FORMS OF MINISTRY THAT CAN OFFER GOOD NEWS, AND INSPIRE COMMITMENT AND MORAL LEADERSHIP IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA AMONG STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL (PIETERMARITZBURG)

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ABSTRACT

This study in Practical Theology has been motivated by a concern that, in post-apartheid South Africa, it has become more difficult for young people in general, and university students in particular to have a vision for, and hope in the future, and hence to demonstrate commitment to working for a new world. It therefore seeks to identify ways in which such commitment and leadership can be nurtured, by engaging in a critical reflection on ministry to university students.

This is done through the use of the critical hermeneutical method of correlation between the Christian tradition and human life experience as employed by Don S. Browning, James and Evelyn Whitehead, and Stuart Bate. This involves beginning with concrete practice, going to theory, and then concluding with practice, in an ongoing hermeneutical circle.

A case study is presented of the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS) at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg (UNP), and an analysis of their situation is undertaken, using two mediations. A psychological mediation identifies the psychological structures to which university students are capable of evolving at their stage of development, which is characterised by relativism and probing commitment. A socio-cultural mediation explores the roots of the loss of a sense of community, and the growth in a spirit of individualism that epitomise the central issues within the UNP ACTS group. These roots are identified in the globalisation that is taking place at an economic, social and cultural level, resulting in relativisation, rationalisation, and personalisation in all dimensions of life. This gives rise to increasing competition, individualism and cultural dislocation, which are particularly evident since the demise of apartheid and the international integration of South Africa, coupled with the collapse of many of the hopes generated in the struggle against apartheid.

A theological judgement of the ministry being employed within ACTS is then made, which points to the forms of ministry which could offer good news, evoke deeper commitment, and build stronger moral leadership amongst the students. The priority emerging is to foster self-esteem amongst them, primarily through building a joyful, accepting community with a small group pedagogy so that they can discover the liberating message of the gospel in their quest for God, for survival in a hostile world, and for personal intimacy and acceptance. Such empowerment, it is suggested, makes deeper commitment possible.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
ACTS	Association of Catholic Tertiary Students
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CASA	Catholic Students Association
Cathsoc	Catholic Society
CCC	The Catechism of the Catholic Church
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
IMCS	International Movement of Catholic Students
IYCS	International Young Catholic Students
JEC Quebec	Jeunesse Etudiante Catholique de Quebec
LG	Lumen Gentium
MBW	Movement for a Better World
NCFS	National Catholic Federation of Students
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PACSA	Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference
SASCO	South African Students Congress
SRC	Students Representative Council
UNP	University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)
UR	Unitatis Redintegratio
USA	United States of America
YCS	Young Christian Students

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 The crisis in youth ministry.

I have recently concluded a three-year term as the Catholic Chaplain to the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg). For the twenty-three years prior to this, I have worked consistently, with the exception of a few years here and there, (as a student leader, as an animator, and as a chaplain) with young people in a variety of contexts. I have primarily worked in student movements like NCFS (National Catholic Federation of Students), CASA (Catholic Students Association), ACTS (Association of Catholic Tertiary Students), and YCS (Young Christian Students). Furthermore, I have ministered to youth through national and diocesan Catholic and ecumenical youth commissions and committees, as well as in teaching in a secondary school, and working in a parish setting.

In the years prior to 1994, ministry to all these youth movements and youth groups was always coloured by the demands of the struggle against apartheid. Much of the focus centred around helping young people to grow in political consciousness, theological awareness, hope and commitment, and to develop leadership in the task of struggling against apartheid, and building a more humane society (Langefeld 1993:78-88; Egan 1991:119-121). This often met with significant degrees of success, reflected in the growth of many close communities engaged in a broader network of reflection and social action. Out of these, many strong leaders emerged, who have played, and are still playing important roles in many sectors of the church and society (Egan 1991:121; Deeb 1989:72). The commitment generated was often unique in relation to their peers in other parts of the world. Many of the youth of South Africa lost their innocence very young as they took on the burden of responsibility to remove apartheid.

With the demise of apartheid and the birth of democracy in 1994, most of these movements and initiatives were thrown into crisis, since the rallying point that generated most energy was now removed, resulting in the decline of a spirituality of "struggle". South African youth were now free to be "normal" young people, to live life and to deal with the issues that accord with their particular stages of development. Besides the many wounds and scars remaining from the years of apartheid, they were now also subject to the challenges faced by the new democracy in a rapidly changing world, characterised by unemployment, insecurity, and uncertainty about the future (Truscott & Milner 1994:36-42).

These wounds and fears have diminished the ability of young people to have a vision for, and hope in the future, and therefore to make commitments. In turn, they have reinforced the prevailing growth of a culture of meaninglessness, of powerlessness, of rampant individualism and consumerism, where the need for immediate gratification is the primary value, political concern is a low priority, and susceptibility to crime is very high (Hirschowitz, Milner & Everatt 1994:76-92). This has required a new pastoral approach, which many of these movements have struggled to develop. Consequently, together with most other Christian youth movements which were engaged in the struggle against apartheid, they are presently rather weak, both in numbers and in their capacity to produce disciplined and visionary leaders, although, in recent years, some have begun to regain a measure of strength and direction.

Their weakness is further accentuated by the fact that many youth today are being attracted to churches and movements (largely evangelical and pentecostal) which were not overtly engaged in the struggle against apartheid (Moela & Mona 1999: 13). A study of these groups (which is beyond the scope of the present work) could be instructive, since they are obviously striking a chord with many of the youth in today's world. Furthermore they highlight a challenge to churches and movements rooted in a more "catholic" theology and spirituality to find a way to enable the richness of their tradition to become more relevant to the youth of today. It is to this challenge that I now wish to rise.

Having worked for twenty-three years amongst youth, it is obvious that youth ministry, especially amongst university students, is very close to my heart. I am involved in it because the need for accompaniment of young people is always pressing, since they are at a critical stage when their direction and choices in life are being determined, and they are searching for a relevant spirituality. Such accompaniment is always difficult, and so few people are readily willing and available to engage in this ministry. This leaves many young people to rely solely on their own resources in developing their values, and in negotiating the pressures of the modern world - often with disastrous consequences for themselves and society as a whole. Even willing youth ministers are often at a loss as to how to deal with the youth in this current context. Through this research, therefore, I hope to find a way of making my own ministry (and hopefully that of other youth ministers in the church) more effective in communicating a spirituality relevant to youth, and in helping young people to identify a future where Christian values will thrive, and which they will willingly commit themselves to bring about.

1.2 The Youth in question

References to youth often give the impression that they form a homogeneous entity. We are clearly talking about young people who are no longer children, but who are not yet mature

adults, which would seem to refer to adolescents or teenagers (Mpundu 1989: 224). However there are many different assessments of the age range of youth. There is general agreement that adolescence begins with puberty (even though children at times are being placed in situations where they are forced to behave like adults), but there is little agreement about where adolescence ends - anywhere from eighteen to forty (Parks 1991:4). There are also many different sectors of youth, each with its own identity and issues. Are we talking about youth in rural or urban settings; in schools or those who are drop-outs or never went to school; those employed or unemployed; those who are church-goers or not?

Within this myriad of possibilities, I will focus on those youth who are university students, since most of my experience has been, and still is located amongst them. Furthermore, they constitute a very significant sector amongst the youth, since their education and qualifications will inevitably propel many of them into leading positions in society. If good moral leaders can be formed amongst them, they could offer a new hope for our society and the church. While even within this group there is great diversity of race, class and culture, they are nevertheless subject to an environment which is more or less uniform in its opportunities, demands and pressures. Furthermore, I will presuppose an age range of 18 - 25 years.

1.3 Assumptions about Ministry

This study will investigate the forms of ministry (or pastoral approach) which can offer Good News to university students, and evoke commitment and build strong moral leadership amongst them in post-apartheid South Africa. However, before we can begin to focus on such relevant forms of ministry, I need to clarify my assumptions about ministry, and the aims with which I approach it.

There is a variety of ways of referring to the pastoral help that is given to people, ranging from an individualised or personal approach, focused on pastoral counselling, to a more social or political approach focused on building social awareness. The pastoral counselling approach is demonstrated by Irwin (1975:xiii) who, in his reflection on the care of youth, talks of "personal ministry". This is the enabling of adolescent youth to grow in positive self-identity, and to hear and respond to the call to strive for the realisation of God's Kingdom. He asserts that this ministry, rather than simply exhorting and giving information, calls for awareness of the whole person and a total approach that makes the good news of Jesus Christ more relevant to their personal growth needs. This requires a theological understanding of God's individualised concern and care, and psychological and counselling insights and skills.

With the same focus but in a different key, De Jongh van Arkel (1995:196-197) differentiates between three forms of pastoral work which are relevant for Africa. Firstly, mutual care (e.g.

burial societies), to which the western world pays the minimum of attention; secondly, informal pastoral care (including that done by lay ministers); and thirdly, pastoral counselling, which is very important, but which requires professionally trained pastors, to whom very few people would have access.

With a somewhat broader approach, Browning (1985:5) distinguishes between three different types of pastoral practice: pastoral care, pastoral counselling, and pastoral psychotherapy, which range from a general and explicitly moral stance towards an individualised and more specialised focus on psychological dynamics. However, he refers to all these forms of pastoral help as "pastoral counselling", which he defines as the interdisciplinary use of Christian theology and the modern social sciences, especially the modern developmental and psychotherapeutic psychologies for the task of mediating care (Browning 1985:7).

Browning sees this approach to care of individuals as crucial for both the church and society as a whole for a number of theological, sociological, and psychological reasons. Firstly, humans are a synthesis of spirit and nature, and hence their behaviour is a product of both free decision and various forms of conditioning, and not just the latter (as the secularised disciplines often assert). In other words, self-transcendence is possible. Secondly, the pastoral counselling perspective is crucial because, since it assumes a belief in a God who is both the author of a good creation, and the ultimate agent behind all redemptive change, it can take a positive attitude towards the possibilities and resources for both general human growth and redemptive change. Finally, Browning asserts that the psychological disciplines help to uncover the determinants of human behaviour and problems, which can greatly increase the accuracy of efforts to mediate the transformative resources of the Christian faith (Browning 1985:8-12).

These authors all bring out the importance of psychological and counselling skills (where they are accessible) for providing effective pastoral care, i.e. enabling people to undergo redemptive change. Mpundu broadens the aims of pastoral care, warning against such youth apostolate (as he refers to it) which aims to tame and domesticate young people, in order to make them "fit into the system" (either the Church or society at large). Rather the aim should be "to empower the youth to become free and overcome the obstacles that prevent them from achieving integral development, humanly, socially, professionally, economically and spiritually". He thus emphasises a social and political perspective which goes beyond a psychological perspective alone (Mpundu 1989:226).

In seeking to define a form of ministry that heals and builds commitment and leadership, I can thus affirm the thrust of Mpundu in defining the aim of pastoral care to be to enable all those in one's care to be empowered to become free and to achieve integral development. This will

therefore also require formation in the realities of the world, and hence in social awareness. My approach thus incorporates all the different dimensions that the authors above are suggesting. Ministry must involve a process of healing past hurts, and offering hope which can enable people to transcend their perceived obstacles and limitations. However, it needs to be broader and more holistic, taking the cultural, social and psychological situation of students into account, and go beyond a narrow and one-dimensional approach that characterises much youth ministry (eg. focusing only on fun, or on politics, or on counselling, or on maintaining a structure).

For this to happen, a space must be created - a group or a movement - where the students can grow in personal and social awareness, in responsibility for their own lives, and in commitment, and where they can assert leadership. Such ministry must also take seriously the issues with which students are confronted at their particular stage of development, for example authority, freedom, sex and relationships, bearing in mind the pressures they are subjected to in the modern age (rapid change, unemployment, insecurity, rampant individualism). It must then attempt to look at them in a fresh way, allowing different cultural understandings of the students' issues to suggest new liberating theological formulations (especially with regard to sex and marriage).

This view of ministry thus also assumes that it is greatly assisted by the use of the social sciences, which help to identify and understand the cultural, social and psychological roots of the students' issues and obstacles, and to clarify the limitations and possibilities for transcendence.

Having clarified my assumptions, I will now proceed to articulate how I plan to approach the subject.

1.4 Practical Theology

This work is an exercise in practical theology. Until recently, practical theology has been regarded as the junior partner in the spectrum of theological disciplines, being the most recent (Ebeling 1979: 109), and often seen simply as an appendix to systematic·theology, scripture and church history. However over the past three decades, a new appreciation for its centrality in theological discourse has developed (Browning 1991:ix), giving rise to a lively debate about the precise meaning of the term, its relationship to other theological disciplines, and the method to be employed in doing it. Its relationship to other terms such as pastoral theology and contextual theology has also become unclear.

I will therefore begin this exercise by identifying the current state of debate about the nature

of practical theology, and about the methods it does and should employ. This will clarify its relationship to the other terms mentioned above, and the methodological presuppositions I will employ in the present work.

1.5 The Evolution of Practical Theology

The formal origins of practical theology lay in the development in the Catholic Church, in about 1777, of pastoral theology, which was intended to fill a gap in clerical training - not in theological thought as a whole. It was intended to give the individual "pastor" directives for his pastoral practice (Schuster 1965:4), since It was understood as the "ordinary knowledge of the ordinary parish priest" (Elizondo and Greinacher 1983:20). In Protestant circles, practical theology evolved with Friedrich Schleiermacher (± 1830) who coined the term (Ebeling 1979:115), which was seen as the application to practice of the theoretical yield of biblical, historical and systematic theology - the final stage of the four-fold theological task (Browning 1991:57).

Three shifts in the Catholic understanding of the discipline took place starting at Vatican II. Firstly, articulated by Karl Rahner, it was asserted that pastoral theology could no longer be limited to the pastoral functions of the clergy. It had to become practical theology, involving all the members of the church in the self-realisation of the church in the world. This resulted in a concern for intra-ecclesial questions such as the democratisation of the church (Elizondo and Greinacher 1983:22). Secondly, after Vatican II, practical theology began to reflect critically on the actual practice of the church in the light of the socio-historical conditions of the time and of the reality of Jesus - how the church could help bring about the liberation of the human person. This therefore focused on "the relationship between the universal church and the problems of the world" (:24). A third shift in focus then took place (from the early eighties) towards the relationship between the local church within its own cultural region and the demands of the Gospel in the world community, where the voices of the poor and marginalised speak for themselves (:25). However, it was recognised that all three moments remain important, since the church could not serve or confront the world if it did not develop its own inner life and ministry.

Thus "pastoral theology" (despite the original connotations of the term) has evolved to the point where the term is interchangeable with the more common modern usage of "practical theology" (Schuster 1965:8).

1.6 The Debate about Practical Theology

The debate about practical theology centres around its place and its status in relation to the

other theological disciplines. Many scholars (such as Schleiermacher, Tillich, Ogden, and Tracy [Browning 1991:43]) see it as the end-point of a theological endeavour, at the point where theology gives rise to ecclesiastical practice.

Thus Schleiermacher organised theology into philosophical, historical, and practical theology, with the emphasis on the latter, seeing theology as a basically practical task. Paul Tillich divided theology into historical, systematic, and practical theology, with the emphasis on meaning rather than the reconstruction of practice (Browning 1991:43). Schubert Ogden proposes a similar division, distinguishing theology (as critical reflection on the "truth" of the Christian faith) from "witness". Therefore, while he gives practical theology heightened visibility, for him theology proper is systematic theology (:44). David Tracy divides theology into fundamental, systematic, historical, and practical theology. He sees the first two tasks being principally concerned with the construction of the *present* meaning, meaningfulness, and truth of the Christian tradition, the historical task being the reconstruction of *past* meaning for the present, and practical theology's task being to project the *future* possibilities of meaning and truth on the basis of present constructive and past historical theological resources (Tracy 1975:240).

Thus, there are many different and contrasting evaluations of the status of practical theology, ranging from those who see it as a descent from the heights of scholarship, with no scholarly content, and simply ecclesiastical, to those such as Schleiermacher, who saw practical theology as the crown towards which all theology is driven (Ebeling 1979:109).

In a different key, Don S. Browning (1991:7-8) opposes the view of practical theology as simply a subspecialty of theology. Rooted in the idea that practical thinking is the centre of human thinking, and that theoretical and technical thinking are abstractions from practical thinking, he believes that Christian theology should be seen as practical through and through. What are referred to as historical, systematic, and practical theology should then be seen as subspecialties of the larger and more encompassing discipline which he calls "fundamental practical theology". He defines this as "critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation" (:36). Theology as a whole would then be fundamental practical theology, which has four submovements: descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology.

For many scholars this view would not be easily understood, as practical theology is still largely associated with the traditional "pastoral" fields of education (catechetics), homiletics, liturgy, care, social action ministries, etc. Browning would classify these under his fourth submovement of strategic practical theology (Browning 1991:57). Nevertheless, even if few

contemporary scholars (with the possible exceptions of people like Juan Segundo, Joseph Hough and John Cobb, Charles Wood, Johann Baptist Metz, and Thomas Groome [:66]) would go as far as Browning in identifying the whole of theology with fundamental practical theology, most would at least see practical theology in broader terms than the pastoral functions of the clergy.

Thus, Ebeling (1979:118-119) identifies the specificity of practical theology in its articulation of the special theory of the forms of church leadership engaged in the present situation, while the other theological disciplines develop the theory of what constitutes the content of the practice of church leadership. And Schuster (1965:5) sees pastoral theology as that branch of theology which deals with the Church's self-fulfilment in the ever new contemporary situation. For him, it is the function of the whole Church, not only the leadership (cf. Ebeling), focusing on all the people and activities geared towards the self-fulfilment of the Church, on the communal and sociological aspects impacting on this project, and on all issues arising from it.

Nevertheless, Browning, in viewing practical theology in fundamental terms, offers a more holistic perspective, the truth claims of which appear more intelligible, using Tracy's criteria of meaningfulness as disclosive of actual experience, and adequacy to experience (Tracy 1975:70-71). The methodology employed in this exercise in practical theology will therefore be rooted in that proposed by him.

1.7 Methodological Presuppositions

The debate around method in practical theology largely revolves around the question of the relationship between theory and practice. All scholars (either consciously or unconsciously) identify their starting-point on one pole or the other, and support a movement between them which is either linear or circular. The present work will largely follow processes articulated by Don S. Browning, James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, and Stuart Bate, whose methodologies I will now outline, drawing out their similarities or differences to other scholars.

1.7.1 Don S. Browning's Fundamental Practical Theology

In the light of his conviction that practical thinking is the centre of human thinking, and that Christian theology should be practical through and through, Browning proposes a view of theology going from practice to theory and back to practice. More fully, he proposes moving "from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practice" (Browning 1991:7). This is proposed in

contrast to the Barthian "theory-to practice" model of theology (total conformity to the Word of God revealed in Scripture) which dominated most theological education and church life and thought in both Europe and North America in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

He is primarily seeking a method that will guide action in the church towards social and individual transformation (Browning 1991:36). To this end, he employs "critical hermeneutics" which, for him, is another term for the "revised correlational method" (:215). The critical hermeneutical method, blending the practical philosophies of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas, sees all understanding as being situated and historical, and proceeding in the form of a dialogue or conversation (:15 & 215). An increasing number of contemporary theologians such as David Tracy (1975), Sandra Schneiders (1991) and Thomas Groome (1991), have also appropriated this method into their theological reflections. Following Gadamer, Browning refutes the possibility that understanding can be achieved through "self-emptying", as required by Wilhelm Dilthey, or by "objectivity" as required by Edmund Husserl. Understanding for him is like a dialogue or conversation where we actually use our prejudices and commitments as fore-understandings for the contrasting light they can throw on what we study (Browning 1991:38). In fact, "all cultural sciences and many if not all natural sciences can best be understood as dialectical movements from traditions of theory-laden practice (including the personal history of the student [:59]) to theory and back to new theory-laden practices" (:40).

Browning insists on the importance of establishing a principle of openness of discussion to have a fully critical practical theology - even an openness to finding "total discontinuity with the previous tradition and revelation on which Christianity rests" (Browning 1991:220-221). With this in mind, he criticises Thomas Groome (who also assumes a revised correlational model of theology) for not being critical enough, since he cannot accept such a possibility. Browning would also differ with Paul Tillich on this issue, since the latter believes that theology takes place within a "theological circle", which is only accessible to one who has had an experience of faith - one who has acknowledged the Christian message as his ultimate concern (Tillich 1951:10).

Browning builds on David Tracy's revised correlational method, which, in turn, is built on the correlational method initially articulated by Paul Tillich (1951). This method identifies common human experience and language and the Christian tradition (texts) as the two principal sources for doing theology, which involves an investigation of these sources, followed by a critical correlation of the results of this investigation (Tracy 1975:43-46). When applied to practical theology, it is "the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary

situation". He sees this as a definition of "fundamental practical theology", which he believes to be the most inclusive understanding of theology as a whole (Browning 1991:47).

This way of looking at theology is similar to the way in which "liberation theology" is to be understood, namely, that it is not just another branch of theology, but a new way of doing theology as a whole (Segundo 1976:8). In similar vein, "contextual theology" in South Africa coincides with this definition of fundamental practical theology, in that it constitutes a different way of doing theology as a whole, viz. attempting to reflect upon the experience of faith which is lived in a particular context (Bate 1995:20). Methodologically speaking, therefore, fundamental practical theology, liberation theology, and contextual theology are singing a similar tune.

The fundamental practical theology, which Browning posits as theology as a whole, has four submovements, the flow of which clearly identifies his methodology. The first movement is *descriptive theology*, a moment of historically situated dialogue in which practices are described in order to discern the conflicting cultural and religious meanings that guide our action and provoke the questions that animate our practical thinking (Browning 1991:48). Honestly and explicitly positioning the social location of the researcher is an extremely important component of this descriptive analysis (:22). It involves the asking of questions such as: What are we actually doing? What reasons, ideals and symbols do we use to interpret what we are doing? What do we consider to be the sources of authority and legitimation for what we do? (:48).

The second movement is *historical theology*, the moment when the questions emerging from the theory-laden practices (ideally through a communally oriented interpretative process) are put to the central texts and monuments of the Christian faith. The question asked is: What do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history really imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible? (Browning 1991:49). This is where the traditional disciplines of biblical studies, church history, and the history of Christian thought are located.

The third movement is *systematic theology*, which is the fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of the normative Christian texts. The questions which guide it are: What new horizon of meaning is fused when questions from present practices are brought to the central Christian witness? What reasons can be advanced to support the validity claims of this new fusion of meaning? (Browning 1991:51).

The fourth movement is *strategic practical theology*, where the ministers and laypersons who

think about the practical life of the church really function. The questions it attempts to answer are: How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act? What should be our praxis in this concrete situation (building on the accomplishments of the first three movements)? How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation? What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation? (Browning 1991:55-56)

Browning recognises that the dominant view throughout the modern history of theology is that this last question is thought to be the totality of practical theology, i.e. practical theology is exclusively application - the means to the ends that have been established outside the precincts of practical theology - a view that he seeks to refute. He insists, though, that practical theologians of all persuasions in fact ask all of these four questions, while only some (especially those following the revised correlational approach) take them self-consciously into account (Browning 1991:55-56).

Finally, Browning sees the practices of strategic practical theology engendering new questions that start the hermeneutic circle again (Browning 1991:58).

Thus the central point of Browning's method is his starting-point of practice in the context of a critical revised correlational approach. He identifies his position more clearly by distinguishing it from a variety of other practical theologians whom he feels close to. He sees his method being very close to that of Segundo, who identifies a similar hermeneutic circle, except that the latter's partiality to the poor makes him selective in the scripture texts he is prepared to grapple with (Browning 1991:66). Hough and Cobb too see practical theological thinking being the goal of theology, but they are still caught in a theory-to-practice model (:66). Charles Wood too advocates critical reflection on both Christian belief and activity, but his model becomes a theory-practice-theory one, since he is not thoroughly practical and hermeneutical from the beginning (:67). Metz also sees all theology and the Christian message as primarily practical, and the importance of starting with practice, but his description of the contemporary situation is done at a very general level, without identifying the personal, institutional, and cultural dimensions. He is also not sufficiently dialogical and mutually critical, being mostly negative about normative Christian practices, and hence failing to see identities and continuities between himself and other actors (:67-68).

Thomas Groome, in his focus on religious education, is very similar to Browning in his use of a revised correlational method, which is also hermeneutical in the Gadamerian sense, although, as mentioned above, Browning does not believe his critical reflection goes far enough (Browning 1991:219-220). Groome is also critical of the theory-to-practice model in which he believes theology and theological education seem trapped. He sees Christian

education as education in a communal or shared context of critical reflection on shared Christian practices - a "shared praxis" methodology - which takes place in a situation of group dialogue. This critical reflection includes five movements: 1) expressing present praxis; 2) critical reflection on present praxis; 3) making accessible the "Christian story and vision"; 4) a dialectical hermeneutic between present praxis and interpretation of the Christian story and vision; and 5) decision and response for renewed Christian praxis. These follow virtually the same movement as Browning's four submovements of his fundamental practical theology, Groome's first two movements being similar to what Browning calls descriptive theology, and his last three corresponding to what Browning calls respectively historical, systematic, and strategic practical theology (:219).

The present work will make extensive use of Browning's four submovements, and the questions he poses for each step.

1.7.2 James D. and Evelyn E. Whitehead's Theological Reflection

The Whiteheads do not engage directly in the debate about practical theology, although their writings, in substance, are all about the subject. Their concern is to articulate a model and method of reflection which enables the development of reflective Christian communities and ministers whose faith finds effective expression in today's world (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:9). They therefore want their model and method to be accessible, performable, and able to be practically used by a range of ministers who want to reflect critically on their ministry (:5 & 12). In effect, what they mean by "theological reflection" is very similar to what Browning means by "fundamental practical theology".

They situate their method in the context of a reciprocal relationship between theology and ministry, on a continuum between the two, with abstract theological reflection (accessible only to professional theologians) at one extreme, reflected in the work of people like Tillich, Lonergan, Ogden, and Tracy, and unreflective ministerial activity at the other (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:3-4). They then see their process of theological reflection situated midway on this continuum, focusing on a pastoral concern, which is more experientially rooted than a reflection in the method of Lonergan or Tracy, but with a concern for its relationship to the broader Christian tradition (:5).

In conversation with theologians of the revised correlation method (Tracy and Ogden), the Whiteheads propose a correlation model for theological reflection on ministry, which focuses on three sources that are important in pastoral decision making: *Christian tradition, personal experience, and cultural information.* Tradition is understood as sacred scripture and the history of the Christian church (which embraces Tracy's "Christian fact"). Personal experience

and cultural information emerge from distinguishing Tracy's general "common human experience" into two separable poles of reflection. Personal experience is the specific, concrete and immediate experience of a particular minister and a particular community concerning a particular pastoral concern. And cultural information is the understanding, conviction, or bias in the symbols, mores and sciences of a culture, which contribute explicitly or implicitly to any theological reflection in ministry (philosophical understandings of man; political interpretations of human community; psychological and sociological perspectives of the person and society; and other religious traditions) (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:12 & 20).

The Whiteheads then define theological reflection in ministry as "the process by which a community of faith correlates the religious information from these three sources in pursuit of insight that will illumine and shape pastoral activity" (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:2). To ensure effective pastoral activity, they propose a method which describes the dynamic or movement of the reflection - the stages through which the correlation proceeds. This is a three-step process: *attending, assertion, and decision.*

Attending is the first stage, which involves listening, and seeking out information residing in the three sources. This includes an intrapersonal awareness of one's own motives, biases, convictions and values. It also requires interpersonal attending to discern and analyse the experience of the community (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:22 & 87). In proposing this, the Whiteheads are following a similar process to the self-conscious hermeneutical method which Browning employs (Browning 1991:59). However, they then go on to say that a necessary ingredient in effective listening is the ability to suspend premature judgement - to effect a self-emptying - which enables attending to be accurate and unprejudiced (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:87-88). This is what Browning (1991:38) (in reaction to Dilthey) feels is impossible to achieve. Besides this, the attending stage corresponds to Browning's first two submovements of descriptive and historical theology.

Assertion is the second stage, which involves instigating a dialogue among the three sources, to clarify, challenge, and purify the insights and limits of each. It requires a style of behaviour which is neither nonassertive (weak and self-effacing) nor aggressive (intolerant), but one of respect and openness, which is nevertheless assertive (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:1 & 90-91). Effective pastoral decision therefore requires mutual assertion between experience, Tradition, and culture (:24). This stage is similar to Browning's third submovement of systematic theology.

Decision is the third stage, which moves the reflection from insight towards practical and corporate pastoral action, a move often neglected in more academically based theological

reflection (Whitehead & Whitehead 1980:99). Central to this method is communal and collaborative planning, decision making, and action (:100). In this, the Whiteheads are in total agreement with Groome, whose whole method is centred around "shared praxis". This final stage is also similar to Browning's fourth and final submovement of strategic practical theology.

The Whiteheads have an easily accessible pastoral approach, which leads them to focus on personal experience as distinct from corporate experience. This hence requires the use of psychological tools for the former, and a broad cultural analysis for the latter, both of which will be employed in the present work.

1.7.3 Stuart Bate's Inculturation Model

Bate primarily has a missiological concern - to understand and articulate the nature and scope of the Church's mission in a given situation (Bate 1995:16). While he does not frame his work in the terms of practical theology, he nevertheless engages in the debate about theory and practice. He situates his work within a methodology of contextual theology which understands the starting point (root metaphor) to be the community of faith and its experience of faith (:20) rather than the text (the gospel) which is then related to the response to it within varying contexts (:284 n.2). He considers culture to be a better root metaphor when considering community of persons, since the concept of culture, by definition, is historical, thus enabling a reappropriation of the history and tradition of a community. Hence, he widens the concept of "context" to include a cultural analysis, which, he notes, has been inadequately appropriated into South African contextual analysis (:20); and he proposes the inculturation model as the best way of understanding and articulating the nature and scope of the Church's mission (:16).

The inculturation model attempts to explain how a local church can enable the people within a particular community sharing aspects or elements of a common culture to become more fully human, and thus evangelised, and live their faith within the cultural understandings (Bate 1995:19). Hence it lends itself more easily to a dynamic interpretation of phenomena through history than the contextualisation model, whose root concepts of text and context are more static (:18).

Bate roots his own method in the "transcendental method" of Bernard Lonergan, who emphasises the importance of intentionality in the four operations of a process starting with perception, through intelligibility and reason to responsibility; in the "political theology" of Clodovis Boff, who locates theology in praxis: practices orientated to the transformation of the world; and in Jesus Andres Vela's use of the human sciences in order to understand the processes of church and society (Bate 1995:22-24). All three follow the basic dynamic of

developing a method in theology which begins from the experience or current praxis of the community of faith, and returns to this praxis (from life back to life) in order to propose the next step forward (:22).

Rather than adopting an empirical method, Bate opts for a phenomenological approach, which considers a phenomenon as it manifests itself and as it is received by an active subject (Bate 1995:24). The value of this approach is that it aims to take into account the two dimensions of subject and object, without lapsing into introspective subjectivism or the illusion of positivist empirical objectivity. Both subject and phenomenon are influenced by their own context both diachronically and synchronically, so that the object of the study is mediated as it is manifested (:24).

Thus, having identified the phenomenon, Bate's method begins with an articulation of the *standpoints* of the subject, of those involved in the phenomenon, and of those who have looked at the phenomenon in some depth (Bate 1998:160). It then moves to an *analysis* of the phenomenon, using a variety of *mediations* (lenses), in order to see it from different points of view and to widen the understanding of it (Bate 1995:25).

