, ministry and theology into neat definitions but rather expand possibilities for the emphases each dimension brings to talking the walk. The trialogue's dimensions are not ironclad categories with rigid divisions but rather a rule of thumb for doing theological reflection holistically—a collaborative venture in service of coming to know. That said, exploring some foci for each is critical if they are to be of practical use when attending to clues in contemplative conversation.

Thus, knowing along the Emmaus Labyrinth's inward trek is pilgrimed, non-linear and shaped by the trialogue. This situates us for contemplative conversation around these things.

Listening to These Things

'Start Close In' by David Whyte removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[13]

Theological reflection is concerned with making meaning from experience in relation to faith. How do we select an experience for reflection? Criteria vary—some focus more narrowly upon ministry contexts,[14] others, on broader life experiences or social situations, still others, on the biblical text or theological questions.[15] More fundamental than such parameters, though, is what draws us to reflect in the first place. Since knowing is covenantal—trusting, relational, interpersoned—a sense

[12] I explain my choice of 'wellsprings' over the conventional 'sources' in the latter section, *Listening Up to Wellsprings of Theology*.
[13] Stanzas 1–4 of Whyte, "Start Close In," 362.
[14] E.g., Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*; Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*; Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*; McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*; Sally Nash and Paul Nash, *Tools for Reflective Ministry* (London: SPCK, 2012); Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*.
[15] E.g., Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*; Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*; Helen Collins, *Reordering Theological Reflection: Starting with Scripture* (London: SCM, 2020).

of pledge pulls us towards the not-yet-known that first piqued our intrigue.[16] So our starting point is desire—a longing to know, gifted by the Spirit. As with the two Emmaus Road disciples, contemplative conversation begins with listening to what gnaws at our gut, occupies our mind, or forms "the pale ground beneath our feet."[17] τούτων/*toutón*—"these things"[18]—is a pointing word, a focusing word. It concentrates on particulars. We are not trying to solve all the world's problems, tackle every issue or nail our 'theory of everything'. We grapple only with what captures our energy, vision and attention right now—not *those* things, but *these* things. Paradoxically, reflection that starts close in can be "the step [we] don't want to take."[19] We hesitate to start with our questions because we think others' are more important. Or we fear the unknown—new questions that might surface or the paschal (trans)formation that awaits. Listening to longing is risky because it makes us vulnerable, opens us to the unknown. Yet as Meek contends, "to care is to move forward toward the unknown with hope"—the hope of *shalom*—even though "we do not yet fully know what it is we long for," because "caring invites the real."[20] Acting upon our care is thus a human, flourishing act, even though it may lead to uncomfortable liminal spaces we often resist.

As we 'start close in' to our desires, we can begin to identify these things as the events, issues or circumstances by which our caring tugs at us. The importance here lies not in the size of the experience (e.g., preaching to thousands) but in the significance of its impact upon us (e.g., an off-handed remark that we churn over and over). The trialogue can provide helpful and rounded entry points. These things could be deeply existential, personally and spiritually central to our identity—a significant birthday celebration, a health scare, or the struggle to pray. They could be a concrete situation in the world and contexts in which we minister and interact with—a conversation with a neighbour, a significant world event, or caring for those in difficulty. Or they could be a broad normative, theological issue that we want to understand more deeply—theodicy,

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[16] Palmer argues that the desire that drives us to reflect is in fact spawned and animated by the subject that draws such interest. "The center of our attention is a subject that continually calls us deeper into its secret, a subject that refuses to be reduced to our conclusions about it … We say that knowing begins in our intrigue about some subject, but that intrigue is the result of the subject's action upon us … The things of this world call to us, and we are drawn to them—each of us to different things, as each is drawn to different friends. Once we have heard that call and responded, the subject calls us out of ourselves and into its own selfhood." Palmer, cited in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 367–68.
[17] Whyte, "Start Close In," 362.
[18] This word appears twice in Luke 24. In verse 14 these things of importance are defined by the disciples. In verse 48, they are redefined by Jesus. I discuss this further in chapter six.
[19] Whyte, "Start Close In," 362.
[20] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 32, 33.

faith and society, a troubling or enlivening passage in Scripture, or how divine sovereignty and human agency relate. Or perhaps, these things do not fit easily anywhere—or fit everywhere! No matter. The point is to follow that which disturbs, excites or generates curiosity and beckons further exploration. As guides, the trialogue's dimensions are great servants but lousy masters. They are not clinical categories—especially given their coinhering nature—but rather gateways into reflection for holistic (trans)formation. Using the trialogue to frame entry points for theological reflection goes some way, I think, to breaking the false impasse about where to begin. All of its domains are valid.[21]

Once identified, we listen to these things through narration. We stick to who, what, when and where, and resist jumping to why. We especially note any strong emotions we encounter. A concise narration is best for focusing us upon the kernel(s) of the experience. Honesty from the outset is pivotal; as much as possible, we eschew self-deception. As Paver contends,[22] this means neither claiming too much[23] nor too little[24] for ourselves. In telling how it is, as best we see it, we can begin to explore how clues drawn from spirituality, ministry and theology—coinhering

[21] While coinherence affirms the mutuality in the relationship between ministry, theology and spirituality, inevitably a choice must be made regarding the order for exploration. In many ways this echoes the long-held debate of theological method and our starting point. Beginning with grounded ministerial concerns reflects something of a Tillichian 'from below' approach. Beginning with theology is somewhat akin to a Barthian 'from above' approach. Beginning with spirituality is somewhat akin to Rahner's 'from within' or 'turn to the subject' approach. My choice in this chapter is to explore spirituality, ministry, and then theology, in part because—similar to Foley—the emphasis for so long in theological education has been upon cognition and getting the theology 'right', and then applying it to ministry contexts. Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 71.

However, I want to restate: the trialogue maintains that any starting point is valid. This allows for the typical starting point of ministry or of personal experience, but allays concerns of those who insist starting with Scripture in theological reflection is being neglected, e.g., Collins, *Reordering Theological Reflection*; Zoë Bennett and Christopher Rowland, *In a Glass Darkly: The Bible, Reflection and Everyday Life* (London: SCM, 2017); Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*. Meek affirms this: "If knowing is through and through normative, it is also through and through about the world, and through and through about me. [John Frame] is explicit: it doesn't matter where you 'start' on the triad. He maintains that the perspectives are equally ultimate, equally important, and equally mutually dependent: each needs the other two to be what itself is. This is what it looks like to take seriously that God, the covenant Lord, is Creator, and we and the world are his creation." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 162–63.

Biblical, historical and systematic theology, philosophical theory and concepts in general all start with the normative—ideas, truths, understandings. Practical and pastoral theology, behaviour and praxis, all start with the situational—context, reality and embodiment of ministry. Spiritual theology, angst and joy, prayer and wonder, all originate from the existential—lived, personal experience of transcendence and immanence. And all coinhere one another in some way. I have thus sometimes wondered about the way in which the trialogue might invite—if they were still with us—Barth, Tillich and Rahner all to the dinner table, each with their own starting point for beginning the conversation.

Perhaps though, as Buxton asserts, "it does not really matter too much where we start: what is more important is where we end up, and the journey we are willing to travel along the way." Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 33.

[22] Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 69–72.

[23] E.g., glossing things up, covering things over, highlighting strengths and minimising weaknesses.

[24] E.g., downplaying our strengths and potentials, emphasising our weaknesses, minimising impacts upon us.

together in conversation—might speak into our particular experience.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

> Narrate your experience (event, issue, circumstance) clearly and concisely. Stick to facts and the feelings evoked. Avoid extended, systematic or intentional interpretation. Use creativity and avoid unnecessary details to help your peers and supervisor enter the experience. Always maintain confidentiality; be discreet and use pseudonyms. Don't claim too much (polish up) or too little (downplay) in the narration; just be simple and real.
>
> What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Listening In to Spirituality and Personhood

As the resonating trialogues in chapter two suggested, spirituality centres on the lived experience of immanence and transcendence. Such experience births the relationality of prayer—*oratio* or *lex orandi*. Spirituality as orthopathy connects with the heart and soul of our affects, deepest desires and animating life force. It is thoroughly bodied, storied, and interwoven with our personality, character and identity. As the "operational paradigm around which a person's life is structured,"[25] Christian spirituality and personhood concerns our unique self in daily life, oriented towards and in harmony with the animating Spirit of God.[26]

Spirituality and personhood provide existential clues for contemplative conversation's struggle to discern. The existential domain anchors our coming to know in the lived body, from *within* us—just as my son Micah made sense of bike riding from within his unique bodied self, and all that entailed at that particular point in his life.[27] God speaks through our lives. Giving voice to the existential accredits—not merely compensates for—the *person* in any knowing endeavour, as reflected in a theory–practice–persons paradigm for theological reflection. We cannot somehow jettison spirituality and personhood to keep theological reflection untainted by self. They offer more than just vital and prayerful support for the proper business of the theory–practice interface. And while we must readily acknowledge how self-delusion can undermine critical reflection, attending to self means more than just limiting blind subjectivity that skews meaning-making.[28]

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[25] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 300.
[26] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 300, 302.
[27] See my example in chapter two, page 68.
[28] E.g., this seems to be the main reason Thompson et al. include a chapter on personality and theological reflection. The default stance is that the subjectivity of one's "personality, emotions and learning style will be present anyway,"

Covenant epistemology affords more positivity than that! As noted in chapter one, a Polanyian approach "centrally affirms the personal in knowing … [and] suggests that we may tap into the knower's full personhood epistemically."[29] To take the existential domain in reflection seriously is to listen in with a hermeneutic of responsible and reasonable hope, not mere suspicion.[30] It affirms that "*what takes place in [us] matters and has meaning*."[31] Our lives have something important to say which, theologically, banks on the indwelling of the Spirit.[32] Listening in opens us to the Sacred Mystery at work in our journey; spirituality's roots are in God's pneumatic ministry in and through us, among others in God's world.[33] So, listening in attends to and moves towards *shalom* not only in self, but also others and the world around us.

Listening in to spirituality and personhood, then, is a reflexive 'theology by heart'.[34] With the narration of these things laid before us, we contemplate God's presence within us through befriending ourselves. We listen to our life,[35] let our life speak[36] or map our inner geography.[37] We

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thus bringing with it "a danger that what is asserted as objective truth may be the result of unacknowledged personal bias or distortion." So while theological reflection is still (supposedly) possible by ignoring the self, "better results will follow if allowances are made" for individual differences. Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 133. Similarly, Graham et al. warn of the dangers of theology by heart. "In a world that some have identified as increasingly narcissistic, too much attention to the self and the inward life can become self-indulgent and self-preoccupied to the extent that the self only engages with what concerns him or her, forgetting the central Christian message of self-giving. Anyone engaging in this method needs to ask, 'To what end?' 'How will the gospel of Christ and his self-sacrificial life, death and resurrection be served?'" Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 567. That is why *shalom* as the *telos* of theological reflection for holistic Christian formation is so important. It keeps reflection connected to concerns of *missio Dei* in communities and the world, and not just the individual.

[29] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 96.

[30] A willingness to take seriously a person's existential account as a human encounter with God, and not just analyse, discount or explain it away due to self-deception or underlying psychological dynamics, is affirmed in William A. Barry, "Overcoming the Hermeneutic of Suspicion," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction.* 6.2 (2000): 25–30. Barry recognises that in spiritual direction the directee's opportunity and willingness to genuinely recount their experience will be curtailed if they sense their director's default stance is a hermeneutic of suspicion. The same can be said for those supervising students learning to theologically reflect. Thus, theological reflection models, and their undergirding epistemologies, must not only to allow for the existential domain of the experience to be voiced, but also to take it seriously.

[31] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 176.

[32] Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16.

[33] As Nouwen observes, "people who can identify and articulate the movements of their inner lives, who can give names to their various experiences, need no longer be victims of themselves but are able slowly and consistently to remove the obstacles that prevent the Spirit from entering." Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, xx.

[34] As termed by Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, chap. 1. They note that reflexivity "takes for granted the significance of the self in forming an understanding of the world." It centres on "the inward working of the interior life" and "the concern to understand more deeply the ways of self, positioned within the networks of society." loc. 553.

[35] E.g., Millis, *Conversation, the Sacred Art*, chap. 4; McHugh, *The Listening Life*, chap. 8.

[36] E.g., Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*.

[37] E.g., Stephen W. Smith, *Embracing Soul Care: Making Space for What Matters Most* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), 143–45. He points to the way in which Jesus connects geography with soul in the parable of the seed scattered

saunter through our ‘soulscape’, which might be thought of as “‘an ecological view of self’ that connects the compartmentalised and fragmented dimensions of our lives.”[38] As they talk their walk, the two disciples connect with their soulscape—confusion, embedded theologies, bodies deflated from dashed hopes, amazement, hearts slow and burning and doubting, excitement, fear and joy. Withholding judgement, we too may carefully listen in to what our self-in-God is saying.[39] As noted in chapter four, *dadirri* points to quiet and patient listening that taps into the deep spring of the Spirit within us.[40] It attends to ways *shalom* is manifest or resisted. Such listening in and articulation take both courage and gentleness. “The soul is like a wild animal,” says Palmer. “If we want to see a wild animal, we know that the last thing we should do is go crashing through the woods yelling for it to come out.”[41] Musts and oughts will not work; instead, the soul is to be wooed. Here are some ways we might court it.

We might listen in to our bodies—our ‘felt body sense’*.* If this starting point jars somewhat (‘Are we not talking about ‘soul’, about spirituality?’), then this response itself is telling, for such jarring is bodily felt and should be listened to! Quite possibly it signals a residual Platonic/Gnostic dualism between body/‘flesh’ and spirit, an Augustinian disdain for the body, or perhaps a Cartesian divorce between mind as subject and body as object.[42] Biblical anthropology (as discussed in chapter two) insists our bodies are not passive shells, as in the 1997 movie *Men in Black*, with a tiny being inside at the controls. Ault notes how this body/spirit split bears itself out

over four types of soil (Mark 4). I came across the idea of *mapping* our inner geography some years ago in conversation with Fr Michael Smith SJ who offered the phrase in talking about the importance of inner work in Jesuit formation.

[38] Drawing from Grey, Ault explains how soulscape “interweaves ‘the physical, material, psychological and emotional elements of all our lives’. Thus soulscape connects internal and external landscapes with all their complexities and relationships … [C]reating soulscape ‘requires patient awareness and a kind of connecting perception. Merton might call it a ‘sacramental perception’.” Ault, “Theological Reflection,” 303–4.

[39] The resistance to listening in I sometimes encounter in students often reflects a penchant for the so-called ‘J.O.Y. principle’ (Jesus first, Yourself last, Others in between.) McHugh cites common objections. “‘Isn’t listening to yourself … an exercise in self-absorption, an excuse for narcissistic navel gazing? Isn’t focusing on myself the very definition of pride? Aren’t we supposed to be people of love who lose ourselves in the service of others?’” McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 176. ‘I should not ponder my inner world’—the argument goes—’because my heart is thoroughly deceitful; better to forget myself and focus on God and others’. Such reasoning may sound noble but is misguided. It relies on a false equation of knowledge of self with narcissistic navel-gazing. It may stem from false piety that masks a deeper fear of coming in touch with inner realities. It neglects the close connection between knowledge of God and self. While contemplative conversation does indeed mean listening well to others and to God, “good listening starts at home.” McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 178. The more we ignore our inner world, the more our theology and ministry are inadvertently pushed around by it—or else, sapped dry of vitality and efficacy. It makes responsible meaning-making incongruous, dehumanising and difficult, if not impossible.

[40] Ungunmerr, “To Be Listened to in Her Teaching.”

[41] Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 58–59.

[42] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 104.

in the popular idea of people as “spiritual beings ‘having a human experience’, ‘on a human journey’ or ‘in physical bodies’.”[43] We do not *have* a body, with the ‘real me’ floating inside; rather, we *are* body because “our bodies are ourselves.”[44] The paradox of our times, Ault notes, is that we “inhabit a landscape that is highly conscious of body image without necessarily being conscious of [our] own bodies.”[45] This frustrates fully-orbed theological reflection.

But unavoidably—or more so, *gloriously!*—“knowers are embodied and situated” says Meek,[46] meaning our bodies are intrinsic for any reception of and response to God. To take the existential domain of knowing seriously—let alone so many thoroughly *physical* biblical theologies[47]—is to acknowledge that “all knowing, even the most explicit, is rooted in the lived body.”[48] This is precisely what coinherence affirms; else, our anthropology is fractured and pathological.[49] It is hard to listen in if our heritage conditions us to ignore our body in favour of ‘more spiritual’ sources for meaning-making.[50] We need rewiring. Our situated, bodily rootedness does not inhibit knowing, but strategically positions us for it.[51] The promise of theological reflection for holistic formation is that it “provides a process in which an intellectual analysis of an experience and the affective dimension of an experience may be integrated with the lived, bodily experience and transformed.”[52]

Honouring and honing body sense, then, is fundamental to listening in to significant experiences. Sometimes we can draw clues from general considerations, like pondering our current relationship with food, rest, recreation, sexuality, pathologies or the surrounding environment. Sometimes narrating our body sense in these things offer clues.[53] Moreover, doing

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[43] Ault, “Theological Reflection,” 299.
[44] Benner, *Care of Souls*, 22; Meek, *Loving to Know*, 109.
[45] Ault, “Theological Reflection,” 299.
[46] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 374.
[47] E.g., creation, incarnation, redemption, resurrection, pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology.
[48] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 78; see also Elizabeth Anne Kinsella, “Embodied Reflection and the Epistemology of Reflective Practice,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41.3 (2007): 395–409. Kinsella explains how, drawing from Polanyi and Ryle, Schön provides a bedrock for reflective practice that affirms how we know more than we can say and is thus attentive to body sense in knowing. See Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983); Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey-Bass Higher Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).
[49] Benner comments that “forms of spirituality that are not sufficiently grounded in bodily existence and tied to the normal mechanisms and processes that make up the rest of our psychological life are dangerous as they represent a dissociative state.” *Care of Souls*, 62.
[50] See McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 191–95.
[51] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 206.
[52] Ault, “Theological Reflection,” 297.
[53] E.g., “My voice quavered as I broke the news to the family.” “I hadn’t felt so alive in years.” “We sensed a shift in our team, on the cusp of something new.” “I was beyond fatigue.”

theological reflection *is an experience itself* that invites inner listening, there and then. We can bring our pre-verbal, bodily-sensed clues into conversation with more explicit theological and ministerial perspectives. "Rather than imposing a theological perspective upon the experience and trying to make the experience fit within the paradigm," says Ault, there can be a "testing of the fit between the 'felt sense' of the experience and theological perspectives."[54] If we are open, this interplay can lead to new and unexpected horizons of enquiry. Can our body sense mislead us? Yes, of course. But the same is true for how we interpret situational or normative clues. That is the labyrinthine nature of any venture in coming to know.

Thus, attending to tacit clues through body sense, in subsidiary service of discerning reality, takes more than beginner's luck. Meek contends body knowing draws upon: a *virtuosity* or knack developed over time;[55] *embodiment*—learning how to live into our own skin—that honours and feels our bodies *as* our bodies, not just as tools;[56] and *presence* to who we are as unified, '*somatopsychospiritual*'[57] persons-in-relationship.[58] Exploring spatial pedagogies that engage body sense can help students develop such virtuosity, embodiment and presence, moving theological reflection beyond a mere intellectual exercise. Talking the walk along the Emmaus Labyrinth is one such approach.

We might listen in to our relationality—our dwelling, abiding or 'with-ness'. While spirituality may refer to a style[59] or the subject of an academic discipline,[60] at an existential level spirituality's core is relatedness, particularly (but not only) with God.[61] For Christians, the central currency of that relationship—its vital, animating and authentic character—is the 'first love' of God, birthing our love response.[62] "As the Father has loved me," said Jesus, "so I have loved you;

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[54] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 308.
[55] For instance, I often seem to sense a threat to my security if challenged in a group situation, whether hostile or (most often) benign—the increased pulse, the tightening torso, a general heightened alertness. I am slowly learning how to harness this knowing in service of deeper listening out to 'the challenger', rather than letting it paralyse me.
[56] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 111–12.
[57] Benner, *Care of Souls*, chap. 3.
[58] Virtuosity, embodiment and presence are Meek's three ways of describing just what she means by body knowledge. Meek, *Loving to Know*, 104–22.
[59] E.g., 'She appreciates Ignatian spirituality'.
[60] E.g., 'Contemporary understandings of spirituality are changing'.
[61] E.g., 'I want to nurture my spirituality'. This delineation of spirituality as style, academic discipline or relationality comes from Bradley Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*, Second edition. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 7. Regarding spirituality as relationality, see Waaijman who argues that relationality—that is, being relational—"is a basic category of spirituality" played out at personal, sociological and universal/cosmic levels, and is "the inner dynamic of all processes of divine-human transformation." Kees Waaijman, "Spirituality - A Multifaceted Phenomenon," *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007): 112–13; see also Ault, "Theological Reflection," 301–2.
[62] As per 1 John 1:19: "We love because [God] first loved us." Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 38.

abide in my love."[63] "Being the beloved," as Nouwen asserts, "constitutes the core truth of our existence."[64] So in reflecting upon experience, the gospel invitation is to take "a long loving look at the real"[65] and to "behold the One beholding you, and smiling."[66] In doing this we "claim our belovedness,"[67] and embrace God's gift of *shalom*.

Listening in to our belovedness is pivotal in theological reflection for formation; when we are deaf to it, our meaning-making can get skewed. Crabb contends that humans have two basic psychospiritual needs: *security* (to be loved) and *significance* (to have purpose).[68] Both flourish in the first love of God in Christ. When we look to 'second loves' for their fulfilment—the affirmation of others, the results of our hard work, the projects of our ego—then we are bound to manipulation (forcing these to meet such needs) rather than freed for ministry (serving out of authentic belovedness). Though manipulation is attractive because of the sense of control it affords, it usually obscures the reality of the experience upon which we are reflecting. Returning to God's first love enables vulnerability and honesty, neither downplaying nor polishing up experiences. Our challenge in theological reflection, notes Paver, is to find "the safe sacred place to reveal to our own selves and to others our self-deceptions that allow the Gospel to address us, and the Spirit to transform us."[69] Our belovedness is that safe, sacred place. Though broken, stubborn, rebellious … still! We are deeply forgiven, accepted, favoured. When our belovedness becomes not just a doctrinal affirmation, but a lived experience, we become reflectors able to embrace and live from our truest, human self.

Listening in to our relationality, then, invites an honest appraisal of our spiritual pulse. What do we notice about the receiving and giving of divine love in our sojourn with God? About our mutual dwelling with Christ and fruit-bearing?[70] About the movements and whispers of the Spirit of Christ who abides within us?[71] Do these offer any insights for interpreting the experience under consideration? Pondering movements and rhythms of prayer can help,[72] though here we

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[63] John 14:23 (NRSV).
[64] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992), 34.
[65] Cited in Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 27.
[66] Cited in Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart*, 20.
[67] Moore, *Shalom Sistas*, 98.
[68] Larry Crabb, *The Marriage Builder: A Blueprint for Couples and Counselors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1982), chap. 3.
[69] Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry*, 71.
[70] John 15:4–5.
[71] John 14:17.
[72] As suggested by various resonating threefold expressions discussed in chapter two, e.g., 'prayer' in the Benedictine

might resist merely assessing our current state of devotional practice. Spiritual practices are not the same as the relationality they cultivate; that is like equating the conversations Sonia (my wife) and I share with the totality of our marriage. Merton's rebuke is particularly apt:

> It's a risky thing to pray, and the danger is that our very prayers get between God and us. The great thing in prayer is not to pray, but to go directly to God. If saying your prayers is an obstacle to prayer, cut it out![73]

Moreover, prayer is not limited to explicitly religious practices.[74] A contemplative posture diminishes the sacred–secular divide, noticing many ways to nurture receptivity and response to God in all things. To abide—*menō*—is to remain or live with. Thus, beyond merely a conversational activity, prayer might be reframed as the myriad 'dwelling places' that cultivate *menō* as the dynamic of divine–human relationality.[75] "Pray without ceasing,"[76] then, suddenly becomes more feasible.[77] Merely assessing quiet times or church attendance usually leads to either pride or despair. Instead, *a compulsion to pray more* is replaced with a gracious invitation to *notice various ways in which—through the Spirit—we are already at prayer*. Attending to our spiritual

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rule and Peterson's approach to pastoral attentiveness; *lex orandi* in Catholic, Orthodox and Mainline Protestant Liturgics; *oratio* in Luther's approach to doing theology. See from page 72.

[73] Cited in Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* (New York: Paulist, 1988), 51.

[74] In Scripture and the Christian tradition, they typically include those summarised by Foster's inward, outward and corporate disciplines. Inward: meditation, prayer, fasting and study; Outward: simplicity, solitude, submission and service; Corporate: confession, worship, guidance and celebration. See Richard J Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008).

[75] E.g., Christine Sine, "What Is A Spiritual Practice: The Complete Series," Blog, *Godspace*, 23 September 2009, http://godspace.wordpress.com/2009/09/23/what-is-a-spiritual-practice-the-complete-series/. The 'dwelling places' we have available to us are broad. They include any habitat, whether aesthetic or ascetic, which helps us live and love fully as *somato-psycho-spiritual* human beings among others in God's world. In our family, for instance, camping has become an important aesthetic spiritual practice, helping us enjoy our relationships, rest, creation and God. Equally, refraining from using technology one day a week is a key ascetic practice that helps us Sabbath well. If we hear an emergency vehicle rushing to a scene with sirens blaring, a brief prayer for those affected is often uttered. I remember one night being arrested by the experience of touching cheeks with my youngest son, a regular bedtime ritual that, unbidden, transformed into a sacred moment. Similarly, I can recall the exact spot on my drive to work one morning when I heard news of a father who had drowned his young sons by deliberately driving his car into a lake; the sudden swell of pain inside me burst into tears of lament. These can be just as 'spiritual' or prayer-ful as reading Scripture, worshipping with others or having a 'prayer time'.

[76] 1 Thess 5:17.

[77] Nouwen says it well: "To pray, I think, does not mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or to spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. Rather, it means to think and live in the presence of God. As soon as we begin to divide our thoughts into thoughts about God and thoughts about people and events, we remove God from our daily life and put him in a pious little niche where we can think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings. Although it is important and even indispensable for the spiritual life to set apart time for God and God alone, prayer can only become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts - beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful - can be thought in the presence of God. Thus, converting our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer moves us from a self-centered monologue to a God-centered dialogue. This requires that we turn all our thoughts into conversation. The main question, therefore, is not so much what we think, but to whom we present our thoughts." Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome: Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer, and Contemplation* (New York: Image, 2000), 67.

relationality in this way helps broaden our net for listening in. In the process, God's first love woos us and grounds our security and significance. Defensiveness and self-abasement are set aside in this safe, sacred place, where we are free to see these things more clearly.

We might listen in to our affections—our more tacit and intuitive aspects of being.[78] Like the bulk of an iceberg submerged beneath the more visible peaks of cognition and behaviour,[79] the affections connect closely to the notion of spirituality[80] and the inner language of heart, soul, spirit and gut—our animating spark, pulse, breath or 'oomph'. Affect is an unbidden intensity, bodily felt, that apprehends, moves, disturbs us; it swells, surges, resides, pressures us. "Were not our hearts *burning* within us?"[81] Jesus is overcome with care for a rebellious Jerusalem,[82] Wesley's heart was strangely warmed, and we feel arrested by a situation. Developing affective intelligence helps us better listen in to that intensity and the Spirit's voice through it. Much of Saint Ignatius' approach to discernment was built around this approach, paying close attention to movements of both consolation and desolation within oneself. In the safe, sacred place of our belovedness, we can set aside our self-protecting anaesthetics of choice and hear deep calling to deep in our moments of significance.

Emotional literacy[83] can help us name, qualify and own the intensity of affect.[84] Killen and de Beer contend that feeling "joins body and mind" as "the most human response to reality;" as such, feelings "are clues to the meaning of our experience."[85] Thus again, we listen in to our

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[78] Wilson, "Three Domains of Learning: Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor"; Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 70–72.
[79] Kondrath, "The Affective Domain and Ministerial Formation," 91; See also Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, chap. 1.
[80] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 89–90.
[81] Luke 24:32, emphasis mine.
[82] Luke 13:34.
[83] This, according to Sharp, is "the ability to recognize, understand, and appropriately express emotions … using your emotions to help yourself and others succeed." Cited in Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 132.
[84] Frequently 'e*motion*'—which signifies what moves us—is simply equated with affect, e.g., Kondrath, "The Affective Domain and Ministerial Formation"; Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 90. However, Massumi explains that they are not the same. If affect pertains to intensity, then emotion is "qualified intensity" or "intensity owned and recognized." Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique*.31 (1995): 88.
[85] "Feelings are rich resources in our journey to meaning. When we encounter a particular feeling in our experience, we want to think of it as neither inevitable, nor fleeting, nor eternal; we do not want to cling to it or control it, but simply experience the feeling, to notice it, and to reflect on it." Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 27–28. See also: Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, chap. 7; Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*; McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 184–91; Kondrath, "The Affective Domain and Ministerial Formation."

bodies, since “it is in our bodies that we experience emotion.”[86] For example, listening in to surges of anger can reveal our hurt, which might point to an expectation, which might disclose a deep unmet or violated need.[87] “We ought to listen to our emotions,” argues McHugh, “before we start preaching to them. Let’s not tell them what to do before they tell us what they are already doing.”[88] Listening to feelings also provides an important gateway to images which can help with discernment, as explored in chapter six.[89]

Affective intelligence also attends our deepest desires and volition, loves and passions, values and commitments, insecurities and hesitations, wounds and dreads. We encounter the intensity of affect when experience connects us to what we hold dear, and what holds us. Where our treasure is—our vision of the good life—there our heart will also be.[90] Listening in to deep longings might feel threatening if our religious tradition insists all desires are self-serving, or if we risk touching our painful, unfulfilled dreams.[91] But Jesus takes people’s desires seriously, even asking “What do you want me to do for you?”[92] “Desire, and the willingness to name that desire in Christ’s presence,” says Barton, “is a catalytic element of the spiritual life.”[93] Our yearnings for *shalom*, birthed from God’s yearnings for us, point to our deepest human vocation. Yet these intermingle with distorted and destructive urges. Thus

> whether we acknowledge them or not, these dynamics are at work wielding a subterranean power over us. Their power only gets stronger the longer we repress them. How much safer it is for ourselves and everyone around us if we open up our desires in Jesus’ presence and allow him to help us sift through them.[94]

Such sifting (trans)forms our loves towards orthopathy. As Knight comments, “orthopathy does not primarily refer to a warm heart, but to a heart formed, governed and motivated by love.”[95] In this way, becoming *shalom* persons through reflection necessitates an openness to the Spirit’s

[86] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 191. One simple approach is *Feelings As Messengers* theory which works with 6 primary feeling families, each with their own multiple cognates: powerful, joyful, peaceful, mad, sad, and scared. Kondrath, “The Affective Domain and Ministerial Formation,” 91–93.
[87] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 189.
[88] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 185.
[89] See Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 33–35.
[90] cf. Matt 6:21, Luke 12:34.
[91] Ruth Hayley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22.
[92] Mark 10:36, Luke 18:41. See also Matt 20:21, John 5:6.
[93] Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 27.
[94] Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 25.
[95] “Consider Wesley.”

deep work in our affections.[96]

We might listen in to our personality—our 'youness'. Befriending our biography, and the narratives we tell (and retell) to construct its meaning, provides context for the formation of our personality. This can be difficult if we have done little work on our stories and find them unfamiliar, too painful, or if we tend to view others' stories as more ideal. It takes vulnerability and acceptance to come home to our narrative.

'Roads' by Ruth Bidgood removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[97]

Coming home to our story allows us to attend deeply to its data, drawn from myriad sources: our sense of place, family of origin, ethnicity and language, gender and sexuality, and our socioeconomic and geographical contexts; embodied memories, events (particularly loss and trauma), governing circumstances, health and pathologies, education and (un)employment; people and relationships, our wounders and our healers, our significant communities and networks; our political influences, and our theological and ecclesial heritage, including norms for language, ritual, practice and belief. Contemplative listening is disposed to discerning God's person and activity within our story's broad and unique spectrum of joy and brokenness, meaning and humdrum.

Befriending our stories reveals and shapes our identity—our sense of belonging, self-concept, what makes us tick, and *how* we tick. This invites forays into ways personality influences meaning-making. Thompson et al. succinctly guide theological reflection students through useful tools such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Enneagram and learning-style theory.[98] These can all help raise awareness of the preferences, strengths and growing edges our personality brings to talking the walk. We might also listen in to our embedded attitudes, dispositions, virtues and character, which often emerge when experiences pressure us. Jesus was "moved with compassion,"[99] not because it seemed like an appropriate response, but because mercy was in his

[96] Elsewhere, Knight comments: "While emphasizing our experiencing God, Wesley does not equate "affections" and "tempers" with transient feelings. Certainly "feelings" could be part of our experience. But feelings come and go; tempers abide. Put differently, the point of Christian experience is not to generate feelings of love but for us to become loving persons. Orthopathy, then, does not mean everyone must experience certain feelings. It means Christians have a character which consists of holy tempers such as love for God and neighbor, faith, hope, peace, humility, and other fruit of the Spirit—what Wesley calls in one sermon the 'marks of the new birth'" "Consider Wesley."

[97] Ruth Bidgood, *New and Selected Poems* (Bridgend, UK: Poetry Wales, 2004), 17.

[98] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, chap. 7.

[99] Matt 9:36, Mk 6:34 (KJV).

bones; compassion *characterised* him. This helps us ponder instinctive reactions when experiences resonate with or disturb us.

What we tend to think marks our personhood. This is a strong emphasis, for example, in Pattison's model of a critical conversation between three primary sources: the situation being explored, relevant perceptions from the Christian tradition, and the *beliefs*, *assumptions*, *presuppositions* and *ideas* of the reflector.[100] Stone and Duke call this our 'embedded theology'—the implicit, 'first-order' theological understandings and conceptions that infuse daily living—which may be brought to the surface for exploration in 'deliberative' or 'second-order' theology through our listening up to wellsprings of theology (see below).[101] Listening in to and naming default internal scripts can help reveal embedded thinking. Those upon which we act, says McHugh, shape our becoming.[102] Whether our scripts are false, partially or mostly true, we need to listen to them all for testing and sifting. Experiences that disrupt embedded theologies or render them inadequate are what often draw us into deliberative reflection in the first place.

Furthermore, *what* we tend to think is rooted in *how* we tend to think. "How we think is a measure of our willingness to change,"[103] contends Buxton, who invites us to think about our thinking.[104] For instance, he questions whether it is primarily cognitive (a Platonic/Western/rationalistic/Enlightenment approach) or embraces a more holistic, Hebraic anthropology that also engages 'heart' thinking (to which I would add, 'body thinking')—essentially, a coinhering view. He distinguishes between approaches that are routine/repetitive[105] and reflective,[106] pointing to Killen and de Beer's three standpoints for reflection.[107] *The standpoint of certitude* adopts an uncritical acceptance of inherited frameworks and sees the unfamiliar only in terms of what is already firmly believed; it diminishes the capacity to make meaning for ourselves. *The standpoint of self-assurance* tires of and jettisons inherited frameworks, in favour of self-determined evaluation; it exaggerates the capacity to make meaning for ourselves. *The standpoint of exploration*, however, allows heritage and experience to mutually inform one another in the

[100] Pattison, "Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection," 139.
[101] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 15–22.
[102] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 177. E.g., 'That *would* happen to me', 'I've been here before, I know I can do this', 'Idiot!', 'God is in control', 'If only we could get on top of our finance, things will be better', 'The Spirit doesn't work this way'.
[103] Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 57.
[104] Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 54–64.
[105] E.g., 'the way it has always been'.
[106] E.g., drawing from the past but excited to explore new possibilities.
[107] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, chap. 1.

context of community, enhancing our capacity for transformative meaning-making. It best exhibits the sort of self-differentiation and reciprocating-self essential to formation discussed in chapter three. Buxton also highlights the contrast between a dogged commitment to ‘either/or’ thinking, and an openness to the possibility of ‘both/and’ thinking.[108] The first tends towards a quest for *certainty* that wants to nail knowing shut through a simplistic, definitive mastery of the truth. The second resonates with a relational journey in and towards *confidence* amidst complexity—what Meek calls a “friendship with the truth,”[109] or Palmer, ‘troth’[110]—that opens knowing up to new vistas through embracing mystery, ambiguity and paradox. Listening in to both the what and the how of our thinking helps us understand what we bring to the table in contemplative conversation.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

As you contemplate these things, *listen in to spirituality and personhood* for clues—the Spirit’s whispers within you through your self-in-God, your soulscape (‘existential domain’).

What might God be saying through your life?

It might help to contemplate any connections to: felt responses in your body; the lived experience of your journey as the beloved of God; what moves you and the emotions you feel; your unique personality revealed in your story, character, thinking and biases.

How was *shalom* manifest and/or inhibited in you?
What clues emerge? How do they ‘trialogue’ with other ministerial or theological clues?

What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Listening Out to Ministry in Context

In chapter two, the resonating threefold expressions suggested that ministry embodies God’s *shalom* in the world through our sojourn with others. It is thus thoroughly situated and contextual, behaviourally and skills-focused, practical and concrete. We must live our lives, so *lex vivendi* presses us: *how* shall we now journey with others in God’s world? Ministry embraces *solvitur*

[108] This dichotomy is the focus of Graham Buxton, *An Uncertain Certainty: Snapshots in a Journey from “Either-Or” to “Both-And” in Christian Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).
[109] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 475.
[110] Cited in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 40–41.

ambulando—walking the questions as pilgrims, not observing them as tourists. We hammer out ministry in context on the anvil of *tentatio*; an orthopraxis that unfolds non-linearly amidst the realities of suffering and delight, complexity and change.

Contemplative conversation draws situational clues from ministry in context as it weaves towards discernment. The situational domain anchors our coming to know in the world, from *around* us—just as my mum's driveway on that old bike with some family watching on one summer's morning provided the particular place for Micah's first ride. God speaks through our journey with others in the world. The result is not mastery of or abstraction from our surrounds but being surprised by and more deeply rooted in them.[111] When we turn our eyes upon Jesus, the things of earth become strangely bright—not dim![112] "A strong doctrine of creation," contends Meek, "naturally entails an epistemological approach that honours situatedness, not absolutizing it, nor exonerating it, but treating it with integrity in the knowing process."[113]

Three theologically charged words underpin ministry in context. First, *participation.* Ministry is commonly conceived in terms of the effect of explicitly religious acts done for God, such as proclamation, fellowship or service,[114] but this tends to straitjacket its nature and scope. Instead, ministry's authentic character "is expressed not in terms of *effect* but in terms of *source*."[115] Its wellspring is the Trinity's lavish life and work—the Father's *shalom*-shaped will for the world enacted in Christ, the faithful minister, outworked through the Spirit—into which we are graciously invited to participate.[116] In ministry, we work among others with God, in God's enterprise, in God's world.

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[111] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 77.

[112] From the hymn, *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*. I think this line reflects Christian dualism. The Western Church has often confused biblical *duality* with Platonic, Augustinian and modern *dualism*. *Duality* distinguishes between good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, humility vs. arrogance, full allegiance to Christ in all of life vs. a divided devotion where various idols are simultaneously honoured. In this sense Jesus warns against loving the 'world' (e.g., John 17:15; 1 John 2:15–17) – that is, embracing a worldview epitomised by anti-God, autonomous secular humanism, which typically marginalises faith to explicitly religious arenas and activities only. *Dualism*, however, confuses this biblical understanding of the 'world' with another—the 'world' as that which God created as good, passionately loves, and throughout which the kingdom has come with the gospel's creative vitality and redemptive power (e.g., John 3:16). In this sense, some Christians have ironically often been *of* the world, but not *in* it! See Steve Turner, *Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 43.

[113] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 206.

[114] That is, *kērygma*, *koinōnia* and *diakonia*. See Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 17–18. As I do with my classes, Buxton draws forth from students their conceptions of 'ministry' and commonly finds preaching, evangelism, praying for others, fellowship, discipleship, worship, service etc. at the top of the list.

[115] Graham Buxton, "Not Effect, but Source: Participating in the Ministry of Christ" (presented at the UCA President's Forum, Coromandel Valley Uniting Church, South Australia, 2002), 3, http://203.122.246.169/events/Presidents%20Forum/Graham%20Buxton.pdf.

[116] See John 5:17; Heb 7:24, 8:2.

Such participation is the thrust of Bishop Untener's prayer in memory of the martyr Fr. Oscar Romero:

> We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.[117]

The temptation to domesticate Christ to serve our agenda, and label it 'ministry', needs to be flipped on its head. Our part is essential yet modest. We take responsibility because God chooses no other way to bring about the kingdom than through humans as stewards and culture-makers of *shalom*. It is a glocal enterprise. We are, as Wright says, like stonemasons working faithfully in our corner on small, incremental tasks. Yet they make an essential contribution to an unimaginably grand cathedral, orchestrated by the master architect.[118] "The church is both the proclaimer of the Kingdom and a sacrament of the Kingdom, but it is not the Kingdom itself."[119] *God* builds God's kingdom, and we build *for* it as God works powerfully in us.[120] A theology of participation thus (trans)forms our orientation in ministry from *productivity* (what we build 'for God') towards *fruitfulness* (what God bears through us in due season).[121] It also rebuffs a sacred–secular divide in ministry. We can ponder and embrace God's invitations to share in Christ's work of reconciliation, justice, creativity and wholeness not only in explicit 'ministries' of the church but in all of life: parenting and work, stewardship and study, recreation and creation-care, the magnificent and the mundane.[122] And so, we can be "steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord,

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[117] "It helps now and then to step back and take a long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own." Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, "A Future Not Our Own - a Prayer/Poem in Memory of Oscar Romero," 1979, http://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Ken_Untener_A_Future_Not_Our_Own.shtml.
[118] Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, 221.
[119] William A. Barry, "The Kingdom of God and Discernment," *America*, September 1987, 156–57.
[120] Col 1:29.
[121] This insight comes from Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Lifesigns: Intimacy, Fecundity, and Ecstasy in Christian Perspective* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 41–51. I discuss abiding fruitfulness in chapter seven.
[122] A student of mine once commented: "I think I've probably had a narrow view of ministry for much of my life, and it's been perpetuated by the church culture I've been in. I'm a fairly passionate person and find myself always drawn to be involved in official ministries. Several years ago I pulled out of the ministries I was involved in because I felt that

because [we] know that in the Lord [our] labour is not in vain."[123]

There is truth in Buechner's oft-quoted assertion that "the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[124] Yet this can still lure us onto an unreflective treadmill of 'ministry on God's behalf' that does not discern *in situ* the Spirit's movements and creative calling. Ministry quickly becomes all on our shoulders, a sure recipe for exhaustion. Listening *up* to a robust theology of ministry as participation crucifies our messiah complex; God does not call us to endlessly meet needs.[125] A spirituality of humility, then, together with a discerning disposition, must undergird our ministerial working with God among others if our pilgrimage is to be lifelong and life-giving.[126]

Second, *place*. The contemplative worldview developed in chapter four rests upon the Triune God-in-context who is "over all and through all and in all,"[127] ever at work to bring about the culture of the kingdom. This means God's creative and saving cultivation of *shalom* always *takes place*. It does not occur in abstract, but rather is recognised only as it *identifies with* and

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they were actually crippling my effectiveness as a Christian—God was challenging me with things from His word but I couldn't really respond to them because I was too busy with official ministry. When I pulled out I lost a lot of favour in my church and was considered to be slipping a bit in my faith, when actually the opposite was true. I've since been involved in several other official ministries over the last few years, even leading a couple, but I left my church and moved closer to Adelaide to study, so I'm not involved in anything right now. Rather I'm joining Christ's work in the people around me in a much more organic way and loving it. One example is I've been talking regularly with an atheist I work with about what I've been learning at Tabor and he's lapping it up, constantly asking me questions. Seeing ministry as the work of Jesus, and me joining in, is quite freeing and much more exciting."

[123] 1 Cor 15:58.

[124] Buechner, *Beyond Words*, 405.

[125] As Buxton states, "we are not the answer to every need—in fact, we are not the answer to *any* need. Christ is. Christian ministry is participating in what God is already doing in Christ in the power of the Spirit." Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 14. Tellingly, Jesus himself does not take up every opportunity to bless and minister as he might. For instance, in Luke 4:15–41 the opening accounts of his public ministry are by all accounts hugely 'successful'. He teaches with authority, sets captives free and heals the many. But when the crowds cling to him so he might stay and continue—presumably because still more hunger for his teaching and touch—he insists on heading elsewhere to proclaim the kingdom. Why not keep a good thing going? Because this small yet intriguing account is preceded by Jesus' baptismal affirmation as the Father's Beloved (Luke 3:22), empowered by the Spirit (Luke 4:14). This is Jesus' *modus operandi* for ministry. Jesus works because he sees his Father at work (John 5:17), and because that work is the very food which sustains his spiritual vitality in ministry (John 4:34) and brings the Father glory (John 17:4).

[126] As a theological educator I find a deep enthusiasm for opening students up to broader vistas in theology, formation, reflection, paradigms for ministry and flourishing ways of being in the world. This is a God-given gift and one of the places in my life where I find myself most alive. At the same time, I note my tendency to want to 'run ahead' and to impart everything I think I know. I want to 'fix' students, and more so, appear competent and wise in their eyes. Repenting of this begins with a return to the security and significance of my belovedness. I have nothing to prove to the students with whom I work, but instead am called to be attentive to *their* journey, here and now, and respond to the Spirit's invitations to ways I might participate in Jesus' loving work in their journey as it intersects with mine. Sometimes this means saying nothing! It also means being open to how God is speaking to and shaping *me* in that encounter, for I too am 'on the Way'. It is freeing, then, to both graciously receive people in ministry encounters and travel with them for a time, but also to release them to continue their journey with the three mile an hour God.

[127] Eph 4:6. See Jean Stairs, "Ch 2. Contemplative Living: A Preventative and Restorative Approach," in *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 38.

owns particular concrete contexts. Thus, a sense of place evokes meaning in theological reflection since, notes Sheldrake, it "is one of the categories of human experience with the greatest impact on how we understand the world and situate ourselves in it … We come to know reality in terms of our experience of specific places."[128]

Place is more than mere location; it has significance, weight. A true place "invites active participation in the environment [which] implies a range of relationships between both people and the natural context." [129] Place speaks of identity, rootedness and belonging; to feel 'out of place' is to be in a liminal space, away from home. Place reflects commitments, values, memory and shared stories of human networks in relation to the material, both natural and constructed. These and more form the 'this-ness' of place within which these things—the focus of talking the walk—occur. Yet knowing as embedded within place does not constrict meaning-making to it; indeed, theology's core task is to lift our eyes to the bigger story encompassing our story. Participating in Christ's ministry, then, means befriending and participating in the richness of place within the larger context of God's grand purposes of *shalom*.