The next step is to seek the major elements (commonalities, relationships, complements and even contradictions) in the different mediations, in order to synthesize them into a *single phenomenological description* from the subject's own standpoint (Bate 1998:166). This is the "(theoretical) material object" (Boff 1987:xxiv) upon which one may then theologise.

Theological criteria, which come from one's own faith tradition, are then identified, and are used to make a *theological judgement* of the phenomenon (Bate 1998:166).

Finally, proposals for *action* need to be drawn out, identifying *culturally mediated pastoral responses* to the culturally mediated needs emerging, which might humanise and sanctify the community (Bate 1995:226-227), and allow for an inculturated ministry (:250).

Bate's methodology follows a remarkably similar process to that proposed by Browning. The present work will make extensive use of both of them, while primarily using Bate's categories. Along with him, I will use a phenomenological approach to reflect on my experience of ministry, and great emphasis will be placed on a cultural analysis.

1.7.4 Conclusion

The debate around the nature of practical theology has thrown up the question of the nature of theology as a whole. Many contemporary theologians are moving towards a consensus that

theology which has no link to reality is baseless. All theology, therefore, should be directed towards action. In this sense, Browning is correct in insisting that the whole of theology is fundamental practical theology.

However, it is also apparent that there are relatively few theologians who begin their theological project from a concrete practice, which means that the bulk of theology today takes place without firm roots, and is therefore, at best, in danger of irrelevance to people's lives, and, at worst, distorting people's faith and lives. I therefore align myself with Browning, the Whiteheads, Bate, Groome, Segundo and others, who use a critical hermeneutical method of correlation between the Christian tradition and human life experience, beginning with concrete practice, going to theory, and then concluding with practice, in an ongoing hermeneutical circle. This is in essence the "See Judge Act" methodology used by the traditional Specialised Catholic Action movements, which are the primary objects of this study, and more recently, the RCIA (Pelegri 1979:153-185). The present work will attempt to remain faithful to this methodology.

1.8 Method of Investigation.

In attempting to develop a critique of ministry to university students, it might have been useful to focus on, and compare two or three different Christian communities on a university campus. However, since that would be beyond the scope of this work, I will do a case study of one group only, concentrating on the community with which I have most recently been working, viz. the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS) at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) (UNP).

This community consists largely of "Black" students, and a few others who can identify with a predominantly Black group. This has a particular meaning in the South African context, and more specifically on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal, where few "Whites", "Coloureds", or "Indians" can feel at home in a predominantly Black group. Consequently, this research will focus largely on the experience of ministry to Black students, with their cultural particularities, and only a limited ministry to White and Coloured students. While much of this reflection will be applicable to all groups, the particularities of the experience and culture of these latter groups will not be explored in depth, if at all.

I will begin to investigate the problem by describing in a narrative way the phenomenon of this group of students who call themselves ACTS at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), as it is appearing and manifesting itself to the leaders of the group, and as it is being perceived by me. This will include an exposition of the essential elements of my experience of ministry amongst them over a period of three years in my role as the Catholic

chaplain.

Having identified the phenomenon from my point of view, taking into account the viewpoints of the leaders and other ordinary members of the group where possible, I will move to an analysis of the current situation the university students find themselves in. To do this, I will use primarily psychological and socio-cultural mediations (analytical viewpoints), which also take into account anthropological and sociological factors. This will coincide with Browning's understanding of "descriptive theology".

In order to understand the psychological predisposition of the students, I will make extensive use of three developmental psychologists and theorists: Erik Erikson (1971), who identifies the stages of personality development; Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), who identifies the stages of moral development; and James Fowler (1981), who identifies the stages of faith development. I will especially make use of the insights of Sharon Parks (1991), who creatively synthesises the work of many developmental theorists in her exploration of the university student condition.

In order to understand the socio-cultural context within which the students are functioning, I will make extensive use of the insights of Kevin McDonald (1998a & 1998b), who has a unique global perspective. Then to identify the particularities of the South African context, I will draw on the reflections, surveys and analyses of Don Pinnock (1997), Jack Johnson-Hill (1998), Neil McGurk (1990), Eleanor Preston-Whyte and Maria Zondi (1992), and David Everatt and Mark Orkin (1993). This cultural analysis will be rooted in the understanding of culture of Clifford Geertz (1973).

Having mediated the phenomenon through psychological and socio-cultural lenses, this analysis will then be concluded by gathering the major elements of each mediation into a single synthetic description of the situation of, and the issues confronted by the students.

I will then move towards a theological evaluation of the current situation of students. This will be done, firstly, by identifying the theological criteria I will employ, namely, the *Three Truths* as articulated by Joseph Cardijn. This step will coincide with Browning's understanding of "historical theology". I will then apply the criteria to the current experience of ministry, engaging in a critical reflection on the current practice with the aid, especially, of Albert Nolan (1976 & 1988) and Sharon Parks (1991), in order to arrive at a theological judgement. This will coincide with Browning's understanding of "systematic theology".

Finally I will suggest forms of ministry or pastoral response to the felt needs of the students that can offer healing and hope, evoke deeper commitment, and, hopefully, build strong moral

leadership amongst them. This will coincide with Browning's understanding of "strategic practical theology".

I will now proceed to describe the phenomenon that will be the subject of our investigation, namely, the ACTS group at UNP. In a narrative way I will attempt to articulate what I have seen and what I have heard from the students in my ministry amongst them over the past three years.

CHAPTER 2

MINISTRY AMONGST STUDENTS IN ACTS AT UNP

2.1 Introduction

Any attempt to describe what is happening in a community is fraught with difficulty, since there are an infinite number of questions and points of view which can determine what might be said about the phenomenon. I will attempt to render what Browning (1991:16-17 & 94) calls, a *thick* description of the UNP ACTS community. This is based on the definition given for a thick description by Clifford Geertz, who describes it as the "setting down (of) the meaning particular social actions have for the actors whose actions they are" (Geertz 1973:27). Its aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts (:28). This therefore means that the description will be multi-dimensional, in an effort to capture the richness of the group. The focus will be on the historical development of the group over the three-year period, from November 1996 to November 1999.

Using the phenomenological approach, I am viewing the community both as a participant and as an observer. I will attempt to describe what Browning (1991:40) refers to as the *theory-laden practices* of the group, conscious of my own history, prejudices and preoccupations, which all significantly influence my questions and my perceptions.

So I approach the phenomenon as a forty-seven year old, white, male, South African, celibate, Dominican, Catholic priest. I have a long history (twenty-four years) of working with the Catholic student movements and with other Christian youth movements and groups in Southern Africa, as a student, a leader, an animator, and a chaplain. Largely through these youth movements, I underwent religious and political conversions. This aroused in me a passion to struggle both for a new world where justice, peace and participatory democracy would prevail, and for a form of church whose structure and practice could inspire and give birth to such a new world, especially through collaborative ministry and a critical pedagogy. This drew me into the struggle against apartheid, with all the dangers, commitment, and hope that came with it. It also led me to join the Dominican Order, and to become a priest, resulting in me gaining an experience of parish work for four years amongst largely Sotho-speaking communities (by whose culture I have obviously been influenced) in the small towns and farms of the central Free State.

I am also conscious that I am the third of six children in a westernised, nuclear family of Lebanese origin, which I always experienced as close-knit, caring and secure. I also grew up in a strong Catholic tradition, very conscious of the Church's moral teachings. Alongside my social and religious preoccupations, over the years I have also invested energy in the growth

of psychological awareness, rooted in my own personal experience. Through this, I have become conscious of many of my own wounds and fears, and therefore my need for healing. This has inevitably impinged on many of my choices and on any ministry I have engaged in.

Having been schooled in rigorous political, social, economic and psychological analysis, focusing on a wide variety of the dimensions of human experience, the hermeneutical key which I employ to interpret reality is largely what I call "holistic liberation". This understands each person's (and in this case each Christian's) life experience to consist of a series of layers of relationship: with God; with oneself; with one's intimate and family relationships; with one's spiritual family (the Church); with the tangible community (school, university, work, neighbourhood); with the broader national community (one's country); and with the global community (the world).
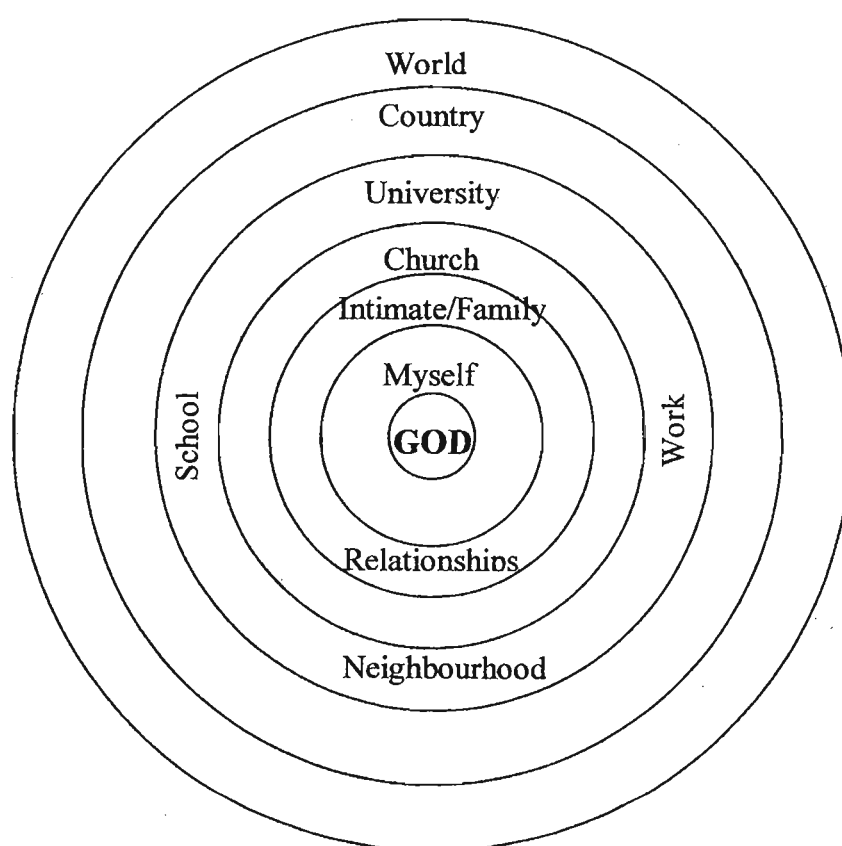
Each of these layers is interconnected, so that the freedom or lack of freedom in each affects the others, either nurturing or destroying the experience of holistic "Good News" (Luke 4:16-19). I am therefore inclined to adopt a relational (and not a legalistic) approach towards the phenomenon, which requires a compassionate, prophetic spirit in order to make a discernment. Consequently, now that I am a religious priest, conscious of the images and expectations that this evokes in society, I straddle the tension of being an official of the Church while trying to be prophetic.

So now, with a consciousness of some elements of my own standpoint, I will proceed with my *thick* description of the ACTS UNP community. This chapter will attempt to give a comprehensive description of the functioning of the community, highlighting all the preoccupations, actions and dynamics that existed within the group. The subsequent chapter will then go deeper, with the help of a variety of mediations, to uncover the meaning that all these actions and preoccupations have for the ACTS students.

2.2 Background and Composition

The University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) (UNP) is an historically "White" campus, which in 1999 had a student population of 5064 (University of Natal 1999a:81), of whom about 3500 were full-time (Govender 1999). According to a list of students who identified themselves as Roman Catholic when they first applied to the university, there were 553 Catholics on campus in 1999 (14.7%) (University of Natal 1999b). These lists of statistics also reveal that the number of White students in general, as well as among the Catholics, had dropped to only 36% of the student population.[1]

In the apartheid era, the Catholic student community on campus, calling itself the Catholic Society (Cathsoc) was affiliated to NCFS (the National Catholic Federation of Students), a predominantly "White" Catholic student organisation, which had a clear federal structure, each local Cathsoc having full autonomy. On the Black university campuses created by the apartheid government, the Catholic communities, which had disaffiliated from NCFS in 1971, formed a separate organisation for Blacks, called the Catholic Students' Association (CASA). This had a greater unitary structure, with a self-understanding as a movement. In 1993, NCFS and CASA dissolved themselves, and formed a single Catholic student organisation, the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS). The new organisation allows each branch to have its own constitution, and hence have a degree of local autonomy, but this constitution has to be in line with, and approved by the national organisation, to ensure a unity of purpose. The branch is also responsible for implementing the national policies and programmes (ACTS 1998:8). While each branch should have a registered membership (:4), the reality on most campuses is that the ACTS leadership regards every student coming to the Sunday Mass as a *de facto* member. At UNP, however, for the most part, it is only the active members who have a sense of identify with ACTS. Nevertheless, throughout this work, whenever I refer to ACTS UNP, I am referring to the Catholic community on campus, manifest especially in the weekly Sunday Mass.

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[1] The latter list is highly incomplete (possibly by as much as 50%, according to a random survey I conducted of the lists of Catholics that I personally have), and so no scientific conclusions can be drawn from it. However, it does give a rough sense of the demographic distribution on campus.

I began my work as the Catholic chaplain at UNP in November 1996. In the years preceding my arrival, with the post-apartheid deracialising of all the South African universities, the number of Black members of ACTS UNP had gradually increased, although the leadership had remained predominantly White. I arrived only two months after a Black chairperson and a predominantly Black executive committee were elected for the first time. At that stage, the proportion of Black and White participants at the weekly Sunday Mass was roughly equal. As 1997 progressed, however, the number of White participants steadily decreased, despite numerous efforts by the committee to show sensitivity, and to respond to "White" concerns and cultural preferences in the liturgy. By the end of the year, only a handful of Whites remained, and even these were largely expatriates, a situation which prevailed up to the end of my term as chaplain (November 1999).

Thus the ACTS group at UNP became a largely Black community. Of these, the majority of participants at the Sunday Mass were Zulu-speaking, with a substantial group of Sotho-speakers, and a sprinkling of students from other South African language groups. In addition, there was a variety of international students from countries as diverse as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Germany, and the United States of America.

With this background, I will now approach the phenomenon having a preoccupation with three aspects in particular in mind: the *structure*, the *concerns*, and the *direction* of the group. These could alternatively be referred to in terms of organisation, ideology, and external relations. However, it is difficult to focus on each aspect separately, since each influences the other. I will therefore highlight the primary focuses or preoccupations of UNP ACTS in its many dimensions, and within each attempt to describe the structures, concerns, and direction that each preoccupation has given rise to. This description, in turn, will raise a number of critical questions which our deeper analysis of the phenomenon will then proceed to address.

2.3 The Main Preoccupations of UNP ACTS

2.3.1 Liturgy

ACTS at UNP largely deals with people who are "churched", i.e. students who already have a sense of identity with the Catholic Church. The main focus of ACTS, therefore, is the traditional Sunday Mass, when all the Catholics on campus are invited to gather in their "spiritual home".

In 1996 when I arrived, Mass attendance was 100-120 students. With the exodus of White students, the number decreased, and in the last two years it stabilised to 60-80 students. This consisted of a regular group of about 30 students who always came, the balance being made up from a large reservoir of students who attended sporadically.

The first reason normally given for erratic attendance was the pressure of studies and assignments due, since the Mass was celebrated on a Sunday evening at 7pm, which often clashed with a Monday deadline. Frustration was also expressed at the frequent lengthiness of the service, which often did not start on time. My own slower liturgical style and the introduction of additional creative elements may also have contributed to this frustration, and may have been a factor in alienating the more time-conscious "westernised" Whites.

Another reason often given was that Mass was boring, and that the singing was not enjoyable, an observation mutually agreed upon from the beginning. Consequently, many Catholic students would frequently attend the services of other, more lively Christian groups and churches. In order to address this issue, a liturgy group was formed in 1997, which operated fairly well for two years, led by a religious student[1] who was assisting me in the chaplaincy. Although there were only three or four regular members, they kept the liturgies running smoothly, and introduced creative elements into the Mass at times, which lifted the spirits.

The music group, on the other hand, always struggled. On countless occasions a regular day and time for practice would be set, but attendance would very soon fall off. Many students loved singing, but few were prepared to commit themselves to a regular practice. While the lack of organisation and inspiring animation was a major reason for this, the absence of adequate training and more experienced accompaniment undoubtedly was a factor.

In 1999, in an attempt to address the problem, the music and liturgy groups were combined, assisted by one of my religious student assistants. This resulted in a significant improvement in the singing, but at the expense of liturgical reflection and creativity. Nevertheless, some spontaneous innovations in the liturgy were introduced, like the ministry of altar servers. All attempts, though, to provide training for ministries like reading and preaching came to naught, due to a problem of time and motivation, since most students were affronted at the suggestion that they needed training to read!

Despite the erratic success of the regular Sunday liturgy, from the beginning there were always some special liturgies through the year which brought life to the community:
- The Paschal Meal, a re-enactment of the Last Supper in the context of a Jewish Passover celebration, became a regular annual event prior to Easter, engendering increasing interest each year.
- A pre-Exam Mass at the end of each semester always drew anxious hearts together to receive blessings and healing, and to pray for guidance and success.

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[1] During my term as chaplain, a number of students of philosophy or theology, preparing for religious life or priesthood at St. Joseph's Theological Institute, Cedara, assisted me in the chaplincy, in order to gain a practical pastoral experience.

- In 1998 and 1999, a Mass to celebrate the baptisms and confirmations of our student candidates by the local Archbishop proved to be the highlights of those years, inspiring a number of new people to enter the confirmation process.

- In 1999, an Annual Academic Mass was introduced, to gather together all the Catholics on campus, staff and students, to get to know each other, and to reflect together on their role and impact as Catholics on campus, with the ACTS National Chaplain being invited to preach. While it did not attract as many as was hoped for, it established a tradition which inspired many, including a Deputy Vice- Chancellor of the university.

- Finally, a Mass using a Taize style of prayer (with lots of candles, chants, informality, and space for silent prayer and movement, and no chairs) was celebrated, attracting many new participants.

Most of these events rallied new energy in the music group, who invariably excelled, and made each liturgy an event to remember.

Besides these liturgies which gathered the whole community, smaller informal mid-week Masses were celebrated. From the beginning they attracted only a handful of people, yet frequently an intimacy and depth of sharing was made possible, which a number found nourishing. This became more evident when the time was changed to accommodate members of the university staff (academic, administrative, and domestic), who were thirsting for such an opportunity.

2.3.2 Sense of Community

When I arrived in 1996, ACTS was a disparate group with a variety of peoples, with little that could hold them together. Pockets of very close friends existed, but they were largely definable in terms of ethnic or language, and hence cultural or racial groups, and there were very few spaces to bridge those barriers. So one could identify much joy and freedom amongst the Basotho, the Mauritians, the Kenyans, the Zimbabweans, the French-speaking Africans, the White South Africans, and the Zulus, but few could break the formality that existed between each. It was aptly stated by a few at a committee training day early in 1997: "We are not really a community - only an organisation! We don't know each other. We don't work together. We aren't friends!" (ACTS UNP 1997a).

The number of Whites, meanwhile, was rapidly decreasing. The more they left, the less the remaining faithful were inclined to participate. As a long-time regular White student reported, when he asked a former regular White student why he no longer came, he received the response: "There are so few Whites there!" (ACTS UNP 1997b).

By the second half of 1997, with a few exceptions, the only Whites left were the small Mauritian group. However, when a number of them finished their studies at the end of that

year, the remainder too disappeared. From 1998 onwards, virtually the only Whites who came were short-term students from Europe and the USA.

Since the beginning, each successive committee was concerned about addressing the issue of a lack of community spirit as a priority. Students were invited to stay after Mass for coffee, in order to get to know each other (although this was difficult to sustain in 1999). Liturgies were sensitively prepared to ensure that there was a good mix of languages in the songs. A Pancake Evening was organised to provide a space for socialising. From 1998, Opening and Closing Parties were arranged. Everyone was encouraged to go to regional meetings at other campuses, which were always fun experiences. I was continually reminded to bless those celebrating their birthdays that week after Mass on Sundays. ACTS T-shirts were produced in 1996, and again in 1999, to develop a sense of common identity.

These efforts certainly did bear fruit in breaking down a number of the barriers, even if they were not successful with the Whites. However, for the first two years, few ACTS members communicated much with other members beyond their own social group, outside of meeting at the Sunday Mass. ACTS was not yet a space where friendships could be developed. Nevertheless, in the second half of 1998, scandalised by the fact that many ACTS members hardly even greeted each other on campus, the committee adopted a motto, "Building a Community of Friends". They began to take this very seriously, with more informal socialising, in the library, in the computer centre, and in students' rooms and homes. As a result, in 1999, a much stronger sense of community developed, with many friendships blossoming outside of traditional groups. Gradually, students began to find time for ACTS activities, and even the money to finance them, thus showing that if one wanted to be with other people, one would find the time or the money. If friendship were not there, neither time nor money would ever be found.

2.3.3 Exercise of Leadership

The evolution of the ACTS Committee over these three years was effectively a microcosm of what was happening in ACTS as a whole, as the organisation struggled to develop a sense of community. Each successive committee had a few members who were good friends, and then a number of others who did not have much relationship with the rest. Committee meetings were normally very task-orientated and often rushed, with little time for reflection. They took place weekly in 1997, but tapered off to occur very erratically in 1998, and for much of 1999 (although many more informal meetings on campus began to take place), and then became more regular again in the second half of the year.

Each year an orientation workshop was held for the committee, which helped to establish direction and get everyone on board. However, after the initial enthusiasm, the responsibility

became a burden for a number of the members. In the absence of a sense of community and friendship, lapses in responsibility by members caused great frustration to the more committed, who at times gave vent to their feelings, leading to tensions. Thus, in each of the committees, a number of members dropped out after a while, leaving a faithful few to carry the load.

The chairpersons, with one or two faithful helpers, normally worked very hard, begging all committee members to be faithful to their responsibilities. When they did not get much response, they often ended up doing things alone, lacking a pedagogy for involving others. This was especially evident in attempts to organise the music group practices (the only regular activity initiated by the students), where successive music officers failed to galvanise the many students who loved singing into a viable and enjoyable choir. This caused these leaders to feel increasingly frustrated and overburdened, and prevented many of the plans made in the orientation workshops from being realised.

However, the idea of a "community of friends", which began to take root in the second half of 1999, reflected the growth of a pedagogy for involving others. The committee began to meet regularly, without a sense of being burdened, because most of them related to each other outside of meetings; the music group began functioning better; and many of the plans made began to be efficiently realised.

2.3.4 Confronting Issues of Life and Faith

From the beginning, there was always an awareness amongst the students of many issues in their lives and in their faith which they needed to find time to address. These were identified at committee training days, in discussion groups which were attempted a few times in 1997 and 1998, in the confirmation group, and in many informal discussions.

2.3.4.1 Life Issues of Students

Many students would begin by identifying their primary issues to be financial difficulties or academic stress. However, it always soon emerged that, in fact, their major issues were those centring around friendship, relationships, sex and marriage, and the related confusions or problems arising, viz. student pregnancies, abortion, rape, the use of contraceptives, HIV/AIDS, and homosexuality. This was confirmed by the Student Counselling Centre at the university, which identified relationship problems as the dominant problem they have to deal with among students (Brain 1998).

The reality of this problem as a central experience in the lives of the students was starkly revealed in an event that occurred in 1998 in the ACTS confirmation group. Having spent

more than a year together, meeting weekly during term-time, two of the members returned from the winter vacation, and gradually let it be known that they each had given birth during the vacation. For some time, an embarrassed silence prevailed, but when the subject was broached, it revealed an experience of confusion within the group about relationships, love and sex, which resulted in much suffering and stress.

The event gave rise to many discussions, which brought out many questions. These included the Church's attitude to sex before marriage, whether it is possible to be lovers without sex, the fear of losing a partner if one refused his advances, and scepticism and fear about entering marriage which mostly seemed to offer only pain and suffering.

Falling pregnant was seen as a problem by some of the students, mainly because it caused hurt to the parents, and it resulted in a great deal of inconvenience. Most of them, however, could see no problem with having sex before marriage. Some of them insisted, though, on the necessity of commitment, faithfulness and trust in a sexual relationship, while others could identify no link between sex and commitment, regarding sex simply as necessary for the satisfaction of desires.

Many of them expressed the desire to get married, yet most also expressed a fear of marriage, which so often seemed to end up in much pain and suffering. In the light of this, a number of them saw no problem in single parenthood. Clearly, though, all yearned for friendship, love and intimacy, although some despaired of finding this outside of their immediate families. There was a general awareness of the Church's teaching on sex before marriage, but most failed to understand this.

Subsequent to this event, a number of other cases of student pregnancy, abortion, and HIV/AIDS manifested themselves within the ACTS community, and many more discussions, both formal and informal, took place amongst students on the subject of sex. What usually emerged was that most students took sexual activity for granted as part and parcel of the relationships they were engaged in, as long as they were careful about practising safe sex, and using condoms.

2.3.4.2 Faith Issues of Students

At a faith level, whenever the students had a chance to raise questions, their preoccupations centred, on the one hand, around the nature of God, Jesus, and the Bible, the meaning of Catholic traditions and rituals (which other Christians regularly attacked) and the Church's relationship to other churches. On the other hand, they were concerned about the implications of faith for morality, especially regarding sex and alcohol. While they never spontaneously raised it as an issue themselves, there was also a concern for issues of inculturation of the

faith. This was reflected in a significant attendance and engagement when a speaker on the issue was organised or when the topic was discussed, and in an ongoing concern to express different languages and ritual traditions in the liturgy. However insufficient space was created to focus on the issue.

It was evident, though, that many Catholics were embarrassed and scared to profess their faith in public. This was either because they could not defend themselves against attacks on Catholic beliefs and practices from other Christians, or because they did not want to be identified with the dominant image many students had of Christians as narrow people focused only on prayer. It was also noted that many students lacked a basic grasp of, and hence identity with the Catholic faith. This was reflected in the ease with which they shopped around different churches and Christian groups, believing that it did not make any difference to which church one belonged, since "we are all worshipping the same God" - a form of ecclesiastical liberalism.

This latter point was indicative of a widespread privatised view of faith amongst the ACTS students, reflected in a thirst for personal nourishment, and an attentiveness to preaching in the Masses, though without much concern for, or interest in getting involved in the community.

2.3.4.3 Addressing the Issues

The discussion groups that were established in 1997 and 1998 to provide space for the students to deal with all these issues all struggled to sustain themselves. For a while they worked very well, focussing on the nature and history of the Bible, relationships, sex, and marriage, and exam stress. Day-long retreats (though attended by only a handful of people) were also arranged in those years, focussing, respectively, on faith, and hope in the midst of stress. The students expressed a lot of appreciation for these spaces for discussion, yet they still petered out, ostensibly due to academic and other commitments. In 1999 a discussion group never even got off the ground due to an overload of other activities being planned.

Nevertheless, there was a space created where many of these issues could be raised - in the catechumenal or confirmation group, which was established in 1997 for students seeking to be baptised or confirmed. The first group began with five candidates, of whom four persevered, and lasted for two years, and the second group, in 1999, had seven candidates, all of whom persevered, and lasted for one year. The RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) method was used, emphasising, firstly, the central role of sponsors in continually accompanying the candidates, including frequent attendance at the weekly two-hour sessions. Secondly, the central role of the community was emphasised, through the regular presentation of the candidates in the Sunday Mass, when a variety of rites (of acceptance, election, exorcism,

blessing, purification, and anointing) were celebrated.

The process consisted primarily of weekly sessions of input and discussion on many of the spiritual, moral, and ecclesial dimensions of the Catholic faith, and its relationship to their lives. In addition, the 1999 group had a full day away, focusing on their experience of, and questions about friendship, love, sex and marriage and the Church's teachings on these. Furthermore, excursions of exposure to other church and social realities were organised by my religious student assistants or me. These included participation in the Archdiocesan annual pilgrimage to Ntshongweni, and visits to the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA), and to the abandoned children of the Thandanani Association. The whole process ended with a day-long retreat, which prepared them for the final celebration.

For all the members of these groups, candidates and sponsors alike, the process was a time of real conversion, the development of intimate friendships, and growth in faith and commitment. Due to time constraints, though, a tension always existed between the giving of inputs and space for sharing their own life experiences, the latter usually getting short-changed. Nevertheless, although this process touched a relatively small group of students (seven in the first group, and thirteen in the second), they formed a nucleus, which, in turn, touched many others in the community, inspiring more students also to present themselves as candidates. They also played no small role in the growth of a sense of community in ACTS as a whole.

The confirmation group experience highlighted the centrality of a small group dynamic in the growth of faith and commitment. From the beginning of 1998, the desire was expressed in the committee to develop such small group dynamics in ACTS as a whole. It was decided to start by gathering students together in their residences through the celebration of a Mass. However, permission to do this was refused by the residence authorities, and this took the steam out of any further initiative. The subsequent committee also prioritised the establishment of "life-issues groups", but nothing was ever done, probably due to activity-overload, and the lack of vision (and training) in how such groups would work.

2.3.5 The Need for Healing

As part of their human condition, all students arrive at university with varying degrees of woundedness, which are in need of healing. These wounds, constituting their most vulnerable sides, can only be confronted in a context in which the student feels safe and accepted.

Many students coming to ACTS, either consciously or unconsciously, were seeking some kind of healing. At times, they found a degree of it in group interactions, as the example of the confirmation group illustrated. A number also reported having found healing in various

liturgies - through preaching, blessings, and various rituals, and through a healing service, when those seeking healing were anointed. However, most students consciously seeking healing normally turned to someone they could trust for confidential counselling, a role a number of students in ACTS have fulfilled themselves, and one which I, as a priest and the chaplain, was continually called on to perform.

In my three years in the chaplaincy, scores of students sought me out, to unburden their hearts, and to seek consolation, advice, or forgiveness. Besides the regular ACTS members, I was also approached by a number of students who were not normally attracted to ACTS activities, showing the importance of this ministry of counselling and healing for the campus at large. It revealed, probably more than any other aspect of ministry, what the central issues were in students' lives.

I can identify five broad areas in which I was called on to counsel students in need of healing: healing in relationship; healing from guilt; healing from fear; healing in bereavement; and healing in not knowing one's father. I will illustrate, in turn, how each need for healing manifested itself to me, using a few examples, and indicate the form of counselling I employed in response.

2.3.5.1 In Relationship

Many students came expressing devastation at a betrayal of trust in an intimate relationship (both sexual and non-sexual). This highlighted the fact that, although all young people (and, indeed, all people) yearn for a deep and trusting friendship, these students were growing up in a social context (which was especially evident in the university) in which there was a cultural acceptance of multiple relationships, where unfaithfulness was the norm and commitment was always a surprise.

This was reflected in the case of a student we will call Sipho, aged 25, who came to see me, feeling very depressed about his relationships. He had a girlfriend in his hometown, but he had made it clear that he had no intention of marrying her. She apparently accepted his feelings. He nevertheless loved her, and they were in regular contact. He had recently gone home for a funeral, and visited her unannounced. She was very angry with him, accusing him of spying on her, and using her. They quarrelled then, and then again over the phone when he had returned, when she hung up on him. This left him confused and depressed.

He had another girlfriend locally, with whom he had a similar arrangement. She too was always full of suspicious questions, accusing him of unfaithfulness, and of not seeing her as good enough. She continually pestered him, leaving him unsure what to do with her. Then, he had two other girlfriends in different towns, but only had occasional contact with them. He

was now very confused about how he should deal with these relationships, especially the first.

At first Sipho's case seemed shocking to me, and I was tempted to immediately point out his exploitative attitudes. However, I quickly realised that his ability to be free to reveal all this to me indicated that he was basically well-motivated, but had a blind spot somewhere. He was a victim of his cultural context, and, in a way, he was not that different from many people in South Africa today who engage in relationships that are characterised by dishonesty and the absence of trust (exploitation and betrayal); domination (physically and emotionally); superficiality (little sharing of real feelings); and dependency (clinging) (See Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:236).