Third, *persons*. Ministry participates in God's work with individuals and communities within various places. How we view persons theologically shapes any meaning-making that involves them. "Do you see this woman?"[130] is Jesus' stinging question to Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7. Her embarrassing public act of devotion has disrupted Simon's hosting of the Rabbi. Yes, of course he sees her—they are likely not more than a few metres apart. But then, no, he does not see *her*. She is visible as an *it*, but invisible as a *you*. True, Luke identifies the woman in the story as a 'sinner'. Sin disrupts flourishing of self and others. But Jesus sees and gladly receives *her* as the beloved of God. This is his starting point.[131] Whatever a person's dysfunctionality, issues, brokenness or even outright rebelliousness, ministry in context begins with *imago Dei.*[132] *This* person *is* fashioned in

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[128] Philip Sheldrake, "Chapter 6: Place and the Sacred," in *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality, and the Urban* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 97.
[129] Sheldrake, "Chapter 6: Place and the Sacred," 97.
[130] Luke 7:44.
[131] In contrast, for some streams of Christianity that equate 'gospel' with *ordo salutis*, 'ministry' sees persons as a project to be managed from A (sinful, cut off from God) to B (going to heaven upon death), rather than a unique *you* with a story to be honoured and listened out to for God's person and presence already at work, there and then. It is hard to listen out to persons *as persons* when (with logs in our eyes) we act like the Bible begins at Genesis 1, not Genesis 3.
[132] I believe this claim but also recognise its challenge. I have experienced how difficult its embodiment can be. As we walked our families into the Adelaide Oval for an international cricket game one lovely summer's afternoon, my friend and I were having this very conversation: how might we participate in the mission of God differently if we viewed persons, first and foremost, as infinitely beloved? Taking our place on the grassy hill we inadvertently found ourselves

God's image, *is* God's beloved. *These* people *are* shaped for *shalom*. Moreover, it banks on *missio Dei*. "It is the Spirit of God who is already at work in the world," notes Buxton, "touching lives, revealing the life of God in situations of distress and hopelessness, *into whose agenda we are invited to participate*."[133] *Missio Dei* declares the absence of any 'no go' zones for the Spirit who in the incarnate Christ has entered into human experience to bring about God's saving work. Ministry in context, then, rests on Christ's work of *shalom* already present and active in the lives of persons within their particular place, and the Spirit's invitations to share in that ministry.

Listening out to ministry in context, then, is at the heart of contextual, practical (practi*sing*) theology. With the narration of these things laid before us, we contemplate God's work around us through befriending others and God's world. We walk in others' shoes, map the landscape surrounding these things, let the rubber hit the road. As the two disciples talk their walk along the Jerusalem–Emmaus road, they offer essential clues by detailing interactions with others: the women's story and apostles' astonishment, those who bolted to the tomb, memories and perceptions of Jesus, and the murderous actions of the religious authorities. They also provide the crucial, contextual backdrop: centuries of Israel's messianic hopes, pinned upon the prophet from Nazareth, now dashed. As we reflect upon these things, we too may carefully listen out to what God is saying in our intersection with others-in-context. Here are some forms such listening out might take.

We might listen out with bare feet. Place affirms the importance of materiality and our relation to it—natural and built, animate and inanimate, the bush and the city. Wright argues that "echoes of a voice"[134] of the new creation might be heard all around us now in yearnings for justice, the spiritual quest, relationships, and beauty—in short, for *shalom*. We can surely hear such echoes in the glory and groans of the non-human world as well as among people. Thus, theological reflection requires "an awareness of the bodily and material world at different levels of

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perched in front of some foul-mouthed fans, already well-lubricated before a ball had been bowled. The ferocity of mindless abuse at players and officials became personal when another spectator to my left happened to place her hand on their picnic rug. A tirade of attack ensued, to which I responded by turning around to plead for at least a modicum of decency. "WHAT ARE YOU F*#KING LOOKING AT, FOUR EYES?!" was what I received for my efforts at *shalom*-making. My safety and that of my family genuinely felt threatened. Fortunately, security moved them on soon enough. But that day my friend and I found our pleasant and hopeful theology of ministry severely tested in the furnace of *tentatio*. Of course, this tension is played out time and again, for instance, for those caught in the hell of domestic abuse, or persecuted for their faith. This reveals not only the importance but also the difficulty of talking our walk.

[133] Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 6.

[134] Wright, *Simply Christian*, chaps. 1–4.

engagement."[135] Barefoot listening is an embodied attentiveness to such echoes that "live[s] redemptively *in* the world because we are looking forward to experiencing it in all its glorious physicality, beauty, and fullness in the new creation of God's promise."[136] It sustains the interdependence between our creation *imago Dei* and *imago mundi*.

"To pay attention," says nature poet Mary Oliver, "this is our endless and proper work."[137] Often, though, this feels *un*natural.[138]

Figure 10: From *Overheard* by Oslo Davis[139]

[135] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 304. "Talk about God cannot be easily separated from discussions of place," explains Lane, because "[our landscapes play] a central role in constructing human subjectivity, including the way one envisions the holy. The place where we live tells us who we are—how we relate to other people, to the larger world around us, even to God." Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 22.

[136] Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 11. Buxton thus concludes that "to live fully human lives means that we are privileged to experience—at a deeply personal level—our own interconnectedness with all creation."

[137] Mary Oliver, "Yes! No!," in *New and Selected Poems, Volume 2* (Boston: Beacon, 2007).

[138] Lane comments: "The intimate connection between spirit and place is hard to grasp for those of us living in a post-Enlightenment technological society. Landscape and spirituality are not, for us, inevitably interwoven … Our concern is to move as quickly (and freely) as possible from one place to another. We are bereft of rituals that allow us to participate fully in the places we inhabit." Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 23.

[139] Oslo Davis, *Overheard: The Art of Eavesdropping*, Paperback edition. (Richmond, VIC: Hardie Grant Books, 2017), 18. Used by permission.

Our shod feet,[140] hustling along the tourist route, numb us to clues only noticeable when we stop to dig our toes into the sand. *Dadirri* seems foreign. Lane says that "without a *habitus*—particularly one that is drawn, at least in part, from the rhythm of the land around us—our habitat ceases to be a living partner in the pursuit of common wholeness."[141] Habitat, divorced from *habitus*, becomes an inconsequential background, rather than a credible voice of meaning. Listening out with bare feet, then, might begin with simply learning to notice how physical surrounds shape the interpretation of these things. A delicate pastoral care issue discussed in a cold and unwelcoming room, compared with sitting around a campfire, might well offer clues about the level of willingness to share openly. Climate, geography and setting can all affect how people think, feel and act together.

Moreover, we might discern echoes of (and resistance to) *shalom* in constructed and natural environments. For example, architecture and design are value-laden. They can enrich or diminish flourishing, include or exclude, connect or isolate, value or exploit, promote opulence, poverty or moderation. So too, the natural world speaks. I was blessed to hear many of her voices through my rural upbringing. I learnt of paschal rhythms in the seasons, sowing and harvest, drought and flood, carefree lambs who butted their mother's udders in the morning sunshine but could be taken by a fox that night. My *shalom* place is a creek crossing where I drove trucks at harvest, slashed thistles on hot summer days, searched for stock among the nooks and stroked the white gums' bark. During a drought, my brothers and I de-silted a dam near there and then slid nude down its muddy banks. Another time I was harvesting close by when a fire started and threatened to escape. My dad's ashes are scattered underneath an old windmill a bit further on, where he and mum had once thought of building a house—but never did. I take my kids down there now whenever I visit my mum. This *place* sang to me of God's command to serve and keep the earth;[142] of relationships forged through toil and play; of fecundity, ferocity and fragility in life

[140] This phrase is drawn from Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, *God's Grandeur*. I cite its first stanza and discuss it in the section on 'walking' in chapter four.

[141] Lane contends that unlike indigenous people, as Westerners "we experience no inescapable linkage between our 'place' and our way of conceiving the holy, between habitat and *habitus*, where one lives and how one practices a habit of being." Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 23. There are many writers, poets and theologians who are allies in helping us (re)connect with physical surrounds in contemplative conversation. Together with Lane, some I have found helpful have included McHugh, *The Listening Life*, chap. 5: Listening to Creation; Philip Sheldrake, *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality, and the Urban* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2014); Nash and Nash, *Tools for Reflective Ministry*, chap. 8: Reflecting with Nature; Margaret Silf, *Landscapes of Prayer: Finding God in Your World and Your Life* (Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2011); Mary Oliver, *Thirst: Poems* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2006).

[142] Gen 2:15. *âbad* is usually translated 'till', yet it is the same Hebrew word for 'serve'. We are to *serve* the earth, a far

and ministry. It sings to me still.

Figure 11: Back Creek Crossing at "High Plain", Holbrook, NSW[143]

Nowadays, listening out barefoot finds other avenues, including gardening, our dog Alfie, chopping wood for our fireplace, weekly walks up a nearby hill, and family holiday adventures. Soon after our Uluru encounter described in chapter four, we spent a day driving through the stunning McDonnell Ranges west of Alice Springs. With the winter sun deceptively warm on our backs, Ellery Creek Big Hole was too tempting for my boys; they had to wade in. I followed, though only dipping my feet! The frigid bite was brutal, and in that moment—surrounded by red rock—I absorbed such an unadulterated, gasping *life* in their faces. These photos evoke for me a penetrating, sacred memory. I see the cosmic Christ at play "in ten thousand places / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of [boy's] faces."[144] They etch within an enduring vision of a deeply earthed pilgrimage. They call me daily to repentance, back into an enlivened listening out with every painful and joyful, barefooted step.

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cry from crushing it. In the Aaronic blessing, we ask the Lord to 'bless and *shâmar*' us. We are to *keep* the earth in the same loving, caring and sustaining way the Lord keeps us.

[143] Photos mine.

[144] Gerard Manley Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2009), 129.

Figure 12: Noah, Micah, Micah's bare feet and a rock 'on fire' at Ellery Creek Big Hole, NT[145]

We might listen out with cultural intelligence. Place, as noted, means more than location. Its 'this-ness' comes from the interweaving of physical with non-material features such as identity, continuity, commitments, memory, shared stories and broader societal influences. Like those of Issachar "who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,"[146] employing cultural intelligence helps us listen out for clues to aid an understanding of the cultural contexts in society that surround experience. As noted in chapter three, culture is "a complex, integrated coping mechanism"[147] we (often unconsciously) employ to navigate life with efficacy and meaning. It encompasses the way things are (beliefs), what is important (desires) and how things work (practices) to inform what we make of the world—our contemplation and contemplation—according to a vision of the good life. Thus, cultural assumptions surround and form the 'this-ness' of place, within which these things—the focus of talking the walk—occur. Understanding culture in this way provides a crucial lens for meaning-making that both contemplates and cultivates beliefs, desires and practices.

When these things involve sharply felt difference, it may well be because of a 'clash of cultures' between people. What we make of the world can be quite different from one person or group to another. Such difference could involve conflict or simply feeling unable to relate. Here,

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[145] Photos by Sonia Hulme. Used by permission.
[146] 1 Chron 12:32.
[147] Kraft defines culture as "a complex, integrated coping mechanism, belonging to and operated by a society (social group), consisting of: 1. concepts and behavior that are patterned and learned; 2. underlying perspectives (worldview); [and] 3. resulting products, both nonmaterial (customs, rituals) and material (artefacts)." Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 39.

developing cultural intelligence becomes crucial. Cultural intelligence, "the capability to engage with different cultures,"[148] means carefully listening out to the forces that might shape others' coping mechanisms while befriending our own. This helps us look *critically at* rather than *obliviously through* cultural forces at play in these things.[149]

Depending on the nature of these things, cultural intelligence can consider a myriad of cultural contexts within society. For example, McAlpin includes

> the socioeconomic location, background, the historical-political reality, the sacredness of creation, geographic space and time, interpersonal dynamics, cultural values and symbols, myths, folklore, literature, art, and movements, and trends such as multiculturalism, postmodernism, and feminism.[150]

We might also note voices such as science and technology; psychology and philosophy; ethnicity, language and customs; religious assumptions, rituals and sacred texts; gender, sexual and generational identities.[151] All of these and more might contribute to cultural lenses that provide clues for contemplative conversation. The point is not to try and incorporate every possible aspect into reflection but to become attentive to which (if any) are worth pursuing. Churches concerned for refugees in their community will likely need to understand issues around economic injustice, immigration policy, trauma, housing and ethnicity. Pastors frustrated by COVID-19 lockdowns will need to think carefully about the church's relationship with the state, and its role and perception within society amidst a health crisis.[152] Psychology, social media trends, adolescent development and family of origin issues might influence parents' and children's struggle to connect. Addressing domestic violence in the church requires an understanding of how oppressive power structures function systemically within religious institutions to perpetuate injustice. Listening out with cultural intelligence wrests faith from the grasp of mere personal piety so we can grapple seriously with the gospel of the kingdom at work in the complex and concrete realities of God's world. It attends to how such forces manifest or resist *shalom*, and the invitations of the Spirit to

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[148] David Turnbull, "Clergy and Cultural Intelligence: A Study of the Foundational Capacity of Clergy to Function Effectively as Multicultural Leaders in Multiethnic Communities Within the Baptist and Uniting Church Denominations in South Australia" (Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, Flinders University, 2019), 35, https://theses.flinders.edu.au/view/8bbbc0fa-0376-4eb6-89b9-18c77ab08f21/1.

[149] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 56.

[150] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 15.

[151] Green's suggested areas of analysis include historical, geographical, social, economic, cultural and religious. Green, *Let's Do Theology*, chap. 4.

[152] I was fascinated to read this public Facebook post and the ensuing thread of discussion about one local church's insistence that Christians were being persecuted by not being allowed to meet in large groups due to government health restrictions. It makes for a fascinating case study in the sources from which people draw to do their theology and the reasoning they employ. https://www.facebook.com/familyvoiceaustralia/posts/2693991284034710

intelligently and practically participate in Christ's ministry of flourishing in God's world.

We might listen out with empathy. These things might not always involve significant interactions with other persons. But when they do, empathy can unlock critical clues for contemplative conversation. We miss God's whispers to us when we are unwilling or unable to imagine walking in their shoes along their labyrinthine track. We know something of the experience from our perspective, but what of theirs? Who are they, and what is their story? What do we know of their spirituality and personhood that might shed light on why they perceive and respond to these things the ways they do? How might their perspective speak (perhaps uncomfortable) truths back to us to which we are currently deaf?

Empathy is an act of remembrance—a movement rooted in God's compassionate, covenantal remembrance of us and all creation.[153] Thus to be empathetic is to share in this ministry. When people feel heard and understood as a result of our reflective practice, not just passed over, they receive God's care and value. *Imago Dei* shapes this remembrance. We listen out not to an *it* to be agreed or disagreed with, approved or disapproved of, boxed or dissected or dismissed.[154] Instead, God-given integrity imbues persons and their own unique stories. "Do you *see* this person?" Jesus' question is to us, too. Thus, *imago Dei* enables empathy that simply says 'You!'—then listens.[155] Empathetic listening then becomes an act of imagination "as we temporarily put on their clothes and live their lives, think their thoughts, hear with their ears and feel with their feelings. We are trying to understand their situation, insofar as it is possible, from

[153] Says Buxton: "We remember God, each other, and others in the world precisely because we have a God who remembers us." Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 12.

[154] One example is the so-called 'gay marriage debate'. For many Christians, this is 'an issue' to discuss and come to an opinion on. They do not personally know any gay people, nor have they really listened to their stories. They are unwilling to really place themselves in others' shoes and grapple with the complexities of same-sex orientation, because for them, some Bible verses simply settle the matter. Moreover, they have not thought about perhaps the most significant question: can a gay person follow Jesus? The answers range. 'No—they have to change first.' Or, 'Yes—but only if they 'repent' and at least try to change.' That is one end of the spectrum. A softer position might be along the lines of, 'Yes, certainly … though somewhere along the line they will need to grapple with a celibate life.' Such answers do not think through the implications of what this might really mean for a person, from a human, day to day perspective, in light of the gospel of grace. Such responses may roll off the tongue for the Christian who is a happily married heterosexual and has their needs for intimacy readily met, but they do not really listen out at all. Moreover, they miss the fundamentally important truth that persons of homosexual orientation are not an issue to be solved, but rather people to be understood and loved like any other. My point is not to argue one way or the other whether gay marriage manifests or inhibits *shalom*. Rather, in terms of *method*, I am doubtful that we can work through this with pastoral integrity and wisdom without engaging in a real empathetic listening out to people as part of the discerning process.

[155] This notion is reflected in Meek's assertion about the interpersoned nature of knowing in general. See Meek, *Loving to Know*, 476. I quote her words later in this chapter.

the inside out."[156] We transcend ourselves to enter, receive and hold the experience of others, without confusing it with our own.[157]

Moreover, *missio Dei* invites a *contemplative* empathy that further ponders how the Spirit might be present and active in others' lives, breathing *shalom* and calling them forward towards their true self-in-God. This flips us back to listening in: how might God be calling me to join in with this work? Where might I offer balm and hope in their brokenness, or affirm and encourage God's ministry of *shalom* through them?

Listening out with empathy is not easy. These things might hurt or enrage us, or we may have little to go on if we cannot directly engage with others involved. Truths revealed through others might emerge that confront us personally or rattle firmly held theologies. But the alternative is to be stuck in an echo chamber. Flourishing and growth, though often painful, is the whole point of theological reflection for holistic formation. Listening out with empathy enlarges our heart in ministry and grinds the edges off our theology with the nuance it often lacks.

We might listen out through ministry evaluation. Appraising *how* we participate in God's work with persons in specific places is crucial if we wish to live authentically and minister fruitfully. A hospital visit, an institutional restructure, a volatile leadership meeting, attempts to address homelessness, unexpected grief unearthed in a spiritual direction session, Christmas dinner with family!—such situations beckon a critical assessment of our *praxis* or value-laden action. A praxis approach refuses to accept the status quo or assumed norms for ministry practice; it resists how when all is said and done, there is usually more said than done. 'Robust *meditatio* and theological orthodoxy? Yes. Vital *oratio* and spiritual orthopathy? Absolutely. But how does the rubber of ministry hit the real road of *tentatio*? Does our orthopraxy effect real and lasting, *shalom*-shaped change? If not, why not? What practices, desires and beliefs need to be challenged and reimagined?' These are the primary concerns of praxis. Listening out through ministry evaluation with such honest questions can profit important (if uncomfortable) clues as we talk our walk to more faithfully walk our talk.[158]

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[156] McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 168.
[157] Benner, *Care of Souls*, 139.
[158] Buxton, as noted in chapter two, contends that pragmatism—closely linked to praxis—"invites us to think clearly about *practical consequences*: it proposes that a thing is meaningful if it leads to certain practical outcomes that have value, that make a measurable difference, in concrete human experience." Buxton, *An Uncertain Certainty*, 112. This sees theory-to-practice usurped in theological method. Instead, as Graham et al. explain, "*theology-in-action* … places primacy on *orthopraxis* (right action) rather than *orthodoxy* (right belief). This is more than simply another form of

Praxis-oriented reflection commonly employs the action-reflection or pastoral cycle, which has numerous iterations. This variance suggests that context plays a significant role in the ministry we choose to evaluate, and what criteria we use.[159] Talking the walk's emphasis is upon how our ministry in Christ (trans)forms the world, communities and persons in and towards the *telos* of *shalom*. To evaluate ministry amidst these things, then, we might contemplate how: reconciling relationships between God, people and creation are nurtured or disrupted; God's heart for justice and righteousness for the marginalised is furthered or retarded;[160] beauty and creativity through the Spirit is fostered or quashed; Christ's paschal rhythms that effect (trans)formational wholeness are embraced or curtailed.

Ministry evaluation with such questions is not straightforward. It is unlikely to yield the hard numbers we sometimes wish we could produce when people ask, 'So, how *are* things going?'[161] How do we answer that question with *shalom* for a plumbline? Perhaps a qualitative disposition is best where we notice, remember and retell stories, even small ones. Ultimately, of course, ministry is not ours to measure. Yet this does not diminish importance and value of evaluation and the clues it might offer for meaning-making. Pragmatic questions refuse to let us off the hook. They necessarily return us, again and again, to the practical embodiment of our participation in Jesus' ministry to *these* persons in *this* place. Jesus offers scant teaching or training before sending out the seventy-two in Luke 10:1–24, opting for just a few basic instructions. They learn through doing. Ministry evaluation and theologising only take place upon their excited return, deepening their formation in the life and work of their beloved Rabbi. Likewise, it is often only from within the crucible of ministry—where so much of our holistic (trans)formation occurs—that God gifts us with clues for contemplative conversation.

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applied theology in which systematic and historical theology provide norms for pastoral care or ethics. Rather, here, practice is both the origin and the end of theological reflection, and 'talk about God' cannot take place independent of a commitment to a struggle for human emancipation." Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 3709.

[159] For a helpful summary see Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, chap. 3; see also Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 3–7.

[160] As McAlpin asks, "Who benefits and who is burdened?" McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 129.

[161] The sorts of answers we automatically reach for in answering this question are very revealing. Typically we think in terms of numbers, which often leads to either pride or despair. It reveals what can be pragmatism's dark side: an identity driven by activism, productivity and perceived 'results', rather than one drawn from deep trust, abiding and fruitfulness in due season. As Ballard and Pritchard observe, in praxis approaches "there can be a tendency towards activism and a playing down of reflection and personal spirituality." Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, 72.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

> As you contemplate these things, *listen out to ministry in context* for clues—the place and persons connected to your participation in Jesus' work ('situational domain').
>
> *What might God be saying through others and the surrounding context?*
>
> It might help to contemplate any connections to: The physical environment, both constructed and natural; the possible influence of cultural, societal dynamics; any persons involved, their journey and their possible perspectives; an evaluation of your participation in Jesus' ministry.
>
> How was *shalom* manifest and inhibited for others in their particular place? What clues emerge? How do they 'trialogue' with other spiritual or theological clues?
>
> What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Listening Up to Wellsprings of Theology

Resonating trialogues in chapter two conceived theology as an exploration of beliefs and understandings that inform orthodoxy. Theology centres on studious attention to the story of God as revealed in the Scriptures and understood in the experience and reflections of Christians, historical and contemporary. It draws particularly upon cognition and the capacity for careful, critical reasoning. As *lex orandi* (the rule of faith), theology makes authoritative claims, and yet is necessarily contested and (trans)formed since it is contextually situated. This is *theologia viatorum* or the theologising of travellers, of wayfarers, of pilgrims—more verb than noun, more inhabited than inherited.

We draw normative clues for contemplative conversation's wending towards discernment from wellsprings of theology. Meek's insights lead me to prefer 'wellsprings' over the conventional term 'sources'.[162] 'Sources of theology' is suggestive of a static databank from which we dip into when we need some theological guidance. It places us in control, to a certain extent, and does not nurture the interpersonal nature of theological knowing that surprises, challenges and gives generously. 'Wellsprings', on the other hand, intimates the Spirit as theology's dynamic font.

[162] "Knowledge is not to be derived from sources, so much as graciously disclosed in response to covenantal candidacy. Here again we see how covenant epistemology transforms the very categories of epistemology. The question is not, where do I get knowledge, but how do I comport myself to invite it? *Source* is a word ill-fitted to express knowing that is construed as fundamentally transformation rather than information, as being apprehended rather than comprehending." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 417.

Theological wellsprings can nourish us along our journey if only we will rest awhile and position ourselves to drink. This reflects talking the walk's core desire "to put ourselves 'in the way of knowing' … to locate ourselves strategically so that we are where it may be apprehended, where we may see it when it discloses."[163]

The normative domain anchors our coming to know in guiding words, from *beyond* us—just as my fatherly wisdom for how bike riding works spoke the authoritative truth Micah needed in order to stay upright and moving. My eldest boy Josiah is soccer crazy. On game day, when his coach gathers the team and says, 'LISTEN UP!', why would teenage boys (mostly!) snap to attention? Because Seb's soccer-nous is way beyond theirs: he has played in Europe, coached many teams, has certified qualifications, and knows the game and its laws inside out. He also cares for them and knows how to help them flourish. The boys anticipate critical guidance they can trust because Seb speaks with loving authority. Similarly, God speaks covenantally through wisdom's call: 'Listen, if you have ears to hear! I have truth, perspective and critical correction regarding these things that will shape you, communities and the world for *shalom*. I have life-giving understanding and insight into the bigger picture, how you are called to act, and who you are called to become.' Thus 'listening up' to wellsprings of theology does not mean listening to 'God up there'. Instead, 'up' references how wise guides and normative words *overarch* our lives, speaking *to* us from *beyond* us. The normative dimension of theological clues thus "guides our struggle to know, and conceptually shapes it once held."[164] That is, the Spirit leads us into all truth,[165] and guides our attempts to name it.

Yet how is theology commonly conceived? Often, as dry and detached *thinking about God* reserved for professional academics. Or as a source of binding, correct answers to hotly debated topics. Or as inspiration and comfort for one's personal and private spiritual journey. At its worst, theology has been conscripted and weaponised into intellectual, doctrinal checkboxes to determine who is in and who is out.

To listen up, we need a robust yet animated and earthed revisioning of theology. Christian theology is undoubtedly concerned with rigorous thinking, wrestling through contested questions, individual nurture, and articulating core beliefs. But such sub-functions of theology must always be

[163] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 417. I discuss this further in chapter six in terms of positioning ourselves for discernment, rather than achieving it.
[164] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 79.
[165] John 16:13.

set within its larger, defining vocation: to faithfully proclaim God's sovereign, gracious *shalom*-shaped purposes for all creation, wooing hearers into Christ's Spirited life and work.

Coinherence insists such proclamation will be spiritually animated—nourishing, hydrated, soulful. Theology is marked by covenantal confidence and mystery, rather than detached certainty and mastery. Thielicke observes that "the first time someone spoke of God in the third person and therefore no longer with God but about God was that very moment when the question resounded, 'Did God really say?' (cf. Gen 3: I)."[166] Theology is thus not third-person, hyperrational thinking *about* God, but a first-person, relational thinking *with* God. Theological understanding thus forever unfolds within the context of experienced, covenantal relationship, ever re-forming what we make of the world. As noted in chapter two, with Williams we might see orthodoxy within our pilgrimage as "a landscape to inhabit with constant amazement and delight of the discovery opened up," rather than "a set of obligations to sign up to."[167] This does not mean theology is devoid of central tenets drawn from its wellsprings—chiefly, the drama of Scripture. But by necessity, it will always have an element of being 'under construction', just as Moltmann once reflected that for him "theology was, and still is, an adventure of ideas. It is an open, inviting path … The road emerged only as I walked it."[168] This means our theology, to a large degree, is always approximate and unfolding. And yet, it does not require constant hedging. I can say many things I know of Sonia, my wife, without ever claiming to have exhausted her wonder as a person. So with Luther we can declare "Here I stand, I can do no other!" yet be ever open to growth, for knowing opens up, rather than nails shut. This grounds theology in humility and wonder. As such, in Barth's words, we "are never dismissed from the wonder that forms the sound root of theology."[169]

Coinherence also insists theology's proclamation is ministerially earthed—contextual, practical, consequential. To many, theology seems entirely alien to complexities like #metoo, #BLM, widespread anxiety and depression, ecological fragility, shifting economic/sociological/geopolitical fault lines—or now, of course, COVID-19. Such turbulence, upheaval and suffering—personal, communal, cosmic—reinvigorate the spiritual quest for meaning, hope and wisdom beyond ourselves. Yet Christians seem to have little to say. Instead, we struggle to move beyond

[166] Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 34.
[167] "To What End Are We Made?," 11.
[168] Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), xv.
[169] Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, Annie Kinkead Warfield lectures 1962 (London: Collins, 1963), 65.

self-consuming bickering about theoretical dots and tittles. Unsurprisingly, many are cynical about theology's practical value. Yet authentic theology never occurs in a vacuum isolated from real people in space and time. It is not private opinion fashioned from or for ourselves. It is received from and formed by God in our thinking among others to embody *shalom* in God's world. It attends to the conditions of life 'on earth' in relation to the unconditional claims of God's Word 'as it is in heaven'.[170] The Word from beyond us addresses the agendas from around and within us. Thus, as Veling contends, "the theological task must be performed each and every time—not once and for all time."[171] Theology, then, is thinking with God among others in God's world. Theology's true coinhering nature thus renders divisions like 'spiritual theology' and 'contextual theology' as tautologies.

Listening up to wellsprings of theology, therefore, is a reasoned, animated and grounded search for truth and its articulation. With the narration of these things laid before us, we contemplate God's Word from beyond us through befriending trusted, authoritative guides. We seek wisdom and search for understanding,[172] listen afresh to trusted travel companions, think things through, indwell a bigger Story. After the two have talked their story while walking to Emmaus, they are captured by the authoritative wisdom that begins to flow from their Companion: he says that they are slow of heart to believe what the prophets have declared; that the Messiah had to suffer these things to enter his glory; and that there is an infinitely more hopeful interpretation on offer when the troubling events centred on himself are understood within God's larger story—a story to which all the Scriptures, starting with Moses and the prophets, attest.[173] Later, to the whole gathering of petrified disciples, he assures them of his physical reality, opens the Scriptures to reinterpret their dim understanding of God's paschal plan for *shalom*, and revisions their new life as witnesses, empowered by the Spirit.[174] With humility and pledged searching, acknowledging our limited understanding, we too may carefully listen up to what God might be saying through trusted wellsprings of wisdom. These reflect the commonly used Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

We might listen up to the drama of Scripture. The Christian Scriptures are theology's

[170] Veling, *Practical Theology*, 18.
[171] Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.
[172] E.g., Prov 4:7.
[173] Luke 24:26–27.
[174] Luke 24:36–49.

primary source of normative clues for contemplative conversation—'the norm that norms'.[175] What the Bible is and what we might do with it is a contested, complex discussion, but we can start with some common pitfalls. One is to take 2 Timothy 3:16–17[176] or 2 Peter 1:3–4,[177] for example, to mean that the Bible is a divinely dictated instruction manual holding all answers for all questions for all time.[178] This was McLaren's experience in his early years, where "systematic theology involved extracting verses from the Bible and assembling them into something that looked an awful lot like a legal constitution."[179] Invariably this results in proof-texting to bolster our confirmation bias. Perhaps more troublingly, though, we soon discover how the Bible is deathly silent on many things in life and ministry. And while overall it contains a coherent and unified thrust,[180] Brueggemann notes how it "is filled with contradictions, and the contradictions simply resist finding a formulation that can account for everything. So, it requires us … to take it seriously without imagining that it is going to deliver a package of certitudes."[181] Peterson also notes the temptation to read the Bible at a purely intellectual distance, reduce it to propaganda or information, or merely look for a moral blueprint or inspiration for living that serves personal whims.[182]

A priori, as Heywood observes, *the Bible itself* is an account of theological reflection:

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[175] It is beyond the scope of this research to explore the complex relationship between the authority of Scripture over the tradition and, in turn, the tradition's authority to bestow that status upon Scripture. I find myself closest to the position that McGrath articulates as a third option to just one or the other: "*The church and Bible belong together*, as an organic unity of community and text, making it impossible to allocate "authority" to either … Whether some place authority with the "people" and others with the "book," this locates the issue at their intersection: "people and book." This is not inconsistent with either of the previous two models, but sets each of them in an expanded context." Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Sixth edition. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 112.

[176] "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work."

[177] "[Jesus'] divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature."

[178] Hence one of my personally most loathed acronyms for the Scriptures: **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth.

[179] Peter Enns and Jared Byas, "Brian McLaren - The Bible as a Weapon," The Bible for Normal People, n.d., https://thebiblefornormalpeople.podbean.com/e/episode-42-barbara-brown-taylor-how-the-bible-is-curated/.

[180] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, Second edition. (London: SPCK, 2014), 13–14.

[181] Peter Enns and Jared Byas, "Walter Brueggemann - Resurrecting the Bible in The Mainline Church," The Bible for Normal People, n.d., https://thebiblefornormalpeople.podbean.com/e/episode-42-barbara-brown-taylor-how-the-bible-is-curated/.

[182] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 11, 23–35.

> a record of men and women asking such questions as: ‘Where is God in this situation?’, ‘How are we to understand our situation in the light of what we have been taught about the character of God?’, or ‘What is God’s call or demand in our situation?’[183]

Scripture is not a collection of ethereal dictums dropped from the sky for us to decode and ‘apply’ to our current situation. Instead, first and foremost, it witnesses to God moving and speaking in the existential experiences of real persons and communities, situated within real places and times. The wisdom literature at the heart of the Biblical narrative reflects this. It is both intensely personal (raw prayers in the Psalms, Job’s depths of suffering, the heights of human love in Song of Songs) and practically situated (how we treat our neighbours in Proverbs or make meaning of toil and wealth in Ecclesiastes). Scripture’s groundedness is also evident in the sacraments, where God’s holy presence comes to us in ordinary water, bread and wine. The shock of this—but also its logic—is that Scripture reveals how God’s transcendence comes through God’s immanence. God is holy—*other*—in the way that God is covenantally present—*near*. That is all we know of God; anything more is mere speculation. Seb’s authoritative words from beyond to Josiah and his teammates come not from an abstract coaching manual, but from his intimate knowledge—*as a player himself*—of both the soccer environment and his players’ felt body sense. So that is why Scripture holds particular, normative authority. This library of books does not contain some intrinsic magical power. Instead, its authority lies beyond itself, as a faithful witness to the transcendent God, revealed fully in the immanent Christ, through the animation of the Spirit: God *enfleshed* and God *in situ*, not God *in abstract theory.* The written Word points to the Incarnate Word. And what characterises this immanent revelation of Christ? The good life of God’s reconciliation, justice, beauty and paschal wholeness for all creation. Thus, far from a legal constitution to be administered, Scripture reveals—from right there on the pitch, mid-game—true wisdom for walking and talking along the way. Its normative wisdom is intertwined with its living invitation to join Christ in manifesting *shalom* in the real stuff of our pilgrimage, becoming more fully human in God’s broken yet beautiful world.

From this basis, listening up to the drama of Scripture—Scripture as *the Script*—presents a much more faithful and flourishing approach than those noted earlier. McGrath explains that “to approach theology from a narrative point of view is, potentially, to be much more faithful to Scripture itself than to take a more theoretical approach.”[184] Discussing a great play with others in

[183] Heywood, *Kingdom Learning*, 95.
[184] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 114.

the theatre's foyer is intriguing. We can delineate key themes and understand something of their connections to one another and the whole. We can arrive at language to help us talk more deftly about the play to others. That is what systematic theology helps us do with God's drama, and it serves us to a point. But too often Christianity has been conceived as cognitive assent to 'correct' interpretations of the play's themes or searching the script for inspirational titbits. This is no match for leaving the foyer, walking down the aisle together and stepping on stage *as actors within the shalom-shaped story itself*—living forgiveness in relationship with God and others, working for justice, creating beauty, embracing paschal wholeness. That is why, ultimately, the text is not to be dissected but indwelt, lived, 'eaten'.[185] And drama does that. In its performance it invites *peripateō* —to walk, act, do, live, be—in the *troth* of what becoming human looks like, as pockets of God's future reign manifest around and within us.[186]

Consider how this might transform our reading of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, for example. They cease to be moral advice, guidelines for ethical behaviour or 'the law' that reveals how rotten we are and thus how much we need Jesus. They become invitations to embody the good life of the gospel of the kingdom, as Christ's *shalom* spiritually animates and ministerially manifests through God's people in the shape of the cross, not the power of Caesar. Indwelling the Road via Emmaus story as the shape of reflective practice is another way the text might be lived, not just analysed. The drama of Scripture, then, leads us not "to see God in our stories but our stories in God's. God is the larger context and plot in which our stories find themselves."[187] Listening up to the drama of Scripture thus requires us to first enter into and be (trans)formed *by the Script* as the proper position to then notice potential normative clues *from the Script*. That is why the Bible, as the norm that norms, is our first port of call in listening up for normative clues; it (re)immerses us in the Script. *Solvitur ambulando*!

This requires careful listening to both the *form* and the *content* of Scripture.[188] Covenantal, relational, participatory reading of the Bible is thus by no means ignorant of or 'beyond' solid

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[185] As per Peterson's heavy usage of Revelation 10:9–10 in Peterson, *Eat This Book*.

[186] Heywood explains: "Because so much of the Bible is itself theological reflection, the record of God's people seeking to respond to God's call in the circumstances of their time, it is ideally suited to be the means through which that process of reflection continues today. But because God's rule is dynamic, still in the process of bringing about the full acknowledgement of his authority, the Bible is far more than a record, far more than simply true information about God's nature and purposes. It is an invitation to join him in the work of the Kingdom: to see the world from his point of view and to allow him to take over our lives and use them for his purpose." Heywood, *Kingdom Learning*, 101–2.

[187] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 44.

[188] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 43.

exegesis, for "without exegesis, spirituality gets sappy, soupy [and] … self-indulgent."[189] On the contrary, exegesis is "an act of love. It loves the one who speaks the words enough to want to get the words right."[190] "Great lovers make great knowers," says Meek.[191] Initially, 'these things' may lead us to question the text, but ultimately, we are the ones addressed by it. As such, "exegesis is a sustained act of humility,"[192] because, in Barth's words, it demands we position ourselves with "utter loyalty" to the text and what the authors are trying to say.[193]

This is a risky business! Can we get it wrong? Of course. Normative wisdom is interpreted—and thus fallible—just as much as are clues from existential and situational domains. But that is the wonder of coming to know! Josiah and his teammates carefully listen to Seb's words but always have to interpret them, as faithfully as they can, for *themselves*, in *this particular game.* What, then, of disagreement between fellow sojourners in interpretation? It is part and parcel of coming to know. Indeed, the opaque contradictions within Scripture itself encourage enlivened wrestling with ambiguity rather than bland (but incongruous) harmonisation. God's Word is inspired by the Spirit, yes. But at least six levels of human involvement in the Bible's curation, before it even lands in our hands, also suggest that God more than welcomes our intimate involvement. Interpreting the Bible is part of our responsible human struggle of coming to know how normative clues might speak divine wisdom.[194] This sees the Bible reframed from a constitution to a conversation. It invites covenantally-shaped tussle and disagreement with a

[189] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 58.
[190] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 55.
[191] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 400.
[192] Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 57. He comments: "Exegesis does not mean mastering the text, it means submitting to it as it is given to us. Exegesis doesn't take charge of the text and impose superior knowledge on it; it enters the world of the text and lets the text 'read' us."
[193] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns, Sixth edition. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 17.
[194] Teacher and Episcopal priest Barbara Brown-Taylor highlights the "human fingerprints" to be found throughout the processes of how the Scriptures, which we may claim as 'authoritative', come to us. She calls this the 'curation' of the Bible, pointing to at least six levels of human decision making: by the original story tellers regarding what from their experience to include (and what not); by the early church leaders (only by about the fourth century) regarding what books constitute the canon; by the copyists who sometimes also edited as they copied; by scholars who decided upon the most reliable copies from which to work; by translators regarding how to render the original languages from those transcripts into contemporary idiom; and by faith traditions and communities regarding which translations to preference. This, all before we as individuals in community begin, usually unwittingly, to curate our own canon within a canon. Her point is not create doubt in the Spirit's guiding hand, but rather point to the way in which this invites both humility in how we engage with the text, particularly with others coming from different perspectives, and awe regarding God's trust in humans' intimate involvement in such curation. Peter Enns and Jared Byas, "Barbara Brown Taylor - How the Bible Is Curated," The Bible for Normal People, n.d., https://thebiblefornormalpeople.podbean.com/e/episode-42-barbara-brown-taylor-how-the-bible-is-curated/.

plurality of perspectives, rather than combative point-scoring or uniform alignment.[195]

What might this all mean for listening up to the drama of Scripture? Graham et al. lament how "theological reflection is often weak in its use of traditional sources." They cite Walton who contends that there exists a "paucity or complete absence of guidelines on how the Bible and Christian tradition are to be used in theological reflection."[196] Talking the walk's hermeneutic for normative clues in Scripture—which we might adapt for the three other wellsprings of theology discussed below—might be summarised, for students, as follows:

- *Live the Script:* The more you befriend and enter *into* the Script, indwelling its broad movements and particular features, the more readily helpful normative clues for holistic reflection will come to mind when needed. This is a lifelong practice and always the baseline to which we return. Keep indwelling the Story, in any way you can!
- *Notice:* With these things before you, be still and notice what Bible verses/ passages/books/stories/characters/themes come to mind. What do other sojourners suggest? Take the arrival of these clues seriously as invitations from the Spirit to indwell them further.
- *Listen In*: Before you listen up, *listen in* to what and how you tend to think about these Scriptural clues. What are your assumptions? Then gently release any embedded interpretations that might tend towards proof-texting to support confirmation bias.
- *Listen Up:* Let your Scriptural clues speak afresh on their terms. Stay loyal to the text and its authors by employing the best exegetical skills you have. Listen up faithfully and attentively to both form and content. Don't get stuck on the first clue; be open to others presenting themselves as you go.
- *Listen With:* Listening up to Scripture is best done with pledged sojourners (rather than combatants) so that disagreement can be constructive. Adopt, for instance, Killen and de Beer's standpoint of exploration that fosters genuine appreciation between others' and your perspectives.
- *Shalom:* Your overarching question is this: in what ways do my interpretations and their fruit manifest or inhibit God's good life of *shalom* for our world, communities and selves?

[195] "Part of any conversation is arguments; if everybody's saying the same thing that's not a conversation, that's just an echo chamber. But if we take the Bible as a conversation over many, many centuries, with people who have certain things in common but other things that are deeply different, and we take seriously their arguments and tensions and disagreements, suddenly the Bible becomes not a constitution that gives certainty, but an incredible library that gives us challenge to think and gives us examples of how thinking changes over time, including thinking about God." Enns and Byas, "The Bible as a Weapon."

[196] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, loc. 261.

I have given reasonable attention to listening up to the drama of Scripture because, while all four wellsprings of normative theological wisdom coinhere one another in various ways, God's drama provides the critical frame of reference for the other three.

We might listen up to communal wisdom. This can be drawn from a wide variety of sources.

One is often called the 'tradition', 'Christian tradition' or 'religious tradition', which can collectively refer to all wellsprings of theology, including Scripture.[197] Yet within the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, tradition means *fides quae*—'the faith that is believed'—as understood by and belonging to the church catholic, developed over the centuries.[198] Christians have long wrestled with what constitutes the Script's fundamental normative beliefs, dispositions and behaviours from myriad standpoints and circumstances. McGrath thus notes that "'tradition' implies not merely something that is handed down but an active process of reflection by which theological or spiritual insights are valued, assessed, and transmitted from one generation to another."[199] Tradition is always a *living* tradition. Thus, while it certainly draws upon historical and systematic theology—writings, figures, councils, teachings—tradition is also the fruit of prior and ongoing theological reflection of denominations, congregations, or even the wisdom of Christian friends, shared over coffee and conversation. We can listen up to fellow sojourners—individuals or communities, past or present, local or global—whose perspectives from beyond us speak to these things, offering clues for our contemplative conversation. The challenge in befriending the tradition, as the Whiteheads note, is its pluriformity and ambiguity.[200] We turn to some and discount others out of our experience of trusted wise guides, but also, often, out of fear,

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[197] E.g., Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 55–56, including "authoritative Scriptures, doctrinal teachings, stories of denominational heores and heroines, saints, church history, official church documents, and the like."; Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, chap. 2, which centres on Scripture but acknowledges broader voices.

[198] This contrasts with yet is intimately connected to the existential *fides qua*, 'the faith *with which* one believes'. That is, "May God strengthen you in *the* faith" is *fides quae*, whereas "May God strengthen you in *your* faith" is *fides qua*. An example of *fides quae* is 1 Cor 16:13: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." See also 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 1:23, 3:23; Eph 4:13; Phil 1:25, 1:27; Col 2:7; 1 Tim 1:2, 1:19, 3:9, 4:6, 5:8, 6:10, 6:12, 6:21; 2 Tim 3:8; Titus 3:15; Phlm 1:6; Heb 4:2, 4:14. An example of *fides qua* is 1 Tim 1:14: "The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." See also Rom 4:12, 4:16, 12:3; Col 1:5; 1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 2:18. In the New Testament the usage of 'faith' (πίστις/*pistis*) frequently alternates between the two and is even ambiguous at times, reflecting spirituality and theology's interdependence. E.g., "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness" (Titus 1:1); and "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). See Mark Henderson, "Fides Qua, Fides Quae," *Glosses From An Old Manse: Notes on the Margins of Theology & Church Life*, 26 December 2009, http://acroamaticus.blogspot.com.au/2009/12/fides-qua-fides-quae.html.

[199] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 124.

[200] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 7–9.

judgement, ignorance or a standpoint of self-assurance. Learning how to listen up to and question both familiar and unfamiliar voices in the tradition, as they promote or inhibit the Script's *shalom*, is in itself an exercise that further strengthens our reflective muscles.

Other religious traditions and indigenous spiritualities, for whom questions of life and meaning have long been grappled with, may also provide valuable wisdom and insight. This thesis' use of *dadirri* (chapter four) and Kintsugi (chapter seven) are two examples. Moreover, echoes of *shalom* may be found in science and technology, philosophy, literature, the creative arts, history, sport, politics, economics and so on. Extreme Christian dualism locates the kingdom of God within the church alone, compartmentalising faith according to the sacred–secular divide. It thus treats such voices with suspicion as being 'of this world' with little or no normative value theologically. But if God is creator and Lord of all, then God can whisper important clues through all.[201] All truth is God's truth. Holistic pastoral care for those afflicted with mental health struggles, for example, needs medical insight, not just Bible verses. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse speaks painful but needed truths to contemporary Christian thought, practice and character. Critically, though, clues may manifest much needed prophetic critique in the reverse direction from a Christian, *shalom*-shaped perspective. A clue may present itself precisely because the pervading voices of 'the world' cut against the grain of *shalom*. Normative theological clues, then, will be malformed if communal wisdom from society is either dualistically shunned, or uncritically embraced. As with tradition, these resources are pluriform and are often confusing to navigate, but that challenge is part and parcel of how *habitus* helps us become salt and light through genuine listening conversation—in our place, in our skin.

We might listen up to robust thinking. Reason and the intellect in theology seem to lean towards one of two extremes.

The first is disdain. A Christian men's camp I once attended included wonderful teaching and fellowship but was frequented by admonitions to get past our 'head' to our 'heart' where the real stuff was. I understood the encouragement to be vulnerable but was struck by the irony: that persistent exhortation was itself a (not so well) reasoned piece of theology from the 'head'. The invitation to authenticity need not have viewed the intellect as its enemy. No one benefits from sloppy thinking. The derision of thought as an essential dimension of discipleship reveals a

[201] See especially Graham Buxton, *Celebrating Life: Beyond the Sacred-Secular Divide* (London, UK: Paternoster, 2007).

fractured anthropology. It diminishes the command to love God with one's mind,[202] the (trans)formation that comes through the renewing of the mind,[203] the mystery of having the mind of Christ,[204] and the call to mature in our thinking.[205]

The other extreme is infatuation. I often ask students new to theological study, 'Why are you here?' Answers vary but usually at least one student declares something like, 'I am here to learn how to rightly divide the word of truth'.[206] A desire for careful exegesis and robust theology is crucial. Yet, it can become a rigid vision, so enamoured with reason that it threatens to suck theology towards merely thinking *about* God. Theology, in Barth's words, "is the logic of wonders."[207] Infatuation contorts it into the wonders of logic. To borrow from Thielicke, this is like the "theological puberty"[208] or "pathology of the young theologian's conceit"[209] which often surges within when we clutch our first fistful of Greek words, historical perspectives and theological terms. There is no quicker way to weaponise theology.