So I tried to help him to put himself into the shoes of each of his girlfriends, and to imagine the real, and not only the expressed hopes and expectations of each of them, so that he could identify their clashing expectations, and the suffering that it caused. Through this, I hoped to bring out why faithfulness and commitment were central to him finding real love, satisfaction and healing in his relationships.

I also realised, though, that his ability to empathise with his girlfriends was obstructed by his own wounds and neediness. So I tried to help him identify these wounds, not least of which was his father's early abandonment of his family, and to see the connection between these and his own desires. I then sought ways to affirm him in his woundedness.

He was very appreciative of our discussion. However, in later discussions with him, I wondered whether he had identified with any new values, since there seemed little change in his behaviour.

While Sipho's case appears to be extreme, it nevertheless highlights the personal and cultural context and values of many of the students I encountered.

2.3.5.2 From Guilt

Many students came to me, confessing a variety of "sins" ranging from abortion, sex before marriage which resulted in pregnancy, and corruption (illegitimate use of an organisation's funds entrusted into his care), to having a spirit of anger and revenge, or having been involved in a car accident in which another party died. In many of these cases, what particularly struck me was not the gravity of the sin or the lack of it, but the difficulty the student found in forgiving herself or himself, resulting in a guilt and self-denigration which became totally debilitating. This was reflected in the case of a student we will call Paul, aged 24, who came to see me.

Just over a month previously, at the end of the first quarter, he had been informed by the organisation financing his studies that they could not support him that year, despite having given him a letter of guaranteed support in order for him to register, since he was not doing the course they had expected. He had gone to see them to try to find a solution, but they displayed no interest in doing so. He left their office furious, with an intense desire for revenge, while all his dreams for furthering his education lay in tatters. Nevertheless, he felt very guilty about his anger and his desire for revenge, and, despite his despair, he sought my help to "help me to forgive".

I tried to help him to see that anger at unjust treatment is not bad. In fact, it is good and necessary, as Jesus showed us on a number of occasions. However, the desire for revenge serves only to eat oneself up, and hence enslave oneself. Difficult though it may be, Jesus showed us how to let go of such feelings, when he asked the Father to forgive his killers "for they know not what they do". The callousness of Paul's financiers indicated that they were so drunk with their own power and importance, that they were incapable of empathising with his pain. They sounded like pitiful creatures who did not know what they were doing.

I also tried to assure him that, despite his self-doubt, he remained special and lovable in God's eyes, whether he completed his university course or not. Nevertheless, it was still worth exploring whether money could be found elsewhere. And even if not, he was still young, and had many talents and skills, with a number of possibilities for finding a job. In this way, I tried to nurture his hope, without offering unguaranteed certainties. He left, remarking how deeply touched he was, and how free he felt.

I could not offer Paul any certainty that he would one day return to the university, yet he seemed satisfied. He came from a tradition where anger was always regarded as negative, and where negative feelings, like the desire for revenge, evoked an enormous sense of guilt. By broadening his vision of sin to be more than simply breaking rules or having negative feelings, he discovered new hope in a compassionate God, a human God who had similar feelings to his own, and in his own ability to stand up again after being knocked down, even with no certainty about where he would go next.

In the other cases where there was more culpability, the difficulty for the student was allowing him- or herself to be forgiven. In using a similar approach to the one I adopted for Paul, most of them claimed they were better disposed to let go of what they had done and to start afresh, free of guilt.

2.3.5.3 From Fear

While the time spent at university is normally a period of great excitement and joy for most

students, it also contains many challenges for them which can provoke much anxiety and fear.

A major source of fear was the danger of contracting AIDS. Since the time at university is often the first opportunity for students to make their own choices about lifestyle free of parental constraints, it is a space for experimentation. Consequently, many students tend to embark on risky behaviours, especially in relation to sex, drugs and alcohol. The prevailing sexual culture makes the university a fertile breeding ground for the spread of AIDS. There had been a number of positive focuses on the disease at UNP, especially in 1999, so that students generally had a high level of awareness of it. With this awareness, though, came a great deal of anxiety. So I had a number of students coming to me and expressing their fear of AIDS, and especially a fear of going for an HIV test.

Another source of fear for many students was the prospect of failing. A great number of them had come to university full of expectations - from their families, and from themselves. And often their ability to register was at great cost to their families. The penalty for failing was therefore very high - maybe even the shattering of all their dreams. Added to this was the spirit of competition and individualism prevailing in the university context, making for a great deal of pressure and stress that often got the better of the students, even if they were in no danger of failing, as was the case of two students we will call Thuli and Jenny.

Both of them had generally done very well in their studies, with a few slight lapses, which devastated them. From being very active in ACTS both withdrew almost completely, thus evoking the wrath of the other active members. Only when I sought them out did their paralysis become evident.

The fear of failing was exacerbated if the student was experiencing financial difficulties, since most energy went into raising funds, and prevented adequate concentration on studies. Probably most of the people who came to see me were experiencing this problem, and much of my time was spent helping them to apply for bursaries or loans.

The counselling approach I adopted in each of these cases was to focus on the worst-case scenario. So what if you discover you have HIV? So what if you fail? So what if you cannot raise the funds? I then tried to help the student to develop a spirituality of failure -to embrace the worst-case scenario, to acknowledge that it might require a significant change in lifestyle, but to see it not as the end of the world, or as a judgement of one's self-worth. Rather, it could be a moment which enables the growth of a new perspective on life, with all its tragedy and possibility, and which allows the uncovering of inner resources that hitherto had been untapped. Fear could only be overcome if viable alternatives to crushed hopes were identified, and if the student could come to accept the reality and value of his or her life, talents and possibilities.

Some students clearly could not be consoled, especially into accepting failure, highlighting the indispensability of a broad focus on community and cultural transformation in order for healing from many of their fears to be found. However, others, like the student, Paul, who was let down by his financiers, did indeed find consolation. He later wrote to me to inform me of the new life, hope and possibilities he had been able to forge.

2.3.5.4 In Bereavement

Many students experience the death of someone close to them during their time at university. Invariably they find lots of support from their friends at such times. Nevertheless, many came to me, struggling to come to terms with the death of loved ones, at times even stretching back to their childhood. For some of them I was the first person they were speaking to about their bewilderment at the death.

"David" spoke of how he had only been informed of his real parents, who were murdered when he was an infant, when he was eighteen years old, after always wondering why he was treated more leniently than his brothers and sisters.

"Thenjiwe" was devastated to hear that the sister she was closest to had died and was buried without her being informed beforehand. Her bereavement was compounded by her anger at being marginalised by her family, since she was far away at the time.

The younger brother of "Fusi" had died at a very young age, but Fusi had tried to put him out of his mind. For some months before he came to see me, he had been getting sick, seemingly without cause. He wondered if the ancestors were trying to tell him something.

"Derek" was remorseful about the abortion that he and his ex-girlfriend had decided to procure, largely through fear of their parents' reactions. He also felt discomfort with the fact that no-one in his family knew about it.

"Thoko" had a miscarriage at six months, and was devastated when she was not allowed to see the baby girl, whose skin had peeled off. She was discharged without any explanation of the cause of the miscarriage. Despite having done traditional rituals at home, she sank into a depression, which had lasted eighteen months before she came to see me, and even lengthy counselling on campus had not helped at all.

With all these students, I first tried to help them to surface all the feelings that had accumulated over the years. We then tried to focus on the people they needed to speak to in order to get more information about some of the circumstances surrounding each death, since

they were all in the dark, to varying degrees. So David needed to sit down and talk to his adoptive parents about his own parents; Thenjiwe needed to talk to her brothers who had failed to inform her; Fusi needed to speak to a traditional healer and his mother about his brother; Derek needed to talk to his ex-girlfriend openly about his feelings about the abortion, and to gauge her feelings too. He also needed to talk to his mother about it; and Thoko needed to glean information from the hospital and the doctors who had attended to her, about the circumstances of her miscarriage.

Since a number of these and other cases involved traditional elements concerning the ancestors, I consulted a traditional healer I knew about ways of dealing with them. I also referred some of the students to see her themselves. I then suggested to a number of them to work towards organising a ritual, in which the deceased loved one could be symbolically made present, addressed, and then allowed to rest. I did this, having experienced myself the power of ritual in confronting the death of my own mother. Every student I spoke to about this responded very enthusiastically.

Most of these rituals needed to take place in the context of, and with their families, and a number succeeded in organising this. I only became directly involved in the ritual with Thoko, celebrating a Mass together with the father of her child and a number of her friends, in which we welcomed her miscarried daughter symbolically into our presence. We prayed for her, blessed the symbols chosen (a candle and a small dress), and allowed her to rest through washing our hands in water (the symbol of life) sprinkled with ash (a symbol of death).

While dealing with death is an ongoing and often long-term process, these rituals and the counselling helped all the students involved to move some steps closer to embracing the death of their loved ones, and hence to find healing.

2.3.5.5 In not knowing one's father

I was struck by the number of students who came to me expressing bewilderment at not knowing who their fathers were. In most of these cases, another man, who was the mother's new husband or partner, was presumed to be the father, but his true identity gradually unfolded as the student, growing up, noticed that a number of things did not fit. Their mothers never said a word, and it was culturally inappropriate to ask about it.

Each of these students was left with a nagging question, which they all found debilitating. Given the space to talk about it, they poured out their sense of rootlessness, and their doubts about their identity. "David", whose parents were murdered when he was an infant, also experienced similar doubts. This left many of these students with a sense of inadequacy, which often resulted in passivity.

The counselling focussed on building up the students ability to find the courage and a way to speak to their mothers or grandmothers about their feelings and questions, so that they could know the truth, which they were convinced would set them free. Furthermore, it focussed on building up their self-esteem, affirming their value as children of God, and helping them to establish a new basis for identity.

2.3.6 Relationship to the Broader Social Context

Due to the lack of internal stability and sense of community in ACTS, most of the energy of the students over this period was directed internally towards the organisation and building up of the community. So, little energy or vision remained for an external focus.

For the first two years, there were no local student initiatives to engage in social projects. A number of ACTS members were involved in projects, like legal aid and tutoring, in their individual capacities, and the confirmation group in 1997 visited the abandoned children at the Thandanani Association, but nothing was organised in the name of ACTS. In 1998, ACTS National Executive initiated a Tin Can Collection Campaign to feed the needy, and the local UNP branch made some efforts to collect tins from their members, and from local supermarkets, but without much success. Another slight effort was made to continue this campaign the following year, with even less success.

Nevertheless, 1999 gave birth to the first and only spontaneous social initiative from ACTS in this period, in the form of a clothes collection for orphans. Initiated by a graduate of the confirmation group, whose conscience was pricked within the group to respond to social needs, a large group of students rallied to take the clothes collected from students, and spend the day entertaining and being entertained by the orphans. This showed that a willingness to serve was present, which only needed some initiative.

This growth in an outer focus, was probably made possible by the concurrent strengthening of the sense of community in ACTS. It was further made manifest in the beginnings of ecumenical contact with other Christian societies on campus, and in engagement with broader social and political issues, through the Student Representative Council (SRC) on campus, and the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). While ACTS leaders from the beginning used to engage with the SRC at general meetings through the urgings of the respective SRC's, a more active involvement in SRC commissions and workshops (e.g. a Gender Workshop) developed from the end of 1998 with a perspective of transforming student government. In 1999, in response to invitations, and with a desire to engage in the educational debate, ACTS also sent a number of committee members to participate in workshops organised by PACSA on the government's macro-economic strategy, GEAR

(Growth, Employment, and Redistribution), and its implications for education.

Although the willingness of ACTS committee members to respond to these initiatives (all of which came from outside) constituted a new point of growth, they, nevertheless, were not yet able to reach a point of taking initiative themselves in promoting social awareness. Space could not be found to share the fruits of the workshops attended with the whole community. Also, the initiatives to raise awareness through bringing in outside speakers for the community all came from me. These were speakers on the workers' struggle in 1997, on Christianity and culture, and on unemployment in 1998, and on AIDS in 1999. These all proved to be inspiring for the students, many of whom stayed to listen, especially to hear the story of a woman who, herself, was living with AIDS. Nevertheless, initiatives came from ACTS National, through the local members of the national executive committee, who informed the community of the contribution of ACTS towards the formulation of policies of the National Youth Commission in relation to youth and national service.

Thus although there was growth in ACTS in focussing outside of itself, and in becoming exposed to broader social and political needs, and although there was a lot of goodwill amongst the students, political and social consciousness was not very developed. This area remained one of the group's biggest challenges.

2.3.7 Sense of being a Movement

Most of the students who came to Mass every Sunday had little interest in becoming involved in ACTS. This was reflected in general meetings, called occasionally after Sunday Mass since 1997 to report back on, and discuss issues affecting ACTS, when only about 20% of the congregation remained behind. Furthermore, even though, frequently, in notices after Mass, requests from, or news about ACTS National were conveyed, the majority of students displayed no interest in the organisation beyond the local campus.

Nevertheless, from the beginning, there was always a small group who at least had a regional consciousness, and who promoted and participated in regional events. For virtually the whole period of my ministry (for three consecutive terms), the Regional Coordinator/Representative on the National Executive came from UNP. There was also usually a significant group of eight to fifteen students who were prepared to pay for transport and attend the variety of regional Annual General Meetings, pre-exam Masses and socials, regional retreats (all-night revivals), and the launch of new branches on various campuses around Kwazulu-Natal - all of which provided much fun and excitement.

Such a regional event (a pre-exam Mass) was hosted only once at UNP, in November, 1996 (the day I began my ministry). A second such event, in 1998, failed, due to poor regional

organisation. Unfortunately, in the 1998/99 term, a bad working relationship developed between the Regional Coordinator and the local committee, which obstructed effective regional participation. Also, many more activities were organised at UNP, which clashed with a number of regional events, preventing UNP participation. This resulted in UNP being accused by other branches (unfairly I thought) of being insular, and lacking a regional consciousness.

Since the Regional Representative on the National Executive was a UNP member for most of this period, there was always a degree of consciousness of the national movement, although it was slow to permeate through to the larger group. Despite vigorous promotion of the national conference in July each year, the numbers attending remained fairly small, though slowly increasing (3 in 1997, 6 in 1998, 8 in 1999). Nevertheless, those who attended grew markedly in national consciousness and commitment, and virtually all increasingly became core people in the local branch. The same applied to the few students who attended the ACTS national leadership conference in December each year.

The sense of being part of a national movement was also deepened through the visits each year of members of the national executive committee, who were able to communicate the support and challenge of the national movement, at least to the local committee. The presence and preaching of the ACTS National Chaplain at the Academic Mass in 1999 also reinforced this sense for the community as a whole. In addition, a UNP ACTS member was elected first as National Treasurer, and then as National President of ACTS, providing a personal point of identity with the national movement.

An attempt was also made to develop a sense of identity with the international movement to which ACTS is affiliated, the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), through celebrating an IMCS Solidarity Day, with an input on the extent and nature of the movement throughout the world. The international consciousness was then further deepened when I attended the International Committee Meeting in 1999, and was appointed as the International Chaplain of IMCS, the cause of the termination of my ministry at UNP.

Thus ACTS UNP was regularly exposed to all dimensions of the movement, even at a personal level. Despite the fact that this did not make much impact on many of the regular participants at the Sunday Mass, I believe that this consciousness played no small part in the growth of a sense of community amongst the active members of ACTS over this period.

Besides the sense of identity with the broader Catholic student movement, a sense of identity with the broader movement, the Catholic Church as a whole, also developed over this period. This often primarily took the form of seeking financial support from the Archbishop and the local parishes to enable attendance at the national conference. In the absence of other forms of

contact, this was a source of irritation to the church authorities, since communication normally only took place through the chaplain.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for the students to participate in many archdiocesan events, such as the rite of election of catechumens, youth gatherings, or rallies, such as those marking the Jubilee Year, since they often occurred in vacation time or at exam time. Nevertheless, a consciousness of being part of the broader church was developed through the Archbishop coming to the university twice in this period to celebrate confirmations. This was also reinforced in 1999 through the participation of the confirmation group in the Ntshongweni Pilgrimage, and through the Archdiocesan Youth Chaplain and Youth Worker coming to the university to celebrate a "Taize Mass". Over the years there had also been erratic ACTS representation in the Church's deanery youth structures, and some neighbouring parishes had provided financial assistance for students to attend the national conference.

2.3.8 The Role of the Chaplain and Adult Companions

When I arrived in November 1996, the expectation of the role of the chaplain was structurally focused primarily on the celebration of the Sunday Mass and the preaching within it, concluding with birthday blessings, and with occasional participation in the committee meetings thereafter. Furthermore, there was a tradition of being available for a few hours on Thursday afternoons, for catechesis, confession, consultation and counselling, concluding with a Mass.

I continued in this role, while developing it in a variety of ways. I began attending most committee meetings, since that was the space where I could keep in touch with developments and assist, where necessary, with reflection on the role and functioning of ACTS. A number of students soon started coming to me asking about baptism and confirmation, so I decided to start a catechumenal/confirmation group. A liturgy group also became necessary to encourage the creative participation of the students. I brought in two students for the priesthood from my religious community to assist me in the chaplaincy, one of whom began coordinating the catechumenal group, and the other the liturgy group. In addition to these initiatives, over the next two years the students also took up other suggestions I made to have a committee training day and a Paschal Meal, to start a discussion group around student issues, and to have a day retreat away. I furthermore organised some guest speakers.

Although a number of new initiatives were taking place, I felt frustrated in my role, which I primarily understood to be one of empowering the students so that they could run everything themselves, and have me as a backup. This was because there seemed so little space and time for reflection and discussion, which were necessary if empowerment was to take place. I also realised that real motivation of students took place through personal encounters, which I had

little time for (being very part-time), much as I would have loved to visit students more.

I am afraid that my frustration became evident at times, especially in meetings when progress was not being made, resulting in me making many interventions. My proactive participation eventually provoked a revolt from the students towards the end of 1998. One Sunday night, after the chairperson had decided that a committee meeting was not necessary, I insisted that the committee should meet to finalise a number of outstanding arrangements for the Confirmation Mass with the Archbishop, which was taking place the following week. After this, they started organising meetings without me, since they felt I was acting more like a chairperson, and intervening too much, which prevented students feeling free to speak (ACTS UNP 1998). Although the chairperson reported this to me, it was not until the following March that I was able to meet with the committee to confront the problem. Meanwhile I was excluded from making any interventions or suggestions, other than those pertaining directly to my function, as plans for the new year were being made.

This was a very painful time for me. However, I could immediately acknowledge the positiveness of this development, namely, that the students were claiming their power to make their own decisions, and hence to take full responsibility themselves for their organisation, free of any dependence on me. Even if it was happening in a messy and hurtful way, this was precisely what I had understood the goal of my ministry to be, and maybe such a rupture was necessary to provoke the transition to a new stage of responsibility.

When we eventually met in March, I was able to explain my dilemma in making my intervention that Sunday night that proved to be so offensive. However, I grew to appreciate how my style of intervention could be undermining for a number of students, and how important it was for a chaplain to minimise his interventions, to enable the students to grapple with issues themselves, and to learn from their own mistakes. Thereafter, we developed a very creative collaboration, which was probably a major factor in the growth of ACTS as a community in 1999.

Although the chaplain is normally the key adult companion in the university Catholic student community, I did not see it as a job I had to do alone. So, from the outset, I developed a chaplaincy team with the two students for the priesthood from my religious community. They, in turn, were able to play a valuable role in relating to the students more as peers, and our common reflections enabled the development of a more effective ministry.

I had a similar perspective in making contact with, and trying to bring together the university staff. Besides ministering to their own needs, I hoped we could develop a collaboration in ministering to the students together. So, after calling all the staff together for a meeting in 1997, I maintained contact with them, and put them in contact with the student leaders, and

we invited them to some significant liturgies and events. In 1999, at their request, we started a lunch-time Mass on campus, which drew a number of them together every now and again.

As a result, a number of them began to play an important backup role for the students, assisting with donations of money, especially in order to attend the national conference, with access to facilities, with development of skills (e.g. drawing up a questionnaire), and with transport when it was needed (e.g. to attend Easter services). I had also begun to involve some of them in preaching. I am sure, therefore, that this (often invisible) backup, too, played no small role in the growth of ACTS over this three-year period.

2.4 Conclusion of Observations

In this chapter, I have attempted to render a *thick* description, i.e. a multi-dimensional view, of the phenomenon of the ACTS branch at UNP, and my ministry within it, in order to bring out the richness of the community in its structure, concerns, and direction. It has revealed a path of growth over the three -year period under consideration, in which, despite the majority of students remaining uninvolved, a greater sense of community amongst a growing core group developed, giving rise to a more fruitful and effective ministry amongst them. It has also revealed a number of the underlying factors that contributed to this growth.

It has been a critical hermeneutical (interpretative) description from my point of view as the chaplain to the community, who is both a participant and an observer. Out of this description, a number of questions have emerged which require a deeper reflection to enable us to formulate a more effective pastoral response. These questions broadly cluster around the issues of *participation, values, and faith.*

The questions emerging about *participation* are: Why did the Whites leave? Why was there erratic attendance at Mass? What gave rise to the reasons given for this, viz. study pressure, the reaction to longer services, and the need for more entertainment or enjoyment? Why did so many students have financial difficulties, and what implications did this have for their participation? Why was there so little commitment to participation in the music group, the discussion group, and in training for ministries? On the other hand, why was the reaction to special liturgies different? Finally, why were most Catholic students not interested in ACTS, and especially beyond the local campus?

The questions emerging about *values* are: What has given rise to the despair of finding friendship, love and intimacy amongst so many students? How come sex is taken for granted as part and parcel of relationships, and is seen as unconnected to commitment? What gives rise to unfaithfulness, multiple relationships, and lack of commitment being the norm? What gives rise to the fact that many students do not know their fathers, that they find this

debilitating, and yet many have a casual attitude to single parenthood? Why is there a predominant spirit of competition and individualism, and little concern for social issues? And finally, what are the obstacles to many students embracing death?

The questions emerging about *faith* are: Why could the Catholic students not defend themselves against attacks on their faith? Why was the dominant image of Christians on campus that of narrow people focused only on prayer? What gives rise to ecclesiastical liberalism and a privatised view of faith? And finally, what are the obstacles to people forgiving themselves?

We will now move to attempt to answer these questions by doing a deeper analysis of the condition of the students in ACTS at UNP, using the mediations (lenses) of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. This will take us a step closer towards identifying the theoretical material object (Boff 1987:xxiv), upon which we need to make a theological judgement in order to answer the question about relevant forms of ministry for university students today.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROOTS OF THE STUDENTS' CONDITION IN ACTS AT UNP

The primary aim of this present work is to explore ways of assisting university students to grow in faith and commitment at what is probably the most critical stage in their life-journey. The students in question are all in the stage of "young adulthood...[when] a person begins self-consciously to reflect on the meaning of life itself....The power and vulnerability of young adulthood lie in the experience of the dissolution and recomposition of the meaning of self and world and its challenges to faith" (Parks 1991:xii).

I will therefore begin this analysis by identifying the distinctive features of this stage through a psychological mediation. This will be followed up with an exploration of the sociological and anthropological roots of the students' behaviour, attitudes and faith through a socio-cultural mediation.

3.1 Psychological Roots

In order to comprehend the psychological processes at play in the university students at their particular stage of development, they need to be seen in their integral relation to the whole life cycle (Irwin 1975:9). I will therefore trace some elements of the psychological development that people go through from infancy to old age, as articulated by Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, and James Fowler, with special focus on the stages of adolescence and young adulthood. I will then deepen their insights with those articulated by other developmental theorists (Sharon Parks, William Perry, Kenneth Keniston, Carol Gilligan and Dan McAdams), and use them all to answer some of the questions arising for a deeper understanding of the UNP ACTS group.

Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg and Fowler each identify an aspect of human growth through different stages. While the number of stages differs for each, there is a remarkable degree of convergence amongst them all.

Piaget and Kohlberg (representing the structural-developmental school) focus on the structures of thought and reasoning - Piaget in the realm of cognitive development, and Kohlberg in the realm of moral reasoning (Fowler 1981:50). Piaget identifies four stages of cognitive development: the development of increasingly complex structures (or capacities) in human beings to receive, compose, and know their world, in interaction with their environment (Parks 1991:33). Kohlberg, on the other hand, identifies six stages of moral reasoning: the reasons people give for their moral behaviour (Kohlberg 1981:16). However,

they affirm that these stages, while dependent on maturation and time, are not tied to them. Movement from one structural-developmental stage to another is not automatic or inevitable, since it is also dependent on a sponsoring environment. So, for Piaget, when a person's previously composed structures of knowing are unable to grasp or "assimilate" an image received from the environment, the structures must change - requiring "accommodation" (Parks 1991:34-35). Consequently, many adults do not attain Piaget's fourth, and Kohlberg's fifth stages, "arresting" in an intermediate stage (Fowler 1981:50).

Erikson (standing in the psychoanalytic tradition) focuses more broadly on personality development, in interaction with the persons, institutions and cultural meanings at hand (Fowler 1981:50). He identifies eight stages of psychosocial development, in each of which the self is required to accomplish a task essential to healthy functioning. During each stage the individual is confronted with a crisis with respect to this task. One either accomplishes the task and moves forward towards the next stage, or, failing that, regresses to an earlier level of adjustment (Irwin 1975:9). The successful resolution of each crisis gives rise to a "virtue", while a failure to do so results in a basic antipathy or pathology. Each virtue is also rooted in a basic element of society - some institution or tradition - that human development both gives rise to and is dependent upon (Parks 1991:32).

Along with Freud, he attends to the functioning of the "depth unconscious" and to the dynamics of repression and defense (Fowler 1981:50). He thus has a strong biological and psychosexual orientation, with each developmental stage being tied to biological maturation. Thus people go through these stages "ready or not" as biological changes inevitably unfold across a lifetime (Parks 1991:32). However, the adult stages are less closely tied to biological maturation than are the stages of childhood and adolescence (Fowler 1981:48).

Fowler draws on both the above "schools" in his construction of stages of faith development, relating structural stages of faith to the predictable crises and challenges of developmental eras, while taking life histories seriously (Fowler 1981:105).

He identifies six stages of faith, with a pre-stage in infancy. He refers to faith as "our way of discerning and committing ourselves to centres of value and power that exert ordering force in our lives" (Fowler 1981:24-25). It is to set one's heart on someone or something, which is not always religious in its content or context. He sees it in the light of Paul Tillich's view of one's "ultimate concern", which may or may not find its expression in institutional or cultic religious forms (Fowler 1981:4).

We will now turn to look at the stages identified by the different theorists, and how they relate to one another.

3.1.1 Stages of Development

3.1.1.1 Infancy

Piaget characterises the first stage of cognitive development, the first eighteen months of infancy, as the *Sensorimotor Stage*. It begins without any thought, only a series of actions by which the baby orients itself to the world, which is a relatively formless sequence of stimuli. It then goes through a gradual process of differentiating itself from a world which comes to be experienced as separate, permanent, and having its own dynamic. This stage shows the marks of genuine intelligence, though it is prelinguistic and presymbolic (Fowler 1981:54).

Erikson sees the infant having to deal with its first crisis of *Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust* (insecurity and anxiety) (Erikson 1971:96-97). Through loving care, the infant can get a sense that the world is benign, predictable and trustworthy. However, when this bliss gets disturbed by teething or weaning, as the caretaker is separated through other commitments, a sense of mistrust develops. The lasting effects of this deprivation can be minimised if the early unity is deeply satisfying, and the inevitable changes are introduced gently. The successful resolution of this crisis gives rise to the virtue of *hope* - that fervent wishes are attainable. The social institution that confirms this is *religion* - the shared ritual of a trusted community. A failure to deal positively with this crisis leads to the antipathy or pathology of *withdrawal* (Wulff 1997:376).

Following on Erikson's thinking, Fowler sees this period as a pre-stage of *Undifferentiated Faith*, where the seeds of trust, courage, hope and love are either sown or not, either underlying or undermining any future faith development. If there is a deficiency of basic trust or a relational experience of mutuality, it can result either in excessive narcissism in which the experience of being "central" continues to dominate and distort mutuality, or in isolation (failed mutuality) (Fowler 1981:121).

3.1.1.2 Early Childhood

Piaget's second stage, from two to six years, he calls the stage of *Preoperational or Intuitive Thinking*, when the child begins to use language to express and explore experience. The child remains *egocentric*, i.e. limited to her or his own perspective on and feelings about things (Fowler 1981:56). There is still not enough mental capacity to make logical steps in thinking, which is dominated by *perception or intuition*, i.e. things are as they seem to be - not as they are.

Erikson identifies two stages during this period. The first (his Stage Two), at age two to three, confronts the child with the crisis of *Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt* (Erikson 1971:107-114). The child achieves a sense of autonomy if he or she can gain self-control with felt boundaries, and act separately from others without jeopardising basic trust. Excessive parental restraint results in doubt and shame, which is a sense of being seen or exposed before one is ready, and thus revealing vulnerability or deficiency (Fowler 1981:59). If there is firm but trusting guidance, the child will develop the virtue of *will*, the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint. In its absence, the antipathy of slavish *compulsion* and wilful *impulsivity* can result. The virtue of will is affirmed in a social context of mutually agreed-upon privileges and obligations safeguarded by the *principle of law and order* (courts of law, or political and economic regulations) (Wulff 1997:377).

The second stage that Erikson identifies during this period (his Stage Three), the *Play Age* from four to six years, confronts the child with the crisis of *Initiative versus Guilt* (Erikson 1971:115-122). Having acquired new capacities for independent and vigorous movement, for understanding (and misunderstanding) language, and for imagining wild and sometimes terrifying possibilities, the child engages in aggressive activity and exuberant discovery. Initiative is achieved when the child is able to undertake, plan, and "attack" a task. However, if fantasies are repressed, and rage is denied, the child takes on guilt, which is the internalised admonitory voice of parental prohibition (Fowler 1981:59). Where the child can be guided to regulate instinctual energy and controlling conscience in the "intermediate" reality of infantile play, the virtue of *purpose* can emerge. This is the courage to envisage and pursue valued goals uninhibited by the defeat of infantile fantasies, by guilt, and by the foiling fear of punishment. Failing this, the antipathy of *inhibition*, and consequent vindictiveness, emerges. The societal support for such 'initiative' is in an *economic order* that fosters a "truly free sense of enterprise" (Wulff 1997:377).

Kohlberg identifies his first stage of moral reasoning during the latter stage of this period, which he calls *Heteronomous Morality* or *Punishment and Obedience* (Kohlberg 1981:17). Synchronising with Erikson's third stage crisis of initiative versus guilt, Kohlberg sees the rightness and wrongness of actions at this stage being determined by anticipated punishment or reward (Fowler 1981:58). Since power lies outside of the child, it is that power that exacts obedience that determines what is right.

Fowler also locates his first stage of faith, *Intuitive-Projective Faith*, in this period. With cognitive egocentrism still reigning, the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced to imitate the examples, moods, actions and stories of the visible faith of significant adults. Also, since logical processes have not yet begun, the imaginative processes underlying fantasy are unrestrained. The strength of this stage, then, is *imagination*, having the capacity

to represent the world in powerful, and unifying images that also serve to orient the child towards ultimate reality. However, there is a danger of becoming overwhelmed by *terrifying images*, or of being exploited by images used to compel moral or doctrinal conformity, such as an angry God (Wulff 1997:401).