Listening up to robust thinking counters both excesses. Reasoned processes that resist sentimentality will spawn clues for contemplative conversation that welcome critical examination from beyond. Robust thinking's internal structure is secure enough to hear others or ourselves say, 'On balance, that idea does not stack up; rework your thinking'. On the other hand, it will retain a humanity that is not obsessed with infallible rationalist argument. Whereas rigid thinking is brittle, robust thinking draws fortitude from being flexed, like a tree gaining strength through its bending in the wind. Using Whitehead's imagery, it is like a child's playful leap.[210] Firstly, the leap arises out of impulsive delight for its own sake; robust thinking carries its own spiritual aesthetic. Secondly, the leap pushes against gravity; robust thinking "test[s] the limits and explore[s] the limited mobility of our Christian lives,"[211] explores the leeway between gospel and experience, and makes room for mystery, ambiguity and paradox. Finally, the leap includes falling back to earth; robust thinking embraces 'failure' and falling gracefully, so one can leap again and again with the same

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[202] Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30.
[203] Rom 12:2.
[204] 1 Cor 2:16.
[205] 1 Cor 14:20.
[206] A reference to the KJV rendering of 2 Tim 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
[207] Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 66.
[208] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 12.
[209] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 16.
[210] Whitehead, "The Practical Play of Theology."
[211] Whitehead, "The Practical Play of Theology," 49.

enthusiasm, but more muscle memory and wisdom each time.

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[212]

We might listen up to gathered experience. Experience speaks to us from beyond in that it happens *to* us. When aged thirteen, my father's death arrived unbidden in my life. Yet though extremely painful, it has been a constant source of God's instructive voice ever since in so many ways. Even when we seek out experiences, we are not in control of their unfolding. We may think we know how they will turn out and what they will say to us, but such assumptions can numb us to their surprising gifts. This is precisely why attentiveness and *habitus* are so central to walking well. Challenges in the topography are bound to reappear; each one is a learning for the next. Gathered experience is, perhaps, like common sense. 'If you get hurt but refuse to forgive, the bitterness and resentment will likely eat you up and hurt others'. We could glean this truth from Ephesians 4:26 or Hebrews 12:15, but equally, from what life generally attests to be true.

This tells us that gathered experience, as a source for clues in our coming to know, is also "*fraught with intimations … of the interpersoned*."[213] To listen up to our gathered experience is to bear the fruit of *habitus* as it speaks normatively. It needs to be understood and interpreted in light of living the Script, reasoned out, and informed by others' voices. But as a teacher, life is a voice that overarches us and through reminding us of past steps, calls us forward on our life's road.

Listening up to gathered experience is thus an appropriate place to conclude listening up to wellsprings of theology, because its experiential emphasis loops us back around to where our exploration of the trialogue in contemplative conversation began, with spirituality and personhood.

[212] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 32.
[213] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

> As you contemplate these things, *listen up to wellsprings of theology* for clues—trusted, authoritative voices for understanding the Father's loving truth ('normative domain').
>
> *What might God be saying through words of guidance and wisdom?*
>
> It might help to contemplate any possible connections to: relevant Bible verses/ passages/books/stories/characters/themes; communal wisdom from both the Christian tradition past and present, and broader society; robust thinking that is open to both critical examination and the mystery and adventure of ideas; common sense from accumulated, gathered experience.
>
> How is *shalom* manifest or inhibited in your interpretations and their likely fruit? What clues emerge? How do they 'trialogue' with other spiritual or ministerial clues?
>
> What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Trialoguing

When explaining the interaction of clues from existential, situational and normative domains in knowing, Meek speaks of *triangulating* between them "rhythmically from one corner of the triad to another, implicating each other in an unfolding, recurring way."[214] I posit *trialoguing* as a richer term. It enhances our relying on clues with the interpersoned image of lively and life-giving conversation between persons. Genuine conversation is coinhering—clues from each domain only fully come to life in service of discernment through dynamic (if contested) exchange with one another.

In that terrifying moment which threatens a harsh meeting between body and gravel, Micah—somehow! remarkably!—integrates the complex functioning of self within his body, the rusty bike wobbling dangerously through the potholed world around him, and my sage words from beyond. Each dimension informs and shapes the others, such that he pedals faster, corrects his balance, navigates the impending pothole, and stays upright. *Shalom*! He has come to know, and I smile—my wisdom was timely and true!

Though in slow motion, trialoguing is like that. In contemplative conversation, we notice and indwell subsidiary clues, though there are always so many more at play than we can

[214] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 82.

articulate—an indeterminate number, in fact. But in so doing, we give ourselves a decent shot at 'placing ourselves on the path' of discernment. There are no guarantees of a focal pattern emerging, but we can position ourselves to receive what might be gifted to us by working with what we can access. Consider the intersection of normative words I know about forgiving one's enemies (maybe a Bible verse, or advice from others), my inner feelings of hurt conflicting with my deep desire to forgive (maybe a knot in my gut, or a heaviness in my praying), and my offender's actions together in light of their backstory (maybe a spiteful word, perhaps reflecting their own wounding). The potential of each set of clues in isolation is limited. But in trialoguing between them—back and forth, in and out, listening and responding—rich possibilities for (trans)formative discernment exist. I understand forgiveness more deeply, release the offender and myself, and am formed more deeply as a forgiving person. It is in this way that contemplative conversation trialogues, in non-linear fashion, between the particulars of subsidiary clues from each domain, towards the larger focal pattern their connections are forming on the labyrinthine path to discernment.

More profoundly, in each of the trialogue's domains, we also notice subtle yet playful echoes of the Trinity. We listen in to the Spirit's person and presence, immanently shaping our spiritual and personal pilgrimage towards *shalom*. We listen out for Christ's ongoing ministry of *shalom* in God's world, ever at work in the contextual space we inhabit and in the lives of fellow sojourners. And we listen up to God's grand, norming Script for all creation through the theological wellsprings of wisdom that guide and recalibrate our lives towards the gospel of the kingdom, embodied as *shalom.* If within the coinhering trialogue we might also notice a corresponding dynamic of Trinitarian *perichōresis* at work, we should not be surprised. For God's perichoretic self is love, and love is the heartbeat of coinhering knowing that is interpersoned and always unfolding.

I am quite aware of how the depth, breadth and complexity of trialoguing in contemplative conversation, as presented in this chapter, can look overwhelming, especially for a student first learning about theological reflection. The coinhering dynamic at play means boundaries within and between these three modes of listening are blurred. Moreover, my survey of each domain is by no means exhaustive. There are vast possibilities for clues in listening in, out and up, and not all domains will be equally prominent in every experience brought to reflection. Various personalities and learning styles will also respond differently to what I am proposing. The intent, though, is to open a vista for theological reflection that contemplates holistic formation at whatever level of

competency we find ourselves, with only those clues that are relevant for us. In its most basic expression, talking the walk is about connecting faith and life through conversation, discernment and embodiment. My young boys and I can manage that easily enough on a walk to school. Trialoguing, though, provides an entrée, a way in, to deeper and broader levels of contemplative reflection to help pilgrims mature in their discerning and, in turn, their embodied walking after Jesus.

Moreover, we can now look back and see how contemplative conversation is thoroughly infused with the animating presence of the Holy Spirit, breathing *shalom*. God's Spirit: draws us to further reflect upon these things in the first place; indwells our spiritual soulscape and enlivens through body, relationality, affect and personality; invites and enables our participation in Christ's contextual ministry in nature and society, persons and our engagement with them; inspires and helps us articulate the theological truth of God's reign revealed in the drama of Scripture, communal wisdom, robust thinking and gathered experience. This is what I mean by claiming that in contemplative conversation, *the Spirit listens us into speech.* Thus, we can take heart from Stone and Duke's assurance that "we are called only to do the best we can, given who and where we are,"[215] because the Spirit is present at every turn. Moving towards discernment through joining the dots is one of the thrills of being human. Wherever we are on our pilgrimage, the Spirit's work of (trans)formation includes deepening us in that capacity.

Conclusion

Talking the walk's method begins with contemplative conversation along the Emmaus Labyrinth's inward journey that is pilgrimed, non-linear and shaped by the trialogue. First, we identify these things which tug at us and then begin to listen by narrating them as best as we can. Then, with a *dadirri*-like patient attentiveness, we can notice and indwell possible clues in three ways.

We can *listen in to spirituality and personhood*, exploring existential realities such as body, relationality, affect and personality. This reaffirms the importance of the person, indwelt by the Spirit, in the act of knowing. We can *listen out to ministry in context*, probing situational realities with bare feet, cultural intelligence, empathy and ministry evaluation. This employs Christocentric theologies of participation, place and person. And we can *listen up to wellsprings of theology*, attending to normative guidance from the drama of Scripture, communal wisdom, robust thinking

[215] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 5.

and gathered experience. This necessitates an animated and earthed approach to accessing and understanding God's truth.

Interweaving clues from each domain—*trialoguing*—draws upon a virtuosity developed over time by the Spirit's work in us that never gets the luxury of arriving at a sure-fire method. Each new contemplative conversation unfolds uniquely, even if resonance exists with previous knowing adventures. Yet gradually, we develop a *habitus* for listening in, out and up for clues in ways that intuitively focus on the coherent pattern emerging between them. With a tacit, burning-hearts sense of being on the cusp of knowing, we follow our longing and loving to know, urging the Companion to stay and dine with us. This is the etiquette of placing ourselves in the path of discernment to encounter the real. The nature and experience of such convergence, the imagination's catalytic role and the naming of discerned truths is the focus of chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX
IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT

	to rely on clues
Knowing is the responsible human struggle	***to focus on a coherent pattern***
	and submit to its reality

Esther Meek[1]

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight.

Luke 24:30–31

A small, shy truth arrives. Arrives from without and within. Arrives and is born.

Michael Leunig[2]

Plain language definitions can help students grasp what theological reflection is and involves. One I have often used is that theological reflection connects experience and faith, and lives the implications. It is simple and effective, yet I have come to recognise a limitation: it obscures the centre of theological reflection.[3] For contemplative conversation connects clues from within, around and beyond; the Spirit listens us into speech as we contemplate holistic formation in and towards *shalom*. That was chapter five. And courageous embodiment wholeheartedly lives the implications in thought, passion and action; the Spirit encourages our cultivation of holistic formation in and towards *shalom*. That will be chapter seven. But what of the space in between the connecting and the living—*the experience itself* of coming to know? When an emerging focal pattern—weightier than the particular clues themselves but dependent upon them—dawns upon us? When implications crystallise? When our eyes are opened to recognise reality, like the disciples with Jesus at the Emmaus meal table?

I term that centre, *discernment*. While discernment can encapsulate the reflective process as a whole, it also specifies the phenomenology of coming to know.[4] In the theological reflection

[1] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13, formatting mine.
[2] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 66.
[3] I still think the definition is helpful pedagogically, and moreover, I have resisted returning to earlier in the thesis to modify it. I trust this conveys the sense of journey that has often marked my research, commensurate with what the project itself is trying to convey. Indeed, for me a strong attraction of Meek's methodology is that she is happy to reveal the progression and modification of her thinking as she goes, rather than try and hide it. This is knowing that is always 'on the way'.
[4] Surprisingly, as an explicitly identifiable step, the term 'discernment' seems largely absent in theological reflection models, though it is often included within general discussion. One notable exception is Collins' charismatic and

literature this connects with the transforming moment,[5] interillumination or bisociation,[6] ongoing conversion,[7] meaning,[8] the *kairos* moment,[9] reflection[10] or assertion.[11] It might elicit an utterance of 'Aha!', 'I see it!', 'Eureka!', 'Oh!'—or, equally, 'Oh no!' It might be a revelation, an epiphany, a light bulb moment, the penny dropping or the gentle and slow arrival of "a small, shy truth."[12] Whatever the experience and however we might describe it, this experience of joining the dots to perceive something larger, deeper and richer is central to knowing. Yet in theological reflection models, it often remains understated, assumed or even absent altogether. Meek contends that the Western defective epistemic default does not acknowledge how this felt sense signals the way knowing works. "The knowledge-as-information approach hasn't recognized this integrative shift that lies at the heart of the knowing event. It hasn't occurred to us to shape our knowing by its guidance, or to invite it in love and pledge."[13] Moreover, the catalytic role of the imagination in this pivot point is often treated with suspicion or even outright denial; Meek contends "our default mode [of Western knowing] prevents us from seeing the central transformative role of the imagination in rationality."[14] Without that creative, integrative shift, though, there can be neither the connection of clues nor any implications to live out. Imaginative discernment, then, interlocks contemplative conversation and courageous embodiment as its own identifiable movement. Deep in the Emmaus Labyrinth's receptive centre, it exhibits the covenantal and creative gift of coming to know so that we might name discerned truths to further embody shalom. Its nature and dynamics are worth befriending if we wish to develop as disciples who talk our walk as we learn to

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evangelical five step model: Scripture, testimony, encounter, discernment, participation. She identifies theological reflection as a spiritual discipline of discernment in community. Collins, *Reordering Theological Reflection*, chap. 6. Wood does use the language of discernment in his approach, although in a different sense where theological reflection oscillates between the big picture of vision and the particulars of discernment. "Paying attention theologically involves 'seeing things whole': making connections, understanding how things hang together, seeking coherence—the work of synthesis. This is vision. It also involves seeing particular things in their particularity, and not letting them be 'interpreted away'; understanding, and respecting differences; caring for the details—the work of analysis. This is discernment. These two modalities of perception and judgment are not independent of each other. They require each other." Wood and Blue, *Attentive to God*, 16; See also Wood, *Vision and Discernment*.

[5] James Edwin Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1981).

[6] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 105.

[7] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 35.

[8] Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*.

[9] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, chap. 5: God, Gaps and Glory: The Kairos Moment.

[10] Green, *Let's Do Theology*.

[11] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*.

[12] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 66.

[13] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 64.

[14] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 470.

walk our talk.

This chapter, then, begins with foundations for knowing at the heart of the Emmaus Labyrinth, in which we focus on a coherent pattern through imaginative discernment. I then explore the modes, nature and experience of discernment, and an etiquette we might practice to position ourselves for its reception. Third, I suggest how the Spirit gifts imagination to catalyse discernment of the now and the not yet. I then conclude with reflections on naming discerned truths and the formational significance of getting it 'wrong'. I include summaries for a critical experience report. Imaginative discernment thus forms the second contour of talking the walk's method and is this chapter's original contribution to knowledge.

Knowing at the Receptive Centre of the Emmaus Labyrinth

Imaginative discernment, at the heart of the Emmaus Labyrinth, has three epistemological footings.

Discernment is Interpersoned Contact with Reality

Whether sudden or gradual, subtle or grand, knowing is contact with reality. It is imbued with gift, which points to Polanyi's interpersoned nature of knowing upon which covenant realism rests. Covenant realism "professes with conviction that the real is there, and that there is something compelling, hauntingly personal about it, especially if you treat it that way."[15] The real we seek to know is not passive data awaiting our control. Rather, it is 'personed' in the way it piques our longing from the outset and draws us forward into knowing through covenantal, pledged response. Knowing is 'shot-through' or "*fraught with intimations of the personed—actually, of the interpersoned* … [K]nowing displays telltale features that could only be present if *a person, or persons in relationship, is, or are, in the vicinity*."[16]

As such, it is not us as knowers, but rather the known, that is the 'prior person'. Contact with reality is more the gracious intrusion of the Other into our lives, than our discovery of a thing. Theologically, this is the language of grace. God seems to respond to our seeking and discerning, but in time we may come to recognise it was in fact, God seeking us. "Reality breaks in, generously, especially, but not necessarily, when invited. It breaks in often not as what was explicitly expected ... Basic knowledge is not, first, my knowing; it is first my *being known* by the

[15] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 400.
[16] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 45.

Other."[17] Therefore, in any discerning experience, the satisfaction of achievement ('I *see* it!') is subsumed within the greater wonder of reception ('I am *seen*!'). Contact with reality manifests in three ways.[18]

The first is the profundity of the pattern we have received and how it reinterprets, in hindsight, the indwelt clues. Through their non-linear integration, the pattern transforms them in ways we simply could not manufacture ourselves. We know this when, for example, a Bible passage or story 'leaps out of the page' because it connects with our situation and soulscape in new ways. Though we might have read it many times prior, we see it now with fresh eyes; it is unlikely we will ever read it in the same way again. The pattern is also "bigger than a simple answer to our question; it reshapes our question—or questions us."[19] We see this in the two disciples at the Emmaus table whose eyes have been opened to recognise Jesus. The terrible events of recent days, Jesus' teaching about himself, Israel's story, the women's witness to the empty tomb, 'dead people stay dead', their sad story told to the Companion and his magnetic response—they look back at these clues (and more) with different eyes. *Retrospectively*, the now of the situation and all that led to it is completely reframed. Often, we cannot map how this happens for us, nor replicate a set method for future knowing; our 'Aha!' simply indicates that we know we now see things differently.[20] The Spirit opens our eyes to see the real.

The second indicator is the vast expanse of future possibilities that the pattern generously offers—what Meek calls, 'indeterminate future manifestations'—since "a good integrative pattern is fraught with promise."[21] Though we cannot name all possible implications, we get glimpses of what could be. The disciples' urgent return to Jerusalem indicates a new world has opened up for

[17] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 246.
[18] Most overtly, following Polanyi, Meek lists two criteria: retrospectively, the profundity of the pattern we have attained, and prospectively, the vastness of new vistas and possibilities that open up, far beyond what we can articulate. E.g., see Meek, *Loving to Know*, 422. However, she also consistently affirms that knowing is therapeutic and for *shalom* and flourishing, e.g., Meek, *Loving to Know*, 422–23. I believe we can take this to be a critical third criterion in and of itself.
[19] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 66.
[20] That is, while we can learn from endeavours in theological reflection, we cannot pin down a method for how it will work each time. This is what I hope the Emmaus Labyrinth's design communicates, for it offers a basic shape and yet fully acknowledges the twists and turns each reflective adventure takes. Meek comments: "The central thrust of knowing is neither linear nor deductive, although later it is often possible to construct a partial account of it that is. A step-by-step articulated procedure may be one of the tools we offer other people to help them into the pattern. Linearity in presentation is helpful, not because it constitutes learning, but because it prompts it. But if we take this linear procedure to be identical with knowledge or knowing, we commit a tempting, but massively damaging, mistake. In our penchant for the security of epistemic certainty, this mistake produces a defective epistemological vision of knowledge as statements and proofs. The human act of knowing is more aptly understood as an amazing feat of skill, much like learning to keep one's balance on a bike." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 73.
[21] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 68.

them, previously unimaginable, that they now begin to live into, albeit with twists and turns. This transformation is most striking in the development of τούτων/*toutón*, 'these things'. In Luke 24:14, these things are focused on the two disciples' perspective. Intriguingly, though, τούτων appears again in 24:48, but this time as reconfigured by Jesus. His disciples are witnesses of these things: God's paschal plan for *shalom* through the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah, proclaimed in repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. Jesus redefines these things and gives a new agenda. The central issues and questions we initially bring to theological reflection are often transformed. *Prospectively*, the not yet of the future and all it might hold is reimagined. Knowing as discernment opens up, rather than nails shut. Our 'Aha!' indicates the world has been unlocked (in some way) and we are (trans)formed in the process. The Spirit opens our eyes to envision the future.

Moreover, in both retrospective and prospective indicators, Meek also maintains that good knowing will be transformational in its flourishing of self, others and world. "Contact with the real should issue in gradually deepening *shalom* and healing of the world, cognitive rest, wisdom, even as it opens us and the world to the future and to others in a public way."[22] James 3:13–18 reflects this by contrasting two types of wisdom or knowing. One centres on bitter envy, selfish ambition, pride and falsehood. It is debased and earthly ('from below'), out of step with the Spirit of life, and demonic. Its fruit is disorder and every sort of evil practice. It could be argued that this sort of knowing also transforms clues and opens up future possibilities—e.g., corrupting nuclear technology to construct a bomb, or abusing power in relationships to coerce and manipulate. However, it retards and destroys, rather than flourishes. Such 'wisdom' does not contact reality because it does not stem from God's gift of creation's original goodness nor further God's promise of creation's true vocation of flourishing. This is not to say that sin and evil do not exist. Instead, only God's good is truly real. As Meek contends, "evil is a distortion of the good, and the whole point of redemption is to remove distortion."[23]

God's good of *shalom*, then, is the true wisdom 'from above'—*the real*—that "is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness."[24] That is, transformation in and

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[22] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 422–23.
[23] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 435.
[24] Jas 3:17–18 (NLT).

towards *shalom* guardrails our discernment of contact with reality, and furthermore, promises such discernment will bear the fruit of *shalom*.

Imagination Catalyses Contact with Reality

Earlier I noted Meek's observation that imagination's role in knowing is not always accepted. Loder calls this the 'eikonic eclipse'[25]—the way "in which so-called reason refuses to acknowledge the role of the imagination and of the personal in knowing."[26] He points instead to the "imaginative crux of the knowing event"[27] where the subjective knower and the objective known imaginatively indwell one another.[28] Loder contends the imagination is a catalyst for knowing in ways that resonate with the first two of covenant epistemology's indicators mentioned above.

Towards the point of contact, as we indwell clues, we are creatively guided by the anticipation of their convergence. This is much like the disciples' burning hearts sense of being on the cusp of knowing;[29] the fact that "they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us'"[30] suggests their feeling of 'getting warmer'! In labyrinthine fashion, we also follow our creative hunches. They lead us towards our own 'imaginative leap' from our subjectively indwelt clues towards objective reality, which first provoked our interest. Through the leap, the clues reveal a larger, deeper and richer focal pattern gifted to us. Jesus' simple yet profound symbolic action—taking, blessing, breaking and giving bread—facilitates the disciples' imaginative leap: 'What? No! Could it be? *Is* he alive?! It is him!' That daring joining of the dots emerging from conversation makes discernment imaginative at its core. As Jesus is made known in the breaking of the bread, the *now* is transformed. These things make sense, even if our explanation remains informal and approximate.

From the point of contact, we are also drawn forward towards an imaginative indwelling of the new reality's possibilities which—quite remarkably—await their fruition through us. Loder says

[25] From the Greek εἰκών/*eikōn* meaning 'image'; that is, the eclipse, covering or dismissal of the role of image and imagination in knowing. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 27.
[26] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 127.
[27] Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 18.
[28] Loder explains that "knowing *anything* is to indwell it and to reconstruct it in one's own terms without losing the essence of what is being indwelt." Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 18.
[29] That is to say, imaginative discernment is bodily-felt as being 'on the precipice'. Frequently, having come to know something of significance, we retrospectively consider our knowing process and utter 'I *knew* it!'—even though at the time we could not say *what* we knew! This confirms Polanyi's assertion that we know more than we can tell, and that such tacit knowing is critical in the knowing endeavour. We look back and note how we *felt* we were 'onto something', which in turn became a guide for us. Part of knowing in theological reflection is learning how to pay attention to such urgings and get better at recognising when they produce transformative fruit, and when they are false leadings that we might let simply go.
[30] Luke 24:29, emphasis added.

that "it is by indwelling the new imaginative reality that one becomes informed by it, and it, in turn, enters history."[31] As Loder evocatively suggests, when Jesus vanishes from the disciples' sight, it is as though they now see through him to suddenly perceive the new world—the *real* world—which graciously welcomes their arrival and, indeed, their participation.[32] It is a world far more expansive than their initial myopic vision, where one rabbi in one place liberates one nation from one oppressor. Now, the revelation redefines Israel's hopes on a mind-blowing, cosmic scale. In their immediate return to Jerusalem to tell the others, that reality takes its first concrete steps into history. The *not yet*—what we identified as a 'social imaginary' of the good life of *shalom* in chapter two—guides us forward and is, in turn, embodied through us.[33]

To summarise. We are drawn towards contact with objective reality through its provocation of our longing to know. And the satisfaction of that longing includes our subjective involvement in integrating an indeterminate number of subsidiary clues through an imaginative leap. Contact! From that point, the gift of the objective reality's new world opens up imaginatively before us as an indeterminate number of future manifestations. And that expansive future comes to fruition through our subjective participation in it. Contact with this imaginative crux results in transformational knowing that is *shalom*-shaped: therapeutic and healing, life-giving and flourishing. Or to put it another way: the thought of riding beckons Micah, but mid-wobble he must make an imaginative leap to integrate the many (explicit and implicit) clues he has from my guidance, his bodied-self and the bike on my mum's driveway. It is a risk, and there is no guarantee of 'success'. Yet he does, and … contact! He corrects, continues, and 'gets it'. Joy! But what now? A new world of possibility opens up before him—there are so many places he could now ride! It awaits his active participation, turning possibility to reality with every new riding adventure he undertakes.

[31] Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 18.
[32] Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 103–4.
[33] I think this points to the incredible paradox and mystery in the nexus between the kingdom of God and the body of Christ. For the people of God always fumble and stumble about without some vision from beyond, given over and over by God, to keep lifting their eyes and reorientating them into God's good life—that is, the kingdom expressed and experienced as *shalom*. But that kingdom's coming, though inaugurated by Christ and outworked by the Spirit, is nevertheless contingent upon this very same, fumbling and stumbling church!

We Can Name Discerned Truths with Fallible Confidence

Polanyi's assertion that "*we know more than we can tell*"[34] does not negate the power of telling what we know. Naming discerned truths in theological reflection is central to the responsible human struggle of coming to know. Covenant epistemology frames imaginative discernment as *contact* with reality resulting in *confidence*, not direct *correspondence* resulting in *certainty*.[35] Correspondence and certainty claim to exhaust all possibilities, sapping the interpersonal nature of knowing and stopping our pilgrimage in its tracks. Acceptance of truth claims built only upon absolute certainty means we avoid personal responsibility for our lack of commitment to the risk of failure and need for correction.[36] Contact and confidence allow us to lay hold of an aspect of objective reality without robbing its mystery by claiming mastery over it, as though articulable fact statements say all there is to say. As Loder says, "the truth always exceeds the proof."[37] We take responsibility for our knowing as a work in progress.

Human relationships illustrate this unfolding, interpersoned nature. I have many different points of authentic contact with Sonia in our marriage and could even claim to know her intimately. Yet I could never say that my knowing holds a direct and complete correspondence to all of who she is. Thus, I can make truth statements about her with confidence but not absolute certainty. It is possible to get things wrong (as I certainly do!) because the relationship is still unfolding, my knowing gets skewed, and I am not her![38]

As a responsible human struggle, then, naming discerned truths assumes a posture of fallible confidence. We can—must!—name our discoveries with covenantal pledge, before we can verify them or understand their full implications. "To say something is true is to back it, as we would our signature on a check," says Meek.

> It is to say, Here I stand. It is a claim in vouching for which we must exercise personal responsibility. But it is also to say, I cannot do otherwise. It is to profess the claim with

[34] Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, 4.
[35] See Meek, *Longing to Know*, chap. 17: Truth: Contact, Not Correspondence; Confidence, Not Certainty.
[36] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 20–21.
[37] Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 216–17.
[38] This is my version of an example offered and explained by Meek: "There is something about interpersonal knowing that helps us past the two-dimensionality of the epistemic default. Knowing a close family member person to person seems to transcend the either-ors, or merge them, or transform them. One need only consider the way we would approach the matter of knowledge in interpersonal relationship. It is not certainty so much as confidence. There is plenty of indeterminacy in truly understanding another person. To believe otherwise is the height of obnoxious presumption. But such knowing is palpable." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 88.

universal intent, to employ Polanyi's account—meaning that we believe that its objective truth is accessible to anyone in a position to see it.[39]

Naming discerned truths, therefore, carries risk—such is the nature of relationships!—but we need not constantly hedge our bets. As pilgrimed knowers, we can claim contact with reality with confidence whilst fully recognising our claims may be faulty and in need of revision. This is itself integral to growth. Thus "fallibilism is no shame, but courage enacted."[40]

Building on these three epistemological foundations, we can now explore discernment, its imaginative tenor and the naming of our discerned truths.

Discernment

Discernment is a mark of Christian maturing as communities and individuals participate in the rhythms of God's speed and speech.[41] In a dream, the newly crowned King Solomon was invited by God to ask for whatever he wanted. Seeing the demands of his role, he asked the Lord for "a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."[42] Thus discernment is closely tied to the notion of wisdom.[43] It is both a gift of the Spirit[44] and a developed human skill[45] for examining, testing, knowing and determining.[46] We can explore discernment in terms of its modes, nature, experience and etiquette.

Modes

Howard identifies the three broad modes of discernment: situational, appreciative and life discernment.[47]

Situational discernment concerns sound judgement—a 'testing of the spirits'[48]—to appraise a circumstance, person(s) or idea and distinguish between what is and is not of God.[49] Most authors insist we must measure any possible inner witness of the Spirit against theological

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[39] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 423.
[40] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 420.
[41] E.g., Rom 12:2. See Barton, *Life Together in Christ*, 138.
[42] 1 Kings 3:9 (NIV). Other renderings include "an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil" (NRSV) and "an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." (KJV).
[43] E.g., Prov 14:33, 16:21.
[44] διάκρισις/*diakrisis* e.g., "the discernment of spirits" (1 Cor 12:10).
[45] δοκιμάζω/*dokimazō* e.g., "determine what is best" (Phil 1:10) and "test everything" (1 Thess 5:21).
[46] Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, 374.
[47] Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, 373–74.
[48] 1 John 4:1.
[49] E.g., Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:3–6; Paul and the slave girl with a spirit of divination in Acts 16:16–18; Heb 5:14.

norms, particularly from Scripture, and within the context of community.[50] Situational discernment also encompasses decision making and the seeking of 'God's will' for a particular context which, of course, depends on how God's will is understood. Some promote a 'bullseye' model of God's 'perfect will',[51] whereas others embrace (practical) wisdom as a more nuanced and moderate approach.[52]

While discernment as decision making is often future-oriented, there is truth in Blythe's contention that "true discernment is always done in hindsight."[53] Discernment can be appreciative—a reflective mode of attentiveness and gratitude to God in all things through continuous revision. The Prayer of Examen is a classic appreciative discipline,[54] whilst congregations and organisations might use approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry[55] that begin with retrospectively discerning strengths to help find a way forward.

Appreciative discernment, in turn, cultivates a greater capacity for life discernment which "opens us up to listen to and recognize the voice and patterns of God's direction in our lives."[56] It attunes us to notice more closely where God might be at work in the micro and macro movements within self and surrounding environments, so we can more intentionally join in.[57] This perspective is a hallmark of Ignatian spirituality and discernment, centred on "finding God in all things so that we might love and serve God in all."[58] For Saint Ignatius, the primary locus for the 'discernment of spirits' is not celestial beings but our inner movements or impulses towards consolation or desolation—'good spirits' or 'bad spirits'—within the affective movements of the soul. These lead either towards or away from God's love, life, hope, joy, compassion and generosity in service. Such attentiveness is central to Ignatian judgement and decision-making in situational discernment.[59]

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[50] E.g., Gordon T. Smith, "Discernment," in *Zondervan Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 404–6.

[51] One influential example amongst conservative Christians is Bob Mumford, *Take Another Look at Guidance: Discerning the Will of God* (Raleigh, NC: Logos Associates, 1993).

[52] E.g., John Senior, "Discernment as Practical Wisdom: Toward a Disruptive Practical Theology of Ministry Leadership," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 38.0 (2018): 49–63; Garry Friesen and J. Robin Maxson, *Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View*, Revised and updated. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004).

[53] Teresa Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 72.

[54] This is a five-step evening review of each day. E.g., 1. *Gratitude* for the day 2. *Review* events more closely, noticing movements towards or away from love 3. *Sorrow* for instances of sin 4. Ask for *forgiveness* for these 5. Ask for *grace* in looking forward with hope to the next day. See James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), chap. 4.

[55] E.g., see https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/.

[56] Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 109.

[57] Barton, *Life Together in Christ*, 139–40.

[58] From St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, cited in Barton, *Life Together in Christ*, 137.

[59] See chapter 12 in Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, especially 326-9.

These varied modes reveal an essential connection between discernment and theological reflection. Both are about knowing in relation to faith, probing questions like: What is going on in this experience, what are its kernels of reality and truth, and what are the deeper or hidden questions? Where might God be present and at work, and what might God be desiring and saying? What does it all mean for future action, understanding and becoming? Thus, discernment finds a natural fit at the heart of talking the walk. The summary also highlights how some modes of discernment emphasise normative theological truth, others situational wisdom, and others the interpretation of existential, inner movements. Yet in any approach, all domains of the trialogue are at play in some way. Discernment is never just inner intuition, or theological truth, or practical wisdom; a coinhering view insists all three interact in dynamic exchange.

Nature

Guidelines, steps and checklists inevitably emerge from the discernment literature.[60] Like Peter offering to build three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration,[61] we naturally want to capture and replicate how discernment 'works'. The problem is, such principles are not always airtight! By all accounts, Joseph the carpenter was "a righteous man" (NRSV), "faithful to the law" (NIV) and "a man of principle" (NEB).[62] He, of anyone, would both know the principles and stick to them. So his plan to quietly divorce his pregnant fiancée Mary made total sense—but it took an angel's visit to reorient his discernment from regulations to trust.[63] Talking the walk offers a model and method and so in one sense provides guidelines, especially when condensed into steps within a critical experience report. Yet covenant epistemology anchors it in pilgrimed, (trans)formational relationship, more than failsafe techniques for getting it 'right'. Talking the walk's six contours[64] provide robust and functional guidance, yet are set within a richer, interpersonal framework.

Sometimes discernment is elevated to a sort of paranormal *gnōsis*, with special keys to

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[60] One example is from Nash and Nash who use the following questions to test the outcome of reflection: "Is it in harmony with our understanding of the Bible? Is it coherent with our values? Does it build the kingdom of God? Do I have an inner peace beyond 'if it feels good do it!'? Do I sense the witness of the Holy Spirit? Will it bring life? Can I do this with integrity? Is it in line with my personal/professional ethics? Am I willing to be accountable over this? Have I discussed this with others or brought it to my community? Why? Why not?" Nash and Nash, *Tools for Reflective Ministry*, 6.
[61] Matt 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33.
[62] Matt 1:19.
[63] This insight comes from Gordon Dalbey, *Sons of the Father: Healing the Father-Wound in Men Today* (Folsom, CA: Civitas, 2011), chap. 9: A Man of Principle or a Faithful Son?
[64] To restate, the contours of talking the walk's model are Trialogue, *Shalom* and Emmaus Labyrinth, and the contours of its method are Contemplative Conversation, Imaginative Discernment and Courageous Embodiment.

unlocking the Spirit's vision into the 'spiritual realm' through prophetic intuition that hears the direct voice of God.[65] Or it is reduced to a rational and linear application of biblical principles.[66] Or it is distilled into neat algorithms for 'finding' God's plan A for one's life.[67] The problem, as Dougherty contends, is that

> we have separated the will of God from God, and discernment has come to mean a search for God's will which we must find in a game of hide-and-seek. We often equate discernment with a skill which we must master rather than the gift of God's love which guides us home to Love.[68]

While principles and checklists for discernment can be helpful, they risk missing knowing's relational centre.

What happens if we reconceive discernment as interpersoned contact with reality? It becomes less a functional event and more a relational journey. This in no way lessens the rigour and responsible struggle of indwelling clues in contemplative conversation. We carefully seek truth because we want and need to know (sometimes, urgently), and move hopefully towards discerning wisely. Nor does it downplay the practical significance of discernment for courageous embodiment. Discernment shapes important, concrete avenues for richer participation in Christ's ministry of *shalom* in the world.

But as Senior argues, "discernment is fundamentally attuned to ontological rather than instrumental questions. Discernment is indexed to vocation, and vocation implies a transformation of individual and corporate identity through participation in God's redemptive purposes."[69] Discernment is not a divine vending machine from which we extract answers when problems in life, ministry or theology stump us. Rather, it is fashioned longitudinally over our journeys and

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[65] E.g., Jane Hamon, *Discernment: The Essential Guide to Hearing the Voice of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen, 2019); Jennifer Eivaz and John Eckhardt, *Seeing the Supernatural: How to Sense, Discern and Battle in the Spiritual Realm* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen, 2017).

[66] E.g., John F. MacArthur, *Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses Its Will to Discern* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), especially Chapter 4: "The Biblical Formula for Discernment." MacArthur defines discernment as "the ability to understand, interpret, and apply truth skillfully. . . . Authentic spiritual discernment must begin with Scripture-revealed truth." MacArthur, *Reckless Faith*, xv; Paul King, "Basic Biblical Principles of Discernment," *The Pneuma Review: Journal of Ministry Resources and Theology for Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministries & Leaders*, 2019, http://pneumareview.com/basic-biblical-principles-of-discernment/. King's steps are 1. **D**iscover Biblical Precedent. 2. **I**nvestigate for Scriptural Harmony. 3. **S**crutinize for Sound Doctrine. 4. **C**onfirm with Experience. 5. **E**xamine the Fruit. 6. **R**eceive Supernatural Discernment. 7. **N**ote Examples and Lessons from the Past. 8. **S**ift and Weigh for Divine Equilibrium.

[67] E.g., Mumford, *Take Another Look at Guidance*. The subtitle on the front cover says it all: "Proven Methods to Help You Sail Through Life's Difficult Choices."

[68] Rose Mary Dougherty, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1995), 25.

[69] Senior, "Discernment as Practical Wisdom," 51.

carries its own relational integrity. This is because contact with reality in some way, whether explicit or implicit, invites contact with the God who journeys with us. Interpersoned knowing means we cannot separate the gift from the giver, for "the gift betokens the giver, and the giver shows up."[70] The wisdom we seek might take the form of a data-like 'It': 'How do we connect with our community more effectively?'; 'Is this teaching right or wrong?'; 'Should I take this job?'; 'What is *really* going on here?'; 'How does God want me to accompany her in her grief?' To discern, though, means more than obtaining an answer; it invites an encounter with that wisdom's real Source, the 'You'.[71] The pattern, it turns out, leads to the Person. Reality is characterised more by who than what. Truth is troth. As such, says Meek, "the aura of encounter must imbue all knowing—else we are choked by the weeds of I-It."[72]

This means that we do not achieve as much as receive discernment, because giving and receiving is something persons do. Our knowing borne from the (sometimes hard) work of trialoguing certainly affords a sense of personal or corporate satisfaction. When insight comes, we might even cry, 'I knew it!' Meek identifies this as a 'surprising recognition' of something beyond our imagination yet somehow familiar.[73] Nevertheless, such satisfaction is subsumed within the greater sense of reality's generosity. We know this because discernment transforms our contemplative conversation in the movement from the subsidiary towards the focal. It gifts a retrospective and prospective richness that we cannot possibly manufacture, reason or force by ourselves. As much as we recognise what we might have first intuited, we are yet further surprised. 'I knew it!' does not mean 'I know everything there is to know'. Our questions are reconfigured, transformed, expanded. Discernment as contact with reality registers as a bodily-felt

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[70] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 440.

[71] Though beyond the scope of this thesis for detailed exploration, this is one of Meek's most intriguing assertions. She develops Frame's claim (paraphrased in her words) that "since God is covenant Lord, there is no place, no thing, in the universe that you can know without also knowing God. *Knowing the world is correlative with knowing God*." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 160. For illustration, she points to how by indwelling of the features of someone's home—*seeing* (not just looking at) the pictures, furniture, photos and so on—we are invited in some way into knowing the person themselves. She develops this idea and its implications for both Christian believers and non-believers in "Texture 4: Anticipative Knowing and Common Grace" in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 184–91.

[72] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 262. Meek explains this more fully when she says, "Sometimes the Giver accompanies the gift and transforms it into himself … Reality—the known, the object of knowledge—is metonymously personal—or the Person himself … There is a sense in which the nonhuman real is not interchangeable with a person, yet it all is so pervasively imbued with the Giver that we may encounter him, anticipatively, prototypically, implicitly, or in full awareness of who he is, in any corner of his world. Reality as gift is such that sometimes the Giver shows up. And when he does, that's the main act ... The real is gift. It is characterized by more-than, divine excess, the continual freshness of the Other. Gift is metonymously personal: it is fraught with the personal, imbued with the dynamic interpersoned relationship which contexts it, yet freely distinct from Giver and recipient." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 381.

[73] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 425.

integrative shift, deepens our understanding of the guidance we pondered and gives us eyes to see others and our world in ways to which we were previously blind. New horizons open up. It gifts *shalom* both to us and to the world through us.[74]

Reception over achievement, then, reveals a humbling truth: there are no guarantees we will discern what we hope for, or perhaps anything at all! We cannot coerce discernment. When we try, we exalt the functional over the relational, turn the 'You' of the experience into an 'It', and risk missing the invitation to encounter. In any case, theology, spirituality and ministry are proximal sources for clues, not inscrutable instruction manuals. The promise of the focal pattern anticipatively animates our (trans)formative coming to know, rather than our technique. "We steward what we have," says Meek, "humbly groping in the direction of the longed-for integration. But when it comes, it comes from 'outside'."[75] This means that

> it is not the knower who is in the driver's seat, but rather the yet-to-be-discovered reality. The real discloses itself, in its own time and way. And when it does, it is grace … Its gracious self-disclosure never strips the real of mystery.[76]

Ultimately, then, discernment draws us deeper into the mystery of life itself and "Christ in you, the hope of glory."[77] Meek contends that

> to know well is to put oneself in the way of knowing, as we have spoken of it. It is to learn in order not merely to comprehend but *to be apprehended*. It is to say "You," and listen. It is to have one's epistemic efforts give way to the coming of the Other. Such is the necessary corollary of any account that is transformative at heart …"[78]

To encounter the real in discernment is to be changed: not just informed but (trans)formed, and not only (trans)formed, but (trans)formatively known.[79] If we or someone else are brave enough to explore 'deep calling to deep' in our spiritual, ministerial and theological journey, then our priority is to ensure such sacred ground maintains its own integrity by holding a *dadirri*-like silence and letting the real gift itself. Paradoxically, that very disposition is precisely what we need to discern. Sometimes—often?—that is enough.

Discernment as a gracious gift is evident in Jesus' enigmatic self-disclosure to his disciples

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[74] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 64–65.
[75] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 417.
[76] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 37.
[77] Col 1:27.
[78] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 476.
[79] Meek contends this is a more Hebraic approach to knowing. She points to Jewish theologian Heschel's summation that "unlike the Greeks, who learn in order to comprehend, the Hebrews learn in order to be apprehended." Meek, *Loving to Know*, 137.

in Luke 24. Though they engage in the responsible human struggle to know, we would not say they are in the driver's seat! The women arrive at the tomb only to discover Jesus is not where he ought to be. Cloaked as the unrecognised Companion walking and talking with the two towards Emmaus, he is asking, listening, prompting, teaching and igniting their hearts with burning curiosity. Through sign and symbol at the meal table of intimate communion, he opens their eyes to recognise reality, only to vanish in the same flashing moment. Back in Jerusalem with the gathered disciples, he shows up in plain view: blessing, reassuring, touching, eating, encouraging, explaining, commissioning, promising. Such unpredictability seems frustratingly inefficient—almost teasing!—but closely reflects the varied ways we experience God's presence in discernment. This dynamic is playfully mirrored in C.S. Lewis' character Aslan from *The Chronicles of Narnia* series.[80] A pervading theme is the great lion's intermittent and unpatterned manifest presence. The protagonists have (wavering) faith in his existence, power and goodness, but are never quite sure when, where or how he will appear.

Surprisingly, then, *God's* fluctuating modes of self-disclosure—not just *our* limitations and blindness—seem to factor in our labyrinthine experiences of theological reflection. This appears to be a divine strategy in our longitudinal (trans)formation that resists the convenience of answers on demand. But even more so it is a tell-tale sign of knowing's interpersoned nature, for flourishing relationships are dynamic and surprising. More specifically, this intimates the creative work and ways of the Spirit of truth whom Jesus promises will guide us into all the truth.[81] "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes," says Jesus to the puzzled Nicodemus.[82] We cannot coerce discernment precisely because we cannot coerce God's Spirit. However, we can practice planting ourselves in its path, particularly as we become familiar with the experience of discerning.

Experience

What is it like to discern? There is no one standard way it is gifted to us, particularly amidst the myriad events, issues or circumstances we bring to theological reflection. Broadly speaking, though, experiences of discernment reside somewhere along a phenomenological continuum.

At one end are more *epiphanic*, 'Aha!' moments, characteristic of a distinct paradigm shift.

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[80] C. S. Lewis, *The Complete Chronicles of Narnia* (London, UK: HarperCollins, 2006).
[81] John 16:13.
[82] John 3:8.

Their arrival is sudden and grand. They effect two forms of what Dahl, citing Miller and C'de Baca, calls "quantum change."[83] One is insightful quantum change, marked by "an accumulation of insights that resonate with the changer in ways that invite relinquishing control and seeing oneself in a new identity."[84] We see how the dots join to form a bigger picture and can articulate ways things are now different. Often, we experience cognitive resolution and rest. The other is mystical quantum change, which "is much more sudden and transient and is felt to be beyond words, full of deep truth, and resulting in awe, peace, and joy."[85] These are deep, tacit, 'Damascus Road' or 'burning hearts' encounters. Their profundity means we can often recall their exact circumstances. Often, we experience affective movement and vitality.

At the other end of the spectrum are more *evolutionary*, 'Hmm …' experiences, that resonate with a more developmental 'paradigm drift'. Their arrival is subtle and gradual. They emerge ordinarily and incrementally, scaffolded upon an accumulation of wisdom over time, perhaps years. We may also feel these tacitly for the most part, though at times words and images surface, helping us collect and articulate what we have discerned. They do not scream for our attention and often emerge in quieter moments, particularly in the presence of the skilled and empathetic listening of another.

Thus, epiphanic discernment tends to be more concentrated in its timeframe, whilst evolutionary discernment, more longitudinal. Both can prompt integrative shifts that are bodily-felt, whether forceful or subtle. We can increase our capacity for recognising discernment when it arrives by befriending some common experiences along the continuum. The following five provide a small sample.

(In)Sight

In the breaking of the bread, the two disciples' eyes are opened to recognise the risen Christ. They move from looking at him to seeing him, like the instant the 2D pattern of a magic eye puzzle suddenly gives way to a deeper 3D image.[86] Caravaggio's famous work captures the dramatic shock of the moment the disciples see:

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[83] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 17.
[84] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 17.
[85] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 17.
[86] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 46–51.

Figure 13: *Supper at Emmaus* by Caravaggio[87]

This recognition leads them to retrospectively discern their earlier affective experience as pivotal to their meaning-making: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"[88] Perhaps this most closely describes the sense of being apprehended. Often it is only in hindsight that such affective experiences acquire a fuller meaning.

Creatively, then, we might re-spell realise as *realeyes*—that is, having eyes to see the real. Discernment as vision is a pervasive theme in the Scriptures and elsewhere that ties closely with contacting reality: the scales fall from Saul's eyes and the veil from our eyes,[89] John Newton once was blind but now can see, and we have lightbulb moments. It is what we might mean by receiving insight[90] through the eye of faith,[91] or interillumination where faith and experience shine upon

[87] Caravaggio, *The Supper at Emmaus*, Oil on canvas, circa 1601. Public domain.
[88] Luke 24:32.
[89] Acts 9:18; 2 Cor 13:13–16.
[90] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 35–40.
[91] Devenish says that spiritual sight is like insight, which "is related to wisdom and a heightened capacity for spiritual perception, discernment, and knowledge in Christian discipleship." Stuart C. Devenish, *Seeing and Believing: The Eye of Faith in a Visual Culture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 13.

one another.[92] Sometimes, though, vision arrives in stages, like the blind man at Bethsaida.[93] From total blindness, we first see the vague shape of things—"I see people, but they look like trees, walking"—before further discernment brings greater clarity. Or sometimes we come to accept that a foggy clarity is the best we can hope for, as Paul describes: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."[94] It is vital to validate and normalise perpetual liminality and questions. For knowers on the way, they are just as important in (trans)formative discernment as crystal clear insights.