3.1.1.3 Childhood

In Piaget's third stage, from seven to twelve years, called *Concrete Operational Thinking*, the child can start thinking logically with operations like arithmetic. However, this logic operates only in the concrete - with what can be seen. We might say that the concrete operational mind reflects *with* the operations of logical thought, but it does not yet reflect *upon* these operations (Fowler 1981:65).

This coincides with Erikson's fourth stage, the *School Age*, which confronts the child with the crisis of *Industry versus Inferiority* (Erikson 1971:122-128). It is a time of sexual latency, and systematic instruction - with energy going into learning to utilize one's physical and intellectual capacities in potentially productive work, and thus developing a sense of industry. But if success eludes the child, a sense of inadequacy or inferiority will likely follow. When industry is rewarded, the foundations are laid for the virtue of *competence*, in the absence of which, its antipathy, *inertia or self-estrangement*, emerges. The institutional underpinnings of competence lie in the *technological order* and the ethos of production (Wulff 1997:378).

Kohlberg calls his second stage of moral thinking *Instrumental Exchange* (Kohlberg 1981:xxviii). While the child is now able to undertake concrete operations, egocentrism is even more evident than in the previous stage, but with a difference. Now the child is aware of and must take other's needs, interests and claims into account. There is a recognition that in order to get others to assent to or cooperate in the achievement one's own goals, one must be prepared to reciprocate. Rightness or wrongness are therefore determined by honouring reciprocal rights and claims - an understanding of justice and fairness (Fowler 1981:66).

Hard on the heels of Piaget and Kohlberg, Fowler calls his second stage of faith *Mythic-Literal Faith*. The rise of concrete operations leads to the curbing of imagination, while beliefs and symbols are seen in one-dimensional and literal terms. *Story, drama and myth* become the major way of giving unity and value to experience, with a strong focus on *reciprocal fairness* and justice (Fowler 1981:149). However, the literalness and concrete reciprocity taken together can lead to self-righteous perfectionism, or a feeling of badness and unworthiness if significant others mistreat or reject the child (Wulff 1997:402).

3.1.1.4 Adolescence

Piaget's fourth and final stage of cognitive development, *Formal Operational Thought*, begins with the onset of adolescence, at about age thirteen. While the concrete operational child reflects on events and relationships within the flow of his or her life, the adolescent begins to be able to reflect on the life course from "above" or "beside" it. It enables *thinking about thinking* (Fowler 1981:69-71). Possibilities can now be imagined beyond concrete realities, unlike the previous stage.

Adolescence constitutes Erikson's fifth stage (from thirteen to twenty years), when the young person is confronted with the crisis of *Identity versus Role Confusion* (Erikson 1971:128-135). Having acquired new thought processes, and with evidence of physical change, society develops new expectations of the adolescent who is in a stage of suspension between the ways of childhood and the responsibilities of adulthood. It is therefore a time for role playing and experimentation (Irwin 1975:11), a time to take risks (Plant & Plant 1992:2), as a means of achieving a lasting sense of inner unity and of settling on some occupational role. The adolescent therefore gets easily bored in dwelling on one item for too long (Kiwory 1985:10). One's identity is especially clarified at this stage by "falling in love", i.e. by projecting one's diffuse ego image on another, and by seeing it reflected (Fowler 1981:76-77).

To meet society's expectations, the adolescent will easily latch on to resonant ideologies, particularly those embodied in charismatic and convincing leaders, often to the point of total identity loss. Temporary enemies are often sought, over against whom one's identity may be clarified, and many join some clique which emphasizes a symbol of shared identity, and that cruelly excludes outsiders. This tests the member's capacity to pledge *fidelity* (the virtue of this stage), which is the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions of value systems. This is inspired by the acceptance and affirmation of one's peers and sustained at a societal level by *Ideology*. However, fidelity can only emerge if adults can provide values that attract the loyalty and energies of youth, as well as identify objects worthy of its repudiation. Otherwise fidelity's antipathy, *role repudiation (delinquency)* will result (Wulff 1997:379), manifesting itself in the shirking of responsibility (Irwin 1975:11).

Kohlberg's third stage marks the beginning of the conventional level of moral judgement (the two previous stages operating at a preconventional level), which he calls *Mutual Interpersonal Relations or Interpersonal Conformity* (Kohlberg 1981:xxviii). In this stage, actions are right if they conform to the expectations of one's "significant others", since pleasing them is a powerful motive. Another moral criterion is doing what people expect of a person in the role one occupies, eg. a good husband, a good friend. Although being subjected

to societal expectations, the adolescent does not yet take a truly societal perspective, with moral reasoning remaining within the realm of interpersonal relationships (Fowler 1981:74-75).

Fowler's third stage, *Synthetic-Conventional Faith*, emerges in adolescence, but he believes that most people do not ever go beyond it. It is conventional or conformist in Kohlberg's sense in that it is shaped by the expectations of significant others, without an autonomous identity. And it is synthetic in the sense that beliefs and values (ideologies) are tacitly and uncritically taken for granted, providing a master plan that offers a unified global wholeness. Symbols, then, as expressive of one's deepest meanings and loyalties, become inseparable from what they symbolize. Again Fowler converges with Kohlberg in identifying how social relations at this stage are constructed as extensions of interpersonal relationships, with a lack of awareness of a sense of "system" (Fowler 1981:161-164).

The risks at this stage are the overinternalising of other's expectations and judgements, which can jeopardize the later development of autonomy, and a vulnerability to interpersonal betrayal. This may result either in despair about an ultimate personal reality or in a compensatory intimacy with it that is disconnected from other spheres of relationship (Wulff 1997:402).

3.1.1.5 Young Adulthood

Erikson's sixth stage emerges between the years twenty one and thirty five, when the young adult is confronted with the crisis of *Intimacy versus Isolation* (Erikson 1971:135-137). The capacity now exists to fuse one's identity with the identity of others in commitment to intimate relationship, even though it might call for significant sacrifices and compromises. When a fear of a loss of the self causes avoidance or withdrawal from situations of intimacy, a deep sense of isolation and a resulting self-absorption may result (Fowler 1981:80).

The successful resolution of this crisis brings out the virtue of *love*, which is selfless care given to others, and mutuality of devotion which enables the subduing of inherent antagonisms. This intimacy and love finds support in the *patterns of relationship* a society defines and facilitates. Some *exclusivity* is also required, but as love's antipathy, it may also become destructive (Wulff 1997:379).

Kohlberg's fourth stage, which he calls *Social System and Conscience Maintenance* still operates at the conventional level, but is now able to go beyond interpersonal modes, and take the perspective of the social system as a whole (Kohlberg 1981:xxviii). Those in this stage have a concern for *law and order*, with rightness or wrongness (and therefore justice) being

determined by legitimate authority or rules (Fowler 1981:79). This is why university students especially are always at the forefront of political protests, having a fresh critique of the system. Kohlberg maintains that most people do not go beyond this stage.

Fowler's fourth stage, *Individuative-Reflective Faith*, marks the transition to taking seriously the burden of responsibility for one's own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes. This comes from the realisation that those one has relied on do not agree with each other, which *relativises* what was previously certain. This can be freeing for many, but disturbing for others, who will then revert back to an authority-oriented faith. Furthermore, the critical questioning of this stage results in a *demythologizing* of the religious symbol or ritual which disrupts the intimate relationship between it and its felt meaning, bringing a sense of loss, but also the possibility of clarifying and communicating meaning (Fowler 1981:182-183).

The emerging strength of this stage is the capacity to reflect critically on personal identity and ideology. The dangers consist of overconfidence in the powers of conscious reflection and the temptation to assimilate other's perspectives, and even reality itself, to one's own limited world view (Wulff 1997:402).

3.1.1.6 Adulthood

Erikson's seventh stage arises in middle adulthood, around thirty-five years of age, when the adult is confronted with crisis of *Generativity versus Stagnation* (Erikson 1971:138-139). All adults need to be needed - to receive guidance and encouragement from those who are the objects of their productivity and care. A positive resolution of this crisis enables the adult to have generativity, which is the readiness to care for and nurture the next generation, and all they will need to become generative in their own generation. The failure of self-absorbed adults to find ways of contributing to such nurture leads to a deep-felt sense of stagnation. This can bring regression to an obsessive need for pseudo-intimacy, where they begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own - or one another's - one and only child (Fowler 1981:85).

The virtue of this stage is *Care*, and there is no one societal institution that safeguards it, since all institutions codify the ethics of generative succession. *Rejectivity* is the antipathy to sympathy and care, although some of it is always necessary in showing care (Wulff 1997:380).

Kohlberg calls his fifth stage *Social Contract and Individual (Prior) Rights* (Kohlberg 1981:xxviii). This is the first stage of what he calls the Postconventional Principled Level, where people define their moral values and principles apart from the authority of the groups

or people holding them, and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups. In this stage, rightness is determined by mutual agreement - by what people together decide is right. However, it also goes beyond this in seeing rightness as determined by human rights that exist prior to social contracts. So, at this stage, most social rules and laws are recognised as important to uphold, but relative, except those upholding fundamental rights like life, liberty, and freedom from oppression, which are inviolable (Fowler 1981:83).

Fowler's fifth stage, *Conjunctive Faith*, involves a process of integration on coming to an awareness of the paradoxes of life that show up the certainties of stage four to have limitations, and then being able to live with such paradox. It senses deeper possibilities within the self, and develops Ricoeur's "second naivete", a postcritical attitude that enables the power of symbols to be rediscovered in a new way. Becoming conscious of relativism in the world, a person in this stage of faith is able to genuinely open up to the truths of other communities and traditions, while maintaining a loyalty to his or her own. Commitment to justice is now freed from the confines of tribe, class, religious community or nation. And there is also a readiness to give of oneself to help others to generate identity and meaning (Fowler 1981:197-198).

The emergent strength of this stage is the *ironic imagination*, the capacity to become engaged by symbolic expressions, even while recognising their relativity and ultimate inadequacy for representing transcendent reality. The danger here is becoming *paralysed* by the irresolvable paradoxes, giving rise to complacency and cynical withdrawal (Wulff 1997:403).

3.1.1.7 Old Age

Erikson's final stage, after the age of sixty, arises when the mature person is confronted with the crisis of *Integrity versus Despair* (Erikson 1971:139-141*)*. If the preceding seven stages have been successfully managed, a sense of integrity, wholeness and coherence becomes possible in old age. Integrity is the acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as something that had to be, and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions - an acceptance most tangibly evident in a courageous facing of death (Wulff 1997:380). On the other hand, the lack of ego integrity is reflected in despair - an inability to accept elements of the life that has passed. There is now no time to start again, and so death is approached with fear and disgust.

When ego integrity outweighs despair, the virtue of *wisdom* is found, being detached concern with life itself, in the face of death, although even the wise are naturally inclined to react to weakness and helplessness with *disdain* - wisdom's antipathic counterpart. Wisdom's essence is provided by a living *religious or philosophical tradition* (Wulff 1997:381).

Erikson's schema thus takes us full circle, with the integrity of old age contributing to the possibility of trust and hope of the first stage.

Kohlberg's sixth and final stage he calls *Universal Ethical Principles*, where rightness is determined by what is universally good (Kohlberg 1981:xxviii). This is only possible for one who has a moral imagination informed enough and detached enough from his or her own interests to accurately take the perspective of every person or group affected by a policy or action being considered (Fowler 1981:84).

Fowler's sixth and final stage, *Universalizing Faith*, he sees being attained by only a few exceptional individuals. They are those who are able to achieve *decentration from self*, through an expanded appreciation of the world as it is experienced by diverse others; and *emptying of self*, through a detachment that follows from radical decentration (Fowler 1981:199-201). Such people embrace the whole human community and demonstrate an all-consuming commitment to justice and love, becoming selfless proponents for a redeemed world. The main danger of this stage is martyrdom at the hands of those threatened by the universalizer's subversive vision and leadership (Wulff 1997:403).

3.1.1.8 Conclusion

I have dealt with these stages of psychological development at some length, because I believe that the perspective of the integrity of the life cycle that they illuminate will greatly assist an understanding of the behaviour and attitudes of the students in ACTS at UNP. Erikson's articulation of the wounds that we remain with through not having resolved earlier crises in our lives is particularly helpful. However, we will only be able to use these tools to full effect in answering the questions we have raised once we have also identified the socio-cultural roots of the students' condition. Meanwhile, having identified the stages of development articulated by these "classical" developmental theorists, we are now in a position to embark on a deeper exploration of the psychological context of university students in particular.

3.1.2 The Stage of University Students

All the developmental theorists that we have explored, despite their focus on different aspects, trace a common starting point, process, and goal. They see life as a process beginning with egocentrism and gradually evolving (although not inevitably) towards decentred self-transcendence. From their theories we can deduce that university students are young people at the critical point of transition in this process from childhood to adulthood, overlapping the stages of adolescence (13-20 years) and young adulthood (20-35 years).

A number of theorists who have focussed particularly on students in higher education, particularly Kenneth Keniston, William Perry, and Sharon Parks, take the discourse further in deepening our understanding of the stage and process of development of university students. Parks, in particular, has produced a seminal work on the subject in *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment* (1991).

While expressing great appreciation for the work of the "classical" developmental theorists, especially Piaget and Fowler, Parks criticises them for failing to address sufficiently the *content* of the formal *structures* of each stage of the human journey (Parks 1991:101-106). She emphasises the power of the images that the formal structures hold in contributing to the formation of the young adult, especially through the curriculum and faculty of higher education, and through the culture that higher education serves (:xvi-xvii), therefore necessitating an analysis of both higher education and culture.

A similar critique is shared by Dan McAdams, who is concerned about the process enabling conversion to take place, which involves not only a change in structure, but also of content (McAdams 1988:241-242). By content he refers to a concern for such topics as values, attitudes, and beliefs (:248).

Parks' emphasis on content is especially an echo of Carol Gilligan's critique of the ethical neutrality or cultural relativism of the so-called objective position of structural developmental theorists, especially Lawrence Kohlberg, which does not take values into account (Gilligan 1993:xvii-xviii). They therefore fail to acknowledge the reality of two different voices (content clusterings in ideology [McAdams 1988:248]), and hence their clear male bias in the telling of the story of human development (Gilligan 1993:10).

According to Gilligan, one voice (largely masculine, eg. Kohlberg's) identifies morality with fairness (Gilligan 1993:19), which emphasises issues of justice, rights, and abstract principles (McAdams 1988:248). Hence it aims at achieving individuation and autonomy (Gilligan 1993:12), and focuses on the differentiation of subject from object (Parks 1991:39). In contrast to this more *individualistic* (:38) approach to human development, Gilligan identifies a second voice (which is largely feminine), which approaches it in *relational* terms, identifying morality with the activity of care (Gilligan 1993:19), which focuses on the relation that orients subject to object, self to truth (Parks 1991:39). Hence this voice emphasises compassion, care and concrete responsibilities to others (McAdams 1988:248).

To illustrate the difference in approach, Gilligan points to Erikson's sequence of a child forging an identity which precedes intimacy and generativity in the optimal cycle of human

separation and attachment. While this might be the case for a man, for a woman the two tasks seem to be fused. For her intimacy goes along with identity, as she comes to know herself through her relationships with others. In the male life cycle, however, there is little preparation for the intimacy of the first adult stage. Besides the initial stage of trust versus mistrust, which suggests the type of mutuality that Erikson means by intimacy and generativity, the other stages all focus on separation (individuation), with the ideal of evolving an autonomous, initiating, industrious self, with which development comes to be identified. Consequently, attachments appear to be developmental impediments, as is repeatedly the case in the assessment of women (Gilligan 1993:12-13).[1]

Parks therefore attempts to address this deficiency in developmental theory with an extensive focus on the content of the formal structures of the human journey. She embarks on a re-examination of Fowler's third and fourth stages, building on the insights of Perry (1970), who identifies nine positions or forms of composing truth through which students in higher education make their way. She collapses, modifies, and extends these into four positions, comprising what she suggests should be an additional stage of development, called *young adulthood*, between Fowler's third and fourth stages - a stage between a conventionally assumed faith and a critically appropriated faith (Parks 1991:xvi). Fowler's fourth and fifth stages would then refer to *tested adults* and *mature adults* (:94).

Parks justifies the need for identifying a separate stage for students in higher education, since the previous assumption that students emerge from these years with a critically aware sense of responsibility for self and world no longer holds up in modern times (Parks 1991:2). Many students move back home after university, and remain financially dependent on their parents for some years (a reality equally present at UNP). This reflects the reality of a *prolonged adolescence* (Erikson 1971:156), and shows the difficulty in achieving adulthood - a confident and secure sense of self in relation to one's world - in a cultural climate marked by change in every dimension of knowledge (Parks 1991:5). This bewilderment about when adulthood begins is also reflected in the church, where there is now an informal assumption that after confirmation (the traditional ritual marking becoming adult in faith) the young people will tend to leave for some time, but hopefully return "when they have children" - read, "when they are adults" (:3).

The four positions which Parks identifies in the development of students are not unique. Indeed, Gallagher (1998:5) notes that practically all recent developmental explorers identify a similar pattern which he neatly describes as movements from *convention* through *confusion* to *commitment* and later on towards *compassion*. Nevertheless Parks deepens this pattern by

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[1]   This could be a contributing factor in explaining the results of a survey of South African youth, which found the men to have a poorer self-image than women (Everatt & Orkin 1993:30).

tracing it through three discrete yet intimately inter-related strands of development: form of cognition, form of dependence, and form of community, which respectively relate to the human needs for knowing, trusting and belonging (Parks 1991:43). We will now explore the process of development of university students through her lenses.

3.1.2.1 Development of the Form of Cognition

The path of cognition begins with an *authority-bound and dualistic* form of knowing. What a person trusts, knows, and believes is based on some external authority, which is uncritically assumed to have access to the truth, and there is little or no tolerance for ambiguity about what is considered right (Parks 1991:44-45). Many arrive at university with this mode of composing meaning intact: for others it has already begun to dissolve (Perry 1970:79-88).

When established patterns of thinking cannot accommodate lived experience, and when the student begins to recognise the validity of competing points of view that cannot easily be reconciled into categories of truth and untruth, the student shifts to the second form of knowing, which is *unqualified relativism*. This is an awareness that all knowledge is relative. It can offer a new power and freedom from the assumptions of his or her conventional world, but at the cost of an earlier certainty (Parks 1991:47-49).

A position of unqualified relativism is, however, difficult to sustain over time. When one then discovers that some points of view are more plausible than others, and when choices, especially moral choices, have to be made, the student must look for a place to stand, and so moves to the third position of cognition, viz. *commitment within realism* - discerning what is adequate, worthy and valuable, while aware of the finite nature of all judgements. It is this movement that is most characteristic of the young adult in the university years (Parks 1991:49-50).

The final form of knowing that Parks identifies is *convictional commitment*, which she believes does not emerge until after midlife, corresponding with Fowler's fifth stage (normally in the late thirties). It enables a new capacity to hear the truth of another without abandoning the centred authority of the self, and a disciplined fidelity to the truth (Parks 1991:50-51).

3.1.2.2 Development of the Form of Dependence

In tracing the strand of development of the *form of dependence*, which is a manifestation of relationship and which focuses on what a person *feels* as opposed to how he or she *thinks* in the form of cognition, Parks again identifies four movements which synchronise with the movements of cognition.

The path begins with a *dependence* upon and trust in an uncritically assumed authority, leading to a need for distance from that authority in order to explore and test truth for oneself. This gives rise to *counterdependence*, which is opposition to that authority who is still in control. Yet, in time, a person may begin to recognise that the authority does not hold ultimate truth or power, leading to a lessening of resistance, and a greater recognition and valuing of the self. This is the third movement of *inner-dependence*, which is different to the individualistic notions of independence or autonomy which associate all forms of dependence with weakness or immaturity. Inner-dependence, rather, acknowledges dependence as integral to the relational dimension of all being, while beginning to listen and to be responsive to the self as a source of authority and as an object of care (Parks 1991:53-58).

When the trustworthiness of the inner self is confirmed, and one is more at home with the limitations and strengths of the self, transition to the fourth movement of *interdependence* becomes possible, since one can then be more at home with the truth embedded in the strengths and limitations of others. Trust is now centred not in the assumed authority of another, nor in the authority of the inner self, but in the meeting of self and other, recognising the strengths and finitude of each and the promise of the truth that emerges in relation (Parks 1991:58-59).

3.1.2.3 Development of the Form of Community

Parks' third strand of adult development, viz. form of community, focuses on human dependence upon a *network of belonging* for the confirmation of care and promise. As with the form of dependence, we are apt to feel uncomfortable if our need for community is strong, due to the domination of the notion of independence in adult psychology. However, this is a need that we never outgrow - only the form it takes undergoes transformation (Parks 1991:61-63).

The path of four movements begins with *conventional community*: where one belongs because one is located by birth or other circumstance in an assumed context. One's world is circumscribed and bound by those sharing one's class norms and interests, eg. ethnic-familial ties, social class norms, or a religious system. However, as one wants to know for oneself, it requires a relinquishing of assumed norms of relationship, moving to an experience of *diffuse community*, bringing both a new freedom and a new vulnerability corresponding to unqualified relativism. In order to develop commitment within relativism, one is then dependent upon a form of community which will both represent and confirm a new pattern of knowing and being: a *self-selected group*, where one's network of belonging may be constituted by those holding similar political, religious, and philosophical views and values.

The final movement, *community open to others*, which is manifest in a commitment to inclusive community marked by justice and love, becomes possible when we encounter the "other", in a Piagetian sense, in such a way that their truth can no longer be avoided with any honesty. This leads to a recognition of the "other" as "other". This form of community, like all the other fourth positions, only appears to be composed in the post-midlife period (Parks 1991:61-69).

3.1.2.4 Conclusion

From all that we have discussed, it is evident that university students are at a stage of significant change in their lives. Moving from an authority-bound, conventional way of viewing the world, through the confusion of the relativism that their new experiences, especially in the university context, give rise to, they are struggling to find a standpoint from which they can make choices and commitments.

The stage is best characterised by what Parks (1991:85) terms *young adult*, building on what Keniston (1971:5-9) refers to as *the postadolescent-not-yet-adult*. She synthesises the variety of stages that Perry (1970:134-176) identifies in the discovery of relativism and commitment (*commitment foreseen, initial commitment, orientation in implications of commitment*, and *developing commitments*), and she refers to it as a period of postadolescent *probing commitment* (Parks 1991:82). They are full of hope, promise and possibility, but at the same time vulnerable to disappointment, failure, exclusion, abandonment, emptiness, and hopelessness (:88).

All this is occurring because (in Erikson's terms) they are still struggling to come to terms with the crises of *Identity versus Role Confusion* of adolescence, and *Intimacy versus Isolation* of young adulthood. In addition, many have not yet positively resolved the crises of the earlier stages, the wounds of which remain obstacles to their personal growth and happiness.

What has also emerged has been the conviction that the key factor enabling students to negotiate this difficult path and be able to make commitments is the availability of a nurturing, mentoring community (Perry 1970:213). If this is not available or discovered during this period, the student may never have another opportunity to grow in commitment since, as McAdams has found, 'profound ideological change after young adulthood is relatively rare. The adolescent or young adult consolidates his or her most fundamental beliefs very early in the course of constructing the life story (McAdams 1988:241-242).

3.1.3 Manifestations of the "Young Adult Stage" in ACTS at UNP

This psychological analysis helps us to understand more deeply many of the dynamics that have taken place in ACTS at UNP over the period under consideration. The over-riding fact of having discovered the late adolescent relativism of all reality, with its consequent confusion, and yet freedom from conventional norms and expectations, can probably significantly account for the lack of concentration, perseverance and commitment of the majority of students in activities and leadership of the community. Along with the struggle to find a standpoint in order to make choices, which is an invitation to experimentation, it is not surprising that there was erratic attendance at ACTS events in the face of so many other options and doubts.

This movement from an authority-bound, conventional way of viewing the world towards the confrontation with relativism can also help us account for a number of the questions about faith emerging from the description of the ACTS UNP community. The embarrassment of many students to profess their Catholic faith was rooted in their ignorance of it, and hence in their inability to defend themselves against attacks on it. Many of them clearly had arrived at university with a conventional faith that they had uncritically adhered to. So, when they were confronted with relativism and its accompanying scepticism of all conventional beliefs, or with other articulate Christian opponents, they felt very vulnerable. Similarly, they were afraid of being identified with the dominant image of Christians on campus, namely as narrow people focused only on prayer, who simply appealed to a different conventional authority. And the widespread ecclesiastical liberalism, manifested in students shopping around different churches oblivious of any substantial difference between them, can partly be put down to the prevailing relativism, including that of all faiths. Finally, the difficulty many students had in forgiving themselves can be partly understood in terms of their difficulty in reconciling the new behaviours that the university context gave rise to (even in themselves) with their continued adherence to a conventional faith, which defined sin as a guilt-provoking violation of a set of rules.

The fragility of young people at their stage of adolescence and young adulthood, as they struggle to discover their identity and intimacy through interpersonal relationships can account for the preoccupations with issues of sex and friendship amongst the ACTS students. Furthermore, their opposition to my role as a chaplain in 1998 was also a reflection of their need for distance in order to clarify their own identity as well as mine, in a manifestation of counterdependence (Parks 1991:55). Their action therefore constituted a movement of growth towards inner-dependence, and hence assumption of responsibility.

Also, the movement described by Parks (1991:64-66) from diffuse community towards a self-

selected group was very evident over these three years. Focused on their Catholic identity, a closeness and friendship developed amongst many of them from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, enabling ACTS to become a nurturing and mentoring community, which helped many students in the clarification of their standpoints. However, it is now also clear that, for most White students, ACTS ceased to be a mentoring group (Parks 1991:89). When their conventional White community, with many White assumptions still intact, was challenged by the influx of many Black students, who represented an "otherness", the community was unable to help them deal with it, and so they left. This also points to the danger, about which Marstin warns, that ACTS can fall into, as an exclusive and comfortable self-selected group "that shapes a private truth - while the earth remains sick", and maybe even lead to "a diminished concern for others" (Parks 1991:68).

Along with Kohlberg and Fowler's insights that, at this stage, a sense of "system" has not yet evolved, and hence face-to-face interpersonal relationships remain the central focus, this dynamic of a self-selected group can also help us to understand why, for the majority of students, there was a lack of enthusiasm for issues of social concern, and for broader ACTS activities. This was often not the case in the apartheid years, probably because the political struggle provided the content (values, attitudes and hopes [McAdams 1988:248]) for the self-selected group, under the influence of the broader socio-political context, enabling the growth of much political commitment. However, in the aftermath of apartheid, this content was eroded, resulting in a vacuum of social motivation, and hence a reversion to the primary interpersonal focus of their stage.

Having identified the psychological structures to which the students have been capable of evolving, we now need to explore the content (the values, attitudes and images) which influenced the construction of their life stories. To this we now turn in a socio-cultural analysis.

3.2 Socio-Cultural Roots

The questions about participation, values, and faith, that emerged from the description of the ACTS community at UNP, reveal the key experiences which require deeper analysis to be the lack of commitment to participate, multiple sexual relationships, and a privatised view of faith. They all point to a loss of a sense of community, and a growth in the spirit of individualism. We will now explore the roots of this state of affairs at the broader societal level, and at the level of youth culture and education.

3.2.1 Globalisation and Cultural Transformation

3.2.1.1 An Age of Rapid Change

We can only fully understand the situation of university students today if we recognise that we are living in an age of rapid change, with 90% of all human discoveries/inventions ever made having been made this century (MBW 1987:12). As Kenneth Keniston succinctly describes it, it is

> a rate of social change so rapid that it threatens to make obsolete all institutions, values, methodologies and technologies within the lifetime of each generation; a technology that has created not only prosperity and longevity, but power to destroy the planet, whether through warfare or violation of nature's balance; a world of extraordinarily complex social organization, instantaneous communication and constant revolution.
>
> (Keniston 1971:5)

The starkest reminder of this is the fact that a computer made yesterday is already out of date today. Consequently, there is very little left in the world that has stability or any sense of permanence. This is largely due to the process referred to as *globalisation*.

3.2.1.2 Globalisation

Kevin McDonald (1998a) gives us a sober definition of what globalisation is all about. For him it is both a reality and an ideology. The reality is that we are living in a world made up of a new model of global networks of production, consumption, exchange and communication. Since the 1970's, this model has supplanted the model of economic development that dominated the 20th century, which focused on inner-directed development, social cohesion and nation building. Now it is a world of constant communication, where we increasingly need to be connected (:7-8).

However, globalisation is also ideology in the sense that it is the imposition (by the new dominant groups in the world) of a conception of social life that says that the nation-building state is not adequate, thereby necessitating the invention of a new reality, which is globalisation (McDonald 1998a:8).

Whichever way we assess it, it is necessary to acknowledge a fundamental starting point: the end of the model of the nation-building state, which has resulted in a widening gap of inequality between countries and within countries. For some states on the periphery, it represents a destruction of the state itself. It is giving rise to an experience of decomposition

and coming apart at the economic, administrative and moral levels (McDonald 1998a:8).

Thus, the global market reigns supreme, and all aspects of life are influenced and assessed by the law of market forces. Through the technological advances, the cultures of the world are colliding, resulting in a cultural pluralism, which relativises every authority to which faith may appeal (Parks 1991:185). In the relativising of every authority, Parks sees an interesting connection between the evolution of the human community in the contemporary world and the development of an emerging young adult moving through unqualified relativism, who is vulnerable, but also full of promise. This young-adult world must compose a new faith - a new sense of "self", "world", and "God" (:187), and a language (and images) of the interdependence of ultimate reality, that makes sense in a pluralistic world, must be reborn (:188)

In the increasing prevalence of "monoculturalism" (IMCS-IYCS International Committees 1999:1), no culture is left untouched, and, if not yet destroyed, is forced to adapt to survive in a world of fierce competition. In the face of such competition, economic inequalities abound alongside widespread poverty and unemployment. Everyone is left with a great sense of insecurity, with no certainty that they will have a livelihood tomorrow. It is therefore increasingly difficult to have any hope for the future, or to make any lasting commitments. In this sense globalisation is not only, or even primarily, an economic affair (McDonald 1998a:8).

However, it is not only negative. It is also enabling the creation of new spaces: of liberty; for more open societies; for the birth of a world public opinion (the increasing focus on non-governmental organisations [NGO's], international conferences of the United Nations, and international law). These open up many new avenues for action at the international level, and for creating new forms of solidarity. If one talks only of economic phenomena, one inevitably adopts a fatalistic vision (McDonald 1998a:8).

However, in order to turn globalisation into an opportunity so that it is not only a threat to society, McDonald suggests the importance of developing three thrusts. Firstly, there is a need to develop *economic actors*: people who can invest, mobilise capital, and produce (including peasant farmers and women). Secondly, there is a need for the development of *social actors* that represent civil society (political parties, trade unions, women's groups, social movements) with the capacity for independent social and political mobilisation. And thirdly, thre is a need for the development of a strong *national consciousness*, in order to develop the capacities of state action (1998a:9).

3.2.1.3 Global Culture

The past few decades have seen the increasing role of the media in determining people's behaviour and sense of identity. For example, Mana Slabbert, in a study of coloured working-class children in the Cape Peninsula to determine the influence of the mass media on behaviour and the shaping of public morality, found that 80% of the children interviewed say they regularly act out what they see on the screens (Slabbert 1985:95). In the age of globalisation, the weakening of the role of communities (social control) in the formation of individual identity is even more evident, since television provides most of the images which determine people's attitudes and values.

We are living in a media culture, which McDonald calls a "culture of emotion" (1998:9). Television especially can whip up an experience of emotional connection to events by de-contextualising them. It appeals to the individual's feelings without providing any foundation, context or mediation, so that we feel connected to the other simply because we feel. McDonald cites the examples of the death of Princess Diana and the Soccer World Cup as examples of a global emotion, where a unity - a global experience of connection - is created through passion alone. He believes a grasp of this is critical to understanding youth culture and global culture in general (:9).

"Global culture underlines the *present* and has little sense of the *past*" [italics mine] (McDonald 1998:9). It fragments individual experience, so that life is no longer constructed as a narrative, but as a series of discontinuous events. This highlights the centrality of *intensity* [italics mine] in contemporary western culture, where people need to search continually for intense sensations (peak experiences) in order to know they exist (:9). This stimulates an insatiable need for entertainment in order to find meaning. For adolescents, at whose stage of development easy boredom is always an issue, these intense sensations are regularly needed to stave it off.

Thus most people, faced with an insecure future, with no guarantee of employment, and bombarded with a culture of emotion by the media, are left with little choice but to live for today alone, for themselves alone, in competition with others, if they want to survive with self-dignity. Globalisation also pulls people out of their community, since according to global culture one is defined more and more by the cultural products one consumes - the music one listens to, the shoes one wears - than by a job or a family or a place in a community (McDonald 1998:9).

Consequently, global culture is a fiercely competitive culture, giving rise to rampant

individualism, consumerism, and narcissism which are now the norm. This brings much stress and tension, with which many people are unable to cope, and which gives rise to a morality that demands *immediate gratification* (to get and enjoy as much satisfaction as possible without delay).

This is manifest in the approach to money - where crime and corruption are now the order of the day; in the use of power - where rape, violence and murder are no longer newsworthy; and in the approach to relationships - which are often treated like consumer commodities, with divorce now the order of the day, and the idea of permanence and faithfulness now regarded as old-fashioned by many. In this cynical climate, sex has less and less relationship to marriage, and is treated like any other consumer good, with few social or cultural constraints. This has resulted in children born out of wedlock becoming the norm, who are then subject to the consequent psychological and physical deprivations of a single-parent family. In contexts of poverty, especially, it has resulted in the proliferation of AIDS, which seems set to decimate our planet.

This competitive culture, which gives rise to individualism and consumerism is also manifest in the approach to religion, in the form of what I have called "ecclesiastical liberalism" and a "privatised view of faith". As relativism has caused people to feel free of the authority and sanctions of the established churches, the individualistic cultural climate has placed faith firmly in the private domain, with all churches having to compete on the religious market. Thus religion too has become a consumer commodity, with any differences between churches being regarded as incidental and as a matter of taste, since "we are all worshipping the same God". As a result, many "Christians" shop around to find a community which will satisfy their emotional needs, often regardless of its doctrinal content. ACTS UNP, therefore, was also obliged to enter this religious market.

Thus globalisation is breeding a culture with predominantly negative values, which give rise to alienation, hopelessness, and stress. This helps us to understand why it is difficult for people in general, and university students in particular, to make and fulfil commitments. Nevertheless, globalisation is also giving birth to a number of positive new values. A number of new searches for solidarity, for authenticity as a person, and for wholeness are now evident in different social movements, especially the cultural movement of women (McDonald 1998:10). Many of the oppressive features of traditional cultures, which had become "sacred cows", eg. gender roles, have begun to be questioned, as a greater consciousness of the possibility of personal freedom has evolved. This has also given rise to the destruction of much inhibitedness, and therefore a greater spirit of spontaneity and joy, especially among young people, many of whom no longer take for granted what has been passed down to them. There is a new struggle for meaning evolving, rooted no longer in tradition and laws, but in a

search for real relationship. Furthermore, there are very important attempts being made to articulate some new forms of human ethics that may form a basis for living together in the new century (:10).

3.2.1.4 From Traditional to Modern Industrialised Culture

The global culture, which is drawing all world cultures into its ambit, is rooted in the modern industrialised cultures of Europe and especially the United States of America. This culture is based on assumptions and a world-view which are totally at variance with most traditional cultures, resulting in a schizophrenic participation in the global culture by most people from those traditional cultures, and a consequent dislocation from their cultural roots.

The cultural world of traditional societies is understood in organic terms, with the human body and the human life cycle as the root metaphors. Social time is cyclic, with change following a natural rhythm like the human life cycle, in which the past, the present, and the future are integrated into an historic whole (McGurk 1990:113-114). The root metaphors of our industrialised civilisation, which were conceptualised in the Enlightenment, are mechanistic and no longer biological, the machine having "no angst for life and for death because its parts are replaceable" (:114). Time is linear, evolutionary, and future-orientated, in which the past is the enemy of the future; and the common good results indirectly from the self-actualisation of the component parts, so that a healthy society is characterised by individualism and innovation in an expanding competitive situation (:114-115).

Something fundamental had to be repressed in the evolution of the modern psyche, because its underpinning value ethos is inherently resentful towards life, which is subordinated to utility and material values, and which is gaining force as modern morality develops (McGurk 1990:115). Consequently, death plays a seminal role in the depth psychological origins of the modern industrialised cultures with their mechanical root metaphors. Without life-creating organic energies in their deepest formations, this covert functioning of death in our modern cultures gives rise to self-destructive tendencies (:115).

Thus the modern industrialised cultures find it difficult to face death, since it is the enemy of future-oriented, linear progress, and they do not have the symbolic tools to deal with it. Unlike the traditional cultures, which embrace death as part of the life cycle, with a lengthy grieving period and funeral, and with rituals loaded with symbolic meaning, allowing grief to be expressed and thereby healed, the industrialised cultures try to push it away as quickly as possible. So the funeral is quickly and efficiently expedited, and it is a virtue to be "brave", i.e. to express the minimum emotion and grief, leaving many people with a residue of unresolved grief which continually manifests itself unconsciously throughout their lives.

With the growing hegemony of the global industrialised culture, more and more people from traditional cultures are internalising its values. This can help us to understand why so many Black students at UNP were struggling to deal with death, and why time-consciousness in the liturgies was an issue for many students, especially the Whites, resulting in erratic Mass attendance and even total withdrawal. Furthermore, it helps us to account for the fascination with inculturation of faith amongst many of the students, as a sense of their cultural dislocation developed.

3.2.1.5 From Apartheid to Non-racial Democracy

The apartheid system in South Africa caused indescribable suffering to so many millions of people through its resultant poverty, dislocation, humiliation, exploitation, oppression and destruction (Nolan 1988:49-57). Nevertheless, it provoked a struggle to destroy it and to build a new society, which engendered an enormous amount of hope (:139). This manifested itself in the growth of numerous organisations in all sectors of society, who were able to mobilise millions of people to participate in the resistance to apartheid. In the process a great deal of non-racial unity was developed, and a culture of democracy was nurtured (:140-150). It also gave rise to phenomenal levels of solidarity, commitment, and courage (:159-161).

In this context, the student movements, too, flourished, both at secondary and tertiary level (Nolan 1988:146-147), resulting in the mobilisation of thousands upon thousands of students, with all the same manifestations of hope and commitment that were displayed in the other sectors.

However, with the demise of apartheid, which began in 1990 with the unbanning of the liberation movements and the release of political prisoners, and was completed with the first democratic elections in 1994, all the energy that the struggle generated was deflated. As the leaders all set about the task of governing, more and more people looked to them to deliver the fruits of the struggle, in order to improve the quality of their lives. When this was slow in coming, a spirit of pessimism set in (Johnson-Hill 1998:66-70), resulting in a widespread spirit of apathy, and rapidly diminishing involvement in all the organisations spawned under apartheid. This was especially evident amongst the youth, where a national survey revealed that youth of all races were alienated about their own future (Everatt & Orkin 1993:29).

Thus South Africa moved from a situation where the enemy was clear, enabling the generation of energy, unity, solidarity and commitment, to one where there was "no way of distinguishing friend from foe"[1], with the resulting doubt, disillusionment and withdrawal.

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[1] Theodore White. Address at Harvard-Radcliffe, 1979. Quoted in Parks 1991:179.

The removal of apartheid was a clear goal, whereas the mechanisms for building a new society were far from clear.

This deflation in spirit after an intense period of struggle is not unique to South Africa. A similar process occurred in the industrialised countries, especially in Europe and the USA, in the late 1960's, when a powerful student movement developed in the wake of the economic boom in reaction to numerous injustices, the dictatorships in Europe, and the war in Vietnam. However, the ensuing widespread student protests were crushed in the absence of broader societal support, and tertiary institutions changed their focus from the humanities to technical careers (Pelegri 1979:46), while the global capitalist economy underwent radical restructuring. This resulted in the disorganisation of the students, a confusion of goals, the collapse of the student movement, and "a turning inward...to escape an inhospitable world"[1] since there was no way of "being sure enough in (their) heart(s) of what is worth living and dying for" (Parks 1991:179).

In a similar way, much of South African society (including the university student milieu) was demobilised at the level of political participation, resulting in people becoming "preoccupied with present demands and obligations, and tend(ing) to view the immediate future more or less in terms of their life experience to date" (Johnson-Hill 1998:69). The same lack of student participation and apathy in relation to broader issues other than their own financial difficulties became a feature of virtually all university campuses, including UNP. This can probably account for much of the lack of attendance, the lack of commitment, and the lack of concern for social issues in our ACTS group.

Another difficult aspect of South Africa's transformation to democracy has been the struggle to develop non-racial integration. After the experience of non-racial unity in the struggle (Nolan 1988:141-143), one might have expected an easier path to achieving this in a democratic South Africa. However, many racial prejudices and stereotypes remain, and are often becoming even more entrenched. Thus there are continual charges by all race groups of ongoing White racism in all sectors of society, while similar charges of Black racism (often connected to the government's policy of "affirmative action") are levelled by many Whites[2], as well as by Indians and Coloureds (Johnson-Hill 1998:50-51).

This has resulted in a lessening of participation, if not a total withdrawal of Whites from most of the non-racial organisations (political, worker, student, and women) where they were active

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[1] Levine, A 1980. *When Dreams and Heroes Died: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, San Francisco:Jossey-Bass. Quoted in Parks 1991:180.

[2] Helena Dolny, the Managing Director of the Land Bank, for example, on resigning her position, accused the Department of Land Affairs of "ethnic cleansing" in a vendetta against the "white left" in the department (Natal Witness 30 Dec 1999. "Ethnic cleansing" claims denied, p2.).

prior to 1994. This is particularly evident on most university campuses, where fewer and fewer Whites are involved in the formerly strong non-racial student organisation, SASCO (South African Students Congress), let alone in Student Representative Councils (SRC's). In former White organisations (where there was not necessarily a non-racial consciousness), the entry of a significant number of Blacks has also led to a large-scale White withdrawal. Neil McGurk describes this process from his experience as a principal of a White school when it was opened to all races:

> With the advent of only a few blacks...(the community could tolerate) the unthreatening assimilation of a few "aliens"....However, once a sufficient number of blacks have been admitted (about 30%), and when they legitimately begin to express their political and economic grievances and their own nationalist aspirations...the institution faces a grave crisis to pass over a threshold into a new mode of "nonracial" consciousness.
>
> (McGurk 1990:27)

So whereas a number of people like Nolan (1988:143) expected that the non-racial unity manifested in the struggle would blossom into a non-racial and unified nation, it is evident that, in the medium-term, this has not been made possible. In fact, in many quarters, one can detect a hardening of racial attitudes. McGurk again helps us to understand why attitude change at times is not possible:

> ...attitude change cannot take place without interaction between the prejudiced groups....(But) contact may either decrease or increase prejudices. If an individual already had a highly structured and resolved belief system in which the prejudicial attitudes and opinions were of central concern, it was unlikely that any contact would have any effect on those prejudices....(P)rejudiced attitudes start...in children (at) five years of age and...can be fixed at the age of eleven or twelve.
>
> (McGurk 1990:65)

If we can agree with McGurk, it means that, at least for the next generation, new non-racial attitudes, especially amongst the Whites, are not likely to emerge at a mass level, since the prejudice has deep emotional roots. This is brought out by Hirschowitz, Milner and Everatt, in their reflection on the experience of violence in South Africa:

> Among whites, the reaction to increasing violence and crime is to try to isolate and protect themselves from it. This is evident in the growing prevalence of high walls, razor wire and electrified fences that surround houses, and the

locked or electronic gates at entrances....Most white youth are therefore kept shut up and isolated from the trauma experienced in the country. This isolation and lack of contact with the reality facing their fellow citizens may also be an important cause of emotional blunting. Indirect exposure through media stereotypes may also be important contributors to alienation.

(Hirschowitz, Milner & Everatt 1994:92)

Thus, in ACTS at UNP, all efforts to stem the withdrawal of the South African Whites failed once the proportion of Blacks (especially in leadership) reached a critical threshold. Having lost control, their deep-seated alienation prevented any possibility of their bridging the racial and cultural gap to feel a sense of belonging. They therefore withdrew into the isolationism of what McDonald calls a "form of defensive culture, a form of defensive identity", a phenomenon that is probably the main opposition to globalisation, manifest in a variety of conservative and right-wing groups throughout the world (1998:10).

3.2.2 Youth Culture

3.2.2.1 The Breakdown of Rites of Passage

As we have noted above, the current experience of most youth takes the form of a "prolonged adolescence" (Erikson 1971:156). McDonald (1998:11) takes this further in his own reflection on this experience, which he depicts as one of "disorganisation".

On the one hand the experience of being young is getting longer right throughout the world, but on the other hand there is a kind of a de-sychronisation, where in many societies people can become sexually adults at the age of 13, 14 15, but they reach financial autonomy at the age of 25, 26 or 30. And they establish a new household at a much later age as well.

(McDonald 1998:11)

Whereas most societies have traditionally viewed youth as a transition experience from childhood to adulthood, requiring clear rites of passage, most of these have now broken down, leaving a high level of uncertainty about what it means to be young.

Pinnock (1997:9-17) points to the indispensability of these rites of passage in late adolescence - initiation rituals - for all young people.

...(I)n cultures that have lost their ancient roots - through migration, poverty or dilution - young people continue to have (and act on) the same needs. And

where ritual is absent it will be created - often in bizarre forms.

<div align="right">(Pinnock 1997:11)</div>

Using the categories of the French anthropologist, Arnold Van Gennep, he describes the successive phases of which life is made up: Rites of Separation, Rites of the Threshold (liminality), and Rites of Incorporation:

- *Separation* involves a symbolic detachment from the community and from their old status - to "die" to old ways in order to be "born" into the new (:15).
- *Liminality* is a state of ambiguity, when there is a suspension of the rules, and the initiate is often impelled to do what is forbidden. Ritualised liminality employs structures of its own, which are contrasted with those of society. Thus they emphasise homogeneity versus heterogeneity; equality versus status-consciousness; and anonymous foolishness versus name-conscious intelligence (:15).
- *Incorporation* uses rituals to symbolise re-entry into the community, generally involving sharing and coming together (:16).

Pinnock contends that these practices developed and are continued in traditional cultures everywhere, because (as he quotes Robert Bly) these cultures have learned what the West has forgotten:

> if a culture does not deal with the warrior energy of its young men and the spirit energy of its young women - take it in consciously, discipline it, honour it - this energy will turn up outside in the form of gangs, wife beating, depression, drug abuse, brutality to children and even aimless murder.

<div align="right">(Pinnock 1997:20)</div>

Focusing on boys, since his concern is with male gangs, (although the same could apply to girls) Pinnock further notes that since the dominantly western global culture has abandoned initiation, the accompanying education and values of all those drawn into it have difficulty in leading their boys into manhood. Consequently, in the cities, these boys invent rituals to fill the gap. The problem is that young men cannot initiate each other - something only an adult can do. So when they attempt to do so, things can go horribly wrong (Pinnock 1997:27). Often, then, no rite of passage into adulthood is made possible, which leads to eternal liminality, in which the excesses of adolescence (in this case, gang violence) know no limits or regrets (:50-51).

Many of the students coming to university have not yet had adequate rites of passage. While using a different language in referring to this process (namely, the experience of the dissolution and recomposition of the meaning of self and world), Parks identifies the

university (or institution of higher education) as the preferred institution for young adults in American culture to undergo this process (Parks 1991:xii). In the same way, in South Africa, the university is a liminal space for many students privileged to enter it. Hence it is a time for taking risks (Plant & Plant 1992:2), and for experimentation with forbidden fruit, especially sex, alcohol and drugs. The danger, though, is that many of them also get trapped in eternal liminality, never learning any discipline which adulthood requires, and become permanently enslaved to sexual or alcoholic excesses.

While operating at a different level - the faith level - the confirmation group in ACTS nevertheless fulfilled an important role in providing a space for all the candidates to undergo rites of passage. Both through doing activities together, as a liminal group, and through the enactment of rituals at different steps along the way, all the candidates underwent profound transformations, which bore out the centrality of such rites in the life of a young adult.

The central factor in the provision of adequate rites of passage is the existence of adult and mentor support structures: adults trusted by the young people who can transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and prepare them for active participation in it (Pinnock 1997:76-77). Unfortunately, urbanisation, and in South Africa, relocations under the Group Areas Act[1], first eroded extended family networks and traditions then those of the nuclear family, resulting in the absence of such adult structures. This has resulted at a global level in adult role models for young people often themselves being "adult dropouts": adults who "have lost the sense of their commitment and ...(whose) only aim is to survive until...(they) retire. Few are the adults who transmit to young people that life is worth living" (JEC Quebec 1998:36).

Pinnock particularly focuses on the importance of a father-figure in a boy's life:

> For young boys initiation is generally done by older men who help them move from their mother's world to their father's world. Robert Bly insists that "women can change the embryo to a boy, but only men can change the boy to a man...boys need a second birth, this time a birth from men."
>
> (Pinnock 1997:19)

This goes some way to explaining why a number of students (all male in this case) came to me, struggling to come to terms with not knowing who their fathers were, since it affected a central part of their identity. For women though, even if for a different reason, the need for a father was often equally dramatically expressed, usually through anger at the absence or

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[1] Apartheid legislation, promulgated in 1950, requiring all races to live in their own areas, separate from the other races. Millions of people had to be relocated to achieve this.

abandonment of the father, or through joy at a reconciliation with the father.

This leads us to see a strong connection between the breakdown of rites of passage and the absence of a father-figure in a child's life. And in South Africa, by far the main reason for the absence of a father-figure is the high rate of "illegitimacy"[1] or children born out of wedlock (Burman 1992:29). Thus the breakdown of rites of passage, with the consequent prevention of young adults from growing into adult maturity, is intimately linked to illegitimacy both as a cause and as an effect. The issue of illegitimacy, along with the sexual culture which accompanies it, therefore requires a deeper reflection.

3.2.2.2 Illegitimacy and the Sexual Culture

Many, if not most of the students, especially the women, who were engaged in discussions at UNP ACTS on the issues, did not see much problem with sex outside of marriage or single parenthood, and hence illegitimacy. These attitudes were not that different from those expressed by youth throughout South Africa. In Everatt and Orkin's survey of South African youth (1993:21), they found that 29% of young mothers (33% of young African mothers) had their first child by the age of eighteen; and 43% of young women with children were at school when they fell pregnant.

a) Anthropological Roots

This casual attitude towards single parenthood is striking in view of the fact that, historically, virtually every culture has applied some stigma to children born out of wedlock. Hence they are referred to in European societies as "illegitimate" (Chidester 1992:146); in Jewish law as *mamzer* (Burman and Frankental 1992:116); in Islamic law as *walad al-zina* (child of fornication) (Moosa 1992:171); and in Zulu society as *umlanjwana* (Doke, Malcolm & Sikakana 1985:II,154).

In traditional African societies, illegitimacy was not a problem, since stable marriage relations were sustained by ritual, ethics, law, and social sanctions that heaped shame upon unmarried pregnant women. When illegitimate births did occur, they were easily accommodated in ways that restored and maintained a social equilibrium (Chidester 1992:157-158). However, after the arrival of the Europeans, the illegitimacy rate spiralled. This was caused largely by the onset of urbanisation, with the accompanying migrant labour system and new urban values, as well as by the missionary destruction of three institutions that had performed important social functions in preventing illegitimacy: initiation, polygyny, and the mocking songs (:158).

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[1] For a discussion on the difficulty of defining "illegitimacy" see Burman 1992:22-23.

While illegitimacy figures for South Africa are not readily available, some studies done in the Western Cape Health Department in 1990 (which may have broader application) indicate that virtually a fifth of births in the White population were illegitimate, almost half of those in the coloured population, and ± 70% in the Black population, where the norm now is to be born out of wedlock (Burman 1992:22). Thus, if the number of children classified as illegitimate according to the community's norms is higher than those classified as legitimate, stigma is inevitably eroded (Burman & Preston-Whyte 1992:xiv). This means that pregnancy outside of marriage, and hence sex before marriage, has become socially acceptable in the Black population and probably also in the Coloured population in South Africa.

This is borne out in an interesting study conducted in KwaMashu and Mpumalanga in Kwazulu/Natal (which has direct cultural relevance to the majority of ACTS UNP members) by Eleanor Preston-Whyte and Maria Zondi, which showed a great tolerance from parents towards their pregnant unmarried daughters. The children are lovingly accepted into the home, and there is little ostracism or insistence on marriage (Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:231). In fact, there is a tacit acceptance of premarital sex, since most parents turn a blind eye to what they know is the reality, and many fathers even encourage sexual experimentation by their sons. Among his peers, a boy who has many girlfriends and who is known to have fathered a child is admired, and his father often shares this attitude (Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:235). Preston-Whyte and Zondi put this attitude down to the priority of fertility as a cultural value amongst the Zulus. For girls, the bearing of children is seen as an essential part of being a woman, while boys are encouraged to display their sexual capability (Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:236). This shows that marriage is a lesser value, and therefore that teenage pregnancy is not something to be avoided at all costs. This value also often results in an indifference to contraception.

Another finding of Preston-Whyte & Zondi was that a growing number of women, even some of the most successful and respected in the urban African community, have no interest in getting married, as they fear control and abuse of a husband, and they doubt the possibility of marriage providing them with long-term security and happiness. This attitude is understandable in the light of Everatt and Orkin's frightening statistic that 5% of young people were currently being beaten by their partners, while 23% knew of others who were suffering this violence (Everatt & Orkin 1993:23). They nevertheless still want and do have children. Many of these women are positive role models for today's urban African girls (Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:232-233), many of whom have become cynical of marriage, and despair of finding a trusting relationship.

Nevertheless, it appears that marriage is still the aspiration of most urban African girls: it is circumstance which has dictated their lack of a husband. However, if a suitable husband is not

found, it is not an obstacle to bearing a child (Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:234).

b) Socio-Economic Roots

These cultural justifications for single parenthood developed after the dislocation caused by urbanisation (mentioned above) resulted in the spiralling of the rate of illegitimacy. This became even more pronounced after the introduction of apartheid, which resulted in widespread poverty and massive disorganisation. The accompanying lack of employment opportunities for the youth, overcrowding, the lack of recreational and educational facilities in urban areas, the need for mothers to work, and hence the lack of parental supervision during the free-time activities of children have caused such widespread social dislocation that the concept of illegitimacy has lost nearly all significance, since it is now the norm (Preston-Whyte & Zondi 1992:238). The comparative statistics for illegitimacy for the different race groups also bear out its socio-economic cause, since they correlate with poverty statistics across the races.

Despite the cultural shift that has taken place, with widespread acceptance of sex and pregnancy before marriage, it is nevertheless evident that children born out of wedlock and reared by a single mother are placed at a severe disadvantage relative to peers born into two-parent families (Burman & Preston-Whyte 1992:xiv). Also the life-chances of young mothers and even young fathers are clearly negatively affected by unplanned pregnancies. This was borne out in Everatt and Orkin's survey, which revealed that pregnancy was the reason for 13% of the young women who were forced to stop their education (Everatt & Orkin 1993:12). From another angle, 56% of young women with children had to leave their school or job because of their first child, while 28% of their partners had to leave their school or job (:21). Illegitimacy therefore remains a social problem, even if it is not perceived as such in some communities.

The roots of this problem can only be fully understood in the light of the dislocation, instability and insecurity caused by the onset of globalisation discussed above, where everyone is forced to adapt to survive in a world of fierce competition. The resultant economic inequality gives rise to widespread poverty and unemployment, with no certainty that anyone will have a livelihood tomorrow. These effects, along with the threat of daily violence, diminish many young people's vision of, and therefore hope in the future, and consequently the ability to make any lasting commitments. This leads to the desire for immediate gratification, resulting in casual sexual relationships from a young age, and hence unplanned pregnancies (Hirschowitz, Milner & Everatt 1994:91-91).

c) Psychological Roots

As discussed above, especially at their stage of psychological development, an intimate and trusting friendship is vital for all young people, whose self-discovery happens through the approval of significant others, in whom their egos are mirrored (Fowler 1981:76-77). This need is reflected in the passion that so many students have for watching soap operas like "The Bold and the Beautiful" on television everyday. Their own yearning for intimacy, depth and acceptance is reflected in the web of complex relationships that these "soapies" portray.

However, all these students have grown up in a social context (which is especially evident in the university) where there is a cultural acceptance of multiple relationships (Johnson-Hill 1998:62). This is reinforced by the media, especially television, which is drenched with images of superficiality in relationships characterised by casual sex and infidelity. Consequently, unfaithfulness has become the norm and commitment is always a surprise, thus preventing their real deep needs from being met. The roots of this tragic state of affairs lie in a variety of distortions of personality and perception.

So many people lack self-esteem and self-love, and have a sense of powerlessness. They therefore seek others to fill the gap, and give them a sense of self-worth, which often depends on romantic desirability, especially for young people. With this motive, real love (mutual fusion and self-giving) is almost impossible. Love becomes distorted to mean "a feeling". Sexual relationships are then compulsively sought primarily for self-satisfaction - a form of narcissism (self-absorption), and sexual exploitation becomes rampant, symbolising an assertion of power in an otherwise powerless existence (Johnson-Hill 1998:63). This was graphically expressed in an interview conducted by Johnson-Hill, when a male student said that

> ...sex was not usually about expressing love or intimacy, as much as it was a matter of "showing one's power". In the township it was important for a man "to spread his seed around" as much as possible as a way of proving his manhood.

> (Johnson-Hill 1998:62)

This woundedness that gives rise to involvement in such sexual relationships then becomes even more compounded, and can result in more hurt and confusion, in cynicism that a trusting relationship is possible, and even further diminishment of their self-esteem. As Johnson-Hill, himself, concludes,

> ...it would not be surprising to find that the greater the despair and sense of

powerlessness of students, the greater the incidence of sexual exploitation.

(Johnson-Hill 1998:63)

Erikson's theory helps us to understand how these distortions of personality might arise. Most people have not dealt in a positive way with the crises they were confronted with in their earlier stages of development, largely through inadequate or flawed parental supervision, or sibling relations (Fowler 1981:48). This does not only occur in homes of single parents, broken marriages, working parents, etc., but even in "well-balanced" homes. This is especially exacerbated in a social context where poverty, unemployment, and the resulting deprivations are prevalent. Many people therefore lack the basic trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry which the first four stages of development are meant to nurture, resulting, respectively, in narcissism, compulsiveness, inhibition, and a sense of inferiority, all of which are obstacles to developing healthy, mutual relationships.

A sense of powerlessness and a lack of self-esteem thus emerge as key factors in determining the destructive and self-destructive behaviour of many students. Besides the broader societal forces that give rise to these factors, we now need to explore how they are nurtured and reinforced in the dominant social location of young people: the school and the university.

3.2.2.3 The Changing Role of Education

In an incisive analysis of the changing role of education at a global level, McDonald (1998a:11-13) notes that, over the past two or three decades, there has been a significant change in education at three levels.

Firstly, there has been a significant expansion or *massification* of education at secondary level, and also at tertiary level, where there has been an expansion both of universities and of forms of education that mix work and study. Yet while education is expanding, the certainties associated with it are being reduced because of growing levels of unemployment (:11).

Secondly, there has been a significant *personalisation* of the tasks students are asked to perform. The school and the university have declined as institutions, in that they are less and less able to transmit norms and to socialise people into a tradition. There is less and less focus on the need for students to meet the expectations of the teacher, through learning things by heart, internalising and repeating, and they are more and more asked to personalise the experience of learning, with their own interpretation and creativity (:11).

Thirdly, there is process of *rationalisation* taking place, in which clearer working goals are expected from students, with a fragmentation of tasks which are being broken down into

smaller and smaller sections. So there is a move away from a focus on a final examination, with students having a lot of autonomy during the year, towards a continuous control of work throughout the year (:12).

This new emphasis means that students have to engage themselves in a process of *self-discovery*, establishing an intimate relationship with themselves through their study. Thus the *subjectivity* or individuality of students becomes central to what they are studying rather than the fulfilling of the expectations of the institution (McDonald 1998a:12). This means that the outcomes of their education increasingly depend on the capacity of the students themselves to mobilise the cultural resources that they have (McDonald 1998b:21). The students, therefore, are under pressure to produce a positive view of themselves, so that self-esteem is increasingly critical to the experience of learning (McDonald 1998a:12). Their ability to do this, in turn, depends on the quality of relationship between teachers and students as a relationship of communication, since the education system has become less and less a transmission towards a passive receptor, and more and more a process of construction of the personality (:13)

So, while the new personalised emphasis in education brings with it, on the one hand, greater autonomy, on the other hand it brings increased vulnerability, especially to the experience of failure, which is interpreted as personal inadequacy (McDonald 1998b:19). This leads to an increasing problem of subjective identity for those who do not succeed, who then use different strategies to deal with it. One, for example, is disruption of the class, which enables the student to avoid the anonymity that threatens if he or she is unable to produce the required creativity. Another defence is to stop working, so that their failure can be attributed to their not working rather to who they are (McDonald 1998a:12).

Thus, the experience of education imposes a negative image of self on many students. This is clearly associated with the explosions of violence that characterise many mass education systems at the moment. These occur when the students feel that they are not being respected - when their subjectivities (or self-dignity) are being violated, or when they feel they are being exposed or rendered transparent by the system, so that the mystery of themselves disappears. A number of youth cultures and student cultures are therefore seeking to counter such transparency, for example in graffiti, which only people within the subculture can understand (McDonald 1998a:12-13).

And so, whereas in an institutional education, students feel a strong sense of belonging, students in the new system who feel it is negatively confronting their subjectivities do not want to talk about school, because it renders them transparent (McDonald 1998a:13).

McDonald's articulation of the shift that has taken place in global education from an institutionalised model, where the focus is on meeting the institutional requirements, to a personalised model, where students have to enter into relationship with their own subjectivity, is very helpful in enabling us to understand many of the dynamics at play at UNP, and in the ACTS group in particular. While the conditions in Africa, and in South Africa in particular often differ substantially from his own Australian context, one can nevertheless detect strands of virtually all the issues he refers to in our local context.

Most of the Black students at UNP, and a significant number of those who have come to ACTS, are products of the Bantu Education system in South Africa[1], which employed an extreme form of the "institutional" model. Arriving at university then, many of them found it very difficult to cope with the much more "personalised" model, resulting in frequent failures. They are coming from a social context where there is already a great lack of confidence and much hopelessness amongst the youth in their ability to fulfil their potential[2]. So their ability to come to university makes them special for their families and their communities, who make great sacrifices to send them there, and who therefore have great expectations of them. The penalty for failing is therefore very high, making for a great deal of pressure and stress that often get the better of them. Any failure therefore, or even the prospect of it (as was the case with "Thuli" and "Jenny"), has served to erode their self-esteem, leaving many with a deep sense of inadequacy. This can also help to explain why many students found it difficult to forgive themselves, even after an offense, mistake, or failure was acknowledged and forgiven. Their sense of inadequacy prevented them from believing that they were forgivable.