Timing

Discernment can be associated with a sense of time, what Todd calls the *kairos* moment.[95] While *chronos* time is rhythmed—our alarm clock and diary, job lists and emails, routines and daily living—*kairos* is occasioned. Sometimes we talk of 'God's timing' when discerning, like Paul who says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time [*kairos*] Christ died for the ungodly."[96] Caravaggio's painting captures how the instant of revelation often feels freeze-framed. Whether more epiphanic or evolutionary, we sense the moment's gravitas and weight, its dignity and significance, suspension and 'now-ness'. Discernment can feel like time stands still.

Dawning

'It dawned on me' is a telling phrase. For the dawn bridges the darkness of night with the brightness of day. It is an intermediary zone, neither fully one nor the other. Polanyi, says Meek, argued that

> a person can actually make a discovery and yet not know what he or she has actually discovered; it may take years, and generations, to find that out ... [W]e can know and not know at the same time, both with regard to a discovery, and also with regard to our subsidiary awareness.[97]

Part of discerning is having a gradual sense of things coming to light within which we begin to see and move, which cuts against the idea that discernment must be sharp, clear and complete before we can live into its truth. But there may come the point when the dawn is no longer. Often clearer

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[92] Cited in Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 106–7.
[93] Mark 8:22–26.
[94] 1 Cor 13:12.
[95] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 102.
[96] Rom 5:6.
[97] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 175.

discernment arrives without fanfare or perhaps the weight of a *kairos* moment, yet nevertheless carries its own quiet strength.

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[98]

Sometimes, it seems, God takes a long time to act suddenly.[99] Surrounded by a protracted dawning, we abruptly find ourselves able to say: 'Yes. The darkness has lifted, and the day has begun. Things are clear.'

Laughter

The laughter of surprise can accompany discernment, as we see with Sarah in Genesis 18 and 21. Upon hearing the three visitors' preposterous suggestion of a promised child, she scoffs: "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"[100] Sarah's initial discernment is wrong-headed. But her sneer turns to incredulous joy at Isaac's birth: **"**God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."[101]

Filipino artist Emmanuel Garibay captures this laughter of astonishment in his provocative depiction of the Emmaus revelation:

[98] Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 66.
[99] I heard this (Christian) saying from a friend some years ago. I have not been able to find a definitive source.
[100] Gen 18:12.
[101] Gen 21:6.

Figure 14: *Emmaus* by Garibay[102]

Gone is the solemnity of Caravaggio's piece. Jesus' self-disclosure in a bar or café as a scantily clad woman, stigmata and all, creates a raucous scene. This was not what they had anticipated! "They have just made the recognition," says Pattenden, "and what a joke! Expecting Jesus to appear in familiar form, they had missed the point. Now they see."[103] Sometimes reality is the exact opposite of what we have come to expect, and the only appropriate response is shocked laughter, that the God whom we thought we knew so well would sabotage our 'normal' in such outrageous ways.

Retrospectively this can reveal a deeper, uncomfortable truth. 'How could I have missed that? I should have known!' we might say to ourselves when something comes to light. Pattenden insists that

> an appropriate theological response to resurrection is amazement, which should be accompanied by an equal amazement that we could have missed the point. Like Jesus at

[102] Emmanuel Garibay, *Emmaus*, Oil on canvas, 2000. Used by permission.
[103] Rod Pattenden, "Recognizing the Stranger: The Art of Emmanuel Garibay," *Image*.68 (n.d.), https://imagejournal.org/article/recognizing-the-stranger/.

> Emmaus, Garibay confronts us with our inherent blindness. We say we have faith and yet we cannot see.[104]

With Isaac in her arms, we can imagine Sarah sheepishly recalling the visitors' challenge: "Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?"[105] Likewise, in hindsight the two disciples no doubt could make sense of Jesus' reproach on the road: "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"[106] Our surprised laughter in discernment, then, might also intermingle with a confession of our ignorance.

Lament

Lament can signal discernment since some truths are incredibly hard to swallow. Discerning is not necessarily satisfying or pleasant; for many reasons, it might be shocking, painful, difficult. Mark Worthing, one of my first lecturers and theological mentors, tells of his experience:

> I had never experienced a major epiphany before. My impression was that these were pleasant, even happy experiences. Mine was anything but. At about 4 a.m., after an hour of fitful, semi-sleep, I sat bolt upright in bed. My twenty-two year old son, who had wanted to be a philosopher, or perhaps a pastor like his dad before he was struck down by serious mental illness at age eighteen, had taken his own life the night before … I knew two things with certainty. First, I would never be the same person again. The scars left by my son's mental illness and death would remain for life. And second, I knew that my theology would never be the same again.[107]

Lament might arise from a conviction of one's brokenness and sin. Peter tells Jesus, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"[108] and the Pentecost crowd, having heard the gospel, are "cut to the heart."[109] Discernment in difficult ministry or life decisions can cause agony; the right course of action, we know, will likely involve pain for self and others. Similarly, significant shifts in theological, spiritual and ministerial worldviews can cause grief over the loss of beliefs, desires and practices with which we can no longer align.

Thus, groans of lament—as much as surprised laughter—can accompany contact with reality. Such instances return us to the paschal heartbeat of *shalom*. They invite us to draw

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[104] Pattenden, "Recognizing the Stranger."
[105] Gen 18:14.
[106] Luke 24:25–26.
[107] Mark Worthing, "The Atonement as Healing of Divine and Human Pain," *Lutheran Theological Journal; Adelaide* 48.3 (2014): 132.
[108] Luke 5:8.
[109] Acts 2:37.

comfort from the three mile an hour God who walks with us in our deep valleys, not just over picturesque mountain passes. As we discern and embrace Christ's suffering, death and loss in our journey, we touch the mystery of our humanity. Recognising the rhythms of the cross and empty tomb in our lives reminds us that there are no short cuts to our formation in and towards *shalom*.

Etiquette

Discernment, then, is the Spirit's gift that comes in all shapes and sizes. How might we nurture its reception? In both Luke 24 and Narnia, we notice an anticipative tension: 'When will Jesus/Aslan appear? Will the characters trust him in the meantime? Will they notice his invitations when he is close, yet hidden? How will they ready themselves to receive and respond to his full disclosure?' These are also questions for us. They point to an important maxim: *develop etiquette rather than follow principles.*[110] If knowing is personal, then forming a courteous disposition, rather than mastering methods, is the best way to plant ourselves on discernment's path to invite the real. Discernment etiquette, as we might expect, already leavens the preceding chapters, as it will those that follow. Though neither exhaustive nor exact, here are some of its already familiar features.[111]

Friendship

Friendship is fundamental to discernment because it characterises interpersoned, covenantal knowing. "The real behaves like a person," says Meek. "Treat it personally, and it will respond personally … Specifically, invite it hospitably."[112] In chapter five I explored befriending normative wellsprings of theology, situational ministry in context, and our existential spirituality and personhood, because this positions us for (trans)formation, not just information. Befriending is what I mean by indwelling or being fully present to clues from these three domains.

Friendship seeks to know for the intrinsic value of the other. We seek God's face in the clues, not just God's hand, which means we stop treating discernment like a vending machine for dispensing wisdom as occasion dictates. Learning to befriend thus reorients our discernment from I-It to I-You. We say 'You', and listen. This does not render information as unimportant, just reframes it. Any analysis of data—the 'It' in knowing—is done passionately, with the best skills and

[110] Again, this is not to say that principles and checklists are unhelpful; just that they find their proper place in the context of relationship. Even the ten commandments—surely such fundamental 'rules' in Judeo-Christian tradition—are themselves framed within interpersoned, covenantal relationship by their preceding words: "I am the LORD your God [YHWH, the covenantal God], who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Ex 20:2, Deut 5:6).
[111] Here I draw from Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 15: Inviting the Real: An Epistemological Etiquette.
[112] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 427.

objectivity we can muster, since friendship fuels discovery. Truth is troth. "The goal of knowing is interpersonal communion—friendship. And just as friendship involves information, but neither exclusively nor exhaustively information, focusing more on the living and ongoing communion, the same may helpfully be said of humans knowing the real."[113] This points to the Triune community of love as the ultimate giver of friendship. To discern is to befriend.

Dignity

Befriending means discernment is not a cool calculation undertaken at arm's length. Instead, a theory–practice–persons approach affirms it as a thoroughly human endeavour. This reinstates and thus dignifies—not merely tolerates—our whole self in meaning-making. Meek calls this 'composure'—"having become most fully ourselves, composed as ourselves."[114] We are best situated to discern when we live fully into our own skin as individual or communities of discerners, rather than discount ourselves for fear of warping the outcome. We are certainly idol-makers, and our interpretations of these things gets distorted. But that does not negate the new covenant miracle that, even as we flounder in discernment, God and God's ways can still be known by humans, "from the least of them to the greatest."[115] Thus, to reclaim our dignity in discernment is, paradoxically, to back the Spirit at work within us, more than ourselves. As God's beloved, the Spirit graciously meets us where we are.

Dignity invites us to fully lean into the interdependent (or coinhering) exchanges between our spirituality, theology and ministry, rather than segmenting ourselves or championing one dimension to the detriment of the others. In doing so, we abandon the sorts of false dichotomies that would depersonalise our discernment: reason vs. faith, knowledge vs. beliefs, sacred vs. secular, facts vs. interpretation, body vs. spirit, theory vs. practice, objective vs. subjective, mind vs. body. The Spirit reveals truth as we embrace God's gift of dignity to discern as whole, integrated persons.

Desire

Knowing as covenantally-constituted means discernment is grounded in desire and pledge. As Meek argues, "caring invites the real, and reality responds to our overtures with the gift of

[113] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 246.
[114] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 436.
[115] Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11.

surprising self-disclosure."[116] God's reality graciously discloses through—though not because of—our desires, even when they are misshapen! Jesus keenly met those who longed to know: Nicodemus,[117] the woman at the well,[118] the centurion,[119] the woman with medical bleeding,[120] the Syrophoenician woman,[121] the thief on the cross.[122] Their faith and desire did not manipulate or coerce discernment, but it did position them to receive when it was gifted. Therefore, we can take desire seriously as the Spirit's invitation to blow on the coals of our care.

The Spirit also uses our longings to sustain our attention and guide our discernment via a deepening sense of proximity to reality. Desire keeps us turned towards these things—towards *God* in these things—in anticipation of something meaningful emerging, even when we find discernment difficult or confusing. Our longing and loving to know, then, are God-given gifts that dispose us towards discernment.

Wonder

Wonder is humble amazement. The real is inexhaustible and wonderful, beyond our limited vision, yet knowable. Discernment opens up, rather than nails shut. Not many of us are "wise by human standards, not many [are] powerful, not many [are] of noble birth," and yet, "we have the mind of Christ"![123] Discernment, then, is fostered through open hearts, minds and hands. It rests upon the humility embedded within wonder, such that insight arrives within our poverty and emptiness. Bonhoeffer says God invites disciples to

> plunge into the deep waters beyond your own understanding, and I will help you comprehend even as I do. Bewilderment is the true comprehension. Not to know where you're going is the true knowledge ... Behold, this is the way of the cross. You cannot find it in yourself, so you must let me lead you as though you were a blind man.[124]

Wonder questions. In the classic *Mister God, This is Anna*, Fynn comes across four-year-old Anna praying, in tears: "Oh please, Mister God, help me how to ask real questions." She is sad that adults ought to get wiser as they age, but do not.

> 'People's boxes get littler and littler.'
> 'Boxes? I don't understand that.'

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[116] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 33.
[117] John 3:1–15.
[118] John 4:1–42.
[119] Luke 7:1–10.
[120] Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:43–48.
[121] Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:25–30.
[122] Luke 23:39–43.
[123] 1 Cor 1:26, 2:16.
[124] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 47.

> ‘Questions are in boxes,’ she explained, ‘and the answers they get only fit the size of the box.’[125]

Questioning positions us for discernment by embracing a ‘negative capability’—“a readiness to let go of the security based on long-held opinions and assumptions, and accept for as long as is needful, a state of doubt, uncertainty and mystery.”[126] Such liminal spaces, we have noted, can be exhilarating but also challenging and painful. It takes time and courage to develop the willingness to wait in the gap and not force answers to come, and just be held and (trans)formed in that in-between space. Growing comfortable with discomfort, questioning and doubt, then, are central to discernment etiquette.

Wonder is also playful. In chapter five, I noted Whitehead’s idea of theology as the child’s leap that carries its own aesthetic, pushes against gravity and falls gracefully. Wonder as play invites us into a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’—“to look anew at what can be learned from the exploration of text and tradition that has been undertaken.”[127] The Spirit of adventure leads us into uncharted waters to discern the real in previously unimaginable ways.

Cultivating wonder as humble amazement, liminal questioning, and adventurous play situates us well for discernment.

Conversation

Conversation is talking the walk’s primary metaphor for reflection. The better we become at authentic conversations, the more likely we will find ourselves upon the path of discernment. Conversation is key to differentiation,[128] which is “the process by which we become more uniquely ourselves by maintaining ourselves in relationship with those we love.”[129] Particularity and relatedness necessitate two conversational capacities.

One is for intrapersonal or reflexive conversation through an inner trialogue, which facilitates our sense of the ‘I’ in the I-You of coming to know. Such inner presence is commonly called self-awareness, though I have in mind something deeper and more dynamic—a continual coming home to our self-in-God through inner exploration and animated exchange between thought, passion and bodied action. Far from a selfish and individualistic obsession, this is

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[125] Fynn, *Mister God, This Is Anna* (London: Collins, 1974), 152–54.
[126] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 109.
[127] Thompson, Pattison, and Thompson, *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*, 109.
[128] As discussed in chapter three.
[129] Schnarch, cited in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 311.

essential to being able to discern through the wisdom of others. If we are estranged from ourselves and unable to have inner conversations, it is unlikely we will genuinely be able to connect with another's otherness.

Reflexivity, in turn, needs a capacity for interpersonal or communal conversation. This is our sense of the 'You' in the I-You of coming to know. We discern best in community when enriched by reciprocal, open and respectful conversations which carry "possibilities for interruption, disagreement and surprise."[130] This includes interaction with those local and global, past and present, in person and via various media.

Both modes of conversation have the greatest potential for discernment when approached with a patient, *dadirri*-like listening for the presence or absence of *shalom*. Such a contemplative posture is quintessential to discernment etiquette because it attends to the possibility of God, present in all things and all places.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is talking the walk's primary metaphor for formation. Sauntering is what I have in mind—not lazy and ambivalent but deliberate and care-full. We shun the tourist's conquest in favour of contemplative connection, plodding our labyrinthine trek with the three mile an hour God and fellow sojourners. It makes discernment slower, but richer.

Pilgrimage facilitates discernment longitudinally because it sets the micro of particular experiences within the context of the macro of our journey. Changing metaphors, it is easier to make sense of specific threads of an experience when we have a broader understanding of our individual and communal tapestries. Pilgrimage also facilitates discernment laterally. A tourist has myopic vision, looking only for the quickest route to the next destination. A pilgrim, though, walks slowly and attentively enough to develop peripheral vision for clues that would otherwise remain unnoticed. This includes perspectives from other travellers beyond our tribe and tongue—unlikely sojourners who sometimes become invaluable, dear friends.

Pilgrimage finds its own habitual tempo. Its rhythmic repetition develops a knack and know-how for discernment that we cannot gain in any other way. Though practise might not make

[130] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 4. Similarly, Killen and de Beer talk about 'genuine conversation' as "the discipline of exploring our individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions and perspectives, as well as from those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection, therefore, may confirm, challenge, clarify and expand how we understand our own experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living." Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 51.

perfect, it does familiarise us with what it is like to discern. Meek suggests, for example, that "years of piano practice … translates into what I call covenantal living on the terms of the yet-to-be known, or putting oneself in the position to know."[131] This is precisely what it means to practise theological reflection as a cultural liturgy—a ritual of ultimate concern—for the good life of *shalom*, as discussed in chapter three. It not only helps us discern and share in God's ministry of *shalom*; in doing so, we encounter God as the *shalom* giver and become *shalom* communities and persons.

Critically, pilgrimage emphasises the embodiment of discernment, not perpetual speculation. Incarnating truth in the arena, not watching from the grandstand, is essential in discernment etiquette. Frequently I have referred to *solvitur ambulando* to make this point. Discernment is not nailed down and then applied linearly; it is 'solved' and tested (or even abandoned!) by walking it out. Discernment permeates embodiment as a natural, labyrinthine means for verification and correction. *Solvitur ambulando* says: 'Enough talk—time to walk!' Such embodiment is itself an ongoing way of placing ourselves upon discernment's path.

Imagination

We can further enhance our discerning by tapping into the "imaginative crux of the knowing event."[132] Imagination is an ally in discernment, for as Devenish argues,

> as a primary generator of intuition, insight, and perception, imagination lies at the center of our human capacity to transcend the limits of our bodies. People whose imaginations function well seem to know where they are going in life, even when they launch into the unknown.[133]

Cultivating imagination in discernment affirms human creativity in knowing. Williams argues that the religious imagination functions "as a fundamental dimension of the mystery of human persons created in the image of God. We are not machines or mere puppets, but personal beings capable of envisioning, interpreting, and changing our world."[134] Similarly, McGrath argues that imagination is central to theology's core vocation of discerning and describing reality.[135] It is not as

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[131] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 427.
[132] Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 18.
[133] Devenish, *Seeing and Believing*, 82.
[134] Williams, "The Mirror of Learning," 58.
[135] "Theology is … about discernment, seeing reality in a certain way and attempting to resolve its ambiguities through this interpretative framework [of having our eyes opened to the world as it really is, rather than with distorted vision]. But how are we to visualize this changed way of seeing the world? How are we to grasp it with the power of the

though we can discard imagination altogether when discerning; questioning, for instance, is innately imaginative (hence scientists are just as creative as artists). But we can actively foster its responsible use. Imaginative discernment does not give a licence to say whatever we fancy, to dream up other worlds disconnected with reality. Loder makes an important distinction:

> By imagina*tive*, I do not mean imagin*ary*. The imaginative thought, act or word puts you in history; the imaginary takes you out. The imaginative links the private to the public world, the imaginary is hidden in privacy. God's action in history can vindicate the imaginative vision; his action shatters the imaginary. The imaginative drives towards transformation of the given; the imaginary arrests transformation.[136]

Historically grounded, the private and public intertwined, vindication by God's action, transformational—these are hallmarks of *shalom*-shaped discernment. In talking the walk, there are two means God gifts to help us discern imaginatively: imagery and vision.

The Breaking of the Bread: Discerning the Now Through Imagery

First, the Spirit gifts imagery to help us discern what is. The clues we rely upon in contemplative conversation converge through an imaginative leap to contact the now of reality. As with Jesus' mealtime ritual at Emmaus, imagery often facilitates this leap. I use 'imagery' or 'image' as shorthand for catalysts such as a picture, figure, icon, metaphor, analogy, saying, sign, symbol, gesture, artefact, illustration, parallel or story. When explanatory language hits its limits, imagery provides something familiar to help us explore and expound the experience's deeper terrain. The prophet Nathan rebukes King David with a story, Jesus catalyses insight through parables, and Forrest Gump insists life is like a box of chocolates. How is Jesus made known in the breaking of the bread? Is it in hearing the mealtime words of blessing?[137] Does the feeding of the 5,000 suddenly come to mind and switch on the light?[138] Do Jesus' crucifixion scars open their eyes to

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imagination, rather than simply comprehend it with our minds? In what way does the Christian gospel so enhance our capacity to behold things that we may discern the footprints of God in the sand, the tracks of his passing in the walkways of life and his presence and power in our everyday experiences? While we should never neglect the importance of reason and understanding, we must also value the power of the human imagination as the gatekeeper of the human soul. Theology is an activity of the imagination as much as of reason, in which we seek to transcend the boundaries of the given, pressing upward, outward and forward. Theology frames the landscape of reality in such a way that our everyday existence is set in a wider perspective. The world, formerly an absolute end in itself, now becomes a gateway to something greater." Alister E. McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 46.

[136] Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 18. Indeed, I do use Taylor's notion of a 'social imaginary'. But what he means is not a fanciful and unrealistic wish, the sort Loder is critiquing here, but a communal vision of the good.

[137] E.g., Luke 22:19; cf. Matt 26:26.

[138] Luke 9:10–17.

the Messiah who had to suffer?[139] Whatever the case, the breaking of the bread brings it all together, sparking recognition.

Likewise, imagery can unlock discernment through pondering, 'It is like …'. We try to imaginatively 'join the dots'—so to speak! Ault explains:

> Through images and metaphors, people can describe their experiences in terms of other things which may be more familiar. The images and metaphors that emerge through the reflective process can occur spontaneously or be revealed gradually over time through a series of reflections. In whatever manner they originate, they are important carriers of meaning … Metaphorical language holds and mediates the experience that is narrated as well as provides a means by which this experience can be structured and interpreted.[140]

Killen and de Beer pioneered the explicit use of image in theological reflection, arguing that experiences give rise to feelings, which spawn images, which spark insight, which can lead to action.[141] "An image … discloses and surprises by revealing familiar and unexpected aspects of meaning in our experience. Both broaden and enrich our awareness and understanding."[142] They function evocatively as symbols for experience. Their imprecision allows the discovery of multiple aspects of meaning without forcing strict allegory.

In moving from contemplative conversation towards discernment, then, the invitation is to identify any imagery that sparks interest or probes the heart of the experience by connecting the indwelt clues. We might draw this imagery from particular normative, situational or existential domains (e.g., one of Jesus' parables, a metaphor that captures our feelings, an artefact prominent in the situation). Or, stepping back to consider our contemplative conversation as a whole, we might be able to say, 'It is like …'. We might also ponder how the absence or presence of *shalom* is expressed in the image: 'Where is flourishing here? Where is flourishing inhibited?' We hold it loosely, sit with it patiently, and attend to what it suggests.

Witnesses of These Things: Discerning the Not Yet Through Vision

Second, the Spirit gifts vision to help us discern what might be. A picture of new possibilities transforms the not yet as we move from discernment towards submitting to reality through courageous embodiment. In Luke 24, Jesus not only reveals resurrection reality to his disciples; he imagines and commissions them as Spirit-empowered witnesses of these things, which he has now

[139] 24:26.
[140] Ault, "Theological Reflection," 297.
[141] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 21.
[142] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 38.

redefined. It is a future vision of *shalom*, currently beyond them but waiting to be embodied by them. Their glimpse of God's future directs their next steps.

Likewise, vision can unlock discernment through pondering, 'It could be like …'. We imaginatively discern not only the truth of the experience but also a vision of the good life in relation to it. Meek insists that

> it makes a difference what you think "normal" is, and what you can hope to develop in your living and knowing. It makes a difference to believe that this is possible, to envision beauty, peace, and well-being. This hope makes a real, palpable difference to our own health, to the health of our knowing venture, and to the health of the world.[143]

The impulse to dream is surprisingly natural. As established in chapter three, most of our meaning-making has some future orientation, a hope for how things could be. Christian discernment calls us to recalibrate this impulse against the gospel of the kingdom, manifest as *shalom*. This, I believe, is another payoff of theological reflection *for formation*—it grounds our particular, local discernment within God's global, eschatological purposes. It faces forwards to connect our daily living to something bigger than ourselves: the hope of *shalom*. Imaginative discernment makes it worth getting out of bed.

In moving towards courageous embodiment, then, the invitation is to re-vision our experience in terms of *shalom*—how we might cultivate it and resist its absence—as a participation in Jesus' ongoing work. Specifically, we might imagine *shalom* within any image already identified; what would reconciliation, justice, creativity and wholeness look like in this story, metaphor, icon or gesture? What might be my or our part in that? Again, we hold such visions loosely, attend to them courteously, and note what they might suggest.

Caveats

Since imaginative discernment is not imaginary or fanciful, we need some caveats for inclusion on a critical experience report template. In addition to the plumbline of *shalom*, I adapt four from Kinast's discussion of how experience illustrates theology.[144]

First, *do not force an image beyond its limits*. We must resist the urge to try and force an experience to illustrate or distort a theological, ministerial or spiritual perspective, so it eventually fits the experience. Accept an image for what it is and the exploration its imprecision evokes. Resist rigid allegories.

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[143] Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, 86.

[144] See Ch. 4: That Reminds Me: Theological Reflection as Illustration in Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, 68–94, esp. 77–78.

Second, *do not fabricate experience to fit a preferred image or vision.* The experience should be allowed to propose its own images and future visions, rather than conform to something that fits our preferred interpretation or future. Respect the experience for what it is and suggests.

Third, *do not finish with just the first image or vision*. An image or vision might come from our recent memory, be a trusted favourite or be most convenient and comfortable. Richer and deeper—if not more challenging—discernment may only come with subsequent images and visions more faithful to what the experience actually suggests and calls forth. This is why we talk our walk with other sojourners who may gently challenge or offer alternatives to the images and social imaginaries we treasure.

Finally, *do not just finish with imagery or vision.* Discernment does not just end at imagining the now and not yet of reality. Instead, after the experience has taught us as much as it can, we name our discerned truths with fallible confidence and move towards their faithful and courageous embodiment.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

In receptive and prayerful stillness, consider how imagination might catalyse your discernment. This can involve exploring one or both of the following:

Imagery: Explore any images that help you discern current reality. In your contemplative conversation, did an image arise which reflects and probes the truths of these things? Can you say, "It is like ..."? Specifically, where is *shalom* present or absent in your imagery? What does your exploration of imagery suggest?

(An image could come from Scripture or elsewhere. It helps you discern the presence and absence of shalom through your contemplative conversation upon your experience. Examples include a picture, figure, icon, metaphor, analogy, saying, sign, symbol, gesture, artefact, illustration, parallel or story. It might come from a particular clue you explored, or from stepping back to ponder your contemplative conversation as a whole.)

Vision: Explore any visions that help you discern future reality. Does a vision of the good life in these things emerge, a picture that calls forth hope and courageous embodiment? Can you say, "It could be like ..."? Specifically, how might *shalom* be cultivated, and its absence resisted, within any imagery you have used? What does your exploration of vision suggest? What part might you and others have to play?

(A vision could come from Scripture or elsewhere. It helps you discern how to embody shalom in your experience with courage. It looks forward to the good life in new and concrete ways of thinking, acting and being that participate in Christ's ministry of flourishing for self, others and world.)

What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Some gentle warnings. Don't:

- force an image or vision
- squeeze your experience to fit a preferred image or vision
- consider just the first image or vision that comes to mind
- stay with only image or vision

Naming Discerned Truths

Naming discerned truths is the pointy end of imaginative discernment. We focus upon a coherent pattern to articulate, as best we can, what that pattern suggests—to make the implicit, explicit. If we are to submit to reality through courageous embodiment, we need to identify what that reality is, as best we can.

The moment Jesus vanishes from their sight, the two disciples excitedly begin to articulate their newfound recognition—first to one another, and then, to the gathered disciples back in Jerusalem. They back their claim of Jesus' resurrected reality, even though they cannot fully explain or justify it. Similarly, naming discerned truths like 'God shows no partiality', 'We need to hit pause on this ministry for a while' or 'I feel paralysed whenever Jenny turns up; I need help to work things through' all carry potential and risk. We could be wrong—or, at the very least, we do not understand the full extent, nuance or consequences of our claims. But fallible confidence marks our assertions, rather than absolute certainty, because we commit to their reality with an open stance towards the Spirit's continuing gracious guidance and (trans)formational nurture. This does not mean justification is unimportant, just reframed. We work with available normative, existential and situational clues in contemplative conversation, name imaginatively discerned truths, then courageously embody their reality, recognising that justification unfolds as we do so—*solvitur ambulando*. The proof is in the pudding.

Such responsible stewardship is what it means to talk and walk as pilgrims, in step with the Spirit. To be sure, we discern poorly, and consequences follow. "Sometimes there is a way that seems to be right, but in the end it is the way to death."[145] But this does not mean no discernment occurs. 'Mistakes' are part and parcel of talking the walk because discernment is about contact, not correspondence. When we walk into truth, rather than try to establish proof before taking a

[145] Prov 16:25.

step, we are exposed to the (trans)formational significance of getting things 'wrong'. That is why the image of the labyrinth is so powerful. It affirms the benevolence of God who waits to be gracious to us amidst the twists and turns of our discernment adventures. We draw assurance from Isaiah's promise to the rebellious Israelites: "And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"[146] Even when we get discernment 'right', we are still forgiven![147] All is grace. This loops us back to our fundamental premise: discernment is interpersoned contact with reality—with the gracious God—rather than distant correspondence.

So, the invitation is to name our discerned truths as simply and succinctly as possible. I often encourage students to use bullet points. If helpful, we use the trialogue; our truths might be theological insights, of spiritual and personal significance, or ministerially practical. Or they might have the clarity of a distinct 'Aha!' and feel relatively straightforward to articulate. Or they might be tentative and stumbling, on the tip of our tongues. Sometimes we feel clumsy because, in contacting reality, it places the little we have come to know within the context of what we now realise we do not know. We might have arrived at new liminal questions to replace the original ones. No matter. We name what we can.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

Name your discerned truths, as best you can, with 'fallible confidence'—knowing you could be wrong, but believing you are right. Consider the conversations so far as a whole, particularly in relation to any imagery and visions of the good life. What stands out? What 'grabbed' you or had your heart burning?

If it helps, use any or all aspects of the trialogue. What do you discern: regarding your spirituality and personhood? About the practical ministry situation in its context? About relevant, key theological understandings?

It could help to consider some questions like:

- What might be going on in these things? What are the kernels of reality?
- Where is *shalom* present and/or absent?
- Where might God be present, at work? What might God be desiring, saying?
- What are the deeper questions? What are liminal spaces of mystery, paradox or ambiguity—particularly those that cause disquiet or discomfort?
- What might it all mean for future action, understanding and becoming?

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[146] Isaiah 30:21.

[147] This is a favourite saying of my good friend, Craig Joppich.

What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Be concise and straightforward. Consider using dot points with short statements.

Conclusion

Imaginative discernment, at the Emmaus Labyrinth's receptive centre, emerges from the integration of theological, spiritual and ministerial clues in contemplative conversation. It has three epistemological underpinnings: discernment is interpersoned contact with reality, imagination catalyses discernment, and fallible confidence marks our naming of discerned truths.

A survey of its situational, appreciative and life modes supports discernment's rightful place at the heart of talking the walk. Guidelines and checklists in the literature, however, do not always reflect its gracious, receptive nature. Though we cannot coerce the Spirit's gift of discernment, we can position ourselves on its path by befriending its phenomenology and etiquette. The Spirit gifts imagery to help us discern the now, and vision to discern the not yet. Exploring the presence and absence of *shalom* in our imagery and vision keeps us connected to what God is on about. Having pondered the integration of clues in contemplative conversation, with imagery and vision, we can now name our truths as best we can—not with hubris, nor timidity, but a fallible confidence that recognises our discerning is always evolving. This frees us to name not only our trialogue-shaped assertions but also any lingering, liminal questions.

We do not, however, receive and name discerned truths just for the sake of it. We are on the road via Emmaus, not to. If theological reflection is to be genuinely (trans)formational, then we must recognise how God opens the eyes of our heart in order to know the hope to which we have been called—the hope of *shalom*.[148] This hope energises our walk, not only towards its ultimate fulfilment in the new creation but also within our concrete, Spirited steps. That is, *shalom* comes to fruition each day through courageous embodiment. This third and final movement of talking the walk's method is the focus of chapter seven.

[148] Eph 1:18.

CHAPTER SEVEN
COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT

	to rely on clues
Knowing is the responsible human struggle	*to focus on a coherent pattern*
	and submit to its reality

Esther Meek[1]

He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself.

Luke 24:38–39

Knowledge is only a rumour until it lives in the muscle.

Attributed to the Asaro Tribe, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea[2]

I began this thesis with a premise: as we learn to walk our talk (practise what we preach, become who we are, live wholeheartedly), we must also learn to talk our walk (make meaning of experience, discern reality, lean into wisdom). This connection between formation and reflection prompts my exploration of contours of theological reflection that contemplate and cultivate holistic Christian formation. Five contours have been identified so far. Talking the walk's model has three: trialogue, *shalom* and the Emmaus Labyrinth provide the model's dimensions and dynamics, direction, and design. Its method has begun to unfold with two more. Contemplative conversation integrates clues from the trialogue, and imaginative discernment identifies emerging truths and possible visions for *shalom*. In this, our talking makes sense of our walking.

The converse, however, is also true: as we learn to talk our walk, we must also learn to walk our talk. Francis of Assisi purportedly said that "humankind has as much knowledge as has been enacted."[3] We must cultivate what we contemplate, for our living reveals our knowing. As such, approaches to theological reflection typically focus upon praxis in their final step. In theological reflection for formation, we are focused upon the deep work of the Spirit with which we cooperate, such that Jesus' life seeps into our flesh and bones to incarnate *shalom* in the world around us. Embodiment, then, is the most appropriate term for talking the walk's praxis.

Yet embodying discerned truths is often a struggle. It can feel easier to bask in the Emmaus

[1] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13, formatting mine.
[2] Brown, *Rising Strong*, 7.
[3] R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 11. I have been unable to verify Stevens' claim that these are indeed St. Francis' words.

table's moment of recognition, or linger in the labyrinth's receptive centre, than to live out new realities. But contemplation and cultivation are synergistic and need one another. I once led a workshop on ethics in ministry formation at a conference for theological field educators. Having listened to my outline of courageous embodiment, one experienced educator in the group smiled wryly and quipped: "Contemplating formation? Yes, we seem happy to do that. But cultivating formation? Now that's another matter." Moving from insight to action is not automatic; wholehearted living is hard because it requires such vulnerability. We need the Spirit's deep work of encouragement in us, calling us back to our belovedness and giving the courage that animates our steps.

Moreover, leaving discerned truths on the shelf to gather dust truncates holistic (trans)formation in and towards *shalom* for self, others and world. We are shaped not only in the security of relationship as God's beloved but also through the significance of participating in the divine work of cultivating *shalom*. This is our cultural mandate: to steward God's abundance through practices that catechise *shalom* in thought, passion and action, so that all might flourish. More than just a linear theory-to-practice application of truth, embodiment is itself the context for new conversations, ongoing discernment and the Spirit's work of holistic (trans)formation in God's good life.

This chapter, then, begins with foundations for knowing along the Emmaus Labyrinth's outward journey, in which we submit to reality through courageous embodiment. I then explore embodiment theologically, considering systematic and image-based approaches to exploring the dynamic of divine–human agency. Third, I consider three ways God encourages us amidst our stumbling attempts to walk our talk. Finally, I reflect on effecting courageous embodiment through cultivating *shalom* in our doing and deepening. I also include a summary for a critical experience report. Courageous embodiment thus forms the final contour of talking the walk's method and is this chapter's original contribution to knowledge.

Knowing Along the Outward Journey of the Emmaus Labyrinth

Courageous embodiment, along the Emmaus Labyrinth's outward journey, has three epistemological groundings.

Embodiment is Submitting to Reality

We become accountable for our knowing as we submit to reality's gracious disclosure. In our

response, we take *responsibility*. "To submit to something," says Meek is "to treat its presence as weighty. We find ourselves in the presence of something which has already won our respect, and which has already changed us."[4] We submit, says Meek, as a *token* of reality.[5] There is no illusion that we fully grasp or embody the entire scope and depth of what has been revealed. Rather, we yield to the terms of our imaginatively discerned truths as best we can. This is what embodiment is about—pledged response in thought, passion and action to the real and its ongoing generosity.

Submitting to reality means we "reassign significances"[6] and respond accordingly. Whatever the original reason for the two disciples' journey to Emmaus, it is all but forgotten after Jesus' meal table revelation. Though fading light would make travelling risky, "that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem."[7] Their urgency signals an embodiment of newfound truth which they simply must share with the other disciples. Jesus' reality requires their participation for it to come to fruition. Jesus' declaration to the gathered group—"You are witnesses of these things"[8]—is not a casual observation but a commission that carries implications. Embodiment directly affects not only who we are and how we think, but also what we do.

This points to the centrality of human agency in ontology. The popular saying, 'We are human beings, not human doings', helpfully invites a recentering of life amidst the freneticism of modern society and the temptation to measure worth by output. However, it perpetuates a false dichotomy, as though agency and being might be separated. Macmurray argues our capacity for action is intrinsic to identity because it only functions in relation to another. To act is to modify, with intent, something or someone else.[9] As Meek explains, "acting is what makes us *persons*. For any agent is an existential being, and thus a person … [W]here action is fundamental, 'You and I' is fundamental as well."[10] Reuschling frames this theologically:

> Participation in the divine life of the Trinity does not privilege being over doing. Instead, it more tightly connects who we are and what we do as a response to the grace of God who calls us in love and pleasure. Participation in God's divine life encompasses both, recognizing that we are human beings and doers.[11]

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[4] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 74–75.
[5] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 67, 69, 74–75, 407.
[6] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 146.
[7] Luke 24:33.
[8] Luke 24:48.
[9] John Macmurray, *The Self As Agent*, Reprint edition. (Amherst, NY: Humanities, 1993); as summarised in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 221–24.
[10] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 223–24.
[11] Brown, Dahl, and Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy*, 134.

In other words, it takes two to tango. And that is just as well; we are designed for God's dancefloor, not spectator seats. Thus, while Hall asserts that being means being-with,[12] we may also say that doing means doing-with. And for that matter, thinking means thinking-with; even when we are 'alone with our thoughts', they are always informed and shaped by others. In communion with others, we think with and through our bodies, feel with our minds and act with our passions. Once again, this affirms a coinhering theory–practice–persons paradigm, firmly challenging fractured anthropologies that privilege one dimension over others.

Submitting to reality, then, is more muscular than ocular. 'I see what you mean' is a common response when we understand something, and indeed, I suggested (in)sight as one way we experience discernment. Yet knowing as seeing, contends Meek, can reflect an impersonal distance typical of the defective epistemic default. Subjects are treated as objects, viewed critically from the outside without the empathy of interpersoned knowing.[13] From the very beginning of our lives, however, nestled deep in our mother's womb, our knowing is visceral and tactile, not a distant observance. Indeed, "knowledge is only a rumour until it lives in the muscle."[14] Christianity, ultimately, is an incarnational walking of the way. This is why embodiment is my preferred term for praxis over common alternatives like action,[15] decision[16] or response.[17] It signals not only our attempts at doing but also the Spirit's deepening—a kinaesthetic, holistic and formational walking of discerned truths and questions. Embodiment is a whole-person praxis of spiritual, ministerial and theological formation.[18]

Submitting to Reality is Non-Linear and Needs (En)Courage(ment)

If relying on clues along the Emmaus Labyrinth's inward journey is non-linear, then so is submitting to reality along its outward journey. In chapter one, I noted Le Cornu's model of internalisation. Reflection, stimulated by the surrounding environment, transforms us

[12] Hall, *Imaging God*, 116.
[13] See Meek, *Loving to Know*, 24–26.
[14] Attributed to the Asaro Tribe, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in Brown, *Rising Strong*, 7.
[15] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 43–45; Groome specifies personal, ministerial, theological action, see Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?*, 38; Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, chap. 10; Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, 137; Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*, chap. 4.
[16] Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?*, 19.
[17] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*; Green, *Let's Do Theology*, chap. 6.
[18] Praxis reflecting the trialogue may be found elsewhere, e.g., cognitive, affective and behavioural decision making in Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 268; and personal, ministerial and theological enactment in Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, chap. 7. Foley uses the language of orthopathy, orthopraxis and orthodoxy. In orthopraxis he places particular emphasis upon the body and embodiment. See Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 77–83.

existentially.[19] Its counterpart is externalisation—a sort of reversal of the process—whereby in turn our reconstructed selfhood shapes the world around us. But this reversal, she says, "is not necessarily something that comes with great ease."[20] Indeed, note Killen and de Beer, 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions' indicates how often "our insights and intentions wither away, leaving us locked into patterns of behavior that go against our better judgement."[21] Meek says that in holding to reality, a knower may swing between feeling both overwhelmed and deserted by their insight. "In those moments of felt desertion, moments of doubt, a knower holds on by teeth-clenching resolve. It isn't pretty or fun. But it is right to see this as an appropriate part of the act of knowing."[22]

Submitting to reality, then, is neither easy nor automatic. When we try to walk our talk, our feet get bogged in all sorts of mud, like fear and failure, doubt and scarcity, grief and isolation, inertia and stubbornness. Stepping forward with the resolve of which Meeks speaks draws upon 'the courage of our convictions'.[23] Courage animates, enlivens and moves us in the face of what inhibits and paralyses. Terry says that "*courage acknowledges, embraces, and transforms primordial fear as it presses sincerity into authenticity.*"[24] But true courage is not the steeled, impenetrable bravery of superheroes. Whyte notes its roots in "the old French word *coeur* meaning 'heart'. So 'courage' is the measure of your heartfelt participation in the world."[25] Such

[19] Le Cornu, "Theological Reflection and Christian Formation," 14; Le Cornu, "Meaning, Internalization, and Externalization," 285.
[20] Le Cornu, "Meaning, Internalization, and Externalization," 291.
[21] Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 44.
[22] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 168–69. Such resolve does not cast embodiment as 'blind faith' that is unwilling to reassess one's discernment. In fact, the dogged choice to believe and act from that belief expresses ongoing covenantal pledge to truth, not robotic automation—a fallible confidence, I have called it. It loves enough to be willing to revisit the clues and focus again on their integration, with an openness to nuance and modification. Embodiment, then, does not simply enact discernment. We do not implement truth in a linear, theory-to-practice manner, like a sermon with neat application points at the end. Rather, as I have emphasised, discernment can only be validated and fine-tuned as we walk in it. Micah might appropriate my advice and still crash his bike. But he does not conclude that riding is therefore impossible or 'wrong'. He gets back on, revisits the clues and works again at their integration, because the prospect of success—a gift from beyond him—animates further attempts.
[23] Generally, the theological reflection literature is somewhat scant in dealing with obstacles to action. Kinast is one exception, working through four obstacles: the contrast between current patterns of functioning and what the new reality calls for; discomfort with practical implications; a lack of resources; and the power of entrenched habits and instincts. Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*, 76–80.
[24] Robert W. Terry, *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*, A Joint Publication in the Jossey-Bass Public Administration Series, the Jossey-Bass Nonprofit Sector Series, and the Jossey Bass Management Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 250.
[25] David Whyte, "10 Questions That Have No Right To Go Away," n.d., https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56d77489cf80a15f84d55c30/t/578805b96b8f5b162da556c5/1468532153946/David+Whyte+-+10+Questions+That+Have+No+Right+to+Go+Away.pdf; see also Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, June 26.

wholehearted living exposes our flank rather than shields us. Social work researcher, author and speaker Brené Brown draws from extensive grounded research to contend that courage necessitates a vulnerability that exposes us to things like shame, fear, grief, scarcity and uncertainty. Paradoxically, though, vulnerability is also the gateway to love, belonging, joy, creativity and meaning.[26] The risk of failure and pain is inevitable; our only choice is whether or not we show up, even though we cannot control the outcome.[27] Wholehearted living, then, rests upon this two-sided coin of courage and vulnerability.[28] Brown finds that those with a strong sense of worthiness, identity and value have the capacity to embrace the vulnerability needed for courageous living. They simply believe they are worthy of being loved.[29] So, wholehearted living "means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, *No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough*."[30]

Some sixty years before Brown's work, Paul Tillich's classic *The Courage to Be*[31] explored similar territory, albeit via philosophical theology. Tillich says that courage addresses our anxiety induced by experiences of fatality, futility and failure,[32] and he grounds it in the power, identity and value of being. "Courage is the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of non-being."[33] That is, courage comes from worth, just as Brown says. But at this point, their paths diverge. For Brown, we generate the sense of worth and 'enoughness' that makes vulnerable (and thus courageous) living possible through practising 'shame resilience'—learning to fend off negative narratives about our value and simply believe that we are worthy of love. Guilt is important (we need to own bad actions) but we should resist shame (we are not bad people, but good people who are imperfect and make mistakes). There seems to be a distinct wedge between doing and being; 'bad actions' do not in any way flow from being a 'bad person'. Tillich, on the other hand, is

[26] Sandra Restrepo, *Brené Brown: The Call to Courage*, Talk (Netflix, 2019).
[27] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2012), 2. Similarly, Whyte contends that "it can be a lovely, merciful thing to think, 'Actually, there is no path I can take without having my heart broken, so why not get on with it and stop wanting these extra-special circumstances which stop me from doing something courageous?'" Whyte, "10 Questions That Have No Right To Go Away."
[28] Elsewhere Brown explains: "Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection." Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 2.
[29] Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 220.
[30] Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 10.
[31] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, Second edition. (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2017), first published in 1952.
[32] This is my summary. In Tillich's words, "courage needs the power of being, a power transcending non-being which is experienced in the anxiety of fate and death, which is present in the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness, which is effective in the anxiety of guilt and condemnation." Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 155.
[33] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 154.

more candid about the reality of our own inner brokenness and rebellion, which leads him to insist upon transcendence as essential to the value of our being.[34] Both we and the world around us are inherently flawed—subject to 'non-being'—so only a transcendent Other can bestow true worth. Thus, he takes courage one step further: "One could say that the courage to be is the courage to accept oneself as accepted in spite of being unacceptable."[35] Tillich brings us to this conclusion: Accepting our acceptance means we receive rather than self-generate the worth central to courage. True vulnerability, it turns out, drills right down to receptivity. Our utter belovedness and worth is a total gift.

Brown's work has much to offer for flourishing living. Her exposition of vulnerability as the flipside of courage is exquisite, and we certainly need to address destructive shame-talk to ourselves and others. But Tillich's argument implies we need more than just the grit to muster courage from within ourselves. Pretty soon we hit the limit of our resources, especially when confronted with our inner crookedness.[36] I return to this truth, for instance, every time I lose my temper as a parent. Shame resilience helps me recognise I am always 'on the way' and the need to be gentle on myself. But simply accepting my imperfections with a shrug of my shoulders is hardly a solid basis for my worth. When I confront that which is deeply out of shape within me, I cannot honestly claim that 'I am enough'. Ironically, shame resilience itself might be a hamster wheel—a preconditioning strategy I need to perform if I am to claim my value to then resist shame, so I do not base my worth upon performance. What if I fail to get *that* right? On the contrary, only an acceptance of my utter acceptance, warts and all, affords the value and identity I need to open myself to courageous embodiment. Brown commissions our task: *Believe you are worthy of love!* But Tillich declares God's gift: *You are loved, and therefore, worthy!* Though not unrelated, the second preconditions the first as a firmer baseline for flourishing. As Nouwen says, "being the beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence."[37]

Ultimately, then, the fuel of courage is external. That is, *courage finds its true power in encouragement*. It is otherwise impotent because, even as Brown herself states, "we are neurobiologically hardwired for connection with other people. In the absence of connection, love,

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[34] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, chap. 6: Courage and Transcendence: The Courage to Accept Acceptance.
[35] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 164.
[36] Kennedy makes this exact point in her analysis of Brown's work in Anne Kennedy, "But What If It Is Me? The Work and Worldview of Brené Brown," *Christian Research Journal* (2020), https://www.equip.org/article/but-what-if-it-is-me-the-work-and-worldview-of-brene-brown/.
[37] Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 34.

and belonging, there is always suffering."[38] Encouragement is the giving or sowing in of courage from one *into* ('en') another to give 'com-fort'—strength alongside.[39] In this sense, true encouragement is much more profound than a pat on the back or 'There, there, you'll be fine'. God's refrain to Joshua—"Be strong and courageous!"[40]—is no 'bootstraps theology'; the imperative is itself the means. Encouragement could be given as tender listening or the gift of resources. Equally, it might be firm discipline which "always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."[41] But whatever its form, encouragement's core dynamic is consistent: the love of one speaking into the 'dis-ease' of another.[42] Encouragement is therefore interpersoned, thoroughly covenantal and at the heart of the gospel. In the face of any number of inhibitors, it is a gift that bestows worth, enables vulnerability and strengthens us to step forward. It oxygenates our muscles to embody truth as we wind our way out of the Emmaus Labyrinth.