The process of rationalisation that McDonald describes is also very evident at UNP. Unlike the days when I was a student twenty-five years ago, there are continual tests and assignments due, which keep the students under constant pressure. This saps a lot of their energy, leaving few of them with much time and energy for extramural involvements that require a lot of effort. Little wonder then that many students are unable to make commitments to many ACTS activities. This also reveals the heroic nature of those who do display commitment.

The distinction that McDonald draws between students who have a sense of belonging to the institution, and those who are alienated from it, is also very much a reality at UNP. Parks (1985:389) succinctly describes the idea that has evolved of what the university as an "institution" (in the sense that McDonald uses it) is, and aims to be. She points out that, by its

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[1]   The system of education promulgated in the Bantu Education Act (1953), which was introduced to prepare black people to maintain their subservient role in society. It therefore used an extremely "institutional" form of education.

[2]   In their national survey of youth, Everatt and Orkin found that 59% of young people of all races do not believe that they will be able to fulfil their potential, due to lack of finance, unemployment, and lack of education (Everatt & Orkin 1993:24).

nature, the university intends that the meaning-making of persons will be transformed, regardless of their initial motives for going there. There is an in-built challenge to a broader perspective, so that it becomes difficult to realise any aims one might have, without setting at risk one's sense of truth, purpose and being. She sees this happening by the student moving through qualified relativism towards commitment in relativism (as we have discussed in depth above) (Parks 1991: 70). Such an experience of the university is always exciting, challenging and motivating for students who can open themselves up to its possibilities.

McDonald (1998b:21-25) also refers to the rich possibilities that the university offers, and he identifies three in particular. The first he describes is the possibility for *community identity*, where students can explore together, through talking about themselves as a group, about the memory of students' events, and about culture, through traditions and rituals, and through social life - all of which can generate a sense of belonging (:21). The second is the *opportunity* that studies represent, reflected in possibilities of employment, and in studies which are directed to a purpose (:22). And the third is the possibility for gaining a *sense of personal fulfillment*, by experiencing learning as pleasurable, and as enabling personal moral and ethical transformation (:23).

However, as McDonald points out, these possibilities are often absent, preventing the time at university from being a positive experience for many students. Thus many just come and go without a community spirit, and no sense of belonging (:22).

The opportunity that studies represent is also often not realised for two reasons. The first is because of the spirit of competition and individualism that predominates, with the resultant opportunism swallowing up the experience of community. Students then become only strategic actors, and studies are there simply to instrumentalise knowledge. So they won't share books or notes with their potential competitors. And they are not prepared to be involved in the many forms of community experience that the student world offers (McDonald 1998b:23).

The second reason for not realising the opportunity that studies represent is that, with the expansion of universities, the job market is flooded. So, many students know that they will struggle to find a job. In South Africa, this is a problem that is rapidly increasing. Everatt and Orkin, in 1993, found that 52% of potentially employable youth were unemployed (Everatt & Orkin 1993:14), but since then the problem has intensified. As a result, many students see their options for developing an economically viable lifestyle as extremely limited (Johnson-Hill 1998:59). This insecurity about finding a job gives rise to feelings of uselessness (Lebulu 1989:215), which can sap students' motivation for study. As a result, many end up just going through the motion of attending class, and adopt a consumerist behaviour in doing only the

absolute minimum to receive the qualifications (McDonald 1998b:23). Others seek something clear and secure to cling to, in order to ward off the feelings of insecurity and uselessness. This may account for the many students who join Christian groups which offer such certainty and security with few demands, and explain why the dominant image of Christians on UNP campus is one of people narrowly focused only on prayer.

A third reason that we can add to McDonald's two for not realising the opportunity that studies represent, is poverty, or the financial difficulties experienced by students to remain at university. A large proportion of the students at UNP, and also in ACTS, expend an enormous amount of energy in trying to raise funds to finance their studies. This results in more and more cases where students have to find a job to survive, leading to an experience of multiple identities combining studies and work (McDonald 1998b:21), or else drop out. Parks furthermore reminds us that

> ...the particular potential of young adulthood lies, in part, in a relative freedom. Consequently, if young adults must bear real anxiety regarding their economic present or future, that freedom is diminished.
>
> (Parks 1991:182)

This gives rise to much anxiety and a sense of powerlessness, which, in turn, inevitably affects their studies and relationships. Little wonder, then, that these students would have little or no time to participate consistently in ACTS activities, or to make full use of the opportunity that university offers!

The possibility of approaching university with a view to gaining a sense of personal fulfilment is also often absent because many students find no pleasure in learning, since their study lacks meaning. This is often due to the fact that, while they may go to the university, their life is elsewhere (McDonald 1998b:24). Johnson-Hill highlights this issue in pointing out that, in South Africa, the university is becoming less and less an ivory tower which exists apart from the township.

> ...(M)ost students appear to have four fingers in the township and only one in what is now experienced as the alien world of the university.
>
> (Johnson-Hill 1998:187)

If students are not enjoying being at university, then they are not likely to be motivated to participate in any groups or activities on campus. If the number of such students is substantial, as it is at UNP, it will result in a very weak student movement on campus. McDonald notes that student movements are made up of people who like being students. Consequently, new

movements are only likely to be created, when the university enables the integration and realisation of the three possibilities that the student world has to offer (community identity, opportunity, and a sense of personal fulfillment) (McDonald 1998b:25). Only then are more substantial numbers of students likely to show more interest in ACTS, especially beyond UNP.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to find answers to the questions posed at the end of the last chapter, which emerged through our description of the ACTS branch at UNP. Our analysis has enabled us to propose an explanation for all the questions through the use of psychological, sociological and anthropological mediations. The next chapter will attempt to spell out these answers in summary form in a synthetic description of the phenomenon.

The analysis has shown the interconnectedness of the different mediations, which, in the modern global context, point to the enormous stresses that young people today are subjected to. These have given rise to new cultural expressions amongst the youth, which the older generations often view negatively. Even the present analysis, in its attempt to address the negative elements that are preventing students from finding life and happiness, and from realising their potential, can give the impression that contemporary youth culture is all negative. However, as McDonald points out, it is wrong to see it as a simple retreat into hedonism. Young people are engaging in many other forms of action, such as humanitarian action, ecological action, and person to person support and solidarity. And at the centre of the youth culture, there is a real desire for life, a search for authentic meaning, and a defence of their personal identity, which is continuously threatened by fragmentation (McDonald 1998a:13).

What we can detect, then, is a distinct shift in modern youth culture away from thinking about the ideal society and changing social structures towards attempting to defend and give meaning to one's personal life. So we are not likely to meet with much success if we approach university students in a search for political and social ideologies. Rather the starting point of the encounter with the student experience is probably through exploring the efforts to construct an identity and a personality, and from this basis the re-composition of civil society can be conceived (McDonald 1998a:13-14).

CHAPTER 4

SYNTHETIC DESCRIPTION OF ACTS AT UNP

Having analysed the phenomenon of the ACTS community at UNP using the mediations of a variety of psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists, I will now attempt to synthesise all the major elements emerging from the analysis into a single description of the phenomenon from my own standpoint, demonstrating the relationship between the different mediations. This will be the "(theoretical) material object" (Boff 1987:xxiv) which I will then attempt to re-interpret from a theological standpoint in the next chapter. In a sense it is a restatement of what has been written in chapter two, but with the aim of identifying only the essential elements. Therefore, on the one hand, it will be a summary of that chapter, and on the other hand it will broaden it with the analytical insights of those essential elements which are enunciated in chapter three. I will highlight the essential elements firstly in terms of the *structure* and then of the *content* or *issues* of the community, and finally return to the structural attempts to address the issues in the search for a viable pedagogy.

4.1 Composition and Structure

4.1.1 From Diffuse Community to Self-selected Group

The student group that constitutes itself as ACTS at UNP has largely attracted students who already have a sense of identity with the Catholic Church. From 1996 to 1999 the group slowly developed from being a diffuse community of different natural groupings, identified on racial, ethnic, or language lines, within each of which alone students found friendship and freedom, to being a broader community – "a self-selected group" (Parks 1991:65-66) - where friendships began to transcend the traditional natural boundaries. More students grew in commitment to the group, as it made concerted efforts to be a more nurturing and mentoring community - a community of friends.

As with all self-selected groups, this growth carried with it the danger of becoming exclusive, and maybe even leading to diminished concern for others. On the surface this appeared to be the case, as virtually all the Whites withdrew soon after the first Black-led committee was elected, so that ACTS became largely a Black community. However, this was consistent with the trend in most non-racial organisations in post-apartheid South Africa, where Whites in general withdrew their participation. Most of the White South African students at UNP in this period, having been schooled in apartheid education, probably already had a highly structured and resolved belief system in which prejudiced attitudes and opinions were of central concern. Given the new context, where Whites were beginning to experience violence, crime

and affirmative action,[1] while still being isolated from the trauma of life in poor Black communities, and having now lost power and control, contact with Blacks served only to entrench racial prejudices and stereotypes. This led to a deep sense of alienation amongst the Whites in ACTS, for whom the community ceased to be a mentoring group, thus preventing them from breaking out of their "conventional" White community, despite many efforts to include them from successive largely Black committees.

4.1.2 Erratic Commitment to ACTS Activities

Besides the growing number of informal gatherings of ACTS members, the main focus of formal activities centred around liturgies, especially the Sunday Mass, and meetings of the music group, the liturgy group, a discussion group, and the confirmation group. With the exception of the latter, each of these activities was characterised by erratic attendance of the members, which was a source of great frustration to convenors and committed members. This erratic attendance was also demonstrated by many committee members over the years, resulting in the burden of leadership falling on only a few. The lack of commitment that this reflected can be put down to four broad factors ranging from the global to more personal realities: the evolving global consumer culture; post-apartheid apathy; the expansion, personalisation and rationalisation of the education system; and the relativist and experimental nature of the young university student condition.

Firstly, the global consumer culture has been a product of the rapid technological change that the world has undergone in the past three decades giving rise to the phenomenon called globalisation. This includes the imposed interdependence of all nations and all cultures (McDonald 1998a:8), resulting in the supremacy of the competitive global market. It has also given rise to an evolving monoculturalism (IMCS-IYCS International Committees 1999:1) that is dominated by the individualistic industrialised cultures of Europe and especially the United States of America. Thus, while globalisation also gives rise to positive new searches for solidarity, authenticity, and wholeness, the rapidity of change prevents the development of a sense of permanence or stability, and the competitive global market causes most people to struggle for survival, leading to widespread unemployment and poverty. All of this gives rise to a prevailing sense of insecurity and powerlessness. In this climate, it is very difficult to have any hope for the future, and hence to make any lasting commitments.

The only meaningful thing to do then is to live for the present only, and to relish the intensity of the moment. The media in particular, as a primary agent of globalisation, is whipping up a culture of emotion, which focuses on de-contextualised events, and promotes the demand for immediate gratification and hence the need for continual intense sensations, usually in the

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[1] The South African government's policy to give preference to previously disadvantaged groups, especially in terms of employment.

form of entertainment (McDonald 1998a:9). Few students today would therefore commit themselves to attending liturgies or meetings which are not entertaining. Hence many would only be interested in such "special" liturgies.

Globalisation has also caused a spirit of individualism and consumerism to become dominant. This has given rise to greater spontaneity and a search for personal freedom and responsibility, but in turn has caused many valued institutions, including religion, to be treated like consumer commodities. Hence we see the prevalence of ecclesiastical liberalism, where people (including the students at UNP) shop around the different churches or Christian groups to find the most satisfying for their emotional needs regardless of doctrinal content.

The second factor contributing to the lack of commitment to ACTS activities is the demobilisation that accompanied the demise of apartheid. When the fruits of the struggle were slow to be seen, a spirit of pessimism set in, resulting in a widespread spirit of apathy, and rapidly diminishing involvement in social and political organisations. In the absence of a clear social and political goal, which the struggle against apartheid had provided, people became more and more preoccupied with demands and obligations they faced at a personal level. Without societal motivation and support, it thus became difficult for people to commit themselves to organisations which did not immediately appear to respond to those personal difficulties. Along with most other organisations at UNP, ACTS too suffered from this trend, especially since many students were experiencing severe financial difficulties.

The third factor affecting commitment to ACTS is the expansion, personalisation and rationalisation of the education system. While university education has become a possibility for previously excluded or disadvantaged young people, especially the products of the ideologically-controlled Bantu Education system, they come ill-prepared for the vastly different personalised approach to education, requiring personal interpretation and creativity. Along with the rationalisation taking place, which requires students to be more goal-directed and more regularly assessed (through frequent tests), this personalisation places a great deal of pressure on students, leaving few of them with much time and energy for extramural involvements (including ACTS activities) that require a lot of effort.

Furthermore, while the education system has expanded to incorporate previously disadvantaged students, their poverty nevertheless remains, requiring them to expend an enormous amount of energy in trying to raise funds to finance their studies. So more and more students have to find a job to survive, leaving little time for other commitments.

These stresses cause many students to view their time at university in pure utilitarian terms: to get it over with as quickly as possible so that they can get on with their lives. Such students thus succumb to the predominant spirit of competition, individualism and consumerism, and

do not enjoy being at university at all. They are therefore unlikely to gain a sense of personal fulfilment there, and, since their hearts are elsewhere, there is little chance that they could be motivated to participate in any groups or activities on campus. Yet they might attend a church service occasionally for their own personal nourishment.

The final factor giving rise to the lack of commitment to ACTS activities is the relativist and experimental nature of the young university student condition. Most students are at the psychological developmental stage of late adolescence, characterised by confusion, when they are struggling to clarify their own identity, which is discovered through experimentation and taking risks. For many of them, being separated from their families and communities for the first time, university is a liminal space, where there is a suspension of conventional rules, and they can explore what was always forbidden. In the relativising environment of the university, this freedom from the conventional world can lead students to move from an authority-bound form of knowing towards a position of unqualified relativism. At this stage, therefore, it is not surprising for students to "take a holiday" from their conventional faith, and hence from active participation in church activities, which are often found to be boring.

4.1.3 Role of the Chaplain: From Leading to Empowering.

From the outset, I had understood my role as chaplain to be one of empowering the students to run their organisation themselves. So, besides fulfilling the traditional liturgical and mentoring (advising and counselling) roles, I resolved to provide training in organisation and leadership and to create structures which could facilitate such empowerment. Consequently, I started the confirmation and liturgy groups, and organised some guest speakers, and the students took up a number of my suggestions for committee training, special liturgies, discussion groups, and retreats.

However, due to the limited space and time that was available for reflection and discussion, both for the students (with their academic pressures) and myself (being very part-time), collaborative initiatives to effect the role I had defined for myself were very slow in coming. In my frustration, I ended up making many interventions, especially in meetings, when progress was seemingly not being made. This eventually provoked a reaction from the students, who excluded me from their meetings for some time, since I was intervening too much, and thus preventing students from feeling free to speak.

While it was a painful time for me, this reaction reflected the students' need for distance (separation) in order to clarify their own identity. It was thus a manifestation of "counterdependence" (Parks 1991:55-56), by which they claimed their power to make their own decisions, and to take full responsibility for their organisation, free of any dependence on me. It highlighted my inadequacy in fulfilling the training role of the chaplain, and

emphasised the importance of a mentoring role which minimises the organisational interventions of the chaplain and enables the students to assert leadership by grappling with issues themselves, in order to learn from their mistakes. Consequently, our eventual confrontation of the issue had a positive outcome in provoking the students to move to a new stage of responsibility - of "inner-dependence" (Parks 1991:57-58) - leading to a lessening of resistance, and the development of a very creative collaboration.

The empowering adult role was also broadened through the formation of a chaplaincy team with students for the priesthood, who were seconded to do pastoral work with me, and through the involvement of members of the university staff in providing logistical and inspirational backup for the students.

4.2 Key Student Issues

Having identified the key structures which gave shape to the UNP ACTS community, we can now identify the content or the issues that preoccupied the lives of the students who comprised this community. Most of these issues reveal a crying out for wholeness and healing, as well as a real desire for life and a defence of their personal identity, which is continuously threatened by fragmentation (McDonald 1998a:13).

4.2.1 Financial Difficulties

For many students, the primary issue they identified in their lives was the difficulty in raising funds to finance their studies. This issue had its roots in the opening up of the education system to incorporate previously disadvantaged students, as well as in the hopes for a better life that the birth of democracy gave promise to. Many students therefore came to university hoping for more institutional financial support. However, much of the same poverty still remained, and the hopes for a better life could not be quickly realised, resulting in students becoming preoccupied with immediate survival. This often clouded any concern for issues other than their own financial difficulties.

4.2.2 Academic Stress

Alongside the issue of financial difficulties, the primary issue identified by most students was academic stress. This manifested itself in a fear of failing. This fear was rooted mostly in their coming from a social context where relatively few young people had succeeded academically, and families had made great sacrifices to send them to university. The communities and families therefore had great expectations of them, making the penalty for failing very high.

Also, since many of them had come through "Bantu Education", the personalised approach to

education at university required a lot of adjustment. So, along with the process of rationalisation which involved continual tests, the limited job opportunities in many fields, and the consequent spirit of competition and individualism that prevailed, the students were subjected to enormous pressures, which many found difficult to cope with. The problem was exacerbated more dramatically if there were any financial difficulties. Any failure therefore, or even the prospect of it, served to erode their self-esteem, leaving many with a deep sense of inadequacy.

4.2.3 Relationships, Love and Sex

While students normally would begin by identifying financial difficulties and academic stress as their primary issues, it always soon emerged that, in fact, the issues that mostly preoccupied them were those centring around friendship, relationships, love, sex and marriage, and the related confusions or problems arising, viz. student pregnancies, abortion, rape, the use of contraceptives, HIV/AIDS, and homosexuality. These preoccupations are typical of the particular stage of psychological development, in Erikson's terms, of all adolescents and young adults, for whom the questions of identity and intimacy are paramount. Their identity is especially clarified through lovers, in whom their egos are mirrored, and they are struggling to find intimacy, which is the fusing of one's identity with another without loss of self. Relationships are therefore at the heart of this struggle. Unfortunately, many people have not yet positively resolved the crises of the earlier stages of development (such as the development of a sense of basic trust which enables self-esteem, or a sense of autonomy which enables self-restraint), the wounds of which remain obstacles to forging satisfying relationships.

In the many discussions about relationships and sex that took place, both in groups and with individuals, by far the majority of students took sex before marriage for granted as part and parcel of an intimate relationship, without a necessary connection to commitment. Despite this, many of them were terrified of AIDS, and even of submitting themselves to an AIDS test. However, the only change of behaviour that most foresaw was a more careful use of condoms. Also despite taking sex before marriage for granted, many experienced devastation at a betrayal of trust, leading frequently to despair of finding true friendship, love and intimacy.

These attitudes and values of the students about sex and relationships can be attributed to a variety of factors. One set of factors revolves around the influence of the global consumer culture described above. In a world of rapid change, which militates against a sense of permanence or stability, and where the competitive global market results in widespread poverty and unemployment, a general sense of insecurity prevails. In this climate, compounded by a personalised education system which increases vulnerability to failure

(which is interpreted as personal inadequacy), many people lack self-esteem. This results, on the one hand, in a compulsive quest for relationships that will fill the gap and give them a sense of self-worth (which often depends on romantic desirability, especially for young people), but which can seldom, if ever, bring real love (mutual fusion and self-giving). Yet, on the other hand, the climate of insecurity results in a reluctance to make permanent commitments.

The prevailing spirit of individualism and consumerism which the global culture has entrenched and promoted through the media along with a morality that demands immediate gratification, has caused relationships too to be treated like consumer commodities, along with sex, which is seldom reserved just for marriage. Meanwhile, exploitative or abusive sexual relationships cause more and more hurt and confusion, resulting in a cynicism amongst many women as to whether a trusting relationship is possible.

Another set of factors influencing the students' attitudes and values in relation to sex and relationships revolves around the breakdown of traditional cultures. Through the process of urbanisation, together with apartheid social engineering, with its resulting poverty and social dislocation, "illegitimacy" has become the norm in South Africa. This was also aggravated by the missionary destruction of the institutions of initiation and polygyny that performed important social functions in preventing illegitimacy in traditional society (Chidester 1992:158). With over 70% of children in the Black community now being born out of wedlock, what was formerly regarded as "illegitimate" is now socially acceptable. Parents largely give tacit acceptance to their children engaging in premarital sex, and many even encourage sexual experimentation of their sons. This has contributed towards a widespread cultural acceptance of having multiple relationships, with unfaithfulness consequently becoming the norm.

In a world where fewer and fewer people find happiness in marriage, with more and more women fearing the control and abuse of a husband, marriage has become a lesser value in relation to fertility, which primarily determines a woman's sense of self. Thus, few of the students who participated in discussions on the issue at UNP ACTS saw much of a problem with single parenthood, and, in fact, many women expressed fear and even repugnance for marriage because of the high incidence of divorce and abuse by husbands. Despite this, a number of students revealed the scars they were left with from not knowing their fathers: passivity and a sense of inadequacy, due to their sense of rootlessness and a lack of identity. This demonstrated the central importance of a father-figure in a child's life, especially for boys, for whose identity a father is a central part. This also confirmed studies and statistics which have shown that children born out of wedlock and reared by a single mother are severely psychologically and physically disadvantaged.

The physical disadvantage is reflected in the statistics for poverty which correlate with the comparative statistics for illegitimacy (Burman & Preston-Whyte 1992:xiv). The psychological disadvantage is particularly manifest in an examination of the way apartheid and urbanisation have eroded many traditional family and community networks. This erosion has resulted in a breakdown of rites of passage for young people, since the necessary adult and mentor support structures are no longer there. These rites of passage are indispensable for adolescents to achieve the discipline of adulthood by going through a period of liminality, accompanied by an adult mentor. In the absence of such adults, often no rite of passage into adulthood is made possible, which leads to eternal liminality, in which the excesses of adolescence know no limits or regrets (Pinnock 1997:50-51).

Many of the students coming to university have not yet had adequate rites of passage. The university then often is a liminal space for many of them. Moving from an authority-bound, conventional way of viewing the world, through the confusion of the relativism that their new experiences, especially in the university context, give rise to, they are struggling to find a standpoint from which they can make choices and commitments. Hence it is a time for taking risks, and for experimentation with forbidden fruit, especially sex, alcohol and drugs. The danger, though, in the absence of adult mentors, is that many of them also get trapped in eternal liminality, never learning any discipline which adulthood requires, and become permanently enslaved to sexual, alcoholic or narcotic excesses.

Thus the attitudes and values about sex and relationship of the students at UNP ACTS were moulded by both the global and local social and economic structures, which had resulted in poverty, the breakdown of traditional cultures, and a pervading sense of insecurity. The consequent lack of self-esteem led to a compulsive quest for sexual relationships, with a reluctance to make any commitments, resulting in widespread unfaithfulness, exploitation and abuse. As a result, the students' personal needs for intimacy and acceptance were increasingly difficult to meet, since trusting relationships were so elusive. Their self-esteem was hence more and more diminished, and with it the prospect of developing mutual, life-giving relationships.

4.2.4 Guilt

In contrast to the many people society has spawned with little sense of conscience, and hence an unscrupulous engagement in hurtful behaviours, a number of ACTS members manifested a scrupulosity, which bore down heavily on them. This made it difficult for them to forgive themselves, whether it be for harmful actions already repented of, or even for unintended mistakes or failures.

This scrupulosity, and the consequent pervading sense of guilt was also rooted in the low self-

esteem and sense of inadequacy that the broader socio-economic, cultural and educational systems are giving rise to. When combined with a deep authority-bound conventional faith based on (uncritical) obedience to clearly-defined rules, commandments, or expectations, this low self-esteem, with its accompanying insecurity, can give rise to destructive self-denigration at the slightest hint of having "sinned". This makes it very difficult to recompose a positive sense of self - to forgive oneself.

Most of these ACTS members manifesting this problem had been schooled in such a conventional faith, mostly within the Catholic Church, but also in other churches, particularly in evangelical churches.

4.2.5 Coping with Death

Many ACTS students displayed a great difficulty in coming to terms with the death of a loved one, sometimes stretching back to their childhood, and a number of them had never spoken to anyone about it. Normally this was a problem when the student had been absent at the time of the death or funeral, through being too far away or not informed, or being too young, or otherwise when no ritual had been performed, as in the case of abortions or miscarriages.

All of these students came from African cultures which traditionally had mechanisms for dealing with such particular experiences of death. Some had gone through some rituals, which, however, had not been very impressive. Most, though, had done nothing, since their families no longer practised traditional rituals.

The students' difficulty with death, therefore, was rooted in their dislocation from their cultural roots, rituals and symbols, which we have highlighted above. Having been drawn into the global industrialised culture, they had probably internalised a number of its mechanistic, individualistic, and future-oriented perspectives, in which the past is the enemy of the future, and death is the enemy of future-oriented, linear progress (McGurk 1990:114-115). This culture does not have the symbolic tools to deal with death, which is therefore difficult to face.

For most of the students involved, this issue highlighted their cultural dislocation, and the gap that existed between their faith and their culture. They were all very enthusiastic about organising rituals, which incorporated both traditional and Christian elements, as part of the healing process, and it sparked an interest in them in inculturation. Nevertheless, while a guest speaker focused on the issue, attempts were made to inculturate the liturgy, and it was discussed in the confirmation group, inculturation remained as a challenge to ACTS requiring a deeper focus.

4.2.6 Inability to Defend their Faith

Many of the ACTS members were embarrassed and scared to profess their faith in public, especially when the community was more diffuse. This was either because they could not defend themselves against attacks on their Catholic beliefs and practices from other Christians, or because they did not want to be identified with the dominant image many students had of Christians as people narrowly focused only on prayer. This fear was rooted in their ignorance of the fundamentals of their faith, a manifestation of their having come from a conventional authority-bound upbringing in the faith, which they had not yet personally appropriated. This rendered them vulnerable when confronted with the relativism of the university environment.

Furthermore, lacking a basic grasp of the faith, the sense of Catholic identity was consequently rather tenuous. This made it easy for those students who did not feel fully at home or found Mass boring to shop around other churches and Christian groups, believing that it did not make any difference to which church one belonged, since "we are all worshipping the same God" - the form of ecclesiastical liberalism referred to above.

Nevertheless, when a greater sense of community developed in ACTS, more and more students felt freer to openly identify with the group, manifest in the informal gatherings on campus. Even if their knowledge of the fundamentals of faith was not necessarily any greater than before, they now at least had the confidence which the community backup provided to assert their Catholic identity. This was reflective of Erikson's characterisation of the adolescent need for joining a clique which emphasises a symbol of shared identity, and which excludes outsiders. Thus, despite the danger of it leading to exclusiveness and arrogance, this close group called its members to pledge fidelity (the virtue of the adolescent stage, according to Erikson), which held out the hope of growing into a more lasting commitment.

4.2.7 Struggling to develop a Broader Focus

Due to the lack of internal stability and sense of community in ACTS, most of the energy of the students over this period was directed internally towards the organisation and building up of the community. So, little energy or vision remained for an external focus, especially on broader social issues. However, in the last year, as initiatives from other groups exposed them to broader questions, and as a deeper sense of community in ACTS grew, a broader focus slowly began to develop, with a clothes collection for orphans, the beginnings of ecumenical contact with other Christian societies on campus, and participation in workshops and meetings focusing on broader social and political issues.

There was always a small group that promoted and participated in ACTS beyond UNP, yet

despite UNP producing a number of regional and national leaders for the organisation, the majority of students displayed no interest in the organisation beyond the local campus.

This minimal interest in broader issues can be put down to a variety of factors. Firstly, as Kohlberg, Fowler and Parks point out, university students are at the stage of late adolescence when a sense of "system", with a societal perspective, has not yet evolved, and hence face-to-face interpersonal relationships within a self-selected group remain the central focus. This makes it difficult to develop an enthusiasm for issues of social concern beyond the group. During the apartheid years, though, this was often not the case, probably because the political struggle provided the content (values, attitudes and hopes [McAdams 1988:248]) for the self-selected group, under the influence of the broader socio-political context, enabling the growth of much political commitment. However, in the aftermath of apartheid, this content was eroded, resulting in a vacuum of social motivation, and hence a reversion to the primary interpersonal focus of their stage.

This points to a second factor accounting for the lack of interest in broader issues, namely, the demobilisation that followed the demise of apartheid. As described above, the delay in delivering the promises of the new democracy gave rise to a spirit of pessimism, which resulted in widespread apathy and diminishing social and political involvement. This was manifest in all sectors of society, including the broader student movement - a spirit which equally affected the students in ACTS.

A final factor is the impact of globalisation, as described above, with its resultant struggle for survival in a competitive world. Along with the personalised and rationalised education system which has sapped the energy and self-esteem of many students, it has threatened their personal identity. This has given rise to a shift in modern youth culture away from political thinking (seeking political and social ideologies about the ideal society and changing social structures) towards defending personal identity and attempting to give meaning to one's personal life. This has inevitably diminished any interest in broader issues - a trend which equally affected the students of ACTS.

4.3 The Search for a Viable Pedagogy

In order to help the students to grow in their faith, a variety of pedagogical methods were employed, all attempting to address the emerging issues and needs of the students. These included a variety of rituals performed and the preaching within the liturgies that were celebrated, committee meetings, the liturgy, music, and confirmation groups, discussion groups, day-long retreats, committee training days, formal and informal social activities, ACTS national conferences, and personal counselling. However, there was often not much space to address most of the issues emerging in depth, since a number of these structures

struggled to be sustained.

One experience, though, which did succeed in addressing many of the students' issues was the confirmation group, where most of the members underwent significant conversion, established intimate friendships, and grew appreciably in faith and commitment. This was achieved through a variety of pedagogies, including weekly inputs, discussions and sharing of life experiences, an occasional day away for a retreat or discussions, excursions of exposure to visit social and welfare organisations and to attend a church pilgrimage, the frequent celebration of rites of passage within the community liturgy, and the permanent accompaniment of a sponsor or mentor. The success of this group demonstrated the centrality of a small group experience for growth in faith and commitment to occur. In fact, plans were made to establish small "life-issues groups" for ACTS as a whole, but these never materialised.

The roots of this difficulty in starting and sustaining groups lay largely in the lack of time, a lack of vision, and hence in the lack of training (especially of the successive committees and music and liturgy groups) in a pedagogy for involving others. We have already pointed out above a number of the cultural, social, and educational factors that give rise to the lack of time, and hence the difficulty in attracting students to attend these groups. Nevertheless, in the last year, with the focus on building friendships in ACTS, at least an awareness grew amongst the leadership of the pedagogical value of enabling the growth of interpersonal relationships.

The lack of time also presented a pedagogical problem in the confirmation group. While a pedagogy beginning from life experience was intended, there was always a tension in the allocation of time between the presentation of inputs and the sharing of the students' life experiences on the issues being dealt with. The latter were usually short-changed when time ran out, preventing a fuller internalisation of the inputs.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL JUDGEMENT

Having synthesised all the analytical elements of the phenomenon of the UNP ACTS community into a single narrative, we now have a tangible material object upon which we can engage in a theological reflection. So I will now move towards making a theological judgement, which is an attempt to look afresh at the phenomenon with the eyes of faith in order to evaluate its consistency with the faith that I believe in. In other words, in Browning's terms (1991:49), we have reached the moment when the questions emerging from the "theory-laden practices" are put to the "central texts and monuments of the Christian faith". In order to do this, a decision has to be made about what constitutes such central texts or monuments. I will therefore begin by identifying texts coming from my own faith tradition which will help me to articulate my critical reflection on the phenomenon. These texts chosen will be the theological criteria which I will then employ to make a theological judgement or evaluation of the ACTS community at UNP.