Courageous embodiment, then, is itself a (trans)formative, sacramental encounter. We do not simply suck up a deep breath and get the job done of our own accord. Rather, in our doing, we are deepened through covenantal encouragement. Reality emboldens us, even as we step into it. McAlpin, writing about the reflective practice of volunteers in a refugee house, states that "action, when accompanied by subsequent reflection and ongoing contemplation, is a locus for conversion. Engagement in a ministry of compassionate service, which is the fruit of conversion, is also the seed of ongoing conversion."[43] That is, when we cultivate *shalom*—for instance, feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the imprisoned—we not only minister with Jesus; we are (trans)formatively met by Jesus.[44] Such encouragement, then, is how the Spirit deepens us through our doing in the labyrinthine struggle to submit to reality.

Knowing Cultivates *Shalom* Through Practices

Covenantal knowing is for flourishing. As Meek contends, it ought to be therapeutic for the

[38] Restrepo, *The Call to Courage*.
[39] This insight is drawn from Meek, *Loving to Know*, 50.
[40] Josh 1:1–9.
[41] Heb 12:11. See also Acts 15:32; Eph 6:22; Col 4:8; 1 Thess 3:2, 4:18, 5:11, 5:14; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:4; 1 Pet 5:12.
[42] This definition is developed further from Crabb and Allender who say encouragement is "the love of one speaking into the fear of another." Larry Crabb and Dan B. Allender, *Encouragement: The Unexpected Power of Building Others Up* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), chap. 8.
[43] McAlpin, *Ministry That Transforms*, 104.
[44] Matt 25:35–40.

knower and the known—to bless and to heal.[45] This drives chapter two, where I made a case for *shalom* as the *telos* of Christian formation—not as an alternative to true selfhood in Christ, but as a faithful and concrete exegesis of that conventional goal. It pulls Christian formation out of a myopic 'me-and-Jesus' project to connect individual formation to communal and, indeed, cosmic formation. *Shalom* is God's good life, the throbbing heartbeat of God's mission for all creation. Our knowing as embodiment, then, has a purpose: to cultivate *shalom* as a participation in *missio Dei*. As we cultivate reconciling relationships, justice and righteousness, beauty and creativity, and paschal wholeness, we embody the culture of the gospel of the kingdom.

In this way, cultivation is about culture-making; it fashions a way of being, doing and thinking according to a vision. It is a fundamental human urge; as Meek says, we are "compelled to culturing—hardwired to shape our surroundings"[46] because "the knower is involved in active shaping, rather than passive reception."[47] The choice is whether our knowing cultivates for good or for ill, to bless or to curse. Genesis 1:28 and 2:15 are not simply *creation* mandates, but humanity's *cultural* mandates: to serve, till and work the earth, and to keep, watch over and take care of it.[48] That is, we make something of the world as a participation in God's culture-making. We plant and water, and God alone gives growth; we build together with choice and care upon the foundation of Christ.[49] Submitting to the reality of *shalom* is an act of stewardship by which we cultivate God's world with tenderness and blessing. Though we seek to modify our environment according to our vision of the good, frequently those visions get skewed and need recalibration. Indeed, "this side of the renewal of all things, our efforts are thwarted and poisoned. We bring curse even when we intended blessing."[50] Even still, this is what God's redemptive purpose includes. Our call is to both the intimacy of friendship and the fecundity of cultivation.

Thus, in verses 50–53, Luke rounds out the whole (trans)formative account of chapter 24 with Jesus' blessing of his disciples as he ascends. Commissioned as witnesses and with the promise of the Spirit, he pivots into Acts as an account of the church's first steps in courageously

[45] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 473–75.
[46] Esther L. Meek, "Compelled to Culturing," *Common Grounds Online*, 2008, https://commongroundsonline.typepad.com/common_grounds_online/2008/03/compelled-to-cu.html.
[47] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 474.
[48] עָבַד/*âbad* is usually translated 'till', yet it is the same Hebrew word for 'serve'. We are to *serve* the earth, a far cry from crushing it. In the Aaronic blessing, we ask the Lord to 'bless and שָׁמַר/*shâmar*' us—to keep us. We are to keep the earth in the same loving, caring and sustaining way the Lord keeps us.
[49] 1 Cor 3:6–11.
[50] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 210.

embodying *shalom* and 'practising resurrection'.[51] The Luke–Acts narrative of the gospel has reached its centripetal centre, and now flings centrifugally outwards through the labyrinthine twists and turns of the early church.

Cultivation is also patterned and practised. Its agricultural tenor evokes images of hoeing, planting, watering, tending and harvesting with purposeful repetition. We are (trans)formed through the rituals and rhythms of holistic practices, corporate and individual, that orient us towards and imbibe within us our visions of the good. Christian discipline, explains Nouwen, makes room for God to act:

> Discipline means to prevent everything in your life from being filled up. Discipline means that somewhere you're not occupied, and certainly not preoccupied … [It] means to create that space in which something can happen that you hadn't planned or counted on.[52]

For James K. A. Smith, such practices are primarily bodily, bypassing cognition, to form our affective heart or gut.[53] However, embodiment does not preclude the critical role of cognitive practices in formation; as Foley contends, "thinking is a practice, too."[54] We cultivate *shalom* through training ourselves in patterns of thinking, just as much as behaviour and affect. The Spirit (trans)forms us when we lean into our holistic, coinhering nature, and a primary means for such cultivation is through theological, ministerial and spiritual practices that strengthen our muscle memory for *shalom*.

Summary

Knowing along the outward journey of the Emmaus Labyrinth is about embodiment—submitting to the reality of discerned truths—as a whole-person, interpersoned endeavour. The responsible human struggle to embody a vision of the good is a non-linear journey and requires the gifting of courage. Animated by encouragement, we manifest reality by cultivating *shalom* through doing and deepening. These epistemological footings enable us to now explore an image-laden working theology of embodiment, three ways God encourages us, and our cultivation of *shalom*.

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[51] Eugene H. Peterson, *Practise Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing up in Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010).

[52] Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Moving from Solitude to Community in Ministry," *Leadership Journal*, *In the Spiritual Life* XVI.2, Spring (1995): 42.

[53] Smith explains: "Habits are inscribed in our heart through bodily practices and rituals that train the heart, as it were, to desire certain ends. This is a noncognitive sort of training, a kind of education that is shaping us often without our realization. Different kinds of material practices infuse noncognitive dispositions and skills in us through ritual and repetition precisely because our hearts (site of habits) are so closely tethered to our bodies." Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 58.

[54] Foley, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions*, 83.

Embodiment

Embodiment is about praxis—the living of discerned truths that cultivates the fruit and roots of *shalom*. It is one thing to recognise I need to forgive someone, rethink suffering and faith, or let go of performance anxiety in prayer. It is quite another, though, to meet my offender with kindness and thus understand forgiveness from the inside; to grapple honestly with the tensions of theodicy and navigate my doctor's bad news with dignity and honesty; to practise the silence of deep acceptance and lead others in intense circumstances from a place of centred rest. It attends to how ministerial, theological and spiritual knowing lives in the muscle.

From the Emmaus Labyrinth's receptive centre, we walk back towards the entry, which has now become the exit. Just as the two Emmaus Road disciples ended up where they began in Jerusalem, embodiment returns us to these things which prompted reflection in the first place. Our family, workplace, theological question, relationships, fledgling ministry, inner insecurities, national or global issues—these await our homecoming. Hence theological reflection for formation is more a cyclical A→B→A' rather than a linear A→B.

The connection between being and doing brings the dynamics of divine–human agency to the fore. Pondering this enduring question is critical for fully orbed formation; it helps us take wholehearted responsibility for our embodiment without the crippling delusion that we control or energise it. Much theological ink has been spilt here, and a detailed exploration is beyond the scope of this research. However, I see two ways of opening up this issue, particularly for students. One is through a brief theological consideration of justification, sanctification and *theosis*, beginning with a summary of my own vexed journey. The other is through an entrée into some helpful images for embodiment.

Systematic Theologies for Embodiment

My years in Lutheran contexts formed a disposition towards the fundamental benevolence of God in Christ towards all creation. This was framed almost entirely in systematic terms. The doctrine of justification by grace through faith was front and centre—the 'alien', forensic righteousness of Christ was imputed to me, a 'helpless sinner', with faith itself a total gift. This central thread, in some way, wove its way through just about every sermon I ever heard, and in many ways, I count it as a great gift. It orients me to recognise grace infusing every breath and heartbeat and engage with others in light of this truth. It helps me avoid the trap of 'measuring up' to being an ideal Christian, and all the dehumanising exhaustion such works-based religion brings.

My struggle, though, emerged as I witnessed how the Lutheran refrain—'You can't do anything. You can't do *anything*. God does it ALL!'—meant many around me did very little with their faith. Indeed, Luther addressed this,[55] Bonhoeffer challenged cheap grace[56] and some in my tradition might argue this is a misrepresentation of balanced Lutheran teaching and practice. But I know my experience was not unique. The pervading message, rightly or wrongly, was to be wary of effort because it could lead to trusting in myself. Consequently, I often felt the need to check over my shoulder if I put my hand to the plough—perhaps I might fall into works-righteousness! At times this left me, paradoxically, feeling disempowered and malformed in my spirituality of ministry. I had little feel for the shape of wholehearted, daily participation in the divine life beyond doctrinal categories.

An overemphasis on Christ's imputed righteousness in the forensic model not only obscures a wide range of atonement metaphors.[57] It also leaves the Lutheran tradition "ill equipped to provide the church with strong teaching on sanctification."[58] My experience aligns with Edwards' claim that sometimes Lutherans tend to shout about justification and whisper about sanctification.[59] The Lutheran tradition tends to fixate upon Luther's existential crisis—'How can I come before a righteous God?'—which sometimes drowns out an equally important question—'How can God's righteousness overcome me?'[60] 'Christ *for* me?' Yes, that was unambiguous. But 'Christ *in* me?' That seemed separate and somehow less pressing.

In terms of a doctrinal approach, I have since found that the Eastern Church's teaching of *theosis* holds such questions together more tightly and opens up conversations that can broaden a working theology of embodiment. *Theosis* is our deification or participation in and union with

[55] E.g., Martin Luther, *A Treatise on Good Works* (Auckland, NZ: The Floating Press, 2009).
[56] E.g., Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*.
[57] That is, the forensic model, so predominant in Protestant theology, is only one of a rich array of ways the Scriptures represent God's salvation. E.g., see Worthing, "The Atonement as Healing of Divine and Human Pain," 132–34.
[58] Jeffrey G. Silcock, "Luther on Justification and Participation in the Divine Life: New Light on an Old Problem," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 34.3 (2000): 132.
[59] Henry Edwards, "Justification, Sanctification and the Eastern Orthodox Concept of Theosis," *Consensus* 14.1 (1988): 67. While related, the Lutheran confessions clearly assert that sanctification is only consequential to, not a part of, the article of justification. There is a definite order: justification (the forgiveness of sins and Christ's righteousness imputed wholly and perfectly), followed by sanctification (the indwelling of the Spirit for partial and increasing transformation), which leads to good works as the fruit of faith.
[60] I was intrigued when a pastor, who had only just begun work in the Lutheran congregation where I was working at, sought to preach about issues pertaining to living the Christian life. The reaction he received from a number of people, including those who had been walking with Christ for many years, was one of protest that he was sacrificing the comfort of the Gospel with a whole lot of rules! Brought up on a diet of imputed righteousness, Lutherans can get insecure when discussion turns to living that grace out.

God's Triune life. Two key texts for salvation as *theosis* are 2 Peter 1:4 and Psalm 82:6,[61] among others.[62] Just as God was incarnated in Christ, so we are 'in-godded'. In this, we do not become God (in God's essence), nor lose our humanity.[63] On the contrary, if *theosis* is our ultimate goal, then never are we more human than when we share in and embody God's Triune life. The Eastern view of God's righteousness is the Spirit's gracious inner transformation of the Christian towards 'God-likeness' (closer to the Lutheran–Protestant view of sanctification or faith), rather than something imputed from without.[64] The emphasis is less upon the grace of a divine pronouncement, and more upon the indwelt gift of the Person who makes that declaration possible. In the grace of the cross *and* the empty tomb, the focus of salvation is Christ's person in us—*Christus Victor*—through the Holy Spirit.[65] The true vocation of humanity and indeed all creation, then, is a life of vibrant union with God.

This brief summary of soteriological emphasises does not claim to be comprehensive or subtly refined. Rather, it simply serves as a teaching tool to help students ponder their own theological formation and expose them to enriching perspectives with which they may be unfamiliar. With this in mind, a generalised comparison can serve as a gateway into to further exploration:

Common Emphasises in Western Soteriologies	***Common Emphasises in Eastern Soteriologies***
The problem of sin is our guilty status before God that deserves punishment; we have offended God	The problem of sin is our corruption which means our mortality and death; we cannot live in communion with God
Salvation as justification; righteousness is imputed, alien, forensic, external	Salvation as *theosis*, deification, divinization, glorification; participation in God is ontic, internal
Justification and sanctification are strictly distinct; justification precedes and founds sanctification, and tends to take precedence	*Theosis* (seems to) hold justification and sanctification more closely together[66]

[61] Jesus quotes this in John 10:34–36.

[62] The Johannine corpus is particularly pregnant with concepts of mutual indwelling, e.g., John 1:32, 3:8, 14:17, 15:4–8; 1 John 3:2, 4:12–16. Paul in Galatians, a book strong in the language of justification, nevertheless says "It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). He also says how God's image in us—distorted, but not lost in the fall—is being renewed in us (Col 3:10), so that we are being transformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom 8:29). See also 2 Cor 8:9 and Heb 4:15.

[63] John of Damascus, for instance, talked of "man becoming deified in the way of participating in the divine glory, and not in that of a change into a divine being." Cited in Daniel B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 130.

[64] John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1992), 24.

[65] Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 132.

[66] Although it is hard to directly equate, since the Orthodox do not use these terms.

Christ for us	Spirit of Christ in us
Personal, Christological	Cosmic, pneumatological
Work of Christ at the cross (soteriology)	Person of Christ (*Christus Victor*) in the Resurrection (Christology)
Church architecture is in the shape of a cross; often the pulpit is central, although Lutherans have the altar central	Church architecture centres on a dome, depicting earthly worship in the presence of all the company of heaven; the altar is central, but behind a screen, representing the veil between this life and the next
Atonement for sin	At-one-ment for life
Declared righteous	Made righteous
The means, or how of salvation	The meaning, or what of salvation
My standing or status: forgiven by God	All of creation's vocation: life in God
What we are saved from	What—and Who—we are saved for

Table 2: Some Common Emphases in Western and Eastern Soteriologies

Clearly such common emphases do not present mutually exclusive or contradictory ideas.[67] It is also worth noting the bridging work done through dialogue and scholarship,[68] including in Lutheran circles.[69] I do not mean to jettison classic Western understandings or claim *theosis* is

[67] Part of the difficulty, as Hinlicky points out, lies in the perils of directly translating terminology between East and West, since their contexts and concerns have been so different. Paul R. Hinlicky, "Theological Anthropology: Toward Integrating Theosis and Justification by Faith," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34.Winter (1997): 55–57. Nonetheless, some Scriptures seem to actually connect Western and Eastern soteriologies, particularly in Pauls' writings. Gal 3:13–14 maintains that the imputed righteousness of God always has as its goal the internal life of Christ through the Spirit, 1 Cor 6:11 closely links justification and Christ with sanctification and the Spirit, and Rom 4:25 ties our justification to the resurrection rather than the cross. These soteriological motifs, along with a number of others in the New Testament—adoption, reconciliation, deliverance, redemption, ransom—all bear witness in a complementary way to the multifaceted nature of salvation in Christ.

[68] E.g., A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London, UK: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1988); Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*; Edwards, "Justification, Sanctification and the Eastern Orthodox Concept of Theosis"; Myk Habets, "Reforming Theōsis," in *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology (Volume 1)*, ed. Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2006), 146–67; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004).

[69] Most notable here is the 'Mannernaa Circle'—five Finnish Lutheran theologians at the University of Helsinki, headed by Professor Tuomo Mannernaa. Silcock explains how they challenge the traditionally strict separation between justification and sanctification from Luther's own writings. Central to their argument is Luther's adage from his commentary on Galatians, *in ipsa fide Christus adest*—Christ is really present in faith. They point out that for Luther, justification includes both 'grace'—the undeserved and merciful declaration by God that we are forgiven and righteous on account of Christ—*and* 'gift'—the indwelling of Christ in his Spirit and the regeneration, renewal, change and transformation into the image of God that brings. Both are an essential part of justification by faith. If we focus only on the forensic model of justification, it is only as *though* we are righteous, but do not really participate in the whole Christ. On the contrary, we must keep the person and work of Christ together, for they condition each other. The proclamation of grace brought by Word and sacraments in itself brings the gift of Christ's Spirit, yet that

without theological and exegetical difficulties.[70] Instead, where the forensic framework has dominated, *theosis* can open up conversations that nuance and enrich our theology and spirituality of embodiment. The mystery of "Christ in you, the hope of glory"[71] means our working with God can be wholehearted, full tilt and free from unnecessary worry about works-righteousness. Paul's words to the Colossians deepen in meaning when viewed through the *theosis* lens: "For this [that is, presenting everyone mature in Christ, having reached their goal] I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me."[72] Amidst all my theological wrestling around this issue, this has become my simple mantra for embodiment.

Of course, my formation journey and these theological categories might not necessarily resonate with students, who will need to work this through from their own standpoint. I have taught many students at the opposite pole: exhausted from the religion treadmill and surprised to discover grace as fundamental to embodiment. For them, working *with* rather than *for* God becomes a revelation. Ultimately, the dynamic of divine–human agency is more of a marvellous mystery to climb into than a conundrum to be resolved on paper. Attending to the inevitable swings of the pendulum as we embody faith is itself an invitation to the Spirit's work of formation—a tension to be embraced and enjoyed as part of being human.

Images for Embodiment

Moreover, in my life and teaching, I find metaphors often help more than a clinical exposition of systematic doctrines. So, I offer seven evocative and accessible images as an alternative yet complementary approach. They tease out different aspects of the Spirit's deepening presence within our attempts at doing.

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proclamation can hardly be received unless the indwelling, sanctifying Spirit is at work in us. Silcock, "Luther on Justification and Participation in the Divine Life," 132–33. See also Meyendorff and Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*.

[70] Protestantism has at least three important critiques of the Orthodox position. Firstly, it questions whether there is enough explicit biblical support to warrant such a monumental emphasis on *theosis*, especially to the exclusion of other central biblical motifs. Secondly, the Orthodox case makes much of the distinction between image and likeness, however this finds little support in contemporary biblical scholarship, as even some Orthodox thinkers acknowledge. Thirdly, while *theosis* rightly seems to keep justification and sanctification together, at times it seems the two are confused or collapsed into one. This is where Lutheran theology in particular raises its chief objection: where is the comfort of the Gospel, the fact that it doesn't depend on me, when I see sin in my life and feel anything but someone who is sharing in God's life? Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 158. See also the summary presented in Thomas R. Schreiner, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification (What the Reformers Taught ... and Why It Still Matters)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), chap. 2.

[71] Col 1:27.

[72] Col 1:29.

Walking the Talk

I have already said much about the intrinsic connection between walking and talking as primary metaphors for formation and reflection. Walking in the Scriptures is associated with accompaniment, obedience and following after. When we embody truth by walking our talk, we step out our confession and practise what we preach. Rather than a direct A→B, our trek is a cyclical and wending A→B→A'. This lands us back in our Jerusalem—our dysfunctional workplace, first grandchild's birth, apathetic faith community, theological conundrum, moving prayer experience or whatever context birthed these things in the first place. Talking the walk returns us to, rather than abstracts us from, our context. But we return to A', not A. Something *is* different. Our return might lead us to tread familiar paths in new ways or perhaps walk in different directions altogether.

The image of walking our talk reinforces the physical, concrete nature of embodying *shalom*—we call our offender to make a time for coffee, read a challenging book or intentionally try silence and stillness when we pray. When we walk our talk, truth tremors in our bodies and our knowing lives in the muscle. Moreover, as we have seen, *solvitur ambulando* points to how our talking is 'solved' or fleshed out by our walking. We tread the path of *tentatio*, the testing of faith, to validate and re-evaluate our discernment; forgiving someone, for instance, seems straightforward until we try it! This resonates with Paul's encouragement to the Christians in Philippi to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."[73] Critically, then, our embodied trek along the Jesus way is with the three mile an hour God—a walking after or by the Spirit.[74] We do not walk our talk alone; the Spirit guides and enables our steps.

Living the Möbius Strip

Walking our talk highlights the centrality of integrity in embodiment. We distrust those who promise much but deliver little. On the other hand, we give respect when someone shows themselves to be genuine. Little wonder that the *Royal Commission into Institutional Childhood Sexual Abuse*[75] has accelerated the erosion of the public's trust in the institution of the Australian Christian church.

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[73] Phil 2:12–13.

[74] Rom 8:1, 4; Gal 5:16.

[75] See https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/.

Integrity is a prominent theme in the book of James, which draws upon the wisdom tradition and Matthew's beatitudes to address the incongruent life. "Who is wise and understanding among you?" James asks. "Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom."[76] Followers along the way are not merely hearers but doers of the Word.[77] They "speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty."[78] Their 'Yes' is their yes, and their 'No' is their no.[79] Integrity, then, is about becoming integrated. It is the movement towards a put-together, consistent life that nurtures the coinhering nature of our theology, spirituality and ministry. In every concrete opportunity we have to embody *shalom*, James exhorts us: 'Become who you are!'[80]

Thus, embodiment as integrity is the movement towards our true self in Christ demonstrated through congruence between our inner and outer lives. This is beautifully and practically illustrated by the Möbius strip, as explained by Parker Palmer.[81] It works well as a teaching tool in three steps.

[Image removed due to copyright restriction. See footnote for original source.]

Figure 15: Soul and Role Divided[82]

First, *soul and role divided*. We start with a strip of paper, each side representing our inner and outer world, our backstage and onstage lives, our soul and role. As babies, says Palmer, our lives begin with no differentiation between the soul and role, but soon these become disconnected for survival's sake. A disjunct develops in our faith journey between the expected and learnt outer role of the 'Christian', and our inner reality. It can be a dry, lonely place.

[Image removed due to copyright restriction. See footnote for original source.]

Figure 16: Living Inside Out[83]

Next, *living inside out*. We join the two ends of the strip to form a circle. We might work hard at attending to this disconnect by seeking to live out of our centre. We engage with God

[76] Jas 3:13.
[77] Jas 1:22–27.
[78] Jas 2:12.
[79] Jas 5:12.
[80] See also 1 John 2:3–6.
[81] This is my summary of Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 39–49.
[82] Image taken from Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 41.
[83] Image taken from Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 46.

more, pray more, read the Bible more, serve more, [insert religious activity] more—so that our inner lives might order our outer lives. We feel safe to be vulnerable only with those who seem to align with our inner world. While this ordering can be a step in the right direction, there is still a wall between soul and role.

[Image removed due to copyright restriction. See footnote for original source.]

Figure 17: Living the Möbius Strip[84]

Finally, *living the Möbius strip*. We let the two ends of the strip part, give one a half twist, and then bring them back together and join them with some tape. It creates the remarkable Möbius strip, a continuous loop with only one surface and one edge. Palmer explains that

> the mechanics of the Möbius strip are mysterious, but its message is clear: whatever is inside us continually flows outward to help form, or deform, the world—and whatever is outside us continually flows inward to help form, or deform, our lives. The Möbius strip is like life itself: here, ultimately, there is only one reality.[85]

That is, the two 'co-create' each other. We see this in Jesus as someone who lives the undivided life. His role as the Father's minister of *shalom* is, in the power of the Spirit, inextricably connected to his soul as the beloved, and vice versa. "I tell you the truth," says Jesus, "the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."[86]

Embodying *shalom* means living the Möbius strip, with a dynamic exchange between our interior and exterior worlds. This does not mean we reveal more of ourselves than is safe or wise, or uncritically bow to the whim of every external force. Nor does integrity mean we have it all together. Rather, living the Möbius strip means we acknowledge and address the inconsistencies between our discernment and embodiment without shame or surprise, as an embrace of the Spirit's work of *shalom* in and through us. It is the lifelong movement towards transparency in our lives—with all our faults and strengths, dark and light—such that as God's beloved and forgiven children, what others see is what they get. The Möbius strip reminds us that embodiment is not about a unidirectional application of truth. It is an interconnected and reciprocal flow between our inner and outer lives in Christ, in whose seamless integrity our own is found.

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[84] Image taken from Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 47.
[85] Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 47.
[86] John 5:19-20a.

Ordinary Sainthood

Embodiment is ordinary sainthood. Devenish says that ordinary saints have currency for four reasons: the lives of saints represent an extension of Christ's own life; saints' lives are revelatory; the history of Christianity is the history of its saints (not its buildings); and the making of saints is the church's first priority.[87] Typically, though, we struggle to think of ourselves, individually or collectively, as saints. Saints are the ἅγιος/*hagios* of God—the holy, sacred, set apart and sanctified. Commonly, saints are cast as noble and notable 'bible heroes', early church martyrs, famous leaders of change or humble servants like Mother Teresa. They are greats who rise above the pack with their newsworthy, sacrificial lives in the face of challenge. In contrast, we look at our quiet, hidden lives as parents and workers, friends and neighbours, and are only too aware of our inner darkness and flailing attempts at embodying *shalom*. Saints? We feel anything but. Protestants tend to dismiss sainthood as a dubious Catholic or Eastern Orthodox idea. Sainthood seems neither achievable nor desirable.

But saints are who we are! Daily we live the baptised life: dead to sin, alive to Christ and his holiness in us. And as Devenish argues, we need to recapture ordinary sainthood as fundamental to the embodied Christian life, because "God's favourite way of making himself present in the world is through the righteous lives of his people."[88] That might sound terrifying, but if we think our frailty disqualifies us, we ought to consider the many Paul called saints,[89] including the Corinthian Christians who displayed all manner of dysfunctional behaviours. Saints are not those who appear to have everything sorted. Their knowledge of inner frailties means they lean into the grace of God all the more. All they have to offer is the availability of their raw selves into the hands of a merciful God.

The myth of saints as pristine heroes gets the death blow it deserves when we consider one of Luther's favourite phrases, *simul justus et peccator*. We are at the same time entirely and always both saints and sinners.[90] And grace meets us at every point—both in the forgiveness we need as sinners, and the empowerment we need as saints. Willard explains:

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[87] Stuart C. Devenish, *Ordinary Saints: Lessons in the Art of Giving Away Your Life* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 167–68.

[88] Devenish, *Ordinary Saints*, vi.

[89] E.g., Rom 1:7, 8:27; 1 Cor 1:2, 14:33; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1, 2:19, 3:18, 5:3, 6:18; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2, 12, 26.

[90] "We are in truth and totally sinners, with regard to ourselves and our first birth. Contrariwise, insofar as Christ has been given for us, we are holy and just totally. Hence from different aspects we are said to be just and sinners at one and the same time." Luther, Martin, Luther's Works Weimar edition (WA 39 p. 523), as cited in Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 72.

> ‘Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning.’ Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action. Grace, you know, does not just have to do with forgiveness of sins alone … [Rather] the true saint burns grace like a 747 burns fuel on takeoff. Become the kind of person who routinely does what Jesus did and said. You will consume much more grace by leading a holy life than you will by sinning, because every holy act you do will be upheld by the grace of God.[91]

Devenish, then, argues not for the *invocation* of saints—the veneration or exaltation of ancient heroes through requesting their intercession—but for the *evocation* of saints—the summons or calling forth of those present who would embody the life and love of God in their own ordinary graced way.[92]

God, who can “ride with a lame horse and shoot with a crooked bow,”[93] is well aware of our frailties and misshapen attempts at living out saintly and significant lives, ever delighting to work through them regardless. Embodiment as ordinary sainthood is not about our righteousness but God’s all-sufficient grace working through our saint–sinner selves, perfecting divine power in human weakness.[94]

Wounded Healing

When our discernment reveals difficult and painful truths, embodiment might take the form of wounded healing. For if God can cultivate *shalom* despite or through our sin and frailty, then the same goes for our wounds. They can become, as Nouwen contends, a fount of healing in the world. “When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilise them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope.” [95] In my early twenties, I was on an itinerant ministry team. At one

[91] Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ Is for the Whole Life and the Whole Person’,” in *For All the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality*, ed. Timothy George and Alister McGrath (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 50.

[92] Devenish says: “My call, then, is for holy people, in these post-Christian times, to ‘stand up and be counted.’ Rabbi Abraham Heschel once observed that ‘What we need more than anything else today is not textbooks, but text people. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupils read; the text they will never forget.’ Similarly, living saints, real persons and actions, are the best proof of the credibility and authenticity of Christianity’s truth claims. If the ‘proof is in the pudding’—as the old saying goes—then the credibility of the gospel is best demonstrated by the authentic lives of those saints who confess, live by, and promote the good news to their family, friends, and neighbors. The lives of living saints are the manifesto of a reality that exists beyond the present status quo.” Devenish, *Ordinary Saints*, 165.

[93] These words (or similar variations) are attributed to Martin Luther, e.g., Sally Sharpe, *365 Meditations for Young Adults* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010), April 26; Stephen R. Montgomery, “Free To Be Truly Appalling,” *Idlewild Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee*, 2002, http://www.idlewildchurch.org/sermon_08-18-02.html. However, I have not been able to locate them in Luther’s extant writings.

[94] 2 Cor 12:9.

[95] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 95.

church, our hosts were praying for one of us who was dealing with significant personal issues. “Really,” they advised, “you shouldn’t be in ministry if you are still wounded.” I remember thinking, “Well then, that disqualifies everyone!” For we all carry hurts that God is in the process of healing.[96] The wonder of wounded healing is that our pain can bring blessing to others even as that healing progresses. Weapons that cause injury become firewood for warmth[97] or tools for cultivation.[98] The God of all comfort gives us comfort that overflows to others in distress.[99]

Wounded healing does not justify or explain away our suffering, nor mean we are always ready to place our hurt in service of others. Instead, it attunes us to our participation in the paschal cycle and the redemptive purpose of our brokenness. “For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”[100] When we touch our *impuissance*—our powerlessness, weakness and vulnerability—we enter more deeply into the true humanity of Christ, whose own wounding is the ultimate source of healing.[101] For even the resurrected Christ still has wounds. The power of God is found in utter weakness.[102]

Poem by Edward Shillito removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for cited source.[103]

When something is broken, typically we either try and restore it to its original condition or simply toss it out. The ancient Japanese craft of Kintsugi, however, painstakingly restores broken ceramics using a lacquer containing gold powder. Far from being hidden, the fault lines are highlighted as part of the pottery’s history. Bartlett explains:

> Not only is there no attempt to hide the damage, but the repair is literally illuminated … The vicissitudes of existence over time, to which all humans are susceptible, could not be clearer than in the breaks, the knocks, and the shattering to which ceramic ware too is subject.[104]

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[96] “Nobody escapes being wounded,” says Nouwen. “We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not, ‘How can we hide our wounds?’ so we don't have to be embarrassed, but ‘How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?’ When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers.” Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, July 8.
[97] Ezek 39:7–10.
[98] Is 2:4.
[99] 2 Cor 1:3–4.
[100] 2 Cor 1:5.
[101] Phil 3:10–11; Col 1:19–20.
[102] 1 Cor 1:23–29.
[103] From the poem *Jesus of the Scars* by Edward Shillito, cited in John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (InterVarsity Press, 2012), 328.
[104] Christy Bartlett, *Flickwerk: The Aesthetics of Mended Japanese Ceramics* (Münster: Museum für Lackkunst, 2008), 11.

Figure 18: A Kintsugi Master[105] and a Hand-Painted Kintsugi Bowl[106]

Kintsugi reflects embodiment as wounded healing. In chapter six, I cited the 'epiphany' of my former lecturer Mark Worthing soon after the suicide of his son. Since then, he has found ways to embody that painful discernment as a fount of healing for others, including through workshops,[107] academic writing,[108] a children's book[109] and a novel.[110] Years of unexplained infertility and early pregnancy loss, encounters with mental illness and relational stress are some of the wounds through which God has cultivated *shalom* in my ministries of teaching and spiritual direction. Christ's work of Kintsugi in our lives is not just about our ongoing healing; we become chalices or jars of clay[111] that hold the living water of Christ for others to drink. The gold-seamed chips and cracks embody the extraordinary power and beauty of God.

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[105] Motoki Tonn, *Kintsugi Master Repairing a Japanese Teapot, Putting Golden Dust Over His Work*, Photo, 2020, https://unsplash.com/photos/s5I9kQhPYvU.
[106] Ruthann Hurwitz, *Hand Painted Kintsugi Pottery Bowl*, Photo, 2018, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hand_Pinted_Kintsugi_Pottery_Bowl.jpg, reused under licence 2.0 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en.
[107] Mark Worthing, "Light in the Darkness: A Six Session Series Exploring Mental Illness, Suicide, Grief, Suffering, Life After Death, and Hope from a Christian Perspective" (presented at the Grass Roots Winter Evening Class Series, Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide, 2013); Mark Worthing, "Suicide: Silence, Ignorance and Confused Theology" (presented at the Rekindling Hope Conference. Baptist Care, Adelaide, 2014).
[108] Worthing, "The Atonement as Healing of Divine and Human Pain."
[109] Mark Worthing, *What the Dog Saw* (Melbourne: Morning Star, 2017).
[110] Mark Worthing, *Iscariot. A Novel* (Melbourne: Morning Star, 2018).
[111] 2 Cor 4:7.

Abiding Fruitfulness

Embodiment as abiding fruitfulness reveals dynamics between the hidden and the visible.[112] The unseen is our mutual abiding in Christ through the Spirit.[113] Love flows like sap from vine to branches in grace and back again in gratitude, deepening our roots in the Triune life.[114] The seen is the Spirit's fruitfulness in our lives, borne from that flow, for the flourishing of self, others and world.[115] Such fruit-bearing itself deepens our roots as we search for more water and nutrients. As Phillips observes,

> In the garden, plants extend their roots and branches toward the life-giving elements. But they don't control the rain or the shine. Those animating elements are given. Plants also participate in, yet don't control, their fruit bearing. Fruit is given to those who orient themselves toward life.[116]

"The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downwards," says the prophet Isaiah, "and bear fruit upwards."[117] Roots and fruit, intimacy and fecundity, security and significance, *imago Dei* and *missio Dei*, deepening and doing—such reciprocity gets missed when theological reflection models only focus on practical outcomes in their praxis step. Embodiment attends to the Spirit's work in both the doing that bears fruit and the deepening that extends roots.

Embodiment as abiding fruitfulness returns us to the theology of participation discussed in chapter five. It shifts our *modus operandi* from productivity and what we manufacture 'for God', towards fruitfulness and what God bears through us. Nouwen explains that productivity is about what we make and claim as our own. Being productive, though not bad in itself, can stem from the fear of being useless and the need to prove ourselves. Fruitfulness, though, comes from our identity as the beloved as experienced in our abiding.[118] Our full involvement is essential, then, for the vine needs branches to bear the fruit of *shalom*. Yet it is a passive activity since branches do not strain with angst when bearing fruit! This invites a non-anxious presence and attentive patience. Though discerned truths can feel crystal clear, their embodiment might be slowed by the dormant waiting of winter, times of fertilising or the necessity of painful pruning. God bears fruit

[112] Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 192.
[113] John 15:1–10.
[114] Col 2:7.
[115] Col 3:10.
[116] Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 197.
[117] Is 37:31.
[118] Nouwen, *Lifesigns*, 41–51.

through us in due season.[119]

‘Trust in the Slow Work of God’ by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[120]

The Latin word *frui*, from which ‘fruit’ comes, means ‘to enjoy’.[121] When discernment eventually comes to *fruition*, we taste and see the goodness of God’s *shalom* and enter into the joy of abiding. But we also imagine what ongoing effect that fruit might have, just as Jesus chooses and appoints us “to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.”[122] Fruitfulness is about legacy—our embodiment of truth that is enjoyed in the moment but also becomes generative. Embodiment as abiding fruitfulness, then, holds out this wonderful possibility: God’s fruit of *shalom* borne through us also carries seeds which take root and a life of their own. These germinate in good soil as we become “someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”[123]

Harnessing the Wind

Embodiment lives the paradox of our wholehearted working with all of God’s energy. In Malawi, Africa, there is a proverb. *Ngati mphepo yofika konse*: ‘God is as the wind, which touches everything’.[124] William Kamkwamba was a fourteen-year-old boy from a poor farming family in the village of Wimbe. Through great struggle and perseverance, he caught God’s breeze.[125]

William loved learning, particularly science. He spent hours tinkering with and fixing broken radios with his cousin Geoffrey. But a severe famine gripped rural areas from 2001, and Wimbe felt forgotten by a corrupt government who years earlier had expediently sold Malawi’s grain reserves. With no family income to pay for school fees, William was forced to drop out and help scrounge for food. But he self-directed his learning through borrowed school notes from his good friend Gilbert and visits to the small Wimbe primary school library. Here he discovered *Using*

[119] See Ps 1:1–3; Jer 17:7–8.
[120] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Making of a Mind: Letters from a Soldier-Priest, 1914-1919* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1961), 57.
[121] Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 192.
[122] John 15:16.
[123] Matt 13:23 (NIV).
[124] Chiwetel Ejiofor, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, Drama (Netflix, 2019), closing credits.
[125] Summary drawn from William Kamkwamba, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2009); William Kamkwamba, “About,” *William Kamkwamba*, 2020, http://www.williamkamkwamba.com/about.html; Ejiofor, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.

Energy,[126] a donated book with its front cover featuring windmills that magically generated electricity. Suddenly everything clicked. He could build a machine to harness one of the area's few consistent resources: wind. Power could bring light for study at night, or even pump water to safeguard against future droughts. An all-consuming, inspiring dream took hold.

An abandoned scrapyard became William's supply shop. He found a radiator fan for a rotor, a shock absorber for a shaft, and wrested a necessary bearing from its casing after hours of banging, causing his hands to blister and bleed. He converted PVC drainpipes into blades and a broken bicycle into the frame for the windmill head. Gilbert donated money for bolts and the all-important dynamo, which they bought from a man on his bike, coaxed into the deal after some bargaining. William, Gilbert and Geoffrey cut down, pruned, carried and erected straight blue gums for poles, built the tower and hoisted the windmill. A small crowd gathered. Months of suspicion and mockery from family and Wimbe's locals evaporated in one magical moment: the blades spun, and a lightbulb flickered to life for all to see.

Figure 19: William Kamkwamba's Windmill in Wimbe, Malawi[127]

[126] Mary Atwater, *Using Energy* (New York, NY: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill School, 1995).
[127] Erik (HASH) Hersman, *William Kamkwamba's Old Windmill*, Photo, 2005,

Sometime later, William built a bigger windmill to pump water:

> That pump now sits above the shallow well at home and irrigates a garden where my mother grows spinach, carrots, tomatoes, and Irish potatoes, both for my family to eat and to sell at market. Finally, the dream had been realized. [128]

William's story suggests how we might harness God-given social imaginaries to energise our tenacity and ingenuity. It challenges our product-driven, disposable cultural context which dupes us into thinking we cannot realise a calling without first acquiring a complete set of new resources. Do we forget what Jesus does with a boy's five barley loaves and two small fish,[129] or through the seventy-two who carry no purse, bag, sandals—or ministry experience?[130] God is good at recycling. Excellence in embodiment is not being wholly resourced, but rather doing our best where we are, with what we have and with who we are. God can do a lot with a little, especially when we band together. The windmill was Gilbert's and Geoffrey's achievement too. Collaborative enterprises invite vulnerability in asking for help and reward us with collective satisfaction. Working together with not much is a powerful conduit for (trans)formation and trust.

William's embodiment of his dream caught God's wind to bring *shalom* to many in practical, concrete ways. But just who was harnessing who? William says that "my family couldn't have imagined that the little windmill I built during the famine would change their lives in every way, and they saw this change as a gift from heaven."[131] His efforts were, in fact, God's efforts, responding to the cries of human need. Divine energies mysteriously infuse human agency. God gives gifts, including our very selves, to employ collaboratively in our embodiment of discerned truths with all the diligence, resourcefulness and perseverance we can muster. But in that same action, we find ourselves harnessed, energised and (trans)formed by the wind of the Spirit.

A Living Sacrifice

Submitting to reality evokes the language of sacrifice. Embodiment costs. We give ground to something larger, surrender to its truth, "treat its presence as weighty."[132] We declare its worth by reordering our priorities, resources and actions accordingly. This frames our daily embodiment of *shalom* as an act of worship. Worship centres on the receiving and giving of love as God gathers

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Kamkwambas_old_windmill.jpg, reused under licence 2.0 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en.

[128] Kamkwamba, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, 261.

[129] John 6:1–14.

[130] Luke 10:1–12.

[131] Kamkwamba, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, 261.

[132] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 74–75.

the church to rehearse the gospel story. But it is not constrained to an hour on Sundays. The prophet Amos rails against elaborate corporate worship occurring alongside injustice in society.[133] Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews connects the sacrifice of praise to God through Christ with the sacrifice of good works and generosity to others.[134] Paul appeals, in view of God's mercies, to

> present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.[135]

Embodiment as a living sacrifice is a way of life as worship. We offer our whole selves to God in our thought, passion and action.

Critically, though, that sacrifice only lives within the ongoing worship of the Trinity. In the Spirit, Jesus is the true worshipper[136]—both great high priest[137] and sacrificial lamb without blemish[138]—who receives the Father's love[139] and reciprocates in complete surrender.[140] 'Abba!' is his fundamental cry, reflecting both familial adoration and reverent submission.[141] But that very cry of intimacy and surrender becomes our own, evoked by the Spirit within us.[142] Embodiment as a living sacrifice, then, is the work of the Spirit that locates our incomplete surrender within Christ's perfect offering to the Father. In Parry's words, "the response that we make to God in worship is a response that is enabled by God."[143] Any sacrifice we make is nestled securely within the perfect submission of Christ; that is what, in turn, allows us to give ourselves as freely and fully as we can.

This is gloriously liberating compared to the burden of worship that depends on our own 'complete surrender'. Who could ever claim *total* devotion to God? Only Christ. In truth, we are idolaters at heart and our offerings are meagre. Nevertheless, they are precious to God. Buxton

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[133] Amos 5:18–27.
[134] Heb 13:15–16.
[135] Rom 12:1–2.
[136] Heb 7:25.
[137] Heb 4:14–16.
[138] 1 Pet 1:19.
[139] Mark 1:9-11.
[140] Mark 4:26.
[141] Although 'Abba' is often understood as 'Daddy', Smail points out the danger that to use 'Daddy' can promote a sentimentalism that diminishes the notions of reverence and obedience implicit in Abba. He agrees with Moule and Jeremias that the best English translation is simply, 'Dear Father'. Tom Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 39.
[142] Rom 8:15–17; Gal 4:6.
[143] Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, Second edition. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 133.

tells of a young girl staying in a hotel with her family. She was in the early stages of learning to play the piano. Seeing the piano in the lobby, she began to play some notes, her ‘plink, plonk’ irritating other guests. Soon, though, a man sat beside her and played notes in and around her offering. He transformed her tinkering into beautiful music. The man was Alexander Borodin, the nineteenth-century Russian composer, and the girl’s father.[144] The ‘plink, plonk’ of our living sacrifice finds its beauty and acceptance within Christ’s fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.[145]

Courage

Prayer/poem by Michael Leunig removed due to copyright restriction.
See footnote for original source.[146]

Embodiment that effects God’s revolution of *shalom* needs courage that comforts, animates and moves us given the many twists and turns in the journey of living discerned truths. We should not be surprised; struggle is integral to embodiment. Consider John the Baptist, that bold prophet chiselled from Elijah’s mould, preparing the way of the Lord. Upon seeing Jesus, he discerns confidently: “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”[147] As he baptises Jesus, his truth-telling is validated by nothing less than a heavenly voice and a descending dove.[148] Yet while in prison he sends his disciples to Jesus with a fragile question: “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”[149] Extending the Road via Emmaus story through to verse 49 also reveals the difficulty of submitting to reality.[150] The two and the larger group excitedly share their encounters with the risen Lord; surely, what could be better than seeing him again? But while they are still talking, Jesus’ sudden appearance and offer of peace have the opposite

144 Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark, Revised Edition*, 191.
145 Eph 5:1.
146 Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, 16.
147 John 1:29.
148 Mark 1:9–11.
149 Matt 11:3, Luke 7:19. John the Baptist's doubt is explored as a prototype for our struggle with doubt in knowing in Meek, *Longing to Know*, chap. 21.
150 As explained in chapter four, the conventional ‘Road *to* Emmaus’ makes the revelation of Jesus the main deal, and embodiment appear straightforward. This is evident in some approaches to theological reflection that employ Luke 24 as a guide. For instance, Cameron et al. explore blurred encounters that move from confusion to clarity through the revelation of Jesus’ presence, then conclude: “This revelation of insight and new understanding Illuminated the meaning of the events that a moment before had so perplexed them and they returned to Jerusalem ready for transformed action and presence in the world.” Cameron, Reader, and Slater, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing*, 14–15. Similarly, Hunter applies the passage’s themes of journey, conversation, engaging the tradition and sacramental revelation to frame theological reflection for STFE students. He simply concludes: “Whatever business [the two disciples] thought they had in Emmaus was set aside as they ‘rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem’ (Luke 24:33) … When the two returned to Jerusalem they shared their story with the stories of others, an important feature of the message of this pericope.” Hunter, “Supervised Theological Field Education: A Resource Manual,” 31.

effect: “They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.”[151]

While typically we name our barriers as sin, death, the devil or ‘the world’, the embodiment images above offer further texture. For instance, when we walk our talk, we fear the uncertainty of unknown paths and hidden obstacles that might cause us to stumble. We doubt our discernment, which might be challenged or even disproven as we step out. The appeal of the Möbius strip is the resolution of inner–outer incongruence, but it costs. It is hard to come clean about our lack of integrity, and realigning our thinking, doing and being may result in criticism, misunderstanding and isolation.

Ordinary sainthood—the baptised life—is holy living in the freedom of the gospel. But exhaustion or a heightened sense of frailty might hamstring adventurous embodiment, especially if we tend to find worth in performance and not the outrageous grace of God. Conversely, inertia and apathy can indicate we have become spiritually overweight from not exercising that grace. Wounded healing sounds great in theory, but our acquired injuries can feel painful enough without the terrifying thought of revisiting them in therapeutic service of others. It often feels preferable to numb ourselves with busyness or distraction or give the devil a foothold through the twisted comfort of bitterness and self-pity drawn from festering wounds.

The passive activity of bearing fruit in due season demands much patience and relinquishing of control. Pruning is painful, and sending down roots is a slow, incremental process. Toiling towards a vision to harness God’s energy requires perseverance, discipline and creativity. We can be beleaguered by scarcity, the voices of sceptics or our own unwillingness to ask for help. Embodiment as worship gets hijacked by our idolatry or stale spirituality. It also suffers when we offer ourselves to please God, rather than live from God’s pleasure as the basis for grateful service.