5.1 Theological Criteria

The theological criteria I will use are the "Three Truths" articulated by Joseph Cardijn, the founder of the Young Christian Workers (Deeb 1989:5), as the theological basis for the "See Judge Act" or "Review of Life" method. This method has been enthusiastically embraced by numerous theologians and church structures over the past thirty years, including Pope Paul VI. Cardijn identified these three truths - of Faith, Life, and Movement - as fundamental dimensions to be acknowledged if Christians are serious about communicating good news to any sector of the population. The use of these criteria is appropriate in this case, since the "Review of Life" has been embraced by the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), to which ACTS is affiliated. It has also formed the basis of my own theological evolution.

The *truth of faith* assures us that we are all created in God's image. Hence, as children of God, all people are called to be co-creators in building a world that God intended: a world of love, justice and peace.

The *truth of life* (alternatively of *reality* or *experience*), however, contradicts the truth of faith, since, for most people, it is largely a reality of suffering, injustice, exploitation, and dehumanisation.

The *truth of movement* (alternatively *method* or *action*), therefore, highlights the necessity of building a movement to remove this contradiction - to change life experience from one of

suffering and injustice to one of love and justice - and hence to bring faith and life together.

With these theological assumptions, Cardijn developed the *See Judge Act* method as his answer to the search for an effective method of evangelisation. This points to the necessity of always starting from life - to *see* a concrete experience or issue, which is always a true story, and to analyse it to understand its context and causes. The second step is then to *judge* the problem or issue by confronting it with the experience of faith, by searching for the feelings God would have in relation to it. The third step, then, is to make concrete plans to *act*, in the light of the preceding reflection, in order to address the issue.

This method has had a powerful impact in spawning numerous dynamic movements over the past century, including Liberation Theology (Gutierrez 1973:103), and in deepening the faith of countless Christians in all sectors of society (Deeb 1989:5). Consequently, its theological foundations will be a useful asset in assessing the effectiveness of ACTS at UNP as a Catholic youth movement.

5.2 Theological Judgement

Having identified our theological criteria, we are now in a position to move to do what Browning calls *systematic theology*, namely, identifying the new horizon of meaning that is fused when questions from present practices are brought to the central Christian witness (Browning 1991:51). We will do this in terms of each of the three truths in turn. Out of this we will make our theological judgement of the ACTS group at UNP.

5.2.1 Truth of Faith

The question that the truth of faith poses to the practice of ACTS at UNP can be framed as follows: Is ACTS helping students to believe in a God who wants justice for all, and hence to realise that all people are children of God with equal dignity, with the power to be co-creators in building a world of love and justice? Put another way, one could ask: Is ACTS helping students to accept God's love for them, and to share it with others?

5.2.1.1 Dominant Image of God as Moralistic Judge

Our analysis of the ACTS community has revealed that a large proportion of the students had low self-esteem, originating in the insecurity and instability arising from the current global cultural, economic and educational systems. One way in which this lack of self-esteem manifested itself was in the consuming guilt that many students live with. These have been either students with a strong personal faith commitment, or more cultural or nominal Catholics with a strong authority-bound conventional faith in which there was little personal

appropriation. This guilt often stemmed from an understanding of sin as the breaking of rules set by a demanding God, who will exact punishment after death.

Another way in which the lack of self-esteem manifested itself was in the casualness of many students for whom explicit faith was not a great determining factor in their lives. While their behaviour did not provoke guilt for them, their unconscious participation in the global culture inevitably resulted in the many tensions that gave rise to low self-esteem.

Consciously or unconsciously, however, this lack of self-esteem was rooted in an *image of God* who is a policeman, a stern moralistic judge, or a dictator - a far cry from the God of love, that Jesus is at pains to reveal to us in the gospel. This image of God, in turn, was reinforced by the growing predominance in the world of what I call a *privatised faith*. Albert Nolan (1988:108-109) incisively helps us to understand the evolution and nature of this phenomenon.

5.2.1.2 Privatisation of Faith

Nolan charges that the most serious heresy of European Christianity (and hence those who benefited from capitalism and colonialism) in the last few centuries has been the reduction of the gospel to little more than the salvation of souls - the need to have feelings of guilt removed. All matters of social oppression, suffering and evil were conveniently excluded from the arena of religion and salvation by the device of calling them material and worldly problems. God (as well as the gospel) is only concerned about "spiritual" matters: guilt and punishment for guilt. Religion is a private affair between God and the individual soul because guilt is a private affair. The individual Christian who is "saved" from guilt by Jesus will be rewarded after death in that other world, where there are no material problems like suffering and poverty (Nolan 1988:108-109).

Nolan asserts that this kind of "Christianity" is not biblical. It takes one aspect of salvation (the need to be saved from individual guilt) and re-interprets the whole Bible in terms of that need, so that everything else in the Bible is "spiritualised". In the end, even "guilt" is distorted - taken out of its context in the whole cycle of sin - so that it becomes neurotic (a guilt complex). Moreover forgiveness divorced from the totality of salvation does nothing more than ameliorate some of the symptoms of guilt to make one feel a little better about it. This "spiritualisation" and privatisation of religion enabled the system of exploitation and colonialism to be justified (Nolan 1988:109-110).

This is the religion largely propagated today by television programmes worldwide. As Villa-Vicencio points out, "In the process of secularisation, as God was excluded increasingly from public life, from politics, economics and social formations, religion was understood more and

more to be solely a matter for the individual soul" (quoted in Nolan 1988:110). Thus, along with all other events, institutions and issues, the media have succeeded in decontextualising faith (cf McDonald 1998a:9). The heresy of the global consumer culture has triumphed in the promotion of the gods of autonomy, individualism, competition, and therapeutic comfort, which have brought virtually the whole world into its consumer market, in no small measure due to the triumph of the religion it has spawned - the spiritualisation and the privatisation of faith. This culture robs people of a sense of future with its abounding insecurities, by highlighting the importance of living intensely and sensationally in the de-contextualised present as the primary way of finding meaning. Commitments, except for pragmatic gain, are meaningless in this context.

5.2.1.3 Heresy of Individualism and Autonomy

A heresy is a distortion of the truth that is being revealed through the community (Ring 1987:460). Thus, a heresy can flourish because it contains a partial truth which is attractive to people, and perceived to be absent in traditional expressions of the faith. Similarly, the heresy of the global consumer culture is pointing to a number of positive truths. Chief among these is the emergence and dissemination of the new information technologies and media (IMCS-IYCS International Committees 1999:1) which enable the creation of new spaces for freedom, more open societies, a world public opinion, and for new forms of solidarity (McDonald 1998a:8). Individualism, too, offers the opportunity for more personal freedom and responsibility and greater spontaneity.

However, as George Ashenbrenner notes, the spirit of autonomy, individualism, and therapeutic comfort of contemporary culture is diametrically opposed to authentic Christian ministry, and must be purged from our bloodstream, through which it has coursed for many years (quoted in Gallagher 1998:8). Sharon Parks, echoing Carol Gilligan, also counters the glorification of individuality and autonomy in western culture, with its consequent denigration of dependence as infantile. She insists that one cannot equate all forms of dependence with weakness or immaturity. Dependence also points to the relational dimension of all being, the neglect of which leads to impoverishment. Hence, rather than seek independence (or autonomy), which connotes a "standing all by oneself", one should seek movement towards inner-dependence, which means beginning to listen and be responsive to the self as a source of authority and as an object of care. This does not necessarily make sources of insight or claims for care outside the self irrelevant. Rather it means that the self takes conscious responsibility for adjudicating competing claims for truth and care (Parks 1991:57-58).

5.2.1.4 Love of God and Love Self

Parks' insight helps us to grasp the integral relationship between love of God and love of self. Rather than self-neglect (which often reflects a pathological desire to care for others, while denying one's own needs) or selfishness (which cares only for the self to the neglect of others), self-love involves a care and acceptance of self, which is indispensable to believing in and accepting that God loves me. I cannot love God per se. I love God by accepting God's love for me, which means believing that I am acceptable or lovable. This in turn fills me with a confidence and a compassion, which enables me to empathise with and love others less conditionally (1 Jn 4:10-12). Without love of self, a deprivation of love is experienced, provoking a neediness. Relationships with others are then sought to satisfy this neediness. Consequently, any demonstration of love for others is then likely to be conditional. Thus, love of God, love of self, and love of others are all integrally connected.

5.2.1.5 Kingdom of God as Universal Salvation

This points to the integral interconnectedness of all dimensions of creation, and highlights what Jesus meant when he preached salvation in the Kingdom of God. He was talking about a future, which has already begun, in which God's love and compassion would pervade every relationship in every dimension of human existence: in relation to ourselves, in our intimate relationships, with others we encounter at school, work, and in our neighbourhood, as well as in our political, economic, social, and ecological relationships. He was talking about universal salvation. Any reduction of salvation to the private domain is therefore a distortion of the gospel.

5.2.1.6 Faith in UNP ACTS

From the above reflections we can conclude, firstly, that the students in ACTS will only be able to accept God's love if their self-esteem or inner-dependence can be built up, if the privatisation of faith and individualism can be countered, and if more loving images of God as a God of justice and compassion can be developed. Secondly, they will only be able to share God's love with others if they develop a more universal vision of the Kingdom of God.

Concerning the students' ability to accept God's love, we can affirm that all three elements were effected in a variety of ways. Through focusing on becoming a community of friends, a God of love, joy and personal affirmation of each one was often experienced in community. Through the preaching and symbolic actions performed in the liturgies, as well as in all the training and discussions that took place, a focus on the communal dimension of faith was always emphasised in both word and deed. The confidence of many was also built up through individual affirmations and the deepening of insights and skills. Through individual

counselling, too, many students broke through oppressive conceptions of God, and were freed to participate more fully in community. Also through their participation and assumption of responsibility in ACTS locally, provincially, and nationally, as well in other organisations on campus and beyond, many of the students grew in confidence and in a spirit of service with a more global perspective. And finally, through the growing focus on inculturation, more and more students began to develop a confidence, a pride and a joy in discovering their own roots in their cultures, and God's affirmation of them.

Besides these positive developments, however, vestiges of reinforcement of a privatised faith remained manifest. A number of leaders became very frustrated in failing to garner support, and ended up working alone. In doing so, this often resulted in them disempowering those assigned to fulfil particular roles. Also students who failed to fulfil their commitments were at times harshly censured, resulting in their being alienated.

Concerning the students' ability to share God's love with others, the relative absence of any missionary thrust on campus other than to mobilise and recruit Catholics, and the minimal interest in establishing ecumenical relations could indicate an exclusivist tendency within ACTS, which runs counter to the universality of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, a more positive sense became manifest in the sincere efforts by many students to break down traditional ethnic, sexual or racial barriers, and in the promotion of leadership of women. The growing broader focus, and concern for the disadvantaged, limited though it was, along with the exposure to societal suffering like AIDS and unemployment through guest speakers and preaching, also reflected the presence of a sense of the universality of salvation.

5.2.2 Truth of Life

The question that the truth of life poses to the practice of ACTS at UNP can be framed as follows: Is ACTS helping students to see the reality of life in the suffering, exploitation and dehumanisation of people as a contradiction of their faith?

5.2.2.1 Clear Values versus Relativised Values

In order to make a theological judgement of the response of ACTS to the life issues facing people, and facing students in particular, it is necessary to identify a set of values by which to measure that response. However, it immediately becomes apparent that such an identification is very elusive.

A couple of decades ago, such an identification, especially in South Africa, was fairly simple in the context of a polarised society. Thus Albert Nolan, in his simple but powerful book *Jesus before Christianity*, was able to identify four key gospel values which one could

immediately use to make a judgement of the situation in South Africa. These values, the *sharing* (versus possessiveness) of money and material possessions, *humility* (versus status), *human solidarity* (versus group solidarity), and *service* (versus domination) (Nolan 1976:50-72) inspired a whole generation of Catholic students in particular, and Christian students in general, to unique levels of conversion and commitment in the 1970"s, through their incisiveness and clarity (Egan 1991:65).

At the turn of the century into the new millenium, however, no such clarity is any longer possible. The collapse of Communism, and the onset of globalisation in the context of a single international economic order have removed the clear polarities that existed, and rendered any analysis much more complex. Similarly, in South Africa, with the demise of apartheid, it is no longer clear who the enemy is, and the values of the global consumer culture have gained such a hegemony that many people wonder if any alternative values are practically possible (cf Parks 1991:178-181).

As we have mentioned above, George Ashenbrenner (quoted in Gallagher 1998:8) bemoans the dominance of the un-Christian values of contemporary culture, which has resulted in the relativisation of Christian values. With the ensuing lack of clarity, it is understandable how apathy can take root. This was one of the primary issues confronting the ACTS group at UNP. However, the concern about apathy related to participation in ACTS alone. Very little concern was expressed about the general level of apathy on campus, and virtually nothing was done to counter it at that level. Again this is understandable in the light of the post-apartheid demobilisation that occurred, so that there was very little initiative taken or space made to engage in social or political analysis. Nevertheless, the ACTS leadership made a sterling effort to counter the apathy within ACTS itself through their focus on building a "community of friends", which, as we have indicated, began to meet with considerable success.

Despite its demobilising effect, relativisation of values and faith is not necessarily always something negative. As we have already indicated, besides the relativisation that is taking place at a global cultural level, university students in particular, on entering the liminal space of the university, are prone to enter a stage of *unqualified relativism*. This, in fact, can be a very positive and creative moment, because, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith points out, it helps one to see through the tradition that one has been brought up in, to encounter atheism, and experience its meaninglessness and dread, to enable a faith that is without superficiality (only God) to emerge (quoted in Parks 1991:190-191).

Thus relativisation, even at the global level, despite its associated confusion and directionlessness, can be a moment of opportunity to go beyond a conventional faith towards a deeper commitment. Nevertheless, the danger (which is probably more evident today) is

that the insecurity of this moment drives people back even deeper into an authority-bound, clear, and therefore secure fundamentalist community (whether it be based on the Bible or Tradition).

So our attempt to evaluate whether ACTS was helping students to see the contradiction between the reality of life and their faith is fraught with difficulty, because a simple analysis of the global reality and culture is no longer possible. This enabled the students, for example, to buy into a number of features of this culture, such as individualism, and, unlike in former years, it could no longer be taken for granted that these were in contradiction to Christian values. Nevertheless, there were some issues which revealed suffering or evil that was clearly a contradiction of faith.

One issue was the pain of the racial division and alienation within ACTS when the Whites all withdrew. The gospel imperative of unity and the need to transcend racial, cultural and language barriers (Lk 10:29-37) to enable the growth of an inclusive solidarity is clear (Nolan 1976:59-67). Each successive ACTS committee was very aware of this contradiction, and (as described above) big efforts were made to remove it, but, unfortunately, to no avail. At least, though, the majority of those remaining had internalised this Christian value.

Another issue that reflected a clear contradiction of faith, which ACTS members were aware of, was the plight of the orphans, for whom one student initiated a collection of clothes. A large group of students then delivered the clothes and spent the day with the orphans, entertaining each other. Many of these students were clearly touched by the suffering of the orphans, which drew out a true Christian spirit of compassion from them (Nolan 1976:27-28).

A final clear contradiction of faith that ACTS members became aware of was the suffering caused by AIDS. When a woman, who herself was infected, came to speak to the community, virtually the whole congregation remained behind to listen to her, and posed many searching questions, reflecting a deep concern. In a context where so much AIDS education was falling on deaf ears, one had a sense that the message was getting through.

These, however, were the only issues where the contradiction to faith was clear. All the other issues carried a great deal of ambiguity, with conflicting values, which prevented the students from having a clear faith response. We will now attempt to flesh each of these out in turn.

5.2.2.2 Use of Money: Entrepreneurial Individualism versus Evangelical Sharing

Jesus' attitude to the use of money always seemed to be very clear. To follow him, we must give away all our possessions (Mk 10:17-22; Lk 12:33-34), and share everything we have

with those in need (Acts 4:34-35). Over the centuries these texts have inspired many Christians, and the formation of many religious orders, who have opted for a life of voluntary poverty. Jesus' way seemed to be the antithesis of competition and individualism.

However, with the advent of globalisation, and the triumph of Capitalism, with its values of competition, individualism and entrepreneurship, all nations and cultures of the world have been forced to engage with this system if they want to survive. This engagement has resulted in widespread rationalisation and unemployment, with "radical forms of poverty that lead to the destruction of society" (McDonald 1998:8). People can no longer hope that employment will be created for them. They have to create it for themselves. So, just as the education system has become personalised, its outcomes increasingly dependent on the creativity and capacity of students to mobilise their own resources, more and more people are having to create their own work. This is only possible if a spirit of entrepreneurship exists, which in turn requires a high degree of individualism for its creativity to be stimulated. So if one is concerned about development and job creation, it would seem that it is necessary to promote an individualistic entrepreneurial spirit - the antithesis of the Christian value!

This pressure has resulted in a permanent tension for all those who were once fired by the "socialist" vision of a sharing society, resulting, for many, in the abandonment of their previous commitments. This is part of the same dynamic (the personalisation and rationalisation of education) that gives rise to the academic stress that students are subjected to, resulting in a permanent tension for those wanting to express their Christian commitment on campus.

So how can we articulate the meaning of Jesus' teachings on the use of money in today's world? Since job creation is a central priority for survival and economic well-being, we have to promote an entrepreneurial spirit to enable it to happen. However, this should take place in the context of promoting the positive aspects of individualism, namely realising the creative potential with which God has blessed each one of us, in order to contribute towards the development of the whole community, without which any personal development will always be at risk. Such promotion of entrepreneurship should also happen in the context of building up the self-esteem of people, since the lack of it can result in a compulsiveness, which could reinforce the negative aspects of individualism.

The central criterion then for evaluating one's use of money remains whether it demonstrates a *spirit of solidarity with the poor* or not. This requires continual awareness-raising and ongoing analysis of the global consumer culture, to uncover the roots of unemployment and academic stress, as a means of empowering people at least with such knowledge, without which we are reduced to being manipulable pawns, and doomed to frustration.

This was often the case with many of the students in ACTS, who, while experiencing a great deal of academic stress, were largely unaware of its roots in the global consumer culture. For the most part, they saw only the positive effects of globalisation in the modern technologies such as e-mail and cellular phones. There was hardly any focus on its negative effects, except when ACTS was a space to express their frustration about the academic pressure. But there was never any space created to analyse the roots of this suffering. A few students gained an insight into the negative effects of globalisation when they attended the PACSA workshop on the effects of the government's macro-economic policy (GEAR) on education. However, this was never communicated to the broader group.

5.2.2.3 Gaining Respect: Glorification of Success versus Evangelical Humility

The second issue where the contradiction to faith was ambiguous related to the question of status or prestige or the things that make one worthy of respect or honour. Jesus' attitude to this issue always seemed very clear to me. He was proclaiming a kingdom where there would be no division of people into inferior and superior, where all people would be loved and respected in their own right, because of their dignity as human beings (Lk 18:9-14), and not because of their education or wealth or ancestry or authority or rank or virtue or other achievements that the world regards as successful (Nolan 1976:54-58).

At UNP the issue manifested itself in the glorification of success reflected in the status and importance accorded to the graduation ceremony. I initially found it difficult to share fully in the acclamations of those graduating in the presence of so many others who were experiencing failure for academic or financial reasons, as it seemed to be emphasising their lack of value. However, in the context of so many students who came from communities where such achievement was rare, where hopelessness and a lack of self-esteem thrived, and for whose education such enormous sacrifices had been made, their success, and hence graduation, was experienced as a symbol of hope that poverty was not inevitable and that progress was possible. It therefore had to be glorified as a role model for those coming behind. And those trivialising the importance of graduation were often harshly criticised as enemies of progress.

Thus, again, the ambiguity of Jesus' value on the grounds for respect needs to be recognised. The symbols of progress clearly need to be affirmed and acclaimed. Nevertheless, any triumphalism needs to be avoided through a stress on a theology of failure, or, as Martin Luther insightfully recognised, a theology of the cross (Luther 1971:45-55). This emphasises the limitedness of any good work we might do of ourselves, and hence the giftedness from God (grace) of any success, and the consequent imperative to serve and to share the fruits of that success. This gives a much deeper sense of the meaning of true humility, which is necessary to avoid reinforcing the low self-esteem of, and to give hope to the many students

who are living under the cloud of academic and financial exclusion.

However, such hopeful insights can only be gained if there is space for such reflection. Unfortunately though, as already noted, little such group space was created at UNP ACTS, so that most students, especially those with financial difficulties, were left to struggle alone in their sense of failure, except for an occasional counselling opportunity. Unless this can be addressed, any affirmations of success will always have an undermining effect on those not succeeding, and hence be a contradiction of Christian values.

5.2.2.4 Premarital Sex: Cultural Necessity versus Evangelical Faithfulness

Another area of enormous ambiguity in clarifying Christian values is that of premarital sex. While Jesus' condemnation of fornication seems very clear (Mt 15:19), and while the Catholic Church regards any sexual act outside of marriage as a grave sin (The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994:2390), it was very difficult for ACTS to help students to identify how it contradicted their faith.

As we have already shown, there are so many factors giving rise to the destruction of the link between sex and marriage, and hence a cultural acceptance of premarital sex. The cultural acceptance of "illegitimacy" as a norm, the cynicism about happiness in marriage, and the relativisation of all traditional and religious moral sexual norms, especially through the media, have all caused the social and cultural justifications for marriage to crumble. In such a context, the Christian teachings on premarital sex make less and less sense to young people today, being seen simply as a set of oppressive rules with no relevance to reality, and therefore to be ignored. This forces us to re-think whether these teachings do not need a radical reformulation.

I believe they will only begin to make sense, if the focus shifts away from condemning premarital sex to encouraging loving and life-giving relationships, and if there is an openness to exploring (as yet undiscovered) new ways of nurturing and giving expression to the faithfulness and commitment in such relationships that the stress on marriage is attempting to uphold. When the issue of relationships, sex and marriage was discussed amongst the ACTS students, many of them felt very strongly about the link between sex and commitment, and would tolerate no unfaithfulness, even in relationships where they were not yet considering marriage. This is an increasingly common phenomenon in the world today,[1] which reinforces the argument for an openness to other forms of expression of commitment.

It is nevertheless important to stress the direct connection between sex and love. Any

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[1]   This is reflected even in the desire of many same-sex couples to get married (Openshaw 1997:120-125).

separation of these becomes harmful, since sex should be seen as the last stage on a continuum of two people revealing themselves more and more (becoming naked) to each other, sharing their deepest selves, which is only possible when trust has grown. Sex without love and trust can only be desirable, and maybe satisfying, if our bodies are separated from our sense of self. So, people with low self-esteem (a negative sense of self) - who probably comprise the majority of the population in South Africa - are more susceptible to be driven to engage in such sexual relationships.

In addition to these questions, the variety of sexual norms in different cultural contexts poses a challenge to the church to open itself up to confront these experiences. It is also challenged to take seriously the argument that sexuality is a social construct, since many of its proponents claim "that anthropological evidence tends to support the notion that various cultures not only influence but in some way 'produce' different kinds of sexualities" (Szesnat 1997:280).

The students are still at a stage of struggling to find an identity. Hence they are filled with curiosity, especially about issues of sex, and with a need to experiment, since there are no ready-made answers. Yet there is also often a cultural awkwardness, which can give rise to repression, inhibition or inappropriate expression. Furthermore, few of them are aware of the ways in which relationships and sex are tied in with the broader societal pressures. Therefore, any attempt to deepen the students' grasp of the issues in confrontation with faith must be rooted in the creation of space for expression of desires and questions, and appropriate satisfaction, as well as to analyse together their respective cultural experiences, and the causes and effects of issues like illegitimacy, low self-esteem, and the breakdown of rites of passage. Furthermore, it is important that any such reflection or analysis takes place without a legalistic approach or an over-admonitory or judgemental atmosphere of restraint. I believe that a relational approach is necessary, which, starting from the students' experience, will help them to identify the enslaving and freeing dimensions of the ways in which they relate, in a process of self-discovery. Nevertheless, mutually defined boundaries, an important adolescent need, ought to be established, to help them to weather the relativisation that will inevitably result.

Within ACTS, there was a fair amount of space for raising questions and for reflection on the issues of relationships - in preaching, in counselling, and in some discussion groups. However, there was little space created to analyse the roots of these issues. Consequently, while it went some way to raising awareness, ACTS was not very successful in bringing the life and faith of the students together through helping them to come to terms with their cultural dislocation and low self-esteem.

I can conclude, therefore, by asserting that the ways of relating among the students seem

destined to continue to lead them to experience more suffering and stress. It is not impossible that premarital sex can be capable of giving loving and life-giving fulfilment, but it carries enormous risks. Besides the emotional risks involved, the dangers of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS are more serious, since they can permanently devastate the lives of the students. The road ahead to address this, though, is long, since it will require challenging the consumerist assumptions of the media and the current cultural priority of fertility to give way to the priority of honest, committed, and life-giving relationships.

5.2.2.5 Healing: Temporary Consolation versus Prophetic Empowerment

The final life issue carrying a degree of ambiguity with conflicting values was the issue of healing. Throughout Jesus' ministry, the one activity that probably drew more people to him than any other was healing. It was the manifestation of his total compassion for people in their suffering, and his desire for wholeness (eg Mk 1:40-42). The need for this ministry in the church would therefore seem to be obvious, backed up by the fact that the Catholic Church acknowledges one of the sacraments to be a sacrament of healing - the Sacrament of the Sick.

However, this sacrament evolved over the centuries away from being an anointing for bodily healing to one enabling a spiritual healing with the forgiveness of sins. The ministry for bodily healing, meanwhile, took the form of caring for the sick in hospitals and other institutions (Richard 1990:522). This was a reflection of the tendency of the Church (and most subsequent "mainline" churches) to ascribe everything to the natural order, where all healing could largely be explained through the operation of psycho-medical, cultural-anthropological, socio-economic and philosophical factors (Bate 1995:282). This led to a theology of healing being quite absent from the Christian tradition (Richard 1990:521).

Consequently a plethora of Coping-healing churches, emphasising bodily healing from sickness ascribed to the supernatural order, have arisen throughout the world, and particularly in South Africa (which has been sickened by the sin of apartheid and racism over many years), where the largest grouping of Christians belong to these churches (Bate 1995:280). While many people have experienced healing at a personal and social level through these churches, and they have provided sites of resistance where people's humanity has been reaffirmed in a context which continually denies it, they have also, at times, played a negative role in society. Some have propagated prosperity gospels, and supported the apartheid status quo, and many have encouraged a quietist withdrawal from society, preventing people becoming involved in the ongoing struggle against social and structural evil. Thus they have helped people to cope with sin and evil, instead of fighting to eradicate it (:281-282).

They therefore often manifest the "heretical" form of religion that Albert Nolan describes as

spiritualised and privatised, which we have referred to above. It offers healing from guilt and sin while leaving systems of exploitation intact. In fact, he asserts, "this kind of religion is, without doubt, the opium of the people" (Nolan 1988:109-110). Rubem Alves is similarly scathing about such forms of pastoral care which cover up the conflicts between the powerful and the powerless, oppressors and oppressed, rich and poor, by comforting its victims (Alves 1977:127). He sees people often seeking pastoral care only in order to be empowered and consoled, which makes it very difficult for a pastor to be prophetic, as the one seeking consolation would then be outraged. This raises a question as to whom such power, insight and moral guidance should be communicated. Alves insists that pastoral care must be politically understood, and hence primarily administered to those committed to the creation of a new world - or those open to a prophetic message - as without this, consolation is an illusion, since it only comforts, reinforces and perpetuates the position of the powerful, the oppressors or the rich (:136).

Thus healing is often associated with this kind of theology that has come to determine the dominant image of Christianity and of the church in South Africa, through vigorous promotion and extensive exposure in the media (Nolan 1988:110). Inevitably, then, many, if not most of the students coming to university, even the Catholics, manifest a great need and enthusiasm for healing activities.

Within UNP ACTS, a variety of healing activities were offered to respond to this need. These variously took the form of blessings before exams, anointing of the sick, birthday blessings, confession, and counselling, and most of these were usually very positively received. The activities within the liturgies also fulfilled the need for sensation that the modern culture yearns for. The dilemma that is posed, then, is whether these activities reinforced a privatised understanding of faith or whether they enabled the growth of a wholeness which empowered the students to become part of creating a new world.

Inevitably, for many of the students, a number of these activities, especially the liturgies, simply provided consolation, as manifested in their continued apathy. However, the broader context of each healing or blessing, and of the need for empowerment in order to serve, were normally stressed, often touching many students very deeply. Especially in the context of counselling and confession, an opportunity for a deeper social awareness and conversion often manifested itself, resulting frequently in profound new forms of involvement.

We can thus affirm the value of these healing activities in ACTS, which certainly contributed to the growth of a sense of belonging, and hence of community, and which often had an empowering effect on the students. The fact that they also played a sensational role is not necessarily a problem, since this has become a need of the contemporary generation of youth which requires a response. The challenge, though, is to ensure that such healings and

blessings are being politically understood by being placed in a broader context.

From all that we have discussed about the life issues facing the students in UNP ACTS, we can conclude that ACTS did help them to gain an awareness of many of the realities of life, although mostly at a superficial level. This was due largely to the absence of much space and initiative for discussion and common reflection. This therefore constitutes a major challenge for the organisation, especially in the light of the many confused values that our world is giving rise to, which prevent the growth of an awareness of how much life experience is in contradiction to our faith.

5.2.3 Truth of Movement

The question that the truth of movement poses to the practice of ACTS at UNP can be framed as follows: Is ACTS helping students to participate in and build a movement that is removing the contradiction between faith and life?

5.2.3.1 Bringing the Church of Vatican II Home to ACTS

The Second Vatican Council recovered and renewed an understanding of the Church as the People of God, and as the Body of Christ. These images emphasise the unity of all the people in the Church, whether they be bishops, priests, religious or laity, who, by virtue of their baptism and confirmation, share in the evangelising mission of the Church (LG 33). The Council also stressed the role of the Church, and especially of the laity, in the renewal and transformation of the temporal order, which has been tarnished by serious defects in the course of history (AA 7). This affirmation of Cardijn's portrayal of the Church as a movement seeking to remove the contradiction between faith and life was highlighted in the Council in the special mention made of Catholic Action, the name given to apostolic lay movements, many of which are those spawned by Cardijn's methodology (AA 20).

The Catholic Church in Southern Africa attempted to bring this vision of Church home through the formulation of its Pastoral Plan, *Community Serving Humanity* (SACBC 1989). This vision statement highlights many of the elements necessary for evaluating the practice of ACTS in helping students to participate in and build a movement that is removing the contradiction between faith and life.

Its vision for being the Church in Southern Africa is firstly to be *building a community* according to the mind of Christ (SACBC 1989:17-25) through:
- the creation of Small Christian Communities or Task Groups;
- encouraging the full participation of all the faithful in the celebration of the liturgy,

requiring the training of everyone in its meaning;

- catechesis in which the whole community is involved in clarifying and deepening each one's faith;

- gospel-sharing which links the gospel to the community's life situation;

- the creation of lay ministries, which enable tasks to be widely distributed, and all members to be included in decision-making, thereby sharing responsibility for the community;

- developing leaders who have a community spirit amongst themselves, who work in teams sharing information and skills, who encourage women to exercise leadership, and who remain among the people through involving the whole community in tasks and decisions;

- demolishing racial and sexual barriers, and removing discrimination; and

- dealing with conflict by promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and repentance.