These are just some of our points of need for courage in embodiment. Their breadth suggests wholehearted living needs a feel for how to find and receive encouragement for the many occasions we will need it. Certainly, God is ready to give. Jesus sends word back to his fretful cousin: “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.”[152] And in the final part of the Road via Emmaus story in Luke 24:36–49, Jesus gives courage in three ways which, as it happens,

[151] Luke 24:37.
[152] Matt 11:4–5; Luke 11:22.

resonate with the trialogue. They might also encourage us.

The Presence of God with Us

First, Jesus gives courage by situating himself in time and place. When he invites them to touch his body, shows his wounds and eats fish, it is like when we pinch ourselves to be sure a moment is not a dream. Jesus is no ghost, and resurrected reality is no rumour; it lives in his muscle. Jesus gives courage through being truly present to them, though clearly, that presence operates differently than before.

In this, we find courage: God is present with and around us. Having the presence of another nearby can make all the difference when undertaking something difficult. Materiality is likewise essential when embodying truths of an unseen God. Certainly, the sacraments, intimated in the Emmaus meal, powerfully reaffirm resurrection reality through ordinary water, bread and wine. But Jesus' physical presence to the gathered disciples also suggests that everyday life back in our own Jerusalem can be equally sacramental. We draw courage from contemplating Jesus' resurrection presence around us—the natural world in which we live, the echoes of grace in society, the people with whom we interact, and the situations where we sense a real participation in God's transformational work. Our 'Barnabas' companions are especially precious—those whose deep courage-giving incarnates God's presence in our lives. Being attentive to such brushes with divine reality can embolden us to embody *shalom* in our present circumstances.

The Providence of God for Us

Next, Jesus gives courage by speaking normative wisdom, bringing perspective from beyond. His earlier teaching together with the witness of the Scriptures interprets their current experience within a larger script. God has a plan, and Jesus is at its paschal centre. It reveals God working providentially for the blessing of all nations, fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant of *shalom*, through repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Moreover, the disciples now find themselves at the centre of the story's continuance as its chief witnesses. Jesus' normative teaching gives them courage by helping them understand the bigger picture. God is in control, working for good through them, even in upside-down ways.

This is also our courage: God is providentially for us.[153] Promises like Romans 8:28—that

[153] See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

"all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose"—strengthen us in our stalled attempts to embody *shalom*. Providence does not mean we dismiss the real difficulties we face or blithely whistle 'que sera, sera'. Rather, it sets our struggles within the larger mystery of God's paschal economy. God is both sovereign and gracious. This truth encourages us to forgo our idol of certainty. We can participate meaningfully in Christ's ministry of *shalom* without having to understand how everything fits together. Since we cannot control our lives, we are free to trust. It also gives us courage because God is unequivocally for us. Nothing separates us from God's favour and good will—not our failures, sense of futility or even our fatality. Such normative wisdom carries and encourages us.

The Power of God In Us

Finally, Jesus gives courage with an existential promise. He will send the gift of power the Father promised, clothing them from on high. Critically, they are to tarry in Jerusalem, not for more teaching of what God is up to, or training in how to minister, but for the lived experience of the Spirit alive within them. Witnessing to Jesus' resurrection reality is not for the faint-hearted. It will need more than just blind obedience or a 5-year strategy. The book of Acts and indeed early church history bears out why Pentecost was so pivotal in the story; Jesus' church would have quickly fizzled under the disciples' own steam given the obstacles they faced. Their embodiment of *shalom* needed the courage of God's animating life at work from the inside.

Here too, we find courage: God's power is in us. The promise of the Spirit within offers true courage to toil with all of God's energy, abide in Christ, and will and work for God's good pleasure. The Spirit resources us with the inner strength to walk our talk and shapes our character towards congruence and integrity. The lived experience of the παράκλητος/*paraklētos*[154] within us is one of advocacy and "com-fort"—strength alongside.[155] The power of God's Spirit in us works courage from within to embody *shalom*, and, in fact, effects the reality of God with us and God for us as well.[156] Again, this attests to the golden thread of pneumatology quietly weaving its way through theological reflection for formation.

[154] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 50.
[155] This insight is drawn from Meek, *Loving to Know*, 50.
[156] John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

Cultivating *Shalom*

Our journey through talking the walk's six contours has brought us to this final point: cultivating *shalom*. Earlier I noted Brueggemann's wonderful definition: "*Shalom* is the management of the abundance of creation so that everyone can participate in the neighborhood."[157] He captures the heart of talking the walk's praxis and guiding vision. 'Management' is all about the mandate given to us in Genesis 2:15, to serve and keep—cultivate—what has been given to us to fashion a culture of flourishing. The gospel of the kingdom is this culture's name, and *shalom* is what it looks like, smells like, feels like. It is *shalom* in tendon, sinew and muscle, not just word, concept and worldview. And it is *cultivated*—tilled, seeded, watered, fertilised, weeded, harvested and composted. There is plenty of dirt under our fingernails where cultivating *shalom* is concerned. But still, it is God who grants growth according to the rhythms of divine seasons.

Cultivation is how we effect the courageous embodiment of discerned truths. It presses us, with specificity, to try and identify just what form our embodiment will take. Cultivation is about doing. Hoe this plot. Plant these seeds. Pull that weed. There is effort and sweat, trial and error, working together and alone. It affects our diaries and bank accounts, our plans and priorities, our energy and daily choices. Like the naming of our imaginatively discerned truths, cultivation carries with it a sense of fallible confidence. "The human mind plans the way," Proverbs tells us, "but the Lord directs the steps."[158] With limited vision about what our plans might involve in detail, we nevertheless map out as best we can the way forward with covenant pledge. Small steps are best.

Cultivation also attends to how the Spirit is forming *shalom* in and through us. It is about deepening—the rhythmic tending of the Spirit that earths us ever deeper in our true humanity. Cultivation promotes embodiment's longitudinal, formational nature because it implies culture-making fashioned by rehearsal. This linkage between doing and deepening, as I have frequently contended, is critical. It is one thing to discern that compassion is needed in a situation, and then proceed to *act compassionately*. That is the courageous embodiment of *shalom*, to be sure. But it is quite another to *deepen as a compassionate person, or community, over time*. Such cultivation occurs through the rhythm of formational practices as the Spirit's prime strategy for the slow work of God within and through us. Consider the cluster of *habit–habitat–habitus–inhabit*. It suggests how *repetition* within a *context* fashions *disposition* through *indwelling*. As avenues for the Spirit's

[157] Brueggemann, *Shalom, Order, Chaos and Sin*.
[158] Prov 16:9.

work, rhythmic practices are central to cultivating *shalom* in a reflective, formational manner. They are cultural liturgies or rituals of ultimate concern that fashion self, others and world towards a vision of God's good life.[159] And since theological reflection is itself a pivotal cultural liturgy, reviewing our reflective process is vital. The absence of this invitation in theological reflection models presents a lost opportunity to strengthen our reflective muscles as we go. Nothing elaborate is needed—*What did you learn about your reflective practice this time around?* is enough.

The concrete actions of doing and practices integral to deepening invite whole-person engagement. Here the trialogue can provide a helpful lens. What theological response is warranted here, and what habits will further theological and cognitive formation? How am I now called practically to reengage with others, and what disciplines will develop this ministerial muscle over time? What movements within my soulscape does my reflection evoke, and what rhythms might nurture these moving forward? The trialogue's coinhering and heuristic nature, however, means we use it as a servant rather than a master. Actions and practices are never *only* theological, spiritual or ministerial, and getting stuck on rigid classifications is counterproductive.

Cultivating *shalom*, then, is a holistic and particular embrace of our cultural mandate—to participate with God in making something of the world. It gives specificity to our courageous embodiment, both in identifiable actions and subterraneous deepening wrought through rhythmic practices. In cultivating *shalom* our knowing lives in the muscle in time and place, calling us deeper into our true human vocation of participation in God's triune work and life. The following guide helps students name ways they might cultivate *shalom* in their courageous embodiment of discerned truths.

Summary for Critical Experience Report

Courageous embodiment is about submitting wholeheartedly to your discerned truths. Consider how you might cultivate it through equal attention to both *doing* and *deepening*. The trialogue might help you fashion a holistic response (but don't force it). Small and simple is good.

Doing
What are the Spirit's invitations to concrete action? Use the following as prompts:

[159] There is no shortage of resources to help us explore holistic practices. Some works I have found particularly helpful include Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*; Yankoski, *The Sacred Year*; Brian D McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2010); Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*; Blythe, *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times*; Michael Casey, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina* (Liguori, MO: Triumph, 1996).

- How will you embody any truths you have discerned, so your knowing 'lives in the muscle'? What specific, practical steps will you take to cultivate any visions of *shalom* in yourself, others and the world? What planning, people and resources might this involve?
- What will holistic embodiment look like? It might help to think of concrete responses that are theological (e.g., research a new question, write a blog), spiritual/personal (e.g., pray differently, book a health check) and/or ministerial (e.g., get help with your listening, volunteer in a team).
- What obstacles to embodying discerned truths can you notice? What courage from God do you need to step forward? How might you receive that encouragement?

Be concise and concrete and consider using dot points with short statements.

Deepening
What are the Spirit's invitations to formational depth? Use the following as prompts:

- What is your sense of formation in and towards *shalom* in yourself, others and the world? Where do you notice resistance and struggle? What might be the Spirit's invitations to growth and deepening?
- What practices for holistic formation might cultivate depth and strengthen your 'muscle memory' for *shalom*? It might help to think of *theological practices* (e.g., commit to communal Scripture reading, practise lateral thinking), *spiritual practices* (e.g., practise gratitude, take up a weekly nature walk), and/or *ministerial practices* (e.g., practise listening before speaking, book regular meetings with a ministry mentor).
- What have you have learnt about theological reflection for formation through this reflective exercise? How has this craft deepened you? What might you change or embrace in your regular reflective practice?

What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you?

Conclusion

As the final contour of talking the walk's method, courageous embodiment centres on praxis. It is epistemologically moored in the non-linear submission to reality that, empowered by encouragement, cultivates *shalom* through doing and deepening.

Embodiment invites a considered grappling with the dynamics of divine–human agency. A systematic approach in Western theology commonly centres on justification–sanctification, and this can be enriched and opened up by the Eastern doctrine of *theosis*. However, particularly in terms of pedagogy, engaging with images provides a complementary alternative, as these draw out nuances often missed in a purely doctrinal approach. I offer seven, but no doubt, there are many more.

Our embodiment of discerned truths brings with it many obstacles, necessitating the covenantal gift of encouragement, in its many forms, to move us forward. From the Road via Emmaus story, I suggested three significant theological avenues for encouragement: the presence of God with us, the providence of God for us, and the power of God in us. Together they give us the courage to

> lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.[160]

But what specific shape does this path-making take? In returning to our own particular Jerusalem, cultivating *shalom* presses us to name and commit to specifics as best we can. Cultivation is about both the concrete acts of doing and the practices that nurture deepening. It articulates how we partner with the Spirit to fashion beliefs, desires and actions according to a vision of God's good life for self, others and world.

Though courageous embodiment is the final contour of talking the walk's method, it is also the very beginning—the place we encounter 'these things'. For as we share in Christ's ministry of cultivating *shalom*, we ask new questions, tackle new problems, enjoy new wonders. From walking our talk, we return once again to talking our walk. No sooner have we left the Emmaus Labyrinth than we find ourselves going back in. Or perhaps we never leave; maybe we are always within its rhythms in some way. Far from feeling like this gets us nowhere, this is what it means to walk in the Spirit. Wherever we find ourselves trekking the *shalom* path with one another and the three mile an hour God, we grow confident that amidst our conversation, discernment and embodiment, we cannot lose our way.

[160] Heb 12:12–14.

PART THREE: PRACTICE

CHAPTER EIGHT
TALKING THE WALK

In our conversation about theological reflection for formation, we have now journeyed through talking the walk's six distinct yet interconnected contours. This final chapter allows us to catch our breath and, from our vantage point, gather some valuable perspective. We can notice the topography's main features, talk about the road we have walked, and ponder future paths and possibilities.

To do this, I first sketch the central narrative of talking the walk—its why, what and how. I then use the trialogue to structure closing reflections upon key aspects of ministerial, theological and spiritual reflection and formation emerging from the research. The appendices ground this discussion, particularly around the ministry of education. Three examples of reports (appendix 3) illustrate the critical experience report template (appendix 1), as supported by a supervisor formative feedback template (appendix 2). Survey responses (appendix 4) and two accounts of the Emmaus Labyrinth embodied exercise (appendix 5) give insight into student experience. A curriculum paradigm demonstrates application of the research at a broader level (appendix 6). Examples from a short course for laypeople (appendix 7) and a church's discernment process (appendix 8) show how talking the walk can move along a simplicity–depth continuum (appendix 9). Though this supporting evidence is only anecdotal, it suggests talking the walk has already begun to show its versatility, utility and broad appeal.

This chapter, then, summarises talking the walk and reflects upon its practice, significance and possibilities.

Talking the Walk in Summary

Preliminaries

1. *As we learn to walk our talk, we must also learn to talk our walk*. This founding premise signifies the innate relationship between Christian reflection and formation that is essential for the flourishing of self, others and world.
2. Theological reflection models do not always explicitly mine this connection, nor embrace the anthropological perspective it calls for. When practical theology centres on a theory–practice dialogue, the third integral voice of persons themselves is diminished. This hinders theological education's vocation as a holistic and integrated enterprise, since developing students'

reflective practice is so pivotal in ministerial training.

3. These observations shape my research question: *What are the contours of an approach to theological reflection that contemplates and cultivates holistic Christian formation?*
4. Covenant epistemology, which addresses the dehumanising effects of the Western defective epistemic default, provides the theoretical backbone of the research. Knowing is interpersoned, pledged, transformational, non-linear, unfolding and for *shalom*. It draws from normative, situational and existential domains, and is "the responsible human struggle to rely on clues to focus on a coherent pattern and submit to its reality."[1]
5. The research methodology interweaves postfoundational theology, action research and autoethnography. This resonates with covenant epistemology's three domains for knowing and demonstrates the holistic and integrated theologising for which the research argues.
6. Talking the walk has a model and a method. The model explores three contours that underpin the method. In turn, the method develops three further contours that outwork the model.

Model

7. *Trialogue* provides talking the walk's dimensions and dynamics. Theology, ministry and spirituality mirror covenant epistemology's three domains for knowing. The dynamics between these dimensions are coinhering; with ever-unfolding interdependence, each is only itself in conversational relationship with the other two. The coinhering trialogue offers a 'rule of thumb' for holistic reflection and formation rather than distinct, iron-clad categories.
8. *Shalom* provides talking the walk's direction. It exegetes rather than replaces selfhood in Christ as the conventional goal of Christian formation. *Shalom*—God's fullness in Christ manifest in graces such as reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness—is glocal, embodies the gospel of the kingdom, and evokes hope. Theological reflection for formation is a cultural liturgy (ritual of ultimate concern) because it contemplates and cultivates God's good life of *shalom* in self, others and world.
9. The *Emmaus Labyrinth* provides talking the walk's design. The Road via Emmaus story and the labyrinth are replete with walking and talking as key metaphors for formation and reflection. Their juxtaposition forms the method's three interlocking movements: contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment, and courageous embodiment. The Emmaus Labyrinth

[1] Meek, *Longing to Know*, 13.

creates possibilities for whole-person pedagogy and reinforces covenant epistemology's key emphases.

Method

10. *Contemplative conversation* along the Emmaus Labyrinth's inward journey explores 'these things' (an event, issue or circumstance) through non-linear conversation between the trialogue's existential, situational and normative clues. With *dadirri*-like attentiveness we listen in to spirituality and personhood, out to ministry in context, and up to wellsprings of theology. Contemplative conversation is attuned to the presence or absence of *shalom*. As the Spirit listens us into speech, we notice emerging connections between the clues we indwell.
11. *Imaginative discernment* at the Emmaus Labyrinth's receptive centre 'joins the dots' by identifying any focal patterns emerging from the integration of clues. Discernment is not about technique but positioning ourselves on its path by befriending its phenomenology and etiquette. The imagination can catalyse discernment through the Spirit's gifts of imagery to discern the now and vision to discern the not yet. Pondering *shalom* keeps us connected to God's mission. We name our discerned truths and liminal questions with fallible confidence.
12. *Courageous embodiment* along the Emmaus Labyrinth's outward journey is about praxis and submitting to the reality of discerned truths. An image-laden theology of embodiment explores how divine–human agency mysteriously enables our knowing to live in the muscle. The Spirit encourages our navigation of inevitable obstacles through God's presence with us, providence for us and power in us. We effect courageous embodiment by cultivating *shalom* through concrete doing and practices that deepen, which in turn prompts new contemplative conversations.

Talking the Walk in Practice

Three stimuli for this project structure my reflections upon talking the walk in practice. First, the call for theological education to become more holistic and integrated. Second, an interest in theologies and theoretical perspectives that nurture winsome, practical and robust meaning-making for holistic (trans)formation and flourishing. And third, my ongoing desire to live life with increasing congruence, centredness and fruitfulness. With the support of appendices, I conclude this thesis with reflections upon talking the walk's significance concerning each of these prompts, noting key resources, learnings and new questions that emerge from the research process.

The Ministry of Education

Grounded in an action research praxis, this project's primary context for ministry has been helping others learn to talk their walk. This has borne fruit, in a variety of ways, at Tabor and beyond.

Critical Experience Report

The coalface of talking the walk in the theological education setting, as developed through the method, is the critical experience report (appendix 1). This takes students through talking the walk's three interlocking movements as they reflect upon their own chosen event, issue or circumstance. It is supported by a formative supervisor feedback sheet and an assessment guide (appendix 2). Critical experience reports are somewhat artificial in that conversation, discernment and embodiment rarely occur in such a linear and distinct way in real life. They also risk a myopic focus upon students' own circumstance which case studies, for example, tend to avoid. They do, however, offer the student an entry into the method, help them learn more about their own approach to meaning-making, and provide the educator with a means for assessment.

For illustration, I have included three examples (appendix 3). I wrote the first, *Coronavirus Rules*, as an example for students in early 2020. It explores my initial processing of the current pandemic and the interplay between 'rules' as a noun (the imposed restrictions) and a verb (the sway of the virus upon our psyche, faith and mission). I consider fear, idolatry and trust, ponder *shalom* as a contagion in our current circumstance, and identify concrete forms of embodying *shalom* in my family and neighbourhood. I produced each section 'just in time' for the corresponding lecture as students were preparing their first report. I also gathered my peer group supervisors for a live 'real play' in front of the class, where they helped me work through my reflection. Preparing a fresh report for each class and modelling a supervised peer group has been my practice for some years now. An educator's willingness to engage in the process themselves can catalyse students' vulnerability and confidence, as student feedback suggests (appendix 4).[2]

Examples two and three are from students. *I See You* is written by a spiritual direction student whose natural penchant for reflective practice intersects powerfully with a thickened and image-laden theology. Her spiritual accompaniment with a university student creatively connects a

[2] E.g., "The honest and personal nature of the content has been encouraging as we see how you have developed and engaged with it all yourself. Thankyou!"; "CER examples from Bruce were very useful because I needed to see examples of how to approach the assignment being a bit overwhelmed by the vast amount of material to remember and understand what it applied to"; "Real life examples are helpful (Such as the Uber example or COVID-19 one), as these are relatable and help to put "feet" to the theory"; "It was also good that we saw Bruce doing TTW with UBER in midst of the course. Bruce doing his own TR with others." Appendix 4.

desire to be seen with the theme of wells in the stories of Hagar (Genesis 16) and the woman at the well (John 4). *The Correct Answer vs the Law of Love*, by a divinity student, explores the struggle of a congregation in discerning how to respond appropriately to the coronavirus restrictions for small gatherings. Most notable is an increased awareness of his default theological method. He realises how relationally-oriented meaning-making is often supplanted by a search for the correct and irrefutable answer.

Such examples greatly encourage me. And yet, others are considerably less spectacular. Sometimes talking the walk's inclusion of reflexivity seems to invite a sentimentality that weakens substantiated Scriptural and theological engagement. Some students get hung up on a rigid delineation of the trialogue. While some students love the metaphors and simplicity,[3] others find the terminology and language difficult.[4] A glossary of terms is needed, and repetition and clarification are critical.[5]

In this I find action research to be a pebble in my shoe—an irritant that keeps asking, 'Is this helpful? useable?', no matter how beautiful or evocative I might find the ideas or language. I resonate with Groome, who reflects on his approach of shared praxis:

> I shudder to think that it could be made to sound like another panacea. In my enthusiasm for it, borne of some apparent success in my own praxis, I may sometimes make strong claims for its possibilities. But I know its limitations, having experienced them too, in my own praxis.[6]

This helps me reframe my expectations. My job is not to convince students of my approach, but rather open them up to possibilities for developing their own. Education that flourishes students, then, necessarily exercises the ministry of hospitality. Hospitality, says Nouwen,

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[3] E.g., "Helpfully puts structure around something I do more instinctually than intentionally."; "There are so many models for TR it can be very confusing. This model is grounded in our daily walk, and as such it is less complicated than other models."; "I am not familiar with other models, but this way of reflecting makes sense and has a clear structure. It invites reflection from me from a broader range of sources than I might get to if I was just doing this from within my own standard patterns and frameworks." Appendix 4.

[4] E.g., "I have really struggled with the terms and looking introspectively. The terms that have been used seem to be created for this course, and they don't seem to match what any of the textbooks or readings say. It makes things very confusing to have to work out what the term means every time it is used. Why not use terms that others use? 'Talking the Walk' just gets confusing. So does the 'looking up', 'looking out'. Why not use something more simple, instead of creating a code? I also hate looking introspectively. I've really struggled with this. I'm trying, but it's hard." Appendix 4.

[5] E.g., "Helpfully puts structure around something I do more instinctually than intentionally. It's a bit like learning a new language, though, and until I learnt your TR vernacular it was a bit of a hurdle to my engagement."; "Most of the topics individually I found difficult to understand, however by the regularity and explanation of your email content, I found that it made sense. The extra explanations were critical." Appendix 4.

[6] Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (Wiley, 1999), 137.

> is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place ... It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories, and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit ... Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a change for the guest to find his or her own.[7]

As one student reflected on talking the walk, “it’s a helpful framework. It’s useful to have one method in mind when thinking about how to reflect. Personally, not my preferred method but it is helpful in helping me refine my own method.”[8] This keeps my focus upon students’ learning over my teaching. The critical experience report template, while certainly improved from previous versions, needs continual refining with this goal in mind.

Creative, Whole-Person Pedagogies

In chapter four I noted my mantra for preparation and teaching: ‘Does this make affective connections? cognitive sense? practical difference?’ This led me to explore aesthetic and kinaesthetic pedagogies, so that theological reflection was more than just an exercise in intellectual gymnastics.

For example, for each contour I produced popularised notes from my thesis writing a week in advance for each lecture and took these as read when we met. Sometimes I sectioned off more nuanced and detailed explorations into ‘Digging Deeper’ sheets for those keen to go further. This allowed me to forsake a content-heavy, ‘death-by-PowerPoint’ approach in lectures in favour of image-based learning with very little text. I developed a Prezi resource, which zooms in and out between topics, to reinforce connections between the particulars and whole of talking the walk. I also made aesthetic connections through a different artefact each week on a stool in the centre of the room (e.g., an assortment of shoes when exploring empathy). These changes freed me to facilitate better class conversation, rather than just focus on getting through the content.

Most lectures also included some sort of embodied or creative activity. I used Ault’s approach of having students use their body to engage with an experience from different perspectives.[9] Students created their own Möbius strip when exploring integrity in courageous embodiment. Sometimes I provided clay for students to fiddle with when considering formation. And the Emmaus Labyrinth, of course, offered a significant opportunity to engage in talking the walk with the whole self. Participation was always by invitation and sensitivity to students’ varying

[7] Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*, 71.
[8] Appendix 4.
[9] Ault, “Theological Reflection,” 308–9.

capacities for walking was critical. The one metre-wide circuits on Tabor's flat courtyard allowed for wheelchair access. Tracing a finger labyrinth while having a conversation provided an alternative for those unable or unwilling to walk the Emmaus labyrinth with another. A video interview made available beforehand primed students to the concept, and on the morning of the lecture I rolled out a 5-circuit Chartres labyrinth in the central courtyard, with one metre pathways, using masking tape on a roller:

Figure 20: An 'Emmaus Labyrinth' in the central courtyard at Tabor, Adelaide

The exercise was always by invitation, never compulsion. Although anyone can walk a labyrinth, the labyrinth is not necessarily for everyone.[10] Students can simply walk and talk around the grounds in pairs if they like, and in any case, this is the only option for online students who do not have close access to a labyrinth. Not all those who walked and talked the Emmaus Labyrinth found it memorable, and here it was important to encourage participants to let the experience be

[10] Because of the broad history of labyrinths, including usage in pagan spirituality and rituals, it is understandable that some students may have reservations about engaging with them in theological reflection. Should Christians engage with labyrinths if they are employed outside of their tradition? Welch is excellent in this regard, addressing key concerns. Welch, *Walking the Labyrinth*, chap. 3. Still, a pastoral approach is best. Even after discussion and reassurance some students may find it difficult and prefer to not engage with a labyrinth. This must certainly be respected, and in any case, the insights it offers need not be lost if a student does not want to walk it.

what it was. Some, though, found it (and the other practical exercises) helpful,[11] including two students who reflected on the profound interweaving of one another's stories as they walked and talked the twists and turns together (appendix 5).

One day, in the latter stages of my research, I was amazed to notice that Luke 24:13–27 and 24:33–49 are, at least in the NRSV, essentially the same length. This led me to create *The Road via Emmaus Labyrinth* image using the text for the labyrinth's lines using the traditional earthy tones of Aboriginal art. I am excited to use this with future students to help them engage creatively with the text and the three movements of talking the walk:

[11] E.g., "I really appreciate the different practical exercises and images you have used throughout to embed certain concepts and material."; "The practical exercises have been extremely powerful and helpful in mining the depths of this subject."; "The labyrinth created in the courtyard, offered an awesome physical, sensory experience of this notion of journey as the outer world and the inner world conversed and danced together."; "Using the Labyrinth and walk to Emmaus as a model for TTW has been a good basis for understanding TR for formation." Appendix 4.

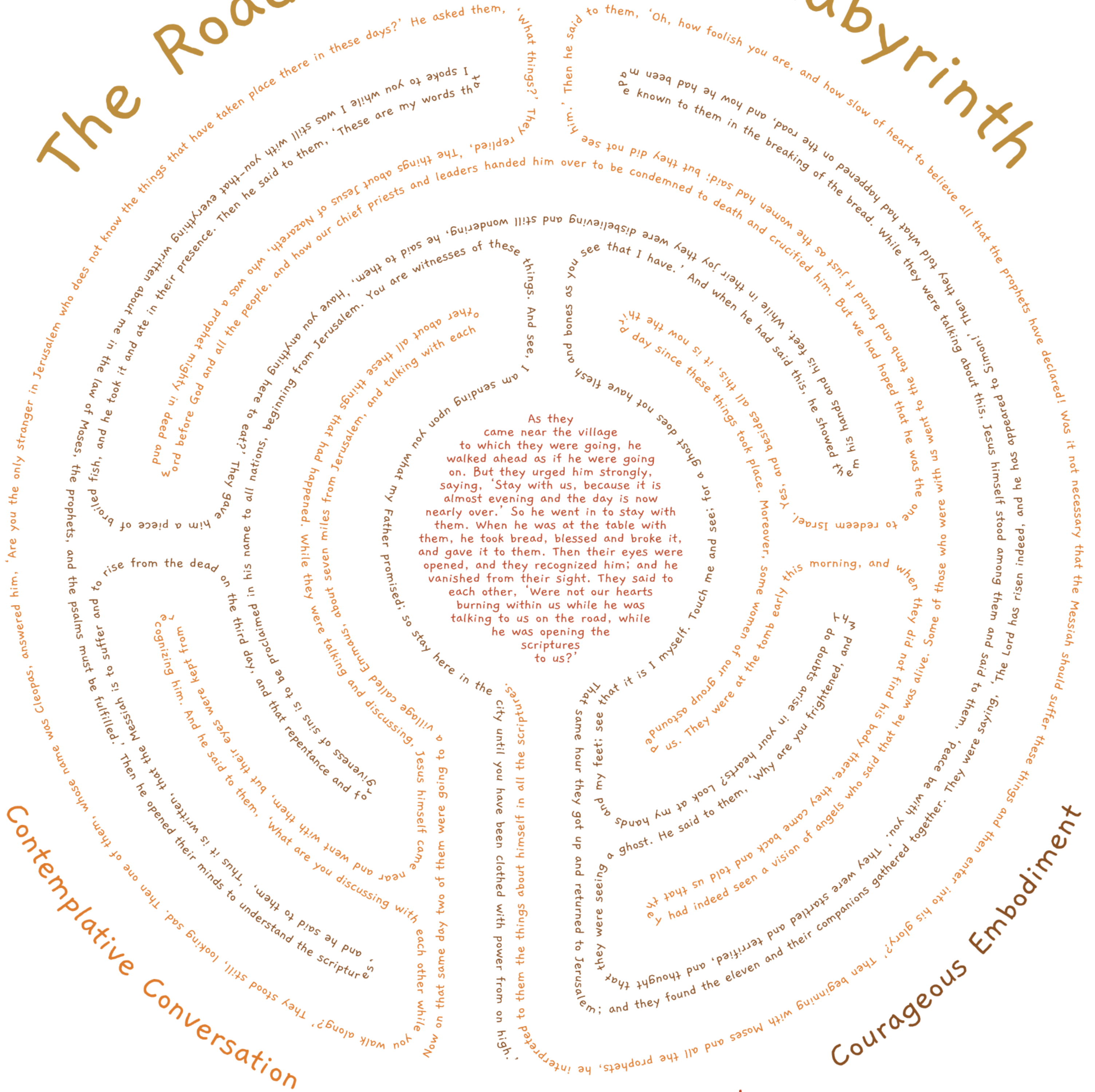

Figure 21: *The Road via Emmaus Labyrinth*[12]

[12] © Bruce Hulme 2020. Technical setup by Beccy Hulme.

My vision is to have this printed upon a large canvas so participants can read the text as they walk the labyrinth. The template also lends itself to a labyrinthine summary of the biblical story in three winding movements, as described in chapter four.

A New Curriculum Paradigm

This research helps theological education become more holistic and integrated through an approach to learning and teaching theological reflection for formation. But as a by-product, it also speaks to the residual challenge of intra-curricula dis-integration, or 'siloing', between disciplines.

Recently I facilitated the reaccreditation process for Tabor's Faculty of Ministry, Theology and Culture (MTC). This included a global curriculum review. I wanted to reconceive the relationship between disciplines to cultivate holistic formation and flourishing in students' overall learning experience. A common remedy for siloing is the integration of different disciplines within units—bringing together what otherwise can exist apart. But coinherence suggests that one discipline (e.g., biblical studies, systematic theology, practical theology) cannot be its full, flourishing self apart from vital, interdependent relationship with others—a subtle but important distinction. Moreover, discipline-specific units could be loosely located within the trialogue's coinhering three domains for knowing, with reflective practice as the central overlapping fourth domain. This anthropological lens for knowing was strengthened by emphases upon formation and cultural intelligence permeating the entire model. Tabor MTC's curriculum paradigm was the result (appendix 6).

Although some units might lean towards one particular domain more than others,[13] they are always in vital and unfolding relationship with the other two. There is no such thing as 'pure theology' detached from spiritual nurture and contextual engagement. Personal development units are guided normatively and grounded in God's mission in the world. Contextual ministry leans upon biblical truths and emanates from one's personhood. MTC's curriculum paradigm will be introduced at the beginning of the students' journey and reinforced right through to the assessment level. More broadly, it may provide a helpful lens for educators in other institutions who wish to review their curricula with similar goals in mind.

Talking the Walk Beyond Tabor

Beyond Tabor's theological education context, talking the walk has connected with people in

[13] e.g., *Interpreting the Old Testament* is more normative, *Effective Community Engagement* is more situational, *Christian Spirituality* is more existential.

various settings.

I reworked the full semester *Theological Reflection* unit into six, ninety-minute sessions for a short course with a children and family ministry pastor, interested laypeople, and teachers and a chaplain from a local Christian school. I was writing chapter seven at the time, and the course helped spawn the idea of working with images to explore divine–human agency in embodiment. For assessment, one teacher produced a creative lesson plan for introducing contemplative conversation to her middle school students (appendix 7).

Rouse Hill Baptist Church Sydney is a new congregation re-formed out of two existing faith communities. A Tabor *Theological Reflection* student is using talking the walk, with around one hundred people, to facilitate their discernment about future directions as a Christian presence in their local community. The experience to date seems to have been helpful and encouraging (appendix 8). It demonstrates talking the walk's appeal and utility for communities, not just individuals. I am also encouraged by its transferability, with someone besides myself able to use it with others.

Churches of Christ in NSW (Fresh Hope Ministries) has expressed a desire to use talking the walk in the training and formation of their ministry practitioners, and in advanced training for those working in areas of discernment, supervision and spiritual mentoring. I have also enjoyed talking the walk with my two youngest boys on walks to school; they can remember and engage with conversation, discernment and embodiment with relative ease.

The anecdotal feedback from these examples has been mostly positive. I am grateful for additional contexts for action research because they test talking the walk's capacity to slide back and forth along the simplicity–depth continuum (appendix 9). More broadly, action research reaffirms for me the critical importance of research-led learning and teaching, whatever the context. It helps my ministry of education, particularly through talking the walk, to become a means of service to others, not an end in itself.

Theologies for Reflection and Formation

At the outset of this research my aim was to develop an approach to theological reflection that was robust and practicable, winsome and evocative, transformational and flourishing. This led me to several theoretical perspectives and theologies that contribute significantly to how we think about theological reflection for formation.

Covenant Epistemology

Because theological reflection is concerned with knowing, any approach we develop needs clear epistemological underpinnings that serve its overarching goals. But though I knew my goal was holistic formation that flourished self, others and world, I began with very little idea of what epistemology I needed or was already (unwittingly) employing. Rather, I experienced Crotty's observation that methods, methodology, theoretical perspective and epistemology often emerge in that order, but with each informing the other as the research progresses.[14] It felt surreal, then, to encounter covenant epistemology relatively late in the research journey, well after all six contours had begun to take shape.[15] Not only did it dovetail with, elucidate and strengthen so much of what I had already developed; it showed me that epistemology was, to my surprise, at the heart of my project all along. This itself was a powerful experience of anticipative knowing.

Covenant epistemology offers much to practical—indeed, practi*sing*—theology. Knowing is interpersoned, pledged and conversational—the real is generous and invites a spirit of discovery and confidence, not mastery and certainty. As such, knowing is about (trans)formation, not just information. Our tacit, half knowing is real, valid and guides our coming to know. Knowing is therefore always 'on the way', unfolding in non-linear fashion. Its goal is *shalom*, bringing healing and blessing to both knower and known. Subsidiary-focal integration explores knowing's mechanics. We rely on clues drawn from normative, situational and existential domains, receive the larger patterns formed through their integration, and submit to the new realities gifted to us.

These aspects of knowing speak powerfully to the theological enterprise. They resonate strongly with a gracious God who walks slowly with us and listens us into speech in our responsible human struggle of coming to know. Meek offers not a 'Christian epistemology', but an account for all knowing that accords with the Scriptural witness to the Christian story.[16] This rejoins ordinary knowing with faith-orientated meaning-making. It boldly connects all knowing, in some way, with knowing God. If Meek rescues epistemology from its typically speculative stratosphere and grounds it in everyday living, then I hope talking the walk does something similar for ordinary saints making meaning along the way. If approaches to theological reflection are to have any bite, they must address complex epistemological issues in accessible ways. As Holmes says, "I would not

[14] Michael Crotty, *Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), chap. 1: Introduction: The Research Process.
[15] That is, in the final two years of a nine-year cumulative process. I began my research with an MTh thesis and upgraded to a PhD. All research was undertaken part-time.
[16] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 148–50.

give a fig for the simplicity that is this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity."[17] Meek models this for us. I trust that my students will experience covenant epistemology's richness and depth as they engage with talking the walk.

Significantly, Meek does not champion covenant epistemology as impenetrable and airtight. In fact, she sees both its strengths and inevitable flaws as "invitations for the reader to contribute to the conversation."[18] Talking the walk is my response to her invitation. It is, as far as I know, the first considered engagement with covenant epistemology's core tenets to fashion an approach to theological reflection for formation. I trust it will not be the last.

Postfoundational Theology

Covenant epistemology's affirmation of common grace made it logical to employ postfoundational theology for making normative claims. This required genuine engagement with multiple disciplines,[19] traditions[20] and fields[21] which was enriching yet challenging, especially with limits upon my time, expertise and word count.

When researching courageous embodiment in chapter seven, for instance, I came with a prior commitment to Tillich's idea of accepting our acceptance (from God) as the grounds for courage.[22] This made it difficult to genuinely hear Brené Brown's contribution that courage is rooted in vulnerability which comes from self-belief in one's own worth.[23] I stand by my conclusion that Tillich provides the stronger basis, and yet I find myself challenged by the implications of Brown's solid, grounded research. People of all walks (not just Christians) *do* live courageous and vulnerable lives, amidst the most terrible and challenging circumstances, from a place of worth and love not necessarily received from a transcendent source. They seem to reflect the paschal wholeness of *shalom*. What does this mean for my own theology of persons and the way the Spirit works?

This is one example of many where the hospitality of postfoundational theology left me with more questions, not less. Yet I am richer for them. This 'third way' between foundationalism and non-foundationalism holds promise. It facilitates theological reflection that is neither locked in

[17] Cited in Max De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1989), 19.
[18] Meek, *Loving to Know*, 47.
[19] e.g., practical theology, systematic theology, biblical studies.
[20] e.g., Lutheran, Evangelical, Reformed, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox.
[21] e.g., theology, philosophy, social science, social work, psychology.
[22] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*.
[23] Brown, *Daring Greatly*.

an echo chamber nor toothless in its wisdom for other contexts.

Coinhering Trialogue

The trialogue seeded this research. Having pondered the rhythm and rhyme of my own spiritual, theological and ministerial formation for some time, my interest was piqued when I noticed a variety of resonating expressions in the theological reflection and Christian formation literature. Chapter two answers Francis' call for "a genuine 'trialogue' between practical or situational reflection, theological reflection and personal reflection."[24] Its survey builds on the work of scholars such as Hollinger[25] to offer significantly more depth, breadth and nuance for understanding this spirituality–theology–ministry interface. I note three points of significance.

First, since *persons* make meaning in graced relationship with God, theological reflection cannot be done at arm's length. We cannot jettison our unique selves from the process, as though we were robots following set algorithms. We weaken theological reflection's human tenor when we speak of practical theology as a theory–practice dialogue—the interface between theology and ministry, thought and action, orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Practical theology is most potent as a theory–practice–persons trialogue—a contemplative and dynamic conversation between theology, ministry, and spirituality, or thought, action and passion, or orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy. Including 'persons' does not just raise self-awareness to limit the potential for skewed subjectivity. Nor does it mean self-interest drowns out every other voice. Rather, 'persons'—what I have broadly designated as spirituality and personhood—is an equally valid and important contributing voice and listening ear in the practical theology conversation.

Second, we must understand the dynamics between these three dimensions if we are to do meaning-making well. They are not three unrelated aspects for theologising that can be brought or integrated together. Rather, they already exist in dynamic relationship. Coinherence—or more specifically, coinhering—best describes this. Each dimension is only its fullest self in unfolding conversational relationship with the other two. From a pedagogical perspective, the richness and nuance of this term clashes with its inaccessibility. Interdependence, though not quite as rich, provides a reasonable and more usable alternative. Often a simple Venn diagram, though static and two-dimensional, is a quick way to communicate something of the trialogue's

[24] Francis, "Developing Genuinely Reflective Ministry Practitioners," 198.
[25] Hollinger, *Head, Heart, and Hands*; Dennis Hollinger, "Three H's of Christian Maturity," *Reformed Journal* 37.1 (1987): 12–16.

dimensions and dynamics.

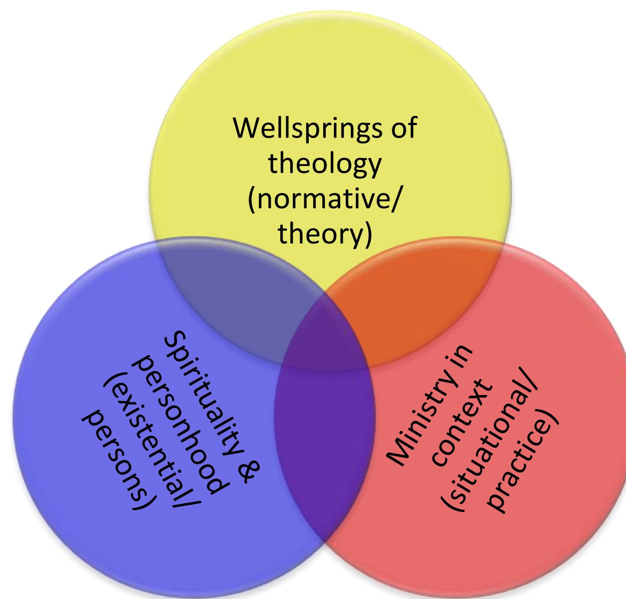

Figure 22: *Coinhering Trialogue* as a Venn Diagram[26]

Third, the coinhering trialogue is not a neat theory of everything. Like any anthropological construct it has weaknesses and limitations. As a heuristic or 'rule of thumb' for doing theological reflection for formation it is a great servant but a lousy master. In any case, the important thing is not to teach coinherence as a concept, but theological reflection for formation in a coinhering manner. Teaching is powerful when educators weave seamlessly between robust theory, grounded practice and the vitality of their personhood, whatever the subject matter. Theological reflection for holistic formation is caught as much as it is taught. The medium is the message.

Shalom

Talking the walk's emphasis upon formation brings a larger vision into focus. Towards what *telos* is theological reflection oriented? What vision shapes its practice? This, I argued, is a cultural question. As teleological creatures, we make meaning of experience and cultivate our world according to our vision of the good life. In this sense theological reflection for formation is a cultural liturgy or ritual of ultimate concern for daily life.

'Christlikeness' is the answer to the above question that is most ingrained and automated in the contemporary Christian psyche. Thinking differently needed careful consideration. My first task was one of nuance; becoming 'more like Jesus' can be twisted to imply 'less like me', which can lead to all sorts of malformation. God-knowledge and self-knowledge are intrinsically

[26] Diagram mine.

entwined, so formation towards our 'true self in Christ' is a healthier version of the conventional goal. But even this, I argued, needs exegesis, lest it become too vague, private and myopic. That was my second task. What does it look like, on the ground, when a person or community is shaped towards their true selfhood in Christ through the cultural liturgy of theological reflection? *Shalom*. More than just peace or tranquillity, this is God's flourishing in Christ for the cosmos, communities and individuals, in graces such as reconciliation and relationship, justice and righteousness, beauty and creativity, and paschal wholeness. *Shalom* is glocal; small, local acts and the gospel's bigger, global story interact with mutual reciprocity. It manifests the gospel of the kingdom and engenders hope.

I was surprised that *shalom* had not been specifically employed as a teleological lens in theological reflection models. There is a rich body of literature on *shalom*, mining its theological and biblical depth, and exploring life as *shalom* persons and communities working together for the flourishing of the world around us. But this does not seem to have seeped into the theological reflection literature in any concentrated way. I hope talking the walk will change this, especially because the notion of *shalom* connects so strongly with the language of flourishing and wellbeing which carries currency in wider society.

As an important distinctive, however, I also argued the need to emphasise the paschal nature of *shalom*. As *shalom* emerged in my research I employed it in my own reflective practice, but quickly realised it taps into a deeper spiritual rhythm than just trying to make things better. I am so often dismayed by the *lack* of *shalom* in the world around me, in my own household, and within my very self. 'Is *shalom* a sham, a pipe dream?' is a question I have asked more than once. Connecting flourishing to death seems counter-intuitive and rarely discussed, but it can be no other way if *shalom*, as the Scriptures attest, is Christocentric and thus cruciform. This insight offers an important contribution to the general discourse on wellbeing which can at times be enchanted by pop-psychology and self-help remedies.

Emmaus Labyrinth

The Emmaus Labyrinth is one of this project's most innovative features.

Using the Emmaus Road story grounds talking the walk in Scripture and provides a natural familiarity for Christians. Extending the passage to verse 49, and renaming it the Road *via* Emmaus, makes sense when we take seriously Luke's emphasis upon Jerusalem as the geographical and symbolic centre of his two volumes. From a longitudinal perspective, Jesus'

revelation of his resurrection reality at the Emmaus meal table simply does not seem to be the main point, as profound as it is. Rather, the fuller story of Luke–Acts accounts for how that resurrection reality is embodied, through the disciples, as the furthering of God's saving mission in Christ. And this goal must begin in Jerusalem, before spreading to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. The fear of the gathered disciples from verse 36 signals anything but an automatic, linear process ahead. Indeed, the 'Acts of the Apostles' is really the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles' amidst the many obstacles they encounter. Such insights are diminished when we cut the Emmaus Road passage off at verse 35. In mining the Road via Emmaus story in this way, talking the walk offers a nuance and depth to theological reflection for formation that is missed by other approaches which also utilise this passage.

Similarly, a considered use of the labyrinth—normally reserved for private spiritual reflection—offers something new to the theological reflection discourse. It emphasises the circuitous and non-linear character of both meaning-making and the pilgrimage of our lives. This provides an important counter to the linear A→B paradigm so ingrained in Western thinking, and frames formation and growth in terms of centred depth rather than linear progress. The labyrinth may also have appeal for spiritual seekers not yet familiar with walking the Jesus way.

Juxtaposing the threefold movements of each resource creates an architecture that leverages the best features of both. It brings interpersoned and Christ-centred meaning-making to the labyrinth and highlights the non-linear nature of the Road via Emmaus story. The Emmaus Labyrinth is heavily imbued with the powerful metaphors of walking and talking, together with covenant epistemology's key emphases. As I have argued, approaches to theological reflection need an epistemologically sound and evocative, engaging design if they are to have pedagogical efficacy. This is precisely what the Emmaus Labyrinth offers.

Pneumatology

Finally, my research inadvertently developed a pneumatology of theological reflection for formation. This was not in my original field of vision. When my supervisor suggested I do so it made sense, yet I was frustrated by my contrived attempts to graft it in systematically. Eventually I set the idea aside and focused on the key aspects of each contour. This, ironically, was the tonic I needed, for as I wrote the pneumatology quietly emerged with relative ease and transparency.

For example, the Spirit is at work in all creation, sources of true wisdom and within our very selves, drawing our attention to *missio Dei* and the presence and absence of *shalom*. The

Spirit plants deep within us a tacit desire for knowing and uses our longings to sustain our attention and guide our meaning-making. The Spirit gifts us with fellow sojourners in contemplative conversation, opens our eyes to clues, and listens us into speech. The Spirit brings revelation and discernment, particularly through imagery, to help us discern the now and vision to conceive the not yet. The Spirit enables discerned truths to live in the muscle, giving courage in the face of obstacles by effecting God's presence with us, providence for us and power within us. The Spirit cultivates *shalom* in and through us by facilitating our doing and deepening in Christ. In all of this, the Spirit uses cultural liturgies such as theological reflection to (trans)form our whole selves—our theology, spirituality and ministry—in and towards God's good life of *shalom*.

In hindsight such a pneumatology seems obvious, but within the research process it was like a 'floater' in my eye that I could only see when I stopped looking for it. This speaks of the wonderful unfolding nature of coming to know, and the gentle ways of the Spirit in formation and reflection. We can neither coerce, nor ignore, the Spirit's person and presence in our pilgrimed meaning-making.

A Spirituality of Talking the Walk

Soulful spirituality, says Benner, is the journey of becoming fully alive and deeply human.[27] It is a vision of walking in and towards *shalom*. The Spirit seeded this longing within me some time ago and has quietly cultivated it through my research and practice of talking the walk. The research methodology of autoethnography has attuned me to this deepening work. So often I found myself living what I was reading and writing about. Along the way I have tried to develop "a kind of reflexivity that is wilfully about the social—about the self made gloriously and ingloriously through Others."[28] I trust these final reflections further serve this purpose.

Finding My Voice

It has taken some time to think of myself as having something significant to say. Melancholics like me tend to think deeply—which is a gift—but only feel they can express that thinking when it is perfectly formed—which is a curse. Perhaps it is every PhD student's lot, but I often felt paralysed by the so-called 'imposter syndrome' in my earlier years. Discovering the idea of fallible confidence has been liberating in this regard; I believe my assertions are right whilst knowing they

[27] Benner, *Soulful Spirituality*, xii.
[28] Cited in Spry, "Autoethnography and the Other: Performative Embodiment and a Bid for Utopia," 628.

could be wrong. This disposition seems indispensable for life-giving, hospitable, scholarly conversation. I am now comfortable to know that my voice has a place at the table amongst others with whom I can meaningfully engage. Indwelling this truth has meant a continual return to my security and significance in Christ.

Research as a Labyrinth

It is ironic that the labyrinth became so integral to my design because it was also an apt metaphor for the research journey itself. Setting off with a seed of an idea, I often thought I was close to the heart of the project, only to be swung right to the outside where I felt clueless. Then suddenly—somewhere around September 2018—I found myself having unwittingly arrived right in the research's receptive centre. '*Now* I know what this is about!' The outward journey of writing one chapter after the next, of course, was just as non-linear as the inward journey. But I took great solace in the labyrinth's truth: though I often felt lost, I could not get lost. Nothing was wasted. This developed within me a tenacity to just keep writing. Writing has become a critical conduit for forming my thinking, not just expressing it, and a deepening spiritual discipline that draws upon the coinherence of head, heart and hands. I am hopeful that the image of the labyrinth might prove helpful to others embarking on the research journey.

Affirming My Vocation

Talking the walk has further affirmed a sense of calling. Some years ago, amidst a season of deep unsettledness about my fit in God's world, my spiritual director helped me discern four key vocational directions: writing, teaching, spiritual direction and retreat leading. There is a deep sense of satisfaction and joy about the ways this research contributes to each of these. It is fuel for the journey. There is a confidence that comes with having delved into questions and wonderings that have long dwelt beneath the surface, which in turn spawn new questions to explore.

I have struggled, whether in church work, as a spiritual director or as a tertiary lecturer, to not acquiesce to inner insecurities that would insist I prove myself as knowledgeable. This, I can now see, is an I-It approach to engaging with others. Paradoxically, the practice of talking the walk through this research, which has resulted in far more depth and breadth in knowledge than I have ever had, now frees me to attend more closely to and learn from others in their journey. I feel formed towards a greater capacity for I–You encounters. New vistas for exploration will unfold as I relate to others, and reality at large, in this way. For knowing opens up, rather than nails shut.

Falling Upward

As I finish this thesis, what are ‘these things’ that capture my attention? This year I turned fifty, and Sonia and I celebrated twenty-five years of marriage. The significance of completing this project as well is not lost on me. I am pausing at a rise in the road. What would talking my walk, this ritual of ultimate concern, suggest from such a vantage point?

Contemplative conversation draws me to ponder the grace of not having to prove myself, as mentioned above. It is a paschal death, a seed of self-importance falling to the ground,[29] that signifies possibilities for new life. Rohr says that although we typically see the second half of life in terms of what is diminishing, the opposite is true: “What looks like falling can largely be experienced as falling upward and onward, into a broader and deeper world, where the soul has found its fullness, is finally connected to the whole, and lives inside the Big Picture.”[30] Is this now my walk in and towards *shalom*?

Imaginatively I discern possibilities for falling upward in my second half of life. Both praise and insults taken less seriously. ‘Why me?!’ prompted more frequently by experiences of wonder than of suffering. Holding my research with pride whilst letting it go. Fewer lists, more spontaneity. Less stuff, greater generosity. Less producing, more fruit bearing. Fingers calloused from gardening, not just typing. Less I-It, more I-You. These would all, I think, evidence a falling upwards that accepts my acceptance as the deeply beloved of God.

For now, the courageous embodiment of falling upward seems mostly incremental. My doing in the immediate is minimal. First, the body: rest is overdue. Then, time for relationships—lots of time—in blocks but also as smaller, regular rhythms. Mid- to long-term, my tacit sense is that there are new rhythms to be found, practices plain and hidden, that might help these discerned visions to live in the muscle. So, I can embody attentiveness, noticing small invitations to fall upward, through talking my walk and walking my talk. In this I am deepened in God’s paschal passion for the world.

[29] John 12:24.
[30] Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 153.

Conclusion

The *Wildflower Wander* is a 45-minute loop up Anstey Hill Reserve, on the outskirts of Adelaide's north-eastern suburbs. Almost every Friday for the past six months or so we have joined a few other families at 6:15am to walk and talk around its now familiar trail. Jemimah, our daughter, is our chief motivator: 'Who's coming?' she asks each Thursday night, regardless of the weather forecast. Good cultural liturgies create their own magnetic pull. Flora and fauna welcome our assorted bunch as we set off. Topography moderates the conversation. The up track is rocky with some steep single-file sections, making talk intermittent and one-on-one, and some pauses necessary. The wide descending road allows groups of three or four abreast to walk and talk more freely. 'These things' set the agenda. Ordinary happenings of home, school and work fuse with deeper questions of faith. Serious talk is punctuated by holy interruptions, like a kangaroo or the latest 'dad joke'. With each week I sense our deepening in the cadence of God's walk and talk.

Figure 23: Walking and talking along the *Wildflower Wander*, Anstey Hill Reserve, Adelaide[31]

[31] Photos, mine.

Our families are continuing an age-old practice. Talking the walk is not really something new. Humans have long talked meaningfully about their journey and sought to walk out that meaning. Talking the walk merely frames ancient themes in new ways. I have delighted in seeing it bear fruit in students who have courageously grappled with difficult and complex ministerial, theological and spiritual issues. But I have also enjoyed its simplicity. Conversation, discernment and embodiment are movements anyone walking the way can practise. They form an attentiveness to the three mile an hour God who walks slowly with us and listens us into speech along our own Emmaus Labyrinth track. As we practise their rhythm, we fulfil our human vocation to contemplate and cultivate cosmic, communal and individual *shalom*, which is the ultimate *telos* of the gospel.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Talking the Walk Critical Experience Report (CER) Template

[OVERTYPE YOUR CER TITLE HERE - do this last]

[Please read then delete: Instructions in this template are enclosed in square brackets; delete /overtype these as you go to create a clean, neat report. This template is pre-formatted.

Pray as you develop your draft. Imagine yourself walking and talking with Jesus and others along a labyrinthine trek. Embrace surprise; remember that reflection and formation are rarely linear. You may like to (literally) walk and talk by yourself or with others, if it helps. Hold your reflection lightly and be open to the insights offered by others who journey with you.

Attend to and accept as normal the struggle and discomfort of coming to know. That process itself is just as important as anything you can articulate clearly. You are placing yourself in the path of knowing, rather than figuring things out through your own cleverness. So, blow on the coals of your care, let God's gentle presence listen you into speech, and see what comes. Be playful and adventurous. Trust the process.]

CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION (~750 words)

*[Please read then delete: What is **contemplative conversation** about? Relying on clues.*
After narrating your experience, listen quietly and patiently to the possibility of God in all things through hospitable conversation, including where shalom seems present and/or absent. Do this by working with clues from the trialogue and exploring possible connections between them. You can listen in, out and up in any order using the headings. Or, if you prefer, write it all as one flowing, dynamic piece. Just ensure all voices are heard. Be sure to move beyond mere personal opinion by substantiating your reflection with relevant sources.

Listen to 'These Things'

[Please read then delete: Narrate your experience (event, issue, circumstance) clearly and concisely. Stick to facts and the feelings evoked; avoid extended, systematic or intentional interpretation. Use creativity and avoid unnecessary details to help your peers and supervisor enter the experience. Always maintain confidentiality; be discreet and use pseudonyms. Don't claim too much (polish up) or too little (downplay); just be simple and real.

[Overtype your narration here]

Listen In to Spirituality and Personhood

[Please read then delete: As you contemplate these things, listen in to spirituality and personhood for clues—the Spirit's whispers within you through your self-in-God, your soulscape ('existential domain').

What might God be saying through your life?

It might help to contemplate any connections to: felt responses in your body; the lived experience of your journey as the beloved of God; what moves you and the emotions you feel; your unique personality revealed in your story, character, thinking and biases.

How was shalom manifest and/or inhibited in you?

What clues emerge? How do they 'trialogue' with other ministerial or theological clues?

[Overtype your listening in here]

Listen Out to Ministry in Context

[Please read then delete: As you contemplate these things, listen out to ministry in context for clues—the place and persons connected to your participation in Jesus' work ('situational domain').

What might God be saying through others and the surrounding context?

It might help to contemplate any connections to: The physical environment, both constructed and natural; the possible influence of cultural, societal dynamics; any persons involved, their journey and their possible perspectives; an evaluation of your participation in Jesus' ministry.

How was shalom manifest and/or inhibited for others in their particular place?

What clues emerge? How do they 'trialogue' with other spiritual or theological clues?

[Overtype your listening out here]

Listen Up to Wellsprings of Theology

[Please read then delete: As you contemplate these things, listen up to wellsprings of theology for clues—trusted, authoritative voices for understanding the Father's loving truth ('normative domain').

What might God be saying through words of guidance and wisdom?

It might help to contemplate any possible connections to: relevant Bible verses/ passages/books/stories/characters/themes; communal wisdom from both the Christian tradition past and present, and broader society; robust thinking that is open to both critical examination and the mystery and adventure of ideas; common sense from accumulated, gathered experience.

How is shalom manifest or inhibited in your interpretations and their likely fruit?

What clues emerge? How do they 'trialogue' with other spiritual or ministerial clues?

[Overtype your listening up here]

IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT
(~300 words)

*[Please read then delete: What is **imaginative discernment** about? Focusing on a coherent pattern(s). You are seeking to 'join the dots' emerging from your contemplative conversation, and articulate possible truths as best you can. The imagination might help. Remember, discernment is gifted, so you are placing yourself on discernment's path, not forcing it!*

Imagine

[Please read then delete: In receptive and prayerful stillness, consider how imagination might catalyse your discernment. This can involve exploring one or both of the following:

Imagery: Explore any images that help you discern current reality. In your contemplative conversation, did an image arise which reflects and probes the truths of these things? Can you say, "It is like ..."? Specifically, where is shalom present or absent in your imagery? What does your exploration of imagery suggest?

(An image could come from Scripture or elsewhere. It helps you discern the presence and absence of shalom through your contemplative conversation upon your experience. Examples include a picture, figure, icon, metaphor, analogy, saying, sign, symbol, gesture, artefact, illustration, parallel or story. It might come from a particular clue you explored, or from stepping back to ponder your contemplative conversation as a whole.)

Vision: Explore any visions that help you discern future reality. Does a vision of the good life in these things emerge, a picture that calls forth hope and courageous embodiment? Can you say, "It could be like ..."? Specifically, how might shalom be cultivated, and its absence resisted, within any imagery you have used? What does your exploration of vision suggest? What part might you and others have to play?

(A vision could come from Scripture or elsewhere. It helps you discern how to embody shalom in your experience with courage. It looks forward to the good life in new and concrete ways of thinking, acting and being that participate in Christ's ministry of flourishing for self, others and world.)

Some gentle warnings. Don't:

- *force an image or vision*
- *squeeze your experience to fit a preferred image or vision*
- *consider just the first image or vision that comes to mind*
- *just stay with only image or vision; your goal is to name discerned truths*

[Overtype your imagining here]

Discern

[Please read then delete: Name your discerned truths, as best you can, with 'fallible confidence'—knowing you could be wrong, but believing you are right. Consider the conversations so far as a whole, particularly in relation to any imagery and visions of the good life. What stands out? What 'grabbed' you or had your heart burning?

If it helps, use any or all aspects of the trialogue. What do you discern: regarding your spirituality and personhood? About the practical ministry situation in its context? About relevant, key theological understandings?

It could help to consider some questions like:

- *What might be going on in 'these things'? What are the kernels of reality and truth?*
- *Where is shalom present and absent?*
- *Where might God be present, at work? What might God be desiring, saying?*
- *What are the deeper questions? What are liminal spaces of mystery, paradox or ambiguity—particularly those that cause disquiet or discomfort?*
- *What might it all mean for future action, understanding and becoming?*

Be concise and straightforward. Consider using dot points with short statements.

[Overtype your discerned truths here]

COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT
(~300 words)

[Please read then delete: What is courageous embodiment about? Submitting wholeheartedly to your discerned truths. Consider how you might cultivate it through equal attention to both doing and deepening. The trialogue might help you fashion a holistic response (but don't force it). Small and simple is good.

Doing

[Please read then delete: What are the Spirit's invitations to concrete action? Use the following as prompts:

- *How will you embody any truths you have discerned, so your knowing 'lives in the muscle'? What specific, practical steps will you take to cultivate any visions of shalom in yourself, others and the world? What planning, people and resources might this involve?*
- *What will holistic embodiment look like? It might help to think of concrete responses that are theological (e.g., research a new question, write a blog), spiritual/personal (e.g., pray differently, book a health check) and/or ministerial (e.g., get help with your listening, volunteer in a team).*
- *What obstacles to embodying discerned truths can you notice? What courage from God do you need to step forward? How might you receive that encouragement?*

Be concise and concrete, and consider using dot points with short statements.

[Overtype your points of 'doing' here]

Deepening

[Please read then delete: What are the Spirit's invitations to formational depth? Use the following as prompts:

- *What is your sense of formation in and towards shalom in yourself, others and the world? Where do you notice resistance and struggle? What might be the Spirit's invitations to growth and deepening?*
- *What practices for holistic formation might cultivate depth and strengthen your 'muscle memory' for shalom? It might help to think of theological practices (e.g., commit to communal Scripture reading, practise lateral thinking), spiritual practices (e.g., practise gratitude, take up a weekly nature walk), and/or ministerial practices (e.g., practise listening before speaking, book regular meetings with a ministry mentor).*
- *What have you have learnt about theological reflection for formation through this reflective exercise? How has this craft deepened you? What might you change or embrace in your regular reflective practice?*

[Overtype any reflections on your deepening here]

[Please read then delete: ***YOUR TWO FINAL STEPS***

1) ***Give Your Report a Title:*** *Once you have finished your draft, insert a CER title at the top that captures the heart of your report. Can you identify the kernel of your experience?*
2) **Listen With Others**: *After you have presented your draft in your peer group face to face or online, consider if/how the discussion changes or nuances your contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment, and or/courageous embodiment. What do fellow sojourners notice that disturbs, intrigues or resonates with you? Modify accordingly with any insights; no need to reference who said what.]*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[Please read then delete:
Use SBL referencing format with footnotes in the body of your CER and bibliography to list the sources you have employed to substantiate your reflection. Focus on using sources well and thoughtfully, not just cherry-picking quotes; this shows your capacity to move beyond a mere thought bubble of personal opinion and confirmation bias, towards thoughtful and critically engaged theological reflection.]

[Overtype your bibliography here]

Appendix 2: Talking the Walk CER Feedback and Assessment Guide

Student Name:		***Report Title:***	
Date:	***Strengths and Growing Edges***		
CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION ▪ Narrating 'these things' ▪ Listening In (to personhood & spirituality) ▪ Listening Out (to ministry in context) ▪ Listening Up (to sources of theology) ▪ Listening With			
IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT ▪ Imagining ▪ Naming Discerned Truths ▪ Listening With			

COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT ▪ Doing ▪ Deepening ▪ Listening With	
General ▪ Postures for theological reflection for formation ▪ Writing, sources	
Further Comments	

ASSESSMENT GUIDE: WHAT ARE YOU AIMING FOR?

1. CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION (45%):

Structuring your contemplative conversation:

The various sections are set out like this to help you work through different aspects of the conversation. You may find it helpful to work through each one at a time. However, like true conversation, voices don't occur sequentially; they interact among one another, back and forth. So, while following the headings may help, you may also wish to write your conversation, without the headings, in a seamless 'to and fro' between the various voices to which you are listening. If you choose to write this way, though, be aware that markers will especially look for roughly equal space and volume given to each voice.

a) Narrating 'these things'

Markers will want to see how well you can narrate an experience in a way that helps others into it, writing succinctly and factually, but also with creativity and humanity.

b) Listening In to personhood & spirituality

Markers will want to see how well you can reflect upon your experience through the lens of your own walk/journey/story. Body awareness and emotional literacy are important here, as is your spirituality/relatedness to God, and generally how well you have mapped your inner geography/befriended your own story, enabling connections to the experience at a personal level.

c) Listening Out to context

Markers will want to see how well you can think beyond yourself and your own 'glasses' through which you viewed the experience, to consider other possible contextual factors at play. This may well involve empathetic listening out—what's it like for others involved? Really good papers will reference sources here to substantiate the contextual analysis. Depending on the nature of the experience and your direct involvement, it may also be appropriate to self-evaluate any ministerial response. It is important here that you don't overplay or underplay your part. Honesty is essential, although of course, there may be blind spots here as well.

d) Listening Up to sources of theology

Markers will want to see how well you can hone in on key theological themes arising from the experience, and show your capacity to theologize around those themes. They will be aware that your perspectives may differ to what they identified as being important, and thus suspend judgement, because your angles might be just as valid. They will be wary of any proof texting—your use of theological sources should be as sound as possible, but can also be playful/adventurous. Where possible you should also demonstrate an awareness of the theological lenses you bring to the experience, and how these might shape your meaning-making.

2. IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT (20%):

Markers will want to see if you can ponder an image that connects with what's happening in the experience, and then envision what that might look like as the God of shalom (reconciliation, justice, beauty, wholeness) is at work. Gathering all of the contemplative conversation and visioning together, and then distilling key points of discernment, is at the heart of Talking the Walk. What's 'the real' here? You are challenged to articulate what's going on and what God might be saying to you. This can take the form of 'kairos moments' - 'Aha!!" - but also an honest acknowledgement of liminality and further questions.

3. COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT (20%):
Markers will want to see if the TR that has occurred might feasibly make any difference. If you set unreasonable, unattainable points for action, then it's unlikely—these should be queried. Markers are also looking for any insights from you into how you are being shaped and formed, towards shalom even. It should be noted that often this is difficult to see at the time of reflection—distance and perspective are usually needed to help such noticing. Finally, there is opportunity for reflection upon the process itself, and an invitation for you to connect the TR process with your ongoing growth in and disposition towards the craft of TR.

4. GENERAL (15%):
Markers will be considering not just what you drew out of the reflection process, but also how you went about it. Were you contemplative and attentive? Able to withhold judgement and listen? Did you maintain a sense of provisionality? Were you respectful of others, and engaged? Could you receive insights from others appropriately? While this is not a unit in English grammar etc., the better you are able to write, the more likely it is that you have been able to reflect well.

5. TITLE
Markers will want to see a title for the CER that reflects your ability to articulate the heart of the CER. Remember, reflection of an experience can raise multiple issues for exploration, and in a CER you can't cover them all. What's the ONE thing you are focusing on here?

Appendix 3: Three Critical Experience Report Examples

1. CORONAVIRUS RULES
(Bruce Hulme)

CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION

Listen to 'These Things'

Saturday March 7, 6:15am. "Cash or card?" Sheepishly I buy my hand sanitiser and toilet paper, strictly according to coronavirus rules. I am struck by the absurdity of my stealth-like efforts to beat the crowds and avoid embarrassment (unlike those shoppers filmed scrapping over trollies full of dunny rolls). Goodness, settle down, people.

But clearly there will be none of that: our family, country and world are headed for more turmoil, not less. Coming to terms with the speed and scale of it all—both macro (heartbreaking business shut downs, Centrelink queues, empty cafes, horrific images and stories from abroad) and micro (kids' sport cancelled, gym closed, work all online, our youngest is highly anxious)—is exhausting. No one is untouched; fear runs viral.

And then, the rules. Enforced isolation. 'Social distancing.' Churches must close. No travel. No holidays. Our school's protocols have ramped up—temperature checks, health declarations from teachers, no canteen.

Restrictions are easing but clearly the 'new normal' will be anything but.

Coronavirus rules. Indeed.

Listening In to Spirituality and Personhood

Like most people, I am deeply unsettled. My sleep is restless. I work hard at centering prayer to get me through each night, but my praying feels random and edgy. My initial morbid fascination with the news has now flipped to searching for strategies to mitigate becoming consumed, and of little help to anyone. I worry for my kids and their future; how, with Sonia, will I be their wisest, strongest and kindest human presence? I am particularly perturbed—no, ticked!!—that what I have planned for so long as my 'Year of Jubilee' (turning 50, 25 year wedding anniversary, finishing my PhD, long service leave, travelling family holidays) seems to be quickly unravelling. My continual loss of normal—of *norms*—leaves me *shalom-less*, as I wonder how to practically push against what Nouwen observes: "Often fear has penetrated our lives so deeply that it controls, whether we are aware of it or not, most of our choices and decisions."[1]

Yet in some moments I have also felt strangely energised. I get glimpses of possibility, amidst the uncertainty, about a deep work of God in me and through me. What if coronavirus *did not* rule? What might be my role and calling?

Listening Out to Ministry in Context

I think of the Australian psyche, already bruised from horrendous bushfires, that is now beyond skittish as together we brace for what is to come. Dr Paul Harrison, a human behaviour expert reflecting on the panic buying of toilet paper, comments that "in Australia we are constantly told that we can solve problems by buying things, and research shows that buying utilitarian items such as toilet paper and cleaning products can rebalance that sense of lack of

[1] Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, 74.

control."[2] Clearly, as life unravels, we clutch at anything that offers stability.

I think of our congregation, and of the church at large. With little warning, our norms and props have been removed and we are grasping for ways forward that reframe just about everything we do and who we are as Christ's body. "Do not fear!" and "The end is nigh!" messages abound in equal measure; neither are particularly helpful.

I think of our schizophrenic friend Frank who sits in our lounge room every now and then just for company and a cuppa. 'Social isolation' is already his reality; how much more so, now, as he and so many others fall further through the cracks of government systems under increasing strain, and are ignored by the anxious, self-preserving mob?

Listening Up to Sources of Theology

Amidst the myriad of theologies swirling about, connections between idolatry, fear and love are worth pondering. Luther, expounding the first commandment—"you shall have no other gods before me"[3]—comments that "a god is whatever a person looks to for all good things and runs to for help in times of trouble. So to have a god is just the same as sincerely trusting and believing in him."[4] To 'fear God', then, is to love God as the giver of good and our help in distress.

The difficulty is that such a brutal and swift removal of our props—exacerbated by media saturation—provides such a perfect breeding ground for misplaced fear. That does not mean we make light of the situation, ignore our very real anxiety, or disregard the measures we must take for the sake of others and ourselves.[5] But it is to view such frightening difficulties as invitations to confront our idolatry and return us to the first love of God as the bedrock of our lives, in good times and bad. This, then, can shape our prayer, as Nouwen comments:

> One way to pray in a fear-filled world is to choose love over anxiety, to open the door of the heart to dwell in the intimate presence of the One who loves us. When we begin to understand at a deep, spiritual level that we live surrounded by love and in communion with God no matter what the external circumstances, we can let go of the fear that lurks on the outskirts of our minds. Hardly a day passes in our lives without an experience of inner or outer fears, anxieties, apprehensions, and preoccupations. We do not have to live in fear. Love is stronger than fear: 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.' (1 Jn 4:18)[6]

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[2] Cited in Charis Chang, "Science Behind Why Australians Are Panic Buying Toilet Paper," News, *News.Com.Au*, 13 March 2020, https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/health-problems/science-behind-why-australians-are-panic-buying-toilet-paper/news-story/ab4f8d40b0fbf1b255fcd2cccee3ae1a.

[3] Exod 20:3.

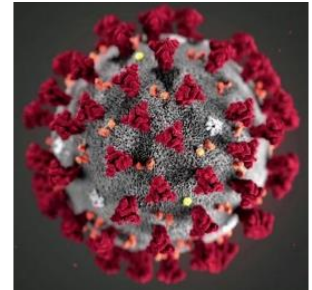
[4]

[5] Luther, living through the bubonic plague, advises: "I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence… If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Volume 43: Devotional Writings II*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and Martin O. Dietrich (Saint Louis, MO: Fortress, 1968), 132.

[6] Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, 79.

IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT

Imagine



Two things arrest me about the current virus: its ability to adapt,[7] and its contagious nature. Amidst the devastation and frightening unfolding situation, I wonder: could this trigger a contagion of *shalom* via Christ's body, grounded in God's love and faithfulness, that might be able to adapt and transmit love and compassion, rather than fear and self-preservation? What would that look like in my family, community, church and work?

Discern

- I am fighting within myself against an idolatry, a misplaced fear and trust, which is understandable but also an invitation God is offering me and the church to reorientate my love. It is scary and unsettling. It is necessary. It is the only way forward.
- There is a paradox at play. 'Coronavirus rules' do indeed govern the way we now live. Yet coronavirus does *not* rule; Christ is Lord. A simple shift in language examples this resistance: 'physical distancing', yes; 'social distancing', no. God is still at work; *shalom* just looks different.
- How I model my response will speak volumes to my family, especially those who are frightened; in particular, how will the generosity of *shalom* and care for those suffering impact my bank balance and my diary?
- I have an opportunity to think and act creativity about *shalom* as a contagion in my faith community and in my work.
- I have an opportunity to reimagine what doing faith, life and discipleship in our family, with others, might look like, particularly as restrictions on larger gatherings look set to remain. Efforts at meeting and praying together as a family unit have been both rich and disastrous; I miss the aspect of connection to the wider congregation, but don't want to go back to just 'normal' church and having a service provided for me.

COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT

Doing

- I will limit engagement with media about the pandemic to between 12 and 1pm, and welcome my anxiety as an opportunity/prompt to recentre my trust and reorientate my gaze
- As a first step to reimagining how we do faith in our family, I will work with Sonia and the kids to redesign our recently renovated rumpus/playroom to become conducive to prayer, reflection and conversation, and keep working at how we learn to be and pray together
- I will support Sonia in her idea to make up toilet roll care packs with a small note to drop around to our neighbours as a means of connection and sharing *shalom*
- I am taken by Sophie and her housemate's creativity in finding simple ways to bless others with hope; I will try and think this way in our own context

[7] First from animal to animal only, then animal to human, then human to human.

Deepening

My chief experience of deepening through this experience and the reflection upon it has been in the Spirit's prompting to listen to my body and what it's telling me about my default response to external factors. Turning my heart towards trust, as well as putting practical strategies in place for mitigating fear, has been a profound experience.

2. "I SEE YOU"[8]
(Spiritual Direction Student)

CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION

Listen to 'These Things'
Phone-to-phone conceals facial expressions, body movement and eye contact and hampers the intimacy of shared space. Listening to cues carried by tone, engagement, expressions, hesitancies and silences, I ask 'What's that like for you?' Kate talks about being overwhelmed and behind in her university assignments and in her job, working from home. Hours, days and weeks required to catch up have been calculated!

Asked about a self-image, she describes a little girl curled up and crying. The conversation pauses a while in the vulnerability and impact of trauma. Gently the conversation slides into her experience of other people's impression of her as either 'really competent' or 'really unwell'.

She switches back to her current assignment overload, describing attempts to obtain support as frustrating, unhelpful and 'after the event'. 'What kind of support do you need?' She adamantly jumps in with what she doesn't need i.e. non-motivational advice-laden encouragement! As we explore the kind of encouragement Kate finds motivational, I'm struck by her response … 'being seen as a person', 'not a machine' or 'a project'. Kate explains how trauma causes her to 'play dead' and not function. I listen to her talk about the 'disgust and antagonism' between her functioning and non-functioning selves.

An idea pops into my consciousness (God's nudge?) as Kate talks about being unable to start her assignment. I tentatively offer to be a 'student' for her teaching video assignment. After a moment of silence, Kate begins to explore what that would be like for her. We both notice the shift from being immobilised to visualising, and engaging with, her assignment. Surprise concludes the conversation.

Listening In to Spirituality and Personhood
In my nuclear family the immobilisation and perfectionism of PTSD is a familiar legacy of abuse. Trauma can be triggered unexpectedly, lurking close by, waiting to hijack relationships. I'm learning to listen gently without advice, suggestion or comment. Feeling protective, angry and sad accompany my longing for healing. A 'magical' God resides in my longing, and debates my knowing that God simply is. These weave through my listening to Kate.

I ponder the movement to second half life and notice Kate's awareness of the dualistic relationship between her two selves. What personal inner parts call for my attention and connection? I recall sitting under the gaze of God as God's broken and beautiful beloved. I both yearn for, and resist, being seen. How can I offer acceptance and nurture without receiving these for my broken and shadow self?

Learning to trust God in me and attend to the energy in creative ideas from left-field makes me thankful I heard and trusted God's nudge.

Listening Out to Ministry in Context
Kate is a millennial and a student, she lives alone, likes 'isolation', enjoys talking about psychology, yet holds her relationships and opinions close. She travels with legacies from trauma. I experience

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[8] Translation of the Zulu greeting 'Sawubona', described by Orland Bishop as representing a question/ agreement 'How do I have to be in order for you to be free?' (seeing in, out, up and with?) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IjUkVZRPK8

her as openly closed.

Individualism, valued by western cultures, promotes personal success, linked to self-esteem[9]. Academic success echoes through Kate's self-image. I question what results when success and achievement become a means of acceptance and validation. Are they both blessing and curse? A countercultural understanding resides in the humanity of being broken and deeply valued.

Kate's desire, 'being seen as a person', sits uncomfortably with her resistance to feedback. This resistance splashes colours of fear, judgement, and other undisclosed scripts onto her life canvas. How can her 'functioning' and 'non-functioning' selves become friends? She sees a counsellor for her trauma background.

In our faith community, how can contemplative practices foster 'seeing' and 'being seen'.

Can phone connection enable 'being seen' in the holding of stories without physically 'being seen'?

God's nudges often open up relational connection particularly and creatively, wasting nothing.

Listening Up to Sources of Theology

'Being seen' is encapsulated in two biblical encounters. Beside a spring in the desert, God's Spirit meets and speaks to Hagar's past, present and future through in two key questions 'Where have you come from?' and 'Where are you going?'[10]. She names the spring/well 'Beerlahai-roi ', 'Well of the Living One who sees me'[11].

Jacob's well is where Jesus sees into an unnamed outcast Samaritan woman's ache and pain of brokenness and her fear of commitment and further rejection. Jesus' presence melts division within and without. As a consequence, her life begins a new trajectory. There is weight in both these women's waiting.

Being seen means being known and valued, being treated as subjects, not objects[12], which is what Jesus communicates in his question to Simon "Do you see this woman?"[13] God knows our name. Our past, present and future all matter. [14] God sees us as ephemeral, beautiful and precious [15] and calls us 'beloved',[16] countering our many modes of self-rejection.

We are continually learning to see ourselves, others and our world with similar soft eyes.

In Mark's 'theology of the road'[17] chapters, the first blind man, healed in stages, is sent home[18]. Later, Bartimaeus is healed immediately and joins Jesus 'on the way'[19]. On the courageous journey home to leave home we learn to see and follow.

IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT

[9] David Robson, "How East and West think in profoundly different ways" - BBC Future https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20170118-how-east-and-west-think-in-profoundly-different-ways

[10] Gen 16:8.

[11] Gen 16:14.

[12] Richard Rohr, "The Foundation of Community." Online Daily Meditations, 05 May 2020

[13] Luke 7:44.

[14] Ps 139.

[15] Makoto Fujimura, "Beauty and Sacrifice," *Conversations* 14.2 (Fall/Winter 2017):13.

[16] Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 26-27.

[17] David Augsburger, "Going home to leave home" (lectures, Baptist Pastors Conference, Sydney, NSW, 1990s).

[18] Mark 8:22-26..

[19] Mark 12:46-52

Imagine

Life depends on water. Wells mean life[20]. In Scripture, wells are places of dispute, rest, settlement and encounter, often reflected in their naming. They are markers of pilgrimage for people 'on the run' and people 'on the move'.

Strategically placed, wells in Scripture enable pilgrimage. I wonder what wells I have drunk from during my pilgrimage. How would I name them? How do I carry their encounters into life? The Samaritan woman's entire village changes through her encounter. Living water, from Godly encounters, flows into lives, relationships, communities. God's essence is described as a spring of living water[21].

Wells are places of encounter. The Samaritan woman received something beyond her expectations. Godly encounters hold unexpected risk, invitation and reversal. Being seen and known distils life. Is this part of hospitality?

Wells hold water or are dry. Water, sweet, bitter or contaminated[22], gives or drains life. I wonder about Moses encounter at Marah[23] and the connection between sweet water and listening carefully, paying attention and obedience.[24]

I ponder what wells I draw from and what wells I offer others. Where do I rest and encounter God's living water? Where do I let myself be seen and known? How do I participate in God's invitation for others? What kinds of wells are found in our faith community, my home, even in phone/email? Do they offer the sweet, life-giving sweet water of being seen, known and valued by God (shalom)?

Discern

- Godly encounters are the markers of our life's journey
- Being seen and known means being valued
- Life involves being seen to discover our God-given names
- Being seen and known/our identity, grows in vulnerable, intimate and transforming relationship
- In being seen we learn to see
- I find it more comfortable offering than receiving
- Receiving and offering and living water are interdependent
- Seeing subject-to-object marginalises others
- We all have blind spots with capacity to 'other'[25]
- How does a church foster a thirst-quenching DNA?
- Drawing from sweet water makes a huge difference at home
- Wells, water and hospitality walk together
- SD creates space to be seen and wells for both director and directee

[20] Shawna Atteberry, "Meeting God at wells", Online sermon Lent 2017 http://www.shawnaatteberry.com/march-2-meeting-god-at-wells/
[21] Jer 2:13, John 4:14.
[22] Jas 3:11-12.
[23] Exod 15:23.
[24] Exod 15:26-27.
[25] Dr Janet Smith, "Spiritual Direction and the Other" (lecture, Listen into Life, Kincumber, NSW, 11 November 2017)

COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT

Doing

- start the day intentionally entering relationship from an life-giving inner well (esp. with autism)
- notice triggers that contaminate my water and practices that enable non-reactive presence
- seek out wise wells in Christian community and choose to be vulnerable … ask for water
- do a reflective study of wells and springs in Scripture (with others?)
- explore with retreat teams how to foster being seen and known
- take steps/plan to follow up opportunities for spiritual direction and contemplative practices at church
- risk acting on God's nudges
- intentionally engage with several on the margins of church who easily slip away
- talk with Kate about mindful practices … offer walking and talking

Deepening

God's invitation to be seen and known is about stepping up, not stepping to the side, participating not observing. This calls for vulnerability and challenges my introvert.

Bringing into community what happens in our encounters with God, is how the church's DNA evolves and changes. This has shifted my understanding of community towards being more organic and continually changing. Community 'on the move' is more inviting and trustworthy.

Hospitality, welcome and vision are about being seen, known and valued with 'soft' eyes.

Theological reflection is a way of being, living and entering life and can be employed 'on the move' with almost anything. I'm wondering about adapting TR for children. I notice the difference between choosing an image and waiting for an image to ask to be explored and the particularity of imagination and discernment.

"Listening in" is a valuable way of seeing others and being seen.

3. THE CORRECT ANSWER VS THE LAW OF LOVE
(Divinity Student)

CONTEMPLATIVE CONVERSATION

Listen to 'These Things'
The coronavirus restrictions in Western Australia are easing. More people are permissible at a gathering and businesses and workplaces are reopening. We continue to have church online and had a recent meeting with all the small group leaders. Part of the discussion was about what groups would look like as restrictions ease. Group leaders had started making decisions for their own groups. There are many opinions about what the 'right' thing to do is. Some people don't think physical distancing need apply for gatherings in homes and state they will begin to meet in person, others will continue online. Each person is putting forward the view they consider most important when deciding what to do. I raise the question that for church-endorsed events, shouldn't we have a consistent view on how we determine what gatherings, of any kind and size, look like as restrictions change. The two pastors ask for input so they can consider a wise approach. The next evening they provide a document outlining not a set of rules about gatherings, but a framework for how to make decisions about gatherings.

Listening In to Spirituality and Personhood
Internally I wrestle with several things. I have my own opinion, which is on the more conservative side. It feels like my opinion comes from a conviction to honour what the government are asking of us, but I'm not convinced it's that pure. I had a feeling of frustration with the people who stated they were going to start meeting in person, then vindication when our church's approach said we would honour physical distancing for any church gathering. I also noticed a sense that for gatherings not related to church I don't feel a need to ensure physical distancing takes place. Why is there seemingly a disconnect between what I think we should do as a church and what I want to do in 'my own time'?

Listening Out to Ministry in Context
It has seemed like many people want to be able to get back together as soon as possible, like it will mean victory over the situation when we can gather again. The view expressed by many in our meeting seemed to reflect this, that physically meeting together is better, so the sooner we can do it the better. After the meeting, my wife raises a good question; what else is this desire serving? Is there something at play that is not of God? One article suggests that this time of isolation is akin to time spent in the wilderness, which is a regular theme in Scripture where God reveals our hearts and our need for Him.[26]

Some other questions come to mind about gathering. Is it a responsible thing to do for an organisation? If there were a local outbreak traced back to a church group, what would be the community's perception? Is worrying about perception too fearful to be of God? Is it easier to invite people to small groups at the moment because they can attend from home? For the group we lead, many people have spread out to their family's homes so they are not all in our area; would we actually make it too difficult for them to attend if we met physically? If everyone in a group felt comfortable to meet except one person, would it be right to meet physically. What is the loving and wise thing to do; for our group, for our church, for the wider community?

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[26] Brian Rosner, "The Coronavirus Crisis as a Wilderness Experience," *The Gospel Coalition | Australia*, n.d., https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-coronavirus-crisis-as-a-wilderness-experience/.

Listening Up to Wellsprings of Theology
Many verses come to mind when thinking about this. Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ (1 Cor 11:1, NIV). Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders (Col 4:5). Everyone must submit to governing authorities for all authority comes from God (Rom 13:1, NLT). Let us not neglect meeting together (Heb 10:25). Overall, it seems like picking a single verse and blindly doing what it says seems like it could be both unwise and unloving in this situation, regardless of what the 'right' thing to do is. The trump card, which is also what our church pastors have used as a guiding framework, is that love does no harm to a neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilment of the law (Rom 13:10, NIV). While several church and denominational organisations have published guidelines on this topic, the Humanitarian Disaster Institute offers wise counsel to make decisions in community based on Biblical truth, prayer and available scientific data.[27] When thinking on how our church made the decision early to shift to meeting online because that was the loving thing to do for the weak and the vulnerable, it seems best to use the same truth when making the decisions in reverse.

IMAGINATIVE DISCERNMENT

Imagine
When reflecting on the situation and trying to discern what the 'best' thing to do is, I have been reminded of the story of the rich young ruler (Matt 19:16-22). The young man came to Jesus looking for the right answer so that he could go away with confidence. Everything about his approach is self-focussed. He seems convinced there must be a thing he can do so that he can live forever. Jesus' response tells him to shift his focus from himself outward, in a loving way, towards those in need. This changes the truth from a detached concept to an interactive reality, it's a complete reorientation. Reading the account of that interaction has made me feel like I came to Jesus looking for the 'right' answer about what to do, when really Jesus' answer is always going to be a loving and outward focused one.

Discern
- During the meeting with our small group leaders, I was (along with others) searching for the correct answer for what to do.
- Thinking about other situations in life, I often do this. I have a situation that needs an answer, so I go looking in the Bible for the 'right' one. This detaches the truth I'm looking for from any relational reality.
- From Scripture, and from the way our church has responded so far, it now seems obvious that the best way to respond is a way that outwardly considers people's needs. In other words, the right answer is whatever the law of love leads us to
- Our church small groups vary in age, size and place they meet so having a one size fits all answer doesn't actually make sense and what is loving in one setting may not be loving in another.

[27] Kent Annan, Jamie Aten, and Nicolette Louissaint, "Guide to Reopening Church Services," n.d., 5–6, https://www.churchesofchrist.org.au/getmedia/5217861e-4608-4e43-a0c8-a6fe82502e34/ReopeningChurch-Guide-r4.pdf.

COURAGEOUS EMBODIMENT

Doing

- First, our small group will continue to meet online rather than trying to rush back to physically meeting. This seems the loving thing to do both corporately and for most of the individuals given their current circumstances.
- Before making any decisions in future, I also want to ask everyone how they feel about the prospect of gathering physically again; whether they feel comfortable to and what concerns they might have.
- In a way, it is easier now to attend a small group than ever; you don't have to get off your couch. I also want to 'look around the zoom room' at church to see if there are people on the fringes who aren't currently in a small group then either invite them or connect them to one of the other leaders.

Deepening

In looking for an answer in Scripture to a problem or question, the big thing I've noticed is not actually the answer I've come to in this situation. I've found the way I approach these kind of questions has been somewhat flawed. In looking for a correct answer, I'm detaching the issue from my relational reality with God and others. This reflection has shown me to think about truth more relationally, not in a way that waters it down but in a way that moves it from a concept to a reality.

One thing I'm still wrestling with is the disconnect I feel between my view on gatherings that are church events compared to gathering with a group of friends. I still feel like I have a more conservative opinion about how we respond as a church compared to what's important to me in my 'private' life. This is something I want to continue reflecting on.

Appendix 4: Student Feedback 2019 and 2020

Study Level	Study Mode	Talking the Walk: What was helpful? What was unhelpful?
Undergrad	On-campus	The whole approach has opened up a new world to me, in some ways. I really like structure and this will help me to focus and navigate issues in future a bit better. We have covered more content then I can take in, but I can keep engaging with it throughout my life. I really appreciate the different practical exercises and images you have used throughout to embed certain concepts and material. The honest and personal nature of the content has been encouraging as we see how you have developed and engaged with it all yourself. Thankyou! I'm looking forward to the next term, even though i find it so immersive that many other things in life become paused!
Undergrad	On-campus	It's been helpful to learn to listen to others and not offer solutions. Also, for my walk to reflect on how God has grown me and to learn from my journey.
Undergrad	On-campus	I have really struggled with the terms and looking introspectively. The terms that have been used seem to be created for this course, and they don't seem to match what any of the textbooks or readings say. It makes things very confusing to have to work out what the term means every time it is used. Why not use terms that others use? 'Talking the Walk' just gets confusing. So does the 'looking up', 'looking out'. Why not use something more simple, instead of creating a code? I also hate looking introspectively. I've really struggled with this. I'm trying, but it's hard.
Undergrad	On-campus	The practical exercises have been extremely powerful and helpful in mining the depths of this subject.
Undergrad	On-campus	Talking the walk has been helpful because it pushes us into deeply reflecting on circumstances and where our feet are planted now.
Undergrad	On-campus	CER examples from Bruce were very useful because I needed to see examples of how to approach the assignment being a bit overwhelmed by the vast amount of material to remember and understand what it applied to.
Undergrad	On-campus	Helpful: an encouragement to grow as a person Overwhelming: being vulnerable in front of strangers
Undergrad	On-campus	Helpfully puts structure around something I do more instinctually than intentionally. It's a bit like learning a new language, though, and until I learnt your TR vernacular it was a bit of a hurdle to my engagement.
Undergrad	On-campus	The emphasis on shalom has been really helpful, it always is. It helps to centre experiences around God, his creation, his mission, our relationship to him. Whether it is interrupted or inhibited, or flourished within an experience seeing that God was there in it. Understanding that God was there and seeing how he was there working is essential to learning to trust in him and is in itself a way that shalom can be manifested.
Undergrad	On-campus	There are so many models for TR it can be very confusing. This model is grounded in our daily walk, and as such it is less complicated than other models.
Undergrad	Online	For me learning how to reflect has been a great tool for my walk with the

		Lord, it has taught me a lot about myself as well.
Undergrad	Online	It's a good way to engage with the material. It's been helpful to have practical things woven in to the theory.
Undergrad	Online	TTW has been incredibly helpful. In my experience reflection on what is happening comes easily BUT actually doing anything about it is often missed. The challenge to practically engage has brought depth to my own practice of theological reflection.
Undergrad	Online	I am not familiar with other models, but this way of reflecting makes sense and has a clear structure. It invites reflection from me from a broader range of sources that I might get to if I was just doing this from within my own standard patterns and frameworks.
Undergrad	Online	Real life examples are helpful (Such as the Uber example or COVID-19 one), as these are relatable and help to put "feet" to the theory. Too much theory is unhelpful, but I don't think there has been too much - perhaps some weeks lean more towards a lot of theory, understandably.
Undergrad	Online	What has been helpful, is that it has, through reflecting brought up many things I thought I had dealt with, but even though they have come up again, this time I feel more comfortable with acknowledging and accepting them.
Postgrad	On-campus	Naming and legitimising the input/impact of life/ministry experience in shaping theology and ongoing ministry has been very helpful and changed the format of some training/teaching I am planning to offer our church
Postgrad	On-campus	Helpful: Life is a journey, to really connect with God and one another the pace needs to be slow - walking pace. The depth and breadth of Shalom Reflecting with others
Postgrad	On-campus	Talking the walk has helped provide an organic structure for deepening one's reflection on the journey and has revealed how reflecting on life's experiences can reveal deep discoveries of self, identity, vocation and relationship to God and others. The labyrinth created in the courtyard, offered an awesome physical, sensory experience of this notion of journey as the outer world and the inner world conversed and danced together.
Postgrad	On-campus	I've appreciated the integrated approach, which has brought together a number of areas I'd only considered on their own.
Postgrad	On-campus	In the attempt to talk a journey through, we engage with the process so much more meaningfully. The process does not always seem to make sense, until the process is experienced, as it is experiential by nature.
Postgrad	On-campus	It has given me new insights into my walk with God and challenged my Theological beliefs and actions. Hope this is the beginning of resetting my lenses through which I see God's action in His world.
Postgrad	On-campus	It's a helpful framework. It's useful to have one method in mind when thinking about how to reflect. Personally not my preferred method but it is helpful in helping me refine my own method.
Postgrad	Online	I have found it helpful to think about Talking the Walk. We all know the expression 'Walk the Talk' meaning that we need to act congruently with what we preach. However, this is different. Here we are learning how to communicate about our journey, learning from others and contributing to others' conversations in ways that are open, respectful, and helpful.

Postgrad	Online	Understanding the three way discussion has been helpful for reflecting on different specific events not just the one used for CER. A craft to be developed. Learning about the Wesleyan Quadrilateral has been insightful, helping me understand my personal experience and church exposure influencing priority and preference.
Postgrad	Online	Having a tangible method of reflection has helped me to understand where God is in the day-to-day and to be continually part of His ongoing work. I like that it's an active process and Its not limited to the academic.
Postgrad	Online	Using the Labyrinth and walk to Emmaus as a model for TTW has been a good basis for understanding TR for formation. Putting TR into practice as you go is very helpful. It was also good that we saw Bruce doing TTW with UBER in midst of the course. Bruce doing his own TR with others.
Postgrad	Online	A helpful metaphor, because we are often so focused on needing to "walk our talk" that we forget the value that comes from mulling over / making sense of / articulating how our walk is changing.
Postgrad	Online	Most of the topics individually I found difficult to understand, however by the regularity and explanation of your emails content, I found that it made sense. The extra explanations were critical.
Postgrad	Online	the approach opens up wider and balanced reflection for myself and slows me down. I love the goal of shalom. I've gained added insight and dimensions for exploration in pondering the in, out and up in how I listen with others' stories and experiences. I can't think of anything that's been unhelpful.