Secondly, the Pastoral Plan envisages a church which is *serving humanity* according to the mind of Christ (SACBC 1989:29-34) through:

- seeing all existing church practices (preaching, celebration of sacraments, providing schools, health care and charity) as part of a larger vision for building a more human world of justice, unity, sharing, service, and mutual respect, while eradicating all that oppresses, dehumanises, and destroys people;

- making life more human, especially in the areas of sexuality, where the link with love and commitment is being broken, of justice and human rights, through the promotion of just social and political structures, and of basic material needs (including cultural and artistic needs);

- discovering the hidden human needs in the community;

- helping all believers to develop their own resources so that all (not only a few) are enabled to meet these human needs and to act together to build a better, a more human world;

- special groups or committees, eg justice and peace commissions, to deal with needs which individuals alone cannot respond to, while involving the whole community as often as possible; and

- giving expression to our concern to serve and transform the world in our liturgies.

Looking at UNP ACTS in the light of this vision of church, we can recognise how the organisation made great strides in building community and friendship and a sense of movement, even if it was with a relatively small but growing group of students.[1] The leaders, too, grew in a spirit of community and teamwork, and were beginning to find ways of dealing creatively with conflict.[2] The membership of an international movement also enabled older

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[1] See 2.3.2 above.

[2] See 2.3.3 above.

leaders to progress to broader responsibilities, thereby giving space for new local leaders to emerge, while still providing support.[1] Full participation was also often encouraged in the liturgies, in the creation of lay ministries, and in the music and liturgy task groups,[2] while more and more students became involved in catechesis in the confirmation group.[3] Furthermore, conscious efforts were made to breach racial and sexual barriers,[4] and a number of women exercised leadership, even at the highest level.[5]

However, the building of community according to the mind of Christ was retarded by the lack of Small Christian Communities, and hence of a space for gospel sharing. Insufficient training in lay ministries, in liturgy, in pedagogy, and in conflict resolution also prevented fuller participation, while the racial barrier remained a long-term challenge.

At the level of serving humanity, some awareness of the human needs for transformation in the community and in broader society was developed, which at times was brought into the liturgy.[6] Amongst a few students there were attempts to respond to basic material needs, and the special discussion and task groups were formed to deal with student issues.[7] These enabled a number of students to grow in understanding of the issues of sexuality and commitment. Furthermore, many students developed a greater personal resourcefulness through assuming responsibilities, and in confronting their weaknesses and fears in counselling.[8]

However, the capacity of ACTS to serve humanity was diminished through the absence of sufficient space for reflection. This resulted in a minimal focus on justice and human rights issues or on cultural and artistic needs, and hence in a limited awareness of the link between existing church practices and a vision for a more human world.

This evaluation of ACTS reveals the making of many elements of a strong movement in the spirit of Vatican II, which is capable of having an impact in removing the contradiction between faith and life. Its weaknesses, however, highlight three central challenges in any attempt to build such a movement, namely, the struggle for inclusivity, the struggle for true ecumenism, and the struggle for an effective pedagogy. We will now attempt to flesh each of these out.

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[1] See 2.3.7 above.
[2] See 2.3.1 above.
[3] See 2.3.4.3 above.
[4] See 2.3.2 above.
[5] See 2.3.7 above.
[6] See 2.3.6 above.
[7] See 2.3.4.3 above.
[8] See 2.3.5 above.

5.2.3.2 The Struggle for Inclusivity

One of the central values of the Kingdom of God which Jesus promoted is the all-inclusive solidarity of the human race, as opposed to the group solidarities (like family, tribe, church, race or nation) that we are so naturally inclined to treasure and cling to (Nolan 1976:59-67). Jesus scandalised the Jews of his time by suggesting that even their enemies were their neighbours who needed to be included (Mt 5:43-44), and that love of one's own family should not take precedence over a broader human solidarity (Lk 14:26). However, we are all inclined to give precedence to that group which gives us a sense of belonging and identity, and UNP ACTS was no exception.

While the group developed a positive vision of itself as an inclusive community of friends, it constantly faced the danger of becoming exclusive, in the functioning of the committee, in its racial composition, and in its relationship to other Christian groups. However, as with many of the values reflected upon above, these human experiences fill the seemingly clear Christian values with a great deal of ambiguity.

As we have noted in identifying the different stages of psychological development, the period of adolescence and young adulthood is a time for establishing one's identity. This is often clarified through joining a group emphasising a symbol of shared identity or an ideology in opposition to another group, and often cruelly excluding outsiders (Wulff 1997:379). Consequently a form of community arises that Parks calls the "self-selected group" (Parks 1991:65-66), which is a positive development, since it can enable the young adult to transcend ethnic, racial and cultural boundaries in favour of a cause. At a faith level, this coincides with what H. Richard Niebuhr calls "henotheism". This involves construing

> a single pattern of meaning around a single cause or center, such as their
> particular institution, political goal, study, project or personal relationship, but
> ...(an inability) to relate such a center to any larger frame of meaning....The
> "center" they rely on to give ultimate meaning to the world they compose,
> however, is not adequate to unify the complexity, the variety, and the tragic
> elements of human experience; therefore, their henotheistic faith is vulnerable
> to...any significant shift in the conditions of personal or cultural life.
>
> (quoted in Parks 1991:18)

Such a stage of faith is a development from a faith that Niebuhr calls "polytheism", which involves creating several separate patterns of meaning that lack any integration, resulting in people living departmentalised lives (quoted in Parks 1991:17-18). Nevertheless the henotheistic faith is still a narrow faith which is vulnerable to collapse if the single cause that gives it meaning is removed, defeated or fails. Such a collapse of faith was manifest amongst

many activists, Christian or otherwise, in the struggle against apartheid, when its demise removed the single cause, while the dream was not yet realised. It is also still manifest today in a number of students, even in ACTS, whose faith collapses when their prayers are not answered, when they do not succeed or get what they want.

The point is that, at such a stage of psychological and faith development, exclusiveness around a common project or cause is virtually inevitable, and maybe even necessary, to assist the establishment of personal identity. This is why a priority for so many groups is to get a uniform, a T-shirt, or a badge, and to have a public display of their shared identity, eg. a church youth group wanting to be a distinct choir in church. In my ministry, I have frequently reacted negatively to such proposals, seeing them as a negation of our Christian goal, but this has only intensified the group's resolve. What is needed is a warm affirmation of such a group's identity, and an accommodation to some of their exclusivist requests, to avoid being labelled as the enemy. Only then might they be open to the broader demands of the Gospel, and to a next stage of faith which Niebuhr calls "radical monotheism".

> Whereas polytheism "depends for its meaning on many centers and gives its partial loyalties to many interests," and henotheism centers in a god who is "one among many possible gods," radical monotheism is the composing of a pattern of meaning centered in the "One beyond all the many," by which Niebuhr means confidence in and loyalty to a center of power and value adequate to all the ongoing conditions of the experiences of persons and their communities.
>
> (Parks 1991:18-19)

However, movement towards such radical monotheism, and hence to a more inclusive form of community is not necessarily inevitable. As Marstin points out, many people can settle into a comfortable self-selected group that shapes a private truth without any broader concern. The ability to mature to inclusivity requires a sustained conversation with "otherness". In underscoring the Piagetian insight that human beings develop "because we need to", he contends that,

> when one continues to bump up against those who are different, the inner-dependent self begins to find a more adequate truth in a dialectic with the "other" both within and without. A yearning for community (not just association) with those who are profoundly other than oneself emerges.
>
> (quoted in Parks 1991:68)

It is thus necessary to acknowledge the need for a degree of exclusivism amongst the university students, while provoking contact with "otherness". This also raises a question

about how one should respond to the withdrawal of Whites from ACTS (or from any other organisation for that matter).

Bearing in mind that they are all victims of an apartheid education and upbringing, giving rise to their sense of alienation and vulnerability in a multiracial context, is it not legitimate, and maybe even necessary to suggest that the Whites need to be organised separately, even if informally? Given a less threatening exclusive space of their own, are they not more likely to be assisted to grow in personal identity, and hence to become more open to contact with "otherness", rather than it being thrust upon them? Such separate organisation under apartheid, while being a scandalous sign of contradiction, nevertheless enabled many unpoliticised White students to grow in commitment. This therefore need not be seen as a reversion to an apartheid mentality, but rather as the recognition of a new cultural dislocation, which needs a pedagogy of re-integration. In the light of the failure of all other methods to reach out to them, this might be the only option left for those concerned about their pastoral care, as long as the effects of apartheid education are manifesting themselves.

5.2.3.3 The Struggle for True Ecumenism

One of the starkest forms of exclusive separate organisation is manifest in the denominationalism that divides the Christian Church in violation of the passionate prayer of Jesus that "they all be one" (Jn 17:21-23). An awareness of this contradiction has given rise to the growth of the ecumenical movement over the past half-century, and the Catholic Church, too, has recognised the urgency of promoting the unity of all Christians (UR 1). Nevertheless, although many Christians from other churches at times attended the ACTS liturgies, and some members attended meetings with other Christian groups on campus, UNP ACTS took very little initiative to engage with the other Christian groups. And at times, a spirit of competition developed, especially as friendships amongst members grew, and ACTS began to successfully assert itself on campus.

On the other hand, in the climate of relativisation of the modern global culture, accompanied by the loosening of all traditional allegiances to particular denominations, we have already noted the ease with which many students moved between different churches, seldom feeling bound to the churches they were brought up in. The personalisation that we have noted has taken place in job creation and in education is thus similarly evident in the appropriation of faith. Many students therefore felt increasingly free to search for their own spiritual home, believing that all churches worshipped the one same God.

While this tended to break down the distinctions between a number of churches, as well as the narrow group solidarities into which many Christians were locked, this phenomenon that I call "ecclesiastical liberalism" unfortunately gave rise to a cheap form of ecumenism. This

was based more on an emotional affinity rather than on any convergence of doctrine or values, since the choice of church was probably made in terms of what was immediately most gratifying. This reduced religion for many to the level of a consumer market, where the entertainment value of the liturgies of the different churches ended up being the dominant factor in making a choice, along with the sense of belonging that the community engendered.

These cultural imperatives, in turn, reinforced the fact that most of the students arriving at university were at the stage of clarifying their identity, and hence were struggling to relate their own basic drives, which were egocentric or narcissistic, to the expectations of society. They were therefore very susceptible to narcissistic forms of faith, some examples of which Paul Pruyser identifies as:

> the group narcissism of denominational proliferation and conflict; the instant mysticism provided by psychedelic drugs, giving a sense of triumphant omnipotence; and the "collective disinhibitions" engendered by evangelistic revival meetings and similar group actions, which diminish the sense of personal agency and responsibility, while promoting a dangerous self-inflation.
>
> (in Wulff 1997:354)

This climate inevitably engendered a spirit of competition amongst the different Christian groups on campus to attract students by satisfying their needs, which reinforced a spirit of exclusivity. ACTS at times was tempted to buy into this consumer market by placing a priority on making the liturgies more competitive, and hence entertaining. In itself this was a good thing, since the liturgies needed to be experiences of joy and meaning, responding to actual student needs. However, it obstructed any reflection on the real challenges of the ecumenical task.

True ecumenism does not reside in being happy together while glossing over, or ignoring doctrinal differences. Rather, it requires each party to have a deep sense of their own identity and standpoint, from which differences and the truth of them can be confronted. For ACTS to develop a healthier ecumenical spirit, therefore, a deeper knowledge of the Catholic faith is necessary, so that they can approach the other groups with more confidence and hence openness.

5.3.3.4 The Struggle for an Effective Pedagogy

The final challenge facing ACTS in its attempts to build a movement that is removing the contradiction between faith and life lies at the level of pedagogy, or of the methods used to grow in awareness and commitment.

As the whole methodology of this thesis betrays, my assumption (based on my own experience and on the considerable experience of numerous scholars) is that a pedagogy which will build critical and visionary leadership and lasting commitment must be rooted in life experience and practice, provide the space for indepth reflection on that practice, and lead to a renewed transforming practice. This is the essence of the *see-judge-act* method articulated by Cardijn, which is also variously referred to as the *review of life* or the *action-reflection-action* method (Pelegri 1979:153).

This methodology has not been consciously employed within ACTS, and is hardly even known, despite the fact that it is accepted as a central part of IMCS, the international movement to which ACTS is affiliated. Nevertheless, a more organic growth in pedagogical effectiveness has developed slowly within the organisation, while we can acknowledge the need for much more development.

Growth is evident in the increasing personal contact and development of friendships that the leaders are engaging in, thus starting with and responding to the real needs of the students (in this case for relationship), which is the fundamental principle of this methodology. However, too many of the leaders still rely too much on mobilising students simply through mass contact, especially in the liturgies, focusing on addressing their more superficial entertainment needs. While such a focus is crucial to the building up of the group, it lacks the personal confrontation needed for real personal growth.

There is further evidence of growth in the better balancing of the task and maintenance functions of the committee, where more energy began to be expended on maintenance functions and hence on renewing the motivation of the members.

Furthermore, there was growth in the awareness of both the students and the chaplain of the need for the students to have the space to make their own mistakes. They therefore began to learn from their own practice, and not only from the theory of others' experience. Even I, as a chaplain with much "head" experience, grew to appreciate with my heart, the significance of mentoring patience, painful as it is to just watch while mistakes are being made.

The confirmation group was a good model of the pedagogical power of a regular small group meeting, along with the diversity of life-sharing, input and discussion, exposure, and symbolic enactment and celebration. However, its weakness at times was the priority given to a theory-to-practice pedagogy, largely due to the shortage of time. This resulted in much input not being internalised, and hence wasted. Also, many of the group took the encouragement to get involved in ACTS and beyond very seriously, but there was little time to reflect on their ensuing involvement, which could have strengthened their commitment and

practical effectiveness.

This highlights one of the main difficulties of the see-judge-act methodology. It needs time, which is often not available. Nevertheless, as both the confirmation group and the more recent committee have demonstrated, when relationship is there, time will be found. This emphasises the priority of starting with the fundamental relationship needs of students before leadership and commitment can be deepened.

The same can be said of the method for promoting ecumenism. Before one can engage with people from other churches in dialogue at a doctrinal level, a dialogue at a human level is necessary. After discovering our common humanity, it then becomes possible to discuss why we believe what we believe in, which requires an openness to the truth of the other, and an openness to repentance.

Furthermore, if one is to start with the real life issues that really are preoccupying the students (which will capture their perseverance), it is also necessary to create an environment of trust, since such sharing often requires a degree of making oneself vulnerable. The resultant sharing of family difficulties, cultural assumptions, and personal weaknesses, in turn, are normally indispensable to an integrated growth in faith, commitment, and moral leadership.

Another fundamental principle of the see-judge-act pedagogy is the priority of action or involvement as a prerequisite for building leadership and commitment. Listening and talking can be inspiring, but only action brings real experience, which transforms one bodily, and inspires hope. Within ACTS, such action and exposure was very limited, thus preventing a fuller realisation of committed, visionary leadership. Nevertheless, the few exposures to guest speakers, the engagement in social action, and the assumption of leadership responsibilities both within ACTS and in other organisations, demonstrated their power in nurturing leadership and commitment, which are fundamental to the building of a movement.

CHAPTER 6

RELEVANT FORMS OF MINISTRY TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Having described the phenomenon of the ACTS community at UNP, and having made a theological evaluation and judgement of the phenomenon, we are now in a position to draw some conclusions about the forms of ministry that can offer "Good News", evoke commitment, and build strong, moral leaders amongst those students. This is the final movement in the hermeneutical circle, which Browning refers to as *strategic practical theology* (1991:55-58), and it constitutes the proposals for action which the Whiteheads refer to as the stage of *decision* (1980:99-100), and which Bate refers to as the *culturally mediated pastoral responses* to the culturally mediated needs emerging (1995:226-227).

While these conclusions will apply particularly to the ACTS group at UNP, I suspect that most of them could equally apply to university students elsewhere in South Africa, and, indeed, even throughout the world, since we are increasingly living in a global village, and hence are subject to similar forces.

I will summarise these conclusions firstly in terms of *structure*, and then in terms of *content*, taking into account the concern of Parks (1991:xvi) that the latter is often neglected by developmental theorists, whereas the images (the content) that the structures hold have great formative power requiring careful consideration.

6.1 Relevant Structures of Ministry

6.1.1 The Priority of Fostering Self-Esteem

The psychological and socio-cultural mediations we employed lead us to conclude that the primary issue facing university students in South Africa today is their lack of self-esteem. They are at a stage of psychological development in which they are struggling to clarify their identity, to find acceptance, and to assert themselves as responsible adults in a world that places enormous demands on them. This is made increasingly difficult in a climate of fierce competition and relativisation, accompanied by great insecurity, where one can rely less and less on institutional support, and where people are forced to draw on their own personal resources in order to experience growth, development, and a sense of meaning, whether it be at the economic, educational, or faith level. In short, self-esteem is critical to most endeavours (cf McDonald 1998a:12), yet most students experience a lack of it, making it very difficult for them to discover peace ("Good News"), to transcend their own problems to show concern for others, or to make commitments. In other words, most students have not yet been able to experience and accept the love of God in such a way that they can share it with others.

The priority task, then, I believe, for ministers to university students, is to be fostering self-esteem in them. Pinnock (1997:72-74), quoting Brendto, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, who use native American principles, suggests a framework for doing this which involves the four notions of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. This framework captures the essence of the fruits of this present work, so I will use it to elaborate the ways in which the self-esteem of university students can be fostered.

6.1.1.1 Fostering Belonging

Pinnock reminds us that "Humans are social creatures, and *belonging* is the baseline from which personality develops" (1997:72). In most African cultures this is reflected in the notion of *ubuntu* (Zulu and Xhosa) or *botho* (Sotho), and in the maxim, *motho ke motho ka batho* (a person is a person by virtue of other people). The first task, therefore, in fostering self-esteem, is to foster such a sense of belonging or a sense of community.

The UNP ACTS group had already recognised this priority, and significant strides had been taken to develop community. This points to the need to provide a space where the students can find joy together, and where they can develop relationships and friendships. This takes into account the particular preoccupation of students for relationship and fun at their stage of psychological development, something often regarded as secondary during the anti-apartheid struggle, or which happened by default.

In a similar vein, university ministry should involve the celebration of liturgies which are joyful, participative, and creative, and in which student issues are highlighted. The role of symbol and ritual in binding people together and giving a sense of belonging should never be underestimated.

There are two other areas which I would regard as fundamental to the growth of community which were not very developed at UNP. The first is the need for the visiting of members by leaders or the chaplain. This immediately establishes a personal contact which enables bonding to take place, and is invariably an affirming experience for the one being visited. The second area is the establishment of small communities, where there is space for reflection on issues of faith and life, and gospel-sharing. Preferably these should use the see-judge-act method, which is action-focused, and hence prevents the group turning in on itself. Such small communities are indispensable to the growth of community, since it is impossible for everyone in a large group to be acknowledged and given space to be heard and to be assertive. They also allow for an intensity of support and challenge which is not possible in large groups, enabling the growth of critical awareness, and hence a countering of a sense of insecurity, hopelessness, and powerlessness.

For a group such as the Whites (although this could relate to any other alienated group) who withdrew from ACTS, and who are not able to integrate into the broader group, maybe a separate, less formal small community could be developed, where they can feel free and become empowered, while remaining more loosely connected to the broader community, yet open to its challenge. This obviously could be perceived as a return to apartheid, and if this were organised in isolation, it would certainly realise that danger. However, the reality at UNP was that the Whites separated themselves anyway, and all efforts to reintegrate them failed. Such separate organisation of them, then, could only be a means to building a new unity, if it is embarked on with a political understanding of pastoral care (Alves 1977:136), which would ensure that the Christian challenge to build true unity would be ever-present, preventing escape into a narrow cozy form of homogeneity.

A final way of fostering a sense of belonging is through promoting a sense of movement. Through establishing contact and common cause with students from other places, especially in meetings at regional, national and international level, an interconnectedness is developed which can result in a deep bonding, and normally in greater commitment.

6.1.1.2 Fostering Mastery

Pinnock identifies the second task in fostering self-esteem to be the fostering of mastery, which

> involves social and physical competence and opportunities for success. It is the basis of individual worth in most societies (and education systems) and if young people are deprived of the chance or ability to master their lives they retreat into helplessness and feelings of inferiority.
>
> (Pinnock 1997:73)

Within ACTS such mastery was fostered largely through giving students responsibility and leadership positions, together with accompaniment and training. As much training as possible should be offered in a variety of ministries, and in all facets of community life to enable students to take on more and more responsibility. Ongoing training in leadership and pedagogy, especially, should be offered, to empower students with methods of involving people, and running small groups, since without such knowledge, these small groups are unlikely to survive.

The promotion of a broader movement, with its opportunities for training through workshops and conferences, and for exercising leadership, is also a vital means of fostering such mastery.

6.1.1.3 Fostering Independence

The third task that Pinnock identifies in order to foster self-esteem is the fostering of a spirit of independence, which

> is the product of both mastery and belonging, in that the purpose of any external discipline and support is to build inner discipline and social worth. Young people who lack a sense of power over their own behaviour and environment often lack motivation and seek alternative sources of personal or social power through dependence on chemicals or membership in a youth subculture.
>
> (Pinnock 1997:73-74)

The development of such inner discipline is assisted through most of what is proposed above for gaining a sense of belonging and mastery, especially in the assumption of leadership responsibility and in the provision of space for exploring and reflecting on issues of life and faith, including the inevitable doubts and insecurities. Through such sharing, whether it be in small communities or in any other type of group, a deeper knowledge of faith and values can be engendered, which in itself is empowering.

A spirit of independence can also be fostered through the availability of adults who are listening, open, flexible and patient, to provide counselling and sensitive accompaniment. At the stage of development of the university students, the adult companion is not needed so much to offer dependence (which the younger adolescent normally seeks) or to provide leadership, as much as to confirm the integrity of the student from a greater distance (Parks 1991:87-88). Hence adult companions are sought to be an honest empowering presence as faith companions (Gallagher 1998:3), to show that life is worth living (JEC Quebec 1998:36), and to offer a vision of self, world, and "God" that resonates with the student's experience and critical capacity, and that "makes sense" (Parks 1991:99). They are especially needed to sensitively accompany the transition from a conventional to a relativised faith, in order to counter cynicism on the one hand, and fundamentalism on the other.

This defines the role, not only of the chaplain, but also of other adult supporters, particularly university staff members, who are prepared to provide accompaniment. Young people often require someone of the same gender to fulfil a mentoring role (Pinnock 1997:78). Therefore an effort should be made to involve staff members, especially women, to avail themselves to fulfil such a role.

6.1.1.4 Fostering Generosity

The final task that Pinnock identifies in order to foster self-esteem is the fostering of a spirit of generosity. With Brendto, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, he suggests that

> self-worth is also derived from how one is viewed by others. For this reason, being committed to the positive value of generosity and caring for others improves one's view of oneself through the eyes of others. Young people cannot develop a sense of responsibility unless they have been responsible to others. Generosity helps them to "de-centre" and contribute to those around them in a self-affirming way.
>
> (Pinnock 1997:74)

This places an imperative on those ministering to university students to provoke and offer them opportunities for social action. This can be done through the functioning of small communities using the see-judge-act method, mentioned above, where the focus is also on critical awareness of broader social needs, and action to respond to them. Otherwise, for those who remain part of a "self-selected group" (Parks 1991:65-66), they can be assisted to develop a broader perspective through exposure to social needs and "otherness" (:68), either through physical visits or through inviting guest speakers, and through focussing on immediate and obvious social needs that can be responded to without being too demanding.

6.2 Relevant Content of Ministry

Having identified the structures which might help university students to find God in their lives, and to grow in commitment and moral leadership, we now turn to identifying the content or the message that needs to permeate those structures. From the analysis and theological judgement of the UNP ACTS group, three broad areas emerge in the lives of the students which are crying out for a message that will bring good news. These relate firstly to images of God which are oppressive or enslaving, secondly to survival in a hostile world, and thirdly to the quest for intimacy and acceptance. In short, they reflect a thirst for a liberating faith, liberating hope, and liberating love. We will now spell out some ways forward to quench that thirst.

6.2.1 Liberating Faith

As we have referred to above, many students are locked into a faith which is either legalistically bound to assumed established institutional structures, or which is relegated to

the private subjective realm, and focused purely on personal forgiveness.[1] While these two conceptions of faith are at opposite ends of a spectrum, they are both rooted in the image of a moralistic God, whose approval is anxiously sought, in the former through good works or behaviour, as defined by the Church, and in the latter through the right language of faith, as defined in the Bible. Both are confined in "Authority-bound forms" (Parks 1991:200), which students, faced with the relativising imperatives of the university, will either reject completely, or cling to for stability in an uncertain environment.

A message of good news, then, will be one which leads students away from such a moralistic conception of God towards a compassionate, loving, and forgiving God, whose authority does not lie in assumed established structures, but in a passionate vision of the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed (Parks 1991:200). This is a Kingdom that offers integral salvation to all, highlighting the interconnectedness of all creation, and hence the freedom that comes from working for unity, justice and peace. In this context, inclusiveness and ecumenism become priorities, and relevant prayer goes beyond asking a distant God for favours, to seeking God within all the different manifestations of creation, including within ourselves.

6.2.2 Liberating Hope

The exigencies of the global culture, with its competitive, individualistic, and consumerist imperatives, alongside the collapse of dreams in post-apartheid South Africa, have left so many people, including many students, with a sense of hopelessness, insecurity, and powerlessness. Confronted with the painful reality of increasing unemployment, and hence poverty, cultural dislocation, and a frequent hardening of racial attitudes, alongside the triumphalism of the few achievers, many students have drifted into apathy as all these symptoms have manifested themselves in the education system. The problem is compounded by the difficulty most people (if not all people) have in understanding what needs to happen in order to manage the global transformations that are taking place, and to overcome the problems that they are giving rise to. This has resulted in a serious crisis of hope.

In this context, it does not help to offer assurances that everything will come right. This can raise false hopes which can lead to even greater devastation. The first step, though, to empowering students is to raise awareness about all these global realities, and to stimulate ongoing reflection about it amongst them. Growth in understanding always gives a sense of hope, even if no solutions are readily apparent.

While an analysis of the global socio-economic, cultural and technological dynamics usually reveals their many negative effects, it is important to identify the many new positive

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[1]   See 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.1.2 above.

opportunities that they give rise to, especially the opportunity for greater international solidarity and engagement amongst those genuinely working for a better world. If the students can be encouraged to engage at this level, especially through their own international movement, any such initiative could be a source of new hope for them.

The enormity and power of the global influences can often prevent people from seeing the local possibilities that lie within their grasp. It is therefore important to encourage the ongoing analysis and reflection on local socio-political, economic, and cultural realities, in order to uncover the roots, but also the possibilities of such issues as cultural dislocation and the breakdown of rites of passage, the hardening of racial attitudes, unemployment, and a pervading fatalistic and unambitious spirit. Such reflection can give rise to initiatives and actions such as the deepening awareness of their cultural roots, and hence the possibilities for inculturation, the promotion of an entrepreneurial spirit, and hence job creation, and the celebration of achievement by potential role models. Any such action, no matter how small, can inspire new hope through mobilising the resources of a local community.

Finally, continual verbal and symbolic focuses on healing, which enable the expression of the need for it, both in community and in individual counselling, can inspire new hope in students through the experience of solidarity. If it is effected in the context of a broader socio-political, economic, or theological understanding, it can become an experience of empowerment, whether we are talking about academic anxiety, financial exclusion, the breakdown of relationships, sickness or death.

6.2.3 Liberating Love

In their quest to find intimacy and acceptance, the students are very vulnerable to exploitative and abusive relationships as well as to unwanted pregnancies and AIDS. In the light of the ambiguity that surrounds the morality of premarital sex,[1] and the breakdown of the traditional link between sex and commitment, an approach to the issue of relationships and sex has to go beyond the statement of traditional Church teachings in order to be perceived as good news by the young people.

Preferably the issue should be dealt with in small groups, which all students should be encouraged to join, where acceptance can be found, and where personal issues can be shared and discussed. The primary focus, then, should be placed on personal responsibility, in order to counter any slavish adherence to, or rejection of laws. Therefore the students should firstly be assisted to clarify their own moral criteria, through focusing on their own experience, in order to discern which types of relationships are:

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[1] See 5.2.2.4 above.

- life-giving or freeing versus destructive or enslaving,
- promoting separateness versus clinging dependency,
- capable of commitment and honesty versus exploitation,
- enabling depth versus superficiality, and
- promoting equality versus domination.

They should then be helped to see the consequences of a lack of commitment, such as dishonesty, a lack of trust, and AIDS.

Such a personal reflection should be deepened by a reflection on the attitudes to, and expectations about sex and marriage in their respective cultures, as well as on global socio-economic and cultural realities, such as illegitimacy, low self-esteem, and the breakdown of rites of passage. Hopefully, the interconnection between their personal desires and these broader realities can then be determined.

Besides such group reflection on the issue, adequate space should be provided for students to experience personal counselling. Within such a context, tolerance should be shown for experimentation, while helping them to establish boundaries, which will enable them to transcend any compulsiveness or underhandedness. Ways also need to be found to encourage acceptance of their own bodiliness and feelings, emphasising their God-givenness, in order to counter the repression of desires and unnecessary guilt.

In short, any legalistic or over-admonitory approach should be avoided, so that the students are rather drawn by the desirable vision of life-giving and loving relationships to see any good news inherent in making commitments.

6.3 Conclusion

This work has been motivated by a concern that, in post-apartheid South Africa, it has become more difficult for young people in general, and university students in particular to have a vision for, and hope in the future, and hence to demonstrate commitment to working for a new world. I have therefore sought to identify ways in which such commitment and leadership can be nurtured, by engaging in a critical reflection on ministry to university students.

I have attempted to do this by using the critical hermeneutical method of correlation between the Christian tradition and human life experience as employed by Don S. Browning, James and Evelyn Whitehead, and Stuart Bate. This involved beginning with concrete practice, going to theory, and then concluding with practice, in an ongoing hermeneutical circle.

I developed this reflection by focusing on a case study of the Catholic community organised

within the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS) at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg (UNP). Having described the phenomenon of this group of students, a number of questions emerged around the issues of participation, values and faith, which I then attempted to answer by undertaking an analysis of the situation they find themselves in, using psychological and socio-cultural mediations.

The psychological mediation identified the psychological structures to which university students are capable of evolving at their stage of development, which is characterised by relativism and probing commitment. The socio-cultural mediation then explored, both at the broader societal level and at the level of youth culture, the roots of the loss of a sense of community, and the growth in the spirit of individualism that epitomised the issues emerging from the description of the UNP ACTS group. This was discovered in the globalisation that is taking place at an economic, social and cultural level, resulting in relativisation, rationalisation, and personalisation in all dimensions of life, which in turn give rise to increasing competition, individualism and cultural dislocation. This has become particularly evident since the demise of apartheid, and the international integration of South Africa, coupled with the collapse of many of the hopes of the struggle.

I then embarked on a theological evaluation of the ministry being employed in that situation, arriving at a theological judgement, which pointed to the forms of ministry which could offer good news, evoke deeper commitment, and build stronger moral leadership amongst the students. The priority emerging was to foster self-esteem amongst them, primarily through building a joyful, accepting community with a small group pedagogy so that they could discover the liberating message of the gospel in their quest for God, for survival in a hostile world, and for personal intimacy and acceptance. Through such empowerment, deeper commitment might become possible.

This work could have been greatly enriched by a deeper reflection on African culture, in order to bring out the more precise particularity of students in South Africa. Time unfortunately prevented the realisation of this intention. Nevertheless, what particularly emerges through all these reflections is the vital importance of developing an awareness of the interconnectedness of all reality - at the spiritual, personal, interpersonal, community, ecclesial, and broader societal levels - a central African value! If the students we are considering can grow in a sense of this interconnectedness, they will grow to be the integrated, committed, and moral leaders that our world sorely needs.

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