Appendix 5: Two Students Walk and Talk the Emmaus Labyrinth Together

Theological Reflection students (on-campus) have the opportunity to walk and talk the Emmaus Labyrinth together in pairs, twice. One talks while the other listens, and then they swap roles. Here are the reflections of two students who engaged in this embodied exercise together in 2019.

Student 1

When I began this journey of my Masters of Divinity, I had a sense that I was to trust this nagging voice inside, this voice that would leave me restless until I responded. I responded not because I completely understood why but in what seemed complete insanity, the Spirit seemed to be calling and would not stop wrestling with me until I began the journey of intentional study. Yet as this journey unfolds, while there are at a times brief moments of clarity, there is also a deep sense of mystery, of discovering and rediscovering vulnerability. Of trusting the twists and turns, the unexpected revelations of myself, of God of what it means to follow.

Into this I enter the Labyrinth. Not alone but with a companion. We begin a slow walk and while we gently enter the sharing of our stories, somehow our feet allow the path of the labyrinth to guide. There seems a conscious yet unconscious rhythm that we not only experience physically but also seems to find a way to play with our conversation.

As the walking begins, I share what seems to be a jumble of thoughts. Of how when I began this journey, I had a linear perspective of where this path may take me to the possibility of ordained ministry where theological education was to give me deeper grounding for speaking into the hearts of others. As I said yes to this journey I had felt that God was calling me to let go of my other paths of returning to art teaching, perhaps even letting go of giving time to creative expression through music.

Further into the labyrinth we go…I describe how rather than this journey revealing a clear vision of my destination it has taken me back to my first loves, my passions. I have remembered my creative self; I have remembered my love of art, my love of music and while on the way to 'somewhere' other paths back to these places have been revealed, others doors have been opened. My earlier vision of my linear path is suddenly faced with deviations, twists and turns, while moving forward I feel as though my journey also winds its' way back. Rather than feeling as though I am holding a clear one-dimensional image of what I am to become, I am reminded of all these other dimensions. Suddenly, there are many colours and brushstrokes finding their way upon my canvas…

My companion shares her story that while unplanned, was inspired by my revealing of journey. Together we reflect how our paths have woven their ways back to where we began, where we are reminded of whom we are but now perceived and experienced from a new context. While walking the rain has fallen, together we have huddled under an umbrella, the chairs waiting for us in the centre are wet with raindrops, so we continue standing as we gather around the bread that has been placed on the table. The question arises of how is God beginning to use these forgotten parts of ourselves for a new vision, for ministry? In this space of vulnerability, we share our unspoken hopes, our dreams, the possibilities of our 'what ifs', pondering the mystery of what is and what may come. Somehow the earlier jumble seems less of a weight to carry and more of

an unexpected hope.

We begin the journey now from the centre as the Labyrinth's rhythm continues to guide. While gently holding the mystery of what we have shared we discover that the path seems to give us time for reflecting further as it continues to twist and turn until quite unexpectedly we find ourselves on the path of departure. While there feels like a sense of relief as the way out is finally revealed there is part of me that wants to stay in that moment of a shared Labyrinth, in the intimacy of deep conversation, shared vulnerability and together reflecting upon how God may be leading us on the journey. The Labyrinth has revealed that it is more than 'A-mazing'…This pilgrimage is more than solving how to get from one side to the other. Rather, perhaps this pilgrimage is a vulnerability and a listening to allowing the Spirit to take me on a dance into all parts of myself; what has, what is and is to come and ... back again …

Student 2

These are some of my initial thoughts from Wednesday's class. They are not at all polished or comprehensive! I hope I will learn how to write more concisely. It was helpful to write down my thought pattern to establish it in my heart - I need to return to regular journaling. I'm so grateful for what you've opened up to us in this subject so far and still have so much to understand and explore!

One idea from our lecture which particularly struck me is that God walks slowly with us. We see this both in the daily life of Jesus amongst the people of Israel and, despite the busyness and frenetic pace of life in our society, we can experience this in our own lives today. The Biblical record of human history shows God's gradually-building, mustard-seed covenant communities with whom He patiently attends to and guides. As Jesus embodies and as Leunig helpfully articulates, 'nothing can be loved at speed'. This resonates with me in many ways and brings my ministry further into the light. In offering hospitality in our home I can miss the moments that might have expressed deeper love if I had slowed down and focused on listening to the person rather than undertake the task I thought was urgently important to show love to that same person. The lecture also reminded me of my European journey in 2006 which, while there were moments of frenetic tourism to see as much as I could see, my most joyful moments were connecting meaningfully with strangers and new friends along the way that I sensed God was leading me. I'm so keen to explore the theology of pilgrimage as this semester and my life unfolds!

My experience of walking a labyrinth for the first time facilitated a mindful, physical expression of our lecture content. I had always wanted the opportunity and this week it arrived, with much effort invested - thankyou Bruce! I often find it easier to talk with someone as we walk together, but there was a new sense of anticipation and purpose as my companion and I commenced our walk. We both recounted ways that the Lord is bringing us again to former passions and opportunities, in His timing and in surprising ways, in some ways mirroring the way a labyrinth is laid out.

[For me, my journey at university ministry led me to Tabor to study Intercultural Life and Work, 15 years ago. The Lord used that subject to prepare me for what was ahead after graduation, but then in marrying my husband I thought I was sacrificing my passion for cross-cultural ministry. In God's time and in His delightful way He actually brought us together to the joy of ministering cross-culturally, in the midst of a difficult church ministry. In light of our labyrinth walk on Wednesday I began to see our six years of international student ministry (so far) as a centre point, and my unexpected return to Tabor to continue the Intercultural study pathway as the journey out again. While my desire to serve in this ministry context is not new, I am a different person: married, an aunty, a volunteer university ministry staff worker, and more aware of the

challenges that people face through life. For a variety of reasons, with recommencing study at Tabor being the most significant, I am beginning to feel like my old self again that was constantly in awe while hearing of God's gentle yet powerful saving work amongst communities throughout the world, and free to wonder at His ways and plans. I have spent the past six or so years focusing often on my own inadequacies and seeking to plan my own steps forward, not living in the freedom we have in Christ to be still, listen and not have to know ahead of time where the next turn in the path will be.]

Physically walking the labyrinth highlights the slow unfolding journey we each experience, helping us to make sense or meaning of our walk through this often-messy and surprising life. My companion and I recounted our own journey but also became part of each other's journey as we sensed and articulated what Jesus might be doing through our different ministries. Talking with her and sensing God's presence helped me to clarify some thoughts, and our watchful walk along the guided path facilitated a kinaesthetic and visual learning experience that I sense will remind me in future to walk more slowly and mindfully with my husband, with fellow 'pilgrims' I meet in the days ahead, and most importantly, with Jesus. As we paused together in the centre of the labyrinth and wondered what our journey out would involve, we again felt anticipation but perhaps with a greater sense of peace after having already experienced some of the journey together. Seeing that others were also walking the same path, ahead or behind us at a different pace but with the same goal of engaging meaningfully together, was encouraging.

I haven't even explored the impact of the Emmaus account! I'd love to have another opportunity to walk a labyrinth, perhaps while reflecting more specifically on Jesus walking with his disciples.

I was just reminded of a song I used to sing as a child at Girls' Brigade! 'When the day has begun and the darkness is done and my eyes see the sky so blue, I put on my clothes and I'm ready to go walking down the road with you.' I love how Jesus guides us through life in such diverse ways! He never leaves or forsakes us.

Thanks for reading!

Shalom

Appendix 6: A Curriculum Paradigm for Theological Education

Tabor Faculty of Ministry, Theology and Culture: Curriculum Paradigm

Bruce Hulme, MTC Reaccreditation Facilitator
Thursday, 12 March 2020

Formation for Flourishing

At Tabor our passion is this: whole-person formation, through a Christian lens, for participation in God's flourishing of self, others and world through service in life and the community professions. Within this college-wide vision, the Faculty of Ministry, Theology and Culture (MTC) forms women and men for conventional and emerging industry-connected vocations in diverse ministry contexts.

The formational lens recognises our modest yet critical part in knowing that is always 'on the way.'[28] With Wood we understand that our goal

> is not to form Christians, but to form the habit of critical reflection on one's formation. It is not to mediate the content of the Christian tradition, but to equip one for theological reflection upon the Christian tradition. It is not to train in leadership skills, but to cultivate an aptitude for reflection on the quality of one's own and others' leadership as an instrument of the church's witness.[29]

Such a pilgrimage approach frees us to educate within and across relevant disciplines with a formative, not merely summative approach; we seek to maximise students' capacity and orientation for lifelong-learning, rather than try to cover everything. This reflects the way in which transformative knowing opens up, rather than nails shut. Ultimately the question is not how much our graduates will 'master', but rather how equipped and disposed they are towards continual formation in their knowing, doing and being.

The *telos* or goal of flourishing orientates communal learning around God's grand missional vision of *shalom*[30] for the cosmos, communities and individuals, centred and begun in Christ, and embodied through the Spirit in graces such as reconciliation, justice, beauty and wholeness. Pastors and church planters, ministry leaders and cross-cultural workers, spiritual directors and chaplains—all are invited to be formed for participation in this central Christian calling. Regular engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, particularly in the review cycle process, helps ensure graduates trained for various vocations are industry connected.

Holistic and Coinhering Learning

As is frequently called for,[31] such education needs to be holistic and interdependent to redress the fragmentation often residual in theological education. In terms of pedagogy and curriculum design, then, this necessitates an explicit move past the linear *theory–to–practice* approach of 'applied theology,' and further, beyond a *theory–practice* dialogue (as though this interface occurs at arm's length), to a *theory–*

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[28] Newbiggin, cited in Meek, *Loving to Know*, 32.
[29] Wood, "Theological Education and Education for Church Leadership," 310.
[30] *Shalom* is a multifaceted Hebrew word that means much more than just tranquillity or the absence of conflict. Rooted in notions of 'completeness' or 'wholeness', *shalom* can convey "health, security, well-being, and salvation as well as peace." Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 881.
[31] For instance, see: Hibbert and Hibbert, "Addressing the Need for Better Integration in Theological Education: Proposals, Progress, and Possibilities from the Medical Education Model," 107; Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*; Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983).

practice–persons trialogue. This recognises the mutually interdependent or *coinhering* relationship[32] between all three areas in the ongoing formation of the student and educator alike. Such formation domains are *perspectives* rather than *entities*; they are distinguishable, but never separable. To reflect this in the curriculum, we employ the narrative terminology of *Engaging God's Story–Engaging in Our Stories–Engaging the World & Others' Stories* as a trialogue central to holistic and coinhering formation. Other strongly resonating expressions include *theology–ministry–spirituality*,[33] or *normative–situational–existential* trialogues.[34]

Culturally Intelligent Theological Reflection

To these, a fourth formation domain centred in the craft of theological reflection—*Engaging Stories Together Through Reflection*—overlays and connects all three. Formation in a contemplative stance towards and capacity for ongoing theological reflection enables participation in Jesus' ministry of *shalom* in various contexts. Intrinsic to this craft is a cultural intelligence lens. This is not just about the capacity for cultural exegesis and the ability to do theology and minister in diverse contexts, as though culture is narrowly understood as something that is just 'out there', or just about ethnicity, for instance. Rather, it is a much more pervasive paradigm for how the student grows in understanding their own cultural lenses (or 'coping mechanisms'[35]) when encountering difference in diverse cultural contexts and cultural lenses of others, and with humility and vulnerability, engages that difference to be formed by the Spirit through such encounters. Thus cultural intelligence cuts to the heart of formation and the willingness to have (theological/ministerial/spiritual) assumptions challenged and changed.

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[32] Coinherence is "a 'full and mutual sharing of one thing in the complete reality of the other'—referring to entities that are distinct yet inseparable from each other." Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 2. Coinherence is similar to the notion of integration but richer, since integration implies things being brought together that otherwise can also exist on their own.

[33] Hulme, "A Vision for the Good Life: Shalom as a Telos for Christian Formation in Teaching Theological Reflection," 142–43.

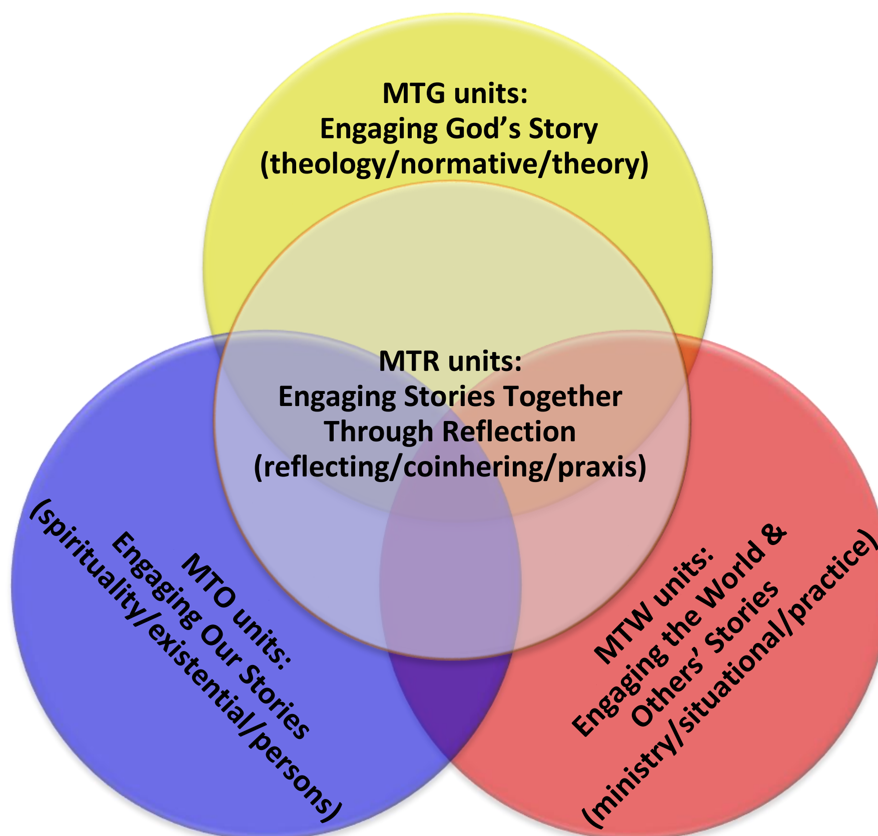
[34] Meek, *Loving to Know*, chap. 6. See also Ball's thorough research into undergraduates' experience of transformative learning in Australian theological education in which he concluded that "there is a widespread and strongly expressed desire for theological education to be holistic and integrated rather than being based on sets of content that are often disconnected from one another and from life beyond the classroom. Such integration will combine cognitive, practical and affective elements … In total, it aims at a congruence of creed, conduct and character within the person of the graduate." L J Ball, *Transforming Theology: Student Experience and Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Theological Education* (Preston, VIC: Mosaic, 2012), 125–26; See also Francis who in the formation of reflective ministry practitioners contends that "we need to develop a genuine "trialogue" between practical or situational reflection, theological reflection and personal reflection which sees the ministry practitioner developing, not just the requisite skills for ministry, but a deep personal relationship with God which fuels and sustains ministry for the long haul." Francis, "Developing Genuinely Reflective Ministry Practitioners," 198.

[35] This idea is taken from Kraft who says the culture is a "complex, integrated coping mechanism, belonging to and operated by a society (social group), consisting of: (i) concepts and behaviour that are patterned and learned; (ii) underlying perspectives (worldview); (iii) resulting products, both nonmaterial (customs, rituals) and material (artefacts)." Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 38.

MTC's Curriculum Paradigm

MTC's curriculum paradigm, then, emphasises formation through holistic and coinhering learning orientated towards *shalom*, across four interdependent domains:

- **Engaging God's Story (theology/normative/theory); unit prefix MTG**
  Theological & critical thinking formation through holistic learning in: the Christian Scriptures and interpretation, Christian history, and Christian thought, in conversation with broader societal and interdisciplinary discourse for faithful and effective discernment and proclamation.
- **Engaging Our Stories (spirituality/existential/persons); unit prefix MTO**
  Spiritual & personal formation through holistic learning in: discipleship, spiritual vitality and practices; self and identity, the affects, suffering, woundedness, desires; meaning, hope, vocation, giftedness; character and dispositions; mental, emotional, physical, social wellbeing; becoming fully alive and deeply human.
- **Engaging the World & Others' Stories (ministry/situational/practice); unit prefix MTW**
  Ministerial & missional formation through holistic learning in: culture; incarnational local and global contextualization; relationally-shaped skills for caring, sharing faith, and working with cultural diversity; innovative servant-leadership for missional communities; best practice, professional standards, industry connections, particularly through work integrated learning.
- **Engaging Stories Together through Reflection (reflecting/coinhering/praxis); unit prefix MTR**
  Reflective formation through holistic learning in: praxis, the reflective arts and method in meaning making; cultural intelligence; theological reflection through contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment and courageous embodiment for *shalom*-shaped life and vocation.



Notes:

- In many ways every unit engages all domains. However, some units will focus on particular domains or across domains—for example, *The biblical story for everyone* mainly in 'Engaging God's Story', or *Exegesis and theology for proclamation – Prophets* in both 'Engaging God's Story' and 'Engaging the World & Others' Stories'. Units have been coded according to their dominant emphasis.
- Moreover, awards will tend to emphasise formation in some domains more than others, e.g., a BMin will naturally be more ministry orientated than a BTh, which will be more theology orientated.
- However, the coinhering, interdependent relatedness between the domains means that learning will invariably be connecting across all domains in some way, and work for assessment may reflect this.
- The point is neither to pigeonhole units or awards, nor to diminish the integrity of particular disciplines, but rather teach and learn with the coinhering relationships between the domains, and the holistic formation of the student, in mind.

Appendix 7: Talking the Walk Six Session Short Course for Laypeople

Over June–August 2020 I taught a truncated version of *Talking the Walk* to laypeople over six sessions. Participants included teachers and a chaplain from a local Christian school, a children's pastor and an interested lay person not associated with a formal ministry role. Employing a flipped learning model, each fortnight I released video clips (each set totalling ~45 minutes) using Zoom in conjunction with this Prezi presentation. Every other fortnight we met for discussion, initially via Zoom and then in person as COVID-19 restrictions eased. Here is the outline of teaching videos:

Session 1: An Introduction to Theological Reflection for Formation, and Talking the Walk

- 1.1 Introduction; About
- 1.2 The Why? What? & How? of Theological Reflection, and Talking the Walk
- 1.3 Getting Started; Next

Session 2: Emmaus Labyrinth

- 2.1 Walking and Talking
- 2.2 Road via Emmaus
- 2.3 Labyrinth; Next

Session 3: Contemplative Conversation

- 3.1 An Introduction to Contemplative Conversation
- 3.2 Listening IN to Spirituality & Personhood
- 3.3 Listening OUT to Ministry in Context
- 3.4 Listening UP to Wellsprings of Theology; Next

Session 4: Imaginative Discernment

- 4.1 Imaginative Discernment ... What?
- 4.2 Imaginative Discernment ... How?
- 4.3 Imaginative Discernment ... Next

Session 5: Courageous Embodiment

- 5.1 Courageous Embodiment ... What?
- 5.2 Courageous Embodiment ... How?
- 5.3 Courageous Embodiment ... Next

Session 6: Talking the Walk - A Summary, and Moving Forward

- 6.1 Talking the Walk ... Summary of the Model
- 6.2 Talking the Walk ... Summary of the Method
- 6.3 Moving Forward in Your Own Reflective Practice

In one item for assessment a teacher developed the following lesson plan for how she would introduce contemplative conversation to middle school students.

Theological Reflection

Lesson 1:

Contemplative conversation voice 1

listening in to self

(spirituality and personhood) in reflection

Lesson Intentions:

At the end of this lesson students will

know why to "listen in"

understand how to "listen in"

be able to reflect on what God might be saying about an issue the class has raised through their life.

Lesson Outline

Activity	Resources
Starter:	
As a class choose a recent issue that has caused conflict or confusion either in the classroom, in the yard or online.	
Explain to the group that they are going to spend some time "Listening In" about that issue or situation.	
Lesson:	
Step 1: Why spend some time listening in?	
Shake a snow globe – or show YouTube clips of shaken globes – ask students to guess everything that is in the globe.	Snow globe/s OR
Reflect that the model/image became much clearer when the only thing to focus on was the model.	Snow globe shake : YouTube video
In the same way when we are still we can pay better attention to the emotion and notice our response.	
Read 1 Corinthians 6:19 reflect that God can speak in and through us.	
Step 2: How will we listen in?	
Using a padlet and thinking about the issue raised students will record their responses	
to these prompts. They can use words/images/drawings.	padlet.com
Listening to your voices – I hear…	bible.com
Listening to your emotions – I feel….	
Listening to your body – I notice …	
Listening to your script – I think …	
Listening for the questions – I wonder ….	
Listening to your score – the music that would be the best soundtrack for this would be …	

Reflection/Exit Ticket:

Students to share one of their responses on their padlet.

Choose one that you would not have realized was there without listening in.

Lesson 2:

Contemplative conversation voice 2

listening in to others

(contextual ministry) in reflection

Lesson Intentions:

At the end of this lesson students will

know why to "listen in to others"

understand how to "listen in to others"

be able to reflect on what God might be saying about an issue the class has raised through others in the world around them.

Lesson Outline

Activity	Resources
Starter:	
Remind the class of the recent issue that has caused conflict or confusion either in the classroom, in the yard or online. As chosen in Lesson 1.	
Explain to the group that they are going to spend some time "Listening In to Others" about that issue or situation.	
Lesson:	
Step 1: Why spend some time listening in to others?	
After listening in to ourselves, listening in to others helps us to know what else is going on.	
Read Psalm 24:1 reflect that the presence of God is in all of the world. We can see what God is doing by participating with others.	bible.com
Step 2: How will we listen in to others?	
The saying "walk in someone's shoes' means to think about something from their perspective.	
Using a padlet each student is to find an image of a shoe that 'sums them up'. A shoe that if they wore it would match them – their likes, personality, or another aspect of themselves.	padlet.com
The teacher will label the shoes with a letter eg. A – Z.	
Instruct the students to 1. think about the issue raised – that occurred in the classroom, in the yard or online 2. choose a shoe 3. create thought bubbles and speech bubbles that a person who was wearing that shoe might have about the issue.	How are you feeling today – picture cards and images that describe emotions

Reflection:

Ask some students to share which letter shoe they put onto the padlet and one of their thoughts or comments about the issue.

Students who chose that shoe can judge how well they were able to understand another person's perspective.

Team Meeting

Lesson 3:

Contemplative conversation voice 3

listening up to God

(sources of theology) in reflection

Lesson Intentions:

At the end of this lesson students will

know why to "listen up to God"

understand how to "listen up to God"

be able to reflect on what God might be saying about an issue the class has raised through authoritative guides.

Lesson Outline

Activity

Starter:

Remind the class of the recent issue that has caused conflict or confusion either in the classroom, in the yard or online. As chosen in Lesson 1.

Explain to the group that they are going to spend some time "Listening up to God" about that issue or situation.

Lesson:

Step 1: Why spend some time listening up to God?

We want to 'befriend' God's story.

Thinking with God brings insight and revelation – the 'aha' or light bulb moments.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 Reflect on the character of God. Which aspects make Him helpful to listen up to for this issue?

Step 2: How will we listen up to God?

Introduce the word/concept of Shalom being about complete or whole.

View https://bibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/ to explore the biblical meaning of peace and how it all leads to Jesus.

Step 3:

Identify the relationships that the issue has caused conflict &/or confusion in.

As students brainstorm their answers place these into four groups e.g.

Peace with God	Peace with self
Peace with others	Peace with nature

Resources

bible.com

X chart

The Bible Project video

Shalom-Peace

In groups discuss how there can be restoration in the relationships where it is currently missing.

Exit Ticket/ Reflection:

As a class decide what the next steps could be to bring restoration for the issue raised.

Student Assignment:

COVID-19 : In your shoes

Key Idea of Theological Reflection:

Contemplative conversation voice 2:

listening out to others

(contextual ministry) in reflection

Rationale

To build empathy.

To build the ability to understand that just as they feel many emotions other people do as well.

To share the gift of God's peace. Romans 13:15 : to overflow with hope.

Description of Assignment

Students are given an image prompt featuring shoes.

It could be one image that has multiple pairs of shoes that represent people of different ages and stages of life or separate images of different shoes.

1. Students select a pair of shoes and complete a profile about the person who might wear their shoes. The profile outlines their age, gender, occupation, personality, interests, hopes/dreams.

2. Students spend time reflecting about how this person's life has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions in lesson 1 can be used to guide their thinking.

Task Outline: write a letter to a person who is part of your community and could be represented by the shoe. Empathise with them for what they may be facing or experiencing and share a message of support for them

Appendix 8: Rouse Hill Baptist Church Uses Talking the Walk

Sent: Sunday, 15 November 2020 4:18 PM
Subject: Re: Using TR

Bruce, we finished this morning with Imaginative Discernment—images and truths with about 100 people, some face to face and some online—it was beautiful. People enjoyed the overall experience and each week more people signed up to attend church. As a process it also worked to grow the two church groups together relationally. Our church leaders used TR for their one-day retreat on church vision and recommended it be used as a whole church process.

For our real-time first 3 face-to-face + online gatherings since COVID restrictions lifted we used TR to explore our church vision.

We used play, short biblical study, group work and communal feedback each week.

Week 1: We played with statements clarifying distinctions between vision, values, strategic plans and purpose + a short study on Saul and Ananias. TR's process and purpose of TR was explained. For Listening IN, we asked Who are we as a community? What's our identity? Table groups brainstormed their responses for 15 mins and gave feedback to the whole gathering. A summary was readied for the next week.

Week 2: We played with photos to discuss our wider community and culture + a short study on Lydia. For Listening OUT we asked What is our social and cultural context? and What does our wider community say to us about our church vision? Feedback was given by table groups to the whole gathering. For Listening UP we asked What are the guiding scriptures that are important for us as we think about vision and who we are becoming? and What does God say to us about *shalom* here at Rouse Hill? Group responses collected and summarized.

Week 3: Prize for group who came up with the most images used by Jesus. Children's feedback for Listening OUT and UP given to whole church. Single statements for each listening dimension up on screen. Imaginative discernment explained with 4 guidelines. Following 5 mins silence, groups shared images that emerged, chose one image and listed its truths that inform our church vision. Group leaders shared image and truths - a moving experience of God's presence. A short study on Shalom – A new heaven and a new earth. The truths will be collated and given to the church leaders to come up with a vision -image and words?

The Road Ahead: Our next step is for the church leaders to work with the truths (which have a lot of commonalities) and to come up with several words/simple statements that encapsulate what the whole group offered—maybe an image will also be chosen (a tree was a common image for quite a few groups, I lean towards Ezekiel 47—but it's not my choice). Then the vision will be introduced and we'll look at the *how*—courageous embodiment—this will be an ongoing process as we are starting from scratch. Several suggestions for action have already come out of the TR process e.g. getting together reps from different cultural and faith communities to listen to their needs and desires in the wider community. It becomes quite a long process with a large group to ensure that ownership of the vision is communal and it remains an organic process. It is so encouraging to have a relational and communal discernment process which is also fun.

Appendix 9: Simplicity–Depth Continuum for Talking the Walk

The following table outlines features of talking the walk along a simplicity–depth continuum to map out the approach's pedagogical flexibility, depending on who the educator is working with.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">BASIC
(children, anyone)</td><td colspan="3"><u>Introducing Talking the Walk</u></td></tr>
<tr><td>Conversation</td><td>Discernment</td><td>Embodiment</td></tr>
<tr><td>- what's grabbing your attention?
- listen to perspectives from yourself, others, and trusted sources of wisdom</td><td>- what stands out? what are your new questions?
- can you picture what could be different in a way that will bless and flourish?</td><td>- how could you put even just one thing into practice?
- what courage is needed?
- who could help?</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="6">DEVELOPING
(interested laypeople)</td><td colspan="3"><u>Developing the Model</u></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">- Theological reflection for formation: terms, importance; 'connecting experience (event, issue, circumstance) and faith, and living the implications'
- Trialogue: provides the dimensions or perspectives; 3-way conversation between spirituality, ministry and theology; explain using some simple resonating expressions
- Shalom: provides the direction; holistic flourishing (in God) is all creation's goal
- Emmaus Labyrinth: provides the design; walking and talking as metaphors for formation/pilgrimage and reflection/conversation; intro Road via Emmaus story and the labyrinth; combine to suggest 3 communal, non-linear and transformative movements</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Developing the Method</u></td></tr>
<tr><td>Contemplative Conversation</td><td>Imaginative Discernment</td><td>Courageous Embodiment</td></tr>
<tr><td>- narrate 'these things'
- listen in (for God's voice in your life)
- listen out (for God's voice in others and the world)
- listen up (for God's voice in sources of wisdom)</td><td>- engage imagination to help you 'join the dots'
- does an image help make sense of things?
- can you envision shalom in experience?
- name truths, questions as best you can</td><td>- what does it look like to embody shalom in your discerned truths? in your selfhood? thinking? action?
- what encouragement is needed and who can help?
- how are you being deepened?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Introductory skills & dispositions for intrapersonal & interpersonal contemplative listening</td></tr>
</table>

ADVANCED
(informed laypeople, theological education students)

TOWARDS DEPTH

Nuancing the Model

- *Theological reflection for formation:* explore innate connection, reflexivity re: default meaning-making approaches, fractured (mal)formation
- *Covenant Epistemology:* Intro to epistemology. TR is a type of knowing. CE says knowing is interpersoned, pledged, transformational, non-linear, unfolding, for *shalom*; normative/situational/existential; 'the responsible human struggle to rely on clues/focus on a coherent pattern/submit to its reality'
- *Pneumatology:* interwoven throughout every contour
- *Trialogue:* introduce resonating expressions, interdependence/coinherence, liminality
- *Shalom:* compare to conventional *telos* for formation; facets (reconciliation & relationships, justice & righteousness, beauty & creativity, paschal wholeness), glocal nature, *shalom* embodies the gospel of the kingdom, hopeful nature
- *Emmaus Labyrinth:* reflexivity re: pilgrimage and capacity for hospitable conversation; engagement with and application of core insights of Emmaus Labyrinth for reflection and formation

Nuancing the Method

Contemplative Conversation

- relying on clues
- 'blowing on coals of your care', identifying an event/issue/circumstance, trialogue can help (holistic entry points)
- narrate 'these things' with creativity, honesty, not polishing up or downplaying
- noticing presence/absence of *shalom*
- listen in: body, relationality, affects, personality
- listen out: bare feet, cultural intelligence, empathy, ministry evaluation
– listen up: drama of Scripture; communal wisdom; robust thinking; gathered experience

Imaginative Discernment

- coherent patterns
- situational, appreciative and life modes of discernment
- receptive nature means positioning not coercion
- phenomenology of discernment (insight, timing, dawning, laughter, lament)
- intro to discernment etiquette (friendship, dignity, desire, wonder, conversation, pilgrimage)
- affirming catalytic role of imagination in discernment
- connecting images with key theological themes using images to 'join the dots'
- envisioning social imaginaries of *shalom*
- fallible confidence for naming truths

Courageous Embodiment

- submitting to reality
- divine-human agency in embodiment explored through
  * theologies (justification-sanctification and *theosis*)
  * images (walking the talk, Möbius strip, ordinary sainthood, wounded healing, abiding fruitfulness, harnessing the wind, living sacrifice)
- obstacles to embodying discerned truths and the need for en-couragement
- cultivating *shalom* (spiritual/theological/ministerial) through concrete doing and practices that deepen
- reflection upon one's reflective practice

Developed skills and dispositions for intrapersonal and interpersonal contemplative listening practised through critical experience reports in supervised peer groups

Appendix 10: Ethics Approvals and Forms

1. Initial Approval

From: Human Research Ethics <human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au>
Sent: Thursday, 1 December 2016 9:27 AM
To: Bruce Hulme <BHulme@adelaide.tabor.edu.au>; Graham Buxton <GBuxton@adelaide.tabor.edu.au>; Tanya Wittwer <tanya.wittwer@flinders.edu.au>
Subject: 7462 SBREC Final approval notice (1 December 2016)
Importance: High

Dear Bruce,

The Chair of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. This means that you now have approval to commence your research. Your ethics final approval notice can be found below.

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**7462**
Project Title:	Talking the Walk: a pedagogy for theological reflection as Christian formation towards shalom
Principal Researcher:	Mr Bruce Hulme
Email:	bhulme@adelaide.tabor.edu.au
Approval Date:	1 December 2016
Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**30 June 2020**

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires –

with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.

- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 'INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval'). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

2. Annual Progress / Final Reports

In order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress report must be submitted each year on the **1 December** (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval using the report template available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.*

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please submit either (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request and an annual report.

Student Projects

The SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, reviewed and approved. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend some changes that may include the collection of additional participant data.

Your first report is due on **1 December 2017** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest.

3. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, principal researcher or supervisor change);
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;
- changes / additions to information and/or documentation to be provided to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., questionnaire, interview questions, focus group questions);
- extensions of time.

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please complete and submit the *Modification Request Form* which is available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. Download the form from the website every time a new modification

request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

Change of Contact Details

Please ensure that you notify the Committee if either your mailing or email address changes to ensure that correspondence relating to this project can be sent to you. A modification request is not required to change your contact details.

4. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au immediately if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Kind regards
Rae

Mrs Andrea Fiegert and Ms Rae Tyler
Ethics Officers and Executive Officer, Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
Andrea - Telephone: +61 8 8201-3116 | Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
Rae – Telephone: +61 8 8201-7938 | ½ day Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au
Web: Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC)

Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity – Dr Peter Wigley
Telephone: +61 8 8201-5466 | email: peter.wigley@flinders.edu.au
Research Services Office |Union Building Basement
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park | South Australia | 5042
GPO Box 2100 | Adelaide SA 5001

CRICOS Registered Provider: The Flinders University of South Australia | CRICOS Provider Number 00114A
This email and attachments may be confidential. If you are not the intended recipient,
please inform the sender by reply email and delete all copies of this message.

2. ***Modification No. 1 Approval***

From: Human Research Ethics <human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au>
Sent: Friday, 9 November 2018 12:20 PM
To: Bruce Hulme <BHulme@adelaide.tabor.edu.au>; Graham Buxton <GBuxton@adelaide.tabor.edu.au>; Tanya Wittwer <tanya.wittwer@flinders.edu.au>
Subject: 7462 modification No.1 approval notice (9 November 2018)

Dear Bruce

The Chairperson of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University has reviewed and approved the modification request that was submitted for project 7462. A modification ethics approval notice can be found below.

MODIFICATION (No.1) APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**7462**
Project Title:	Talking the Walk: An Emmaus Labyrinth Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation
Principal Researcher:	Mr Bruce Hulme
Email:	bhulme@adelaide.tabor.edu.au

Modification Approval Date:	9 November 2018	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**30 June 2020**

I am pleased to inform you that the modification request submitted for project 7462 on the 1 November 2018 has been reviewed and approved by the SBREC Chairperson. A summary of the approved modifications are listed below. Any additional information that may be required from you will be listed in the second table shown below called 'Additional Information Required'.

Approved Modifications	
Extension of ethics approval expiry date	
Project title change	X
Personnel change	
Research objectives change	
Research method change	
Participants – addition +/- change	
Consent process change	
Recruitment process change	

Research tools change	X
Document / Information Changes	X
Other (if yes, please specify)	

Additional Information Required
None.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

5. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 'INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval'). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

6. Annual Progress / Final Reports

Please be reminded that in order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress report must be submitted each year on **1 December** (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval.

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please submit either (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request and an annual report.

Student Projects

The SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, reviewed and approved. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend some changes that may include the collection of additional participant data.

Your next report is due on **1 December 2018** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. The report template is available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.*

7. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, principal researcher or supervisor change);
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;
- changes / additions to information and/or documentation to be provided to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., questionnaire, interview questions, focus group questions);
- Extensions of time.

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please complete and submit the *Modification Request Form* which is available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. Download the form from the website every time a new modification request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

Change of Contact Details

Please ensure that you notify the Executive Officer if either your mailing or email address changes to ensure that correspondence relating to this project can be sent to you. A modification request is not required to change your contact details.

8. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer immediately on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Kind regards
Wendy Green

On behalf of Andrea Mather

Ms Andrea Mather (formerly Fiegert) **and Ms Rae Tyler**
Ethics Officers and Executive Officers, Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee

Ms Andrea Mather | Monday - Friday	T: +61 8201-3116 | E: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au
Ms Rae Tyler | Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings	T: +61 8201-7938 | E: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au
A/Prof David Hunter | SBREC Chairperson	T: +61 7221-8477 | E: david.hunter@flinders.edu.au
Dr Deb Agnew | SBREC Deputy Chairperson	T: +61 8201-3456 E: deb.agnew@flinders.edu.au
SBREC Website	Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC)

Research Development and Support |Union Building Basement
Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park | South Australia | 5042
GPO Box 2100 | Adelaide SA 5001

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3. ***Modification No. 2 Approval***

Dear Bruce,

The Deputy Chairperson of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University has reviewed and approved the modification request that was submitted for project 7462. The modification ethics approval notice can be found below.

MODIFICATION (No.2) APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**7462**
Project Title:	Talking the Walk: Six Contours of an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation
Principal Researcher:	Mr Bruce Hulme
Email:	bhulme@adelaide.tabor.edu.au

Modification Approval Date:	15 April 2020	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**30 June 2021**

I am pleased to inform you that the modification request submitted for project 7462 on the 14 April 2020 has been reviewed and approved by the Deputy Chairperson of the Sub-Committee. A summary of the approved modifications are listed below. Any additional information that may be required from you will be listed in the second table shown below called 'Additional Information Required'.

Approved Modifications	
Extension of ethics approval expiry date	X
Personnel change	
Research objectives change	
Research method change	
Participants – addition +/- change	X
Consent process change	
Recruitment process change	
Research tools change	
Document / Information Changes	X
Other (if yes, please specify)	

Additional Information Required
None.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

9. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Sub-Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.

- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

  This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 'INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval'). For more information regarding ethics approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

10. Annual Progress / Final Reports

In order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (updated 2018);* please be reminded that; an annual progress report must be submitted each year on the **1 December** (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval using the report template available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval web page.

Please note that no data collection can be undertaken after the ethics approval expiry date listed at the top of this notice. If data is collected after expiry, it will not be covered in terms of ethics. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that annual progress reports are submitted on time; and that no data is collected after ethics has expired.

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please either submit (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request (using the modification request form).

Next Report Due Date:	**1 December 2019**
Final Report Due Date:	**30 June 2021**

Student Projects
For student projects, the SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, assessed and finalised. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend that additional data be collected from participants.

11. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, researchers and supervisors)
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;

- changes to information / documents to be given to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., survey, interview questions, focus group questions etc);
- extensions of time (i.e. to extend the period of ethics approval past current expiry date).

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please complete and submit the *Modification Request Form* which is available from the Managing Your Ethics Approval SBREC web page. Download the form from the website every time a new modification request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of

Change of Contact Details If the contact details of researchers, listed in the approved application, change please notify the Committee so that the details can be updated in our system. A modification request is not required to change your contact details; but would be if a new researcher needs to be added on to the research / supervisory team.

12. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer immediately on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Kind regards
Rae

Please note: *Both Executive Officers are currently working from home to assist with the management of COVID-19 and to ensure everyone's safety and wellbeing Flinders University. During this time we will still able to be contacted by email and our business phone numbers provided below. We are also available on Cisco Jabber and Zoom for meetings. Thank you.*

Andrea Mather and Rae Tyler
Executive Officers, Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
Research Development and Support | human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au
P: (+61-8) 8201 3116 | andrea.mather@flinders.edu.au
P: (+61-8) 8201 7938 | rae.tyler@flinders.edu.au (Mon, Wed, Frid mornings)

Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park, South Australia, 5042
GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, South Australia, 5001
http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/researcher-support/ebi/human-ethics/human-ethics_home.cfm

Proactively supporting our Research

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College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences/Theology

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gbuxton@adelaide.tabor.edu.au
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www.acd.edu.au

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Date

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
(to Tabor student)

Dear

This email is to introduce Bruce Hulme who is a PhD student in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences/Theology Department at Flinders University. He may have been one of your lecturers as part of your study at Tabor. If required he can supply a copy of his Flinders' student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject learning and teaching theological reflection in Christian higher education in ways that contemplate and cultivate students' holistic Christian formation.

He would like to invite you to assist with this project by agreeing to use information from one of your assignments from your study at Tabor which covers certain aspects of this topic. The assignment in question is attached. He would like the option of referencing your assignment in his final reflections as an example of the approach he is developing. Your participation would involve no more than 2 hours of your time.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. As explained in the information letter, a process is in place to protect the identities of individuals and communities, involving modification of the data by the researcher, approval by yourself, and further checking by myself. However, given the highly particular nature of some assignments which involve recounting and reflecting upon personal experiences, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to withdraw your permission for the use of part or all of your assignments at any time.

An information sheet about the research project is attached.

Should you choose to participate, a consent form with instructions is also attached.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me via the following contact details:

Email gbuxton@adelaide.tabor.edu.au OR graham.buxton@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Rev Dr Graham Buxton
Adjunct, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences/Theology, Adelaide College of Divinity
GCRI research Fellow, Tabor

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7462). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

INFORMATION SHEET
(for present/past student of Tabor)

Title: 'Talking the Walk: Six Contours of an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation'

Researcher:
Mr Bruce Hulme
College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences/Theology Department
Flinders University
Ph: 8373 8777

Supervisor:
Rev Dr Graham Buxton
College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences/Theology Department
Flinders University
Ph: 8416 8400

Supervisor:
Dr Tanya Wittwer
College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences/Theology Department
Flinders University
Ph: 8416 8434

Description of the project:
This doctoral research project is entitled '*Talking the Walk: Six Contours of an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation'.* It employs covenant epistemology to develop a model and a method for learning and teaching theological reflection in theological education in ways that contemplate and cultivate holistic Christian formation. The model has three contours: *trialogue* is a holistic and interdependent conversation between spirituality, ministry and theology; *shalom* is the goal of theological reflection for formation; and the *Emmaus Labyrinth* provides the design for talking the walk's method. The method also has three contours: *contemplative conversation* listens for clues and their connections as an experience is narrated and then explored through the trialogue; *imaginative* discernment engages the imagination, including a picture of *shalom*, to draw clues together to discern core truths of the experience; and *courageous embodiment* explores the doing and deepening of such discerned truths through encouragement.

Purpose of this project:
Recent studies have shown that the student experience of fragmentation between lived spirituality, theological learning and ministry practice continues to be a pervasive challenge in Australian Christian higher education. In developing a theology as outlined above, this project aims to contribute to the understanding and practice of learning and teaching theological reflection in ways that foster a deeper and more holistic integration between faith and life.

What will I be asked to do?
The primary data for the project is the literature on theological education, Christian formation and theological reflection. However, at various points the researcher would also

like to utilise excerpts from previous Tabor student assignments to illustrate the central themes being developed.

The following assignment/s completed by you as a student at Tabor has/have been identified as being potentially helpful for this purpose:

- Assignment name, subject name, semester xx, 20xx
- Assignment name, subject name, semester xx, 20xx

You are invited to grant consent for the researcher to use part or all of one or more of these/this assignment/s for the purposes of illustration in the research.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?
The sharing of data from your assignments as examples in the research will assist in the improvement of the understanding and experience of students and educators in Christian higher education in Australia and around the world. While this will directly benefit future students and educators rather than yourself, this may benefit Christian ministry more broadly with which you may intersect in the future.

It may also be that as you consider granting permission for an assignment to be used, you may benefit by revisiting theological reflection you had completed sometime earlier, and reflecting again on the learning undertaken at that time.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?
Assignments related to theological reflection upon ministry/life experience and/or formation may include personal and sensitive information relating to you, other individuals, and/or groups of people (e.g. a congregation). Through modification of the assignment, including changing names, locations or any other identifying detail, every effort will be made to ensure identities are protected. However, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed given

- there is a relatively small population pool (around 300 students) from which assignments are drawn;
- the highly particular nature of the circumstances they describe;
- Tabor will be identified as the institution from which examples of student assignments have been drawn.

Your original assignment was accessed via Tabor's online learning platform Tabor Online, where all assignments are stored securely.

Modified versions of assignments will be stored in a separate password protected location on Tabor Adelaide's server.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?
Given the assignment is your original work the data being requested will not be new to you. But it may be possible that in revisiting the assignment, particularly if it contains personal stories or reflections of a painful nature, that you may experience difficult emotions. If this is the case and you are experiencing discomfort or stress in managing these emotions you are encouraged to seek support through an organisation such as LifeLine (ph. 13 11 14), or a trusted friend or professional. You may also contact Tabor to access free support from one of the faculty with whom you feel comfortable.

If you have previously been a student of the researcher, but you also have reservations about granting permission for your assignment to be used in the research, you may feel the burden of conflict between a sense of personal obligation or desire to assist the researcher in his research, and being uncomfortable about granting this permission. While your assignment has been identified as potentially helpful, once again be assured that you are under no pressure to give consent for its use in the research, and that you may opt out at any time without question or having to give a reason.

There is also the risk that participants and/or incidental individuals or communities may be inadvertently identified. This risk will be minimised by modifications being approved by you as well as checked by the researcher's principal supervisor.

If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the researcher.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation is completely voluntary, and even if you have initially agreed to participate you are free to withdraw your consent at any time any time without effect or consequences. The procedure for responding to the invitation to participate is as follows:

Upon your receipt of this invitation you can

i. Refuse to participate; **OR**
ii. Agree to participate on the condition that a you approve of a modified version of your assignment/s

If you agree to participate, your assignment will be modified and emailed to you.
You will then have the choice to

i. Refuse to participate
ii. Grant permission for the modified version of your assignment presented to you to be used in the research
iii. Request that the assignment be further modified to your satisfaction before reconsidering whether or not they will grant permission for it to be used

A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form and send it back to the researcher at bhulme@adelaide.tabor.edu.au or hulm0008@flinders.edu.au.

How will I receive feedback?

On project completion outcomes of the project will be given to all participants via email.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7462). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

(by granting permission for use of student assignment)

‘Talking the Walk: Six Contours of an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation’

I …..

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction and Information Sheet for the research project on ‘Talking the Walk: Six Contours of an Approach to Theological Reflection for Formation’.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
   - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
   - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
   - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, individual information will remain confidential.
   - Despite the modification of my assignment/s to protect my identity to the satisfaction of myself, the researcher and the researcher’s supervisor, full anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
   - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my progress in my course of study, or results gained, in any current or future study associated with Tabor College

Participant’s signature……………………………………Date…………………...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher’s name…………………………….……………………….................

Researcher’s signature…………………………………..Date…………………….

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER THE PARTICIPANT HAS REVIEWED THE MODIFIED ASSIGNMENT/S TO THE THEIR SATISFACTION:

5. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my modified assignment/s and agree to its/their use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature……………………………………Date…………………...