A PERSONAL RESEARCH INTO THE CONCEPT OF POWER/KNOWLEDGE ABUSE WITHIN THE CHURCH

BY

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I declare that **An Inquiry into the Concept of Power/Knowledge Abuse within the Church** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SUMMARY

This research regarding power/knowledge abuse within the church was conducted within the postmodern social construction discourse and in the context of narrative therapy, feminist theology and practical theology. It presents a chronicle of five individuals who experienced abuse within their congregations. It reflects on the co-authoring journey of these five individuals personally and within the context of the narrative group.

As part of the narrative group they came to re-author their lives around what they had experienced regarding abuse within their churches. Together they challenged those dominant structures that are so often hidden just below 'sacred' tradition.

In conclusion the five individuals experienced a renaissance within themselves and their personal theology of God and His dealings within the church. This renaissance has led them to seek out others who have experienced this form of abuse and to give them the hope that they discovered together.

KEY TERMS

Social construction

Modernism

Postmodernism

Power/Knowledge abuse

Deconstruction

Paradigms

Context

Relativism

Narrative group

Participatory action research

<div align="center">**CHAPTER ONE**</div>

<div align="center">**A GROWING AWARENESS OF POWER/ KNOWLEDGE ABUSE WITHIN THE CHURCH**</div>

1.1 Prelude

> In this study I want to acknowledge my conversational partners; (Viv, Steve, Jeremy, Mark and Lynne), contribution to this study. They were willing to be part of this research and helped me in co-creating a new awareness of abuse and power within the confines of the church. As they felt that they had nothing to 'hide' they all agreed that their personal names could be used in this thesis. They also felt that they would be available to anyone else who found themselves in a similar position, as they had, regarding power/knowledge abuse within the church. I want to thank them for their openness and concern for their sisters and brothers in Christ.

In this study I have chosen to write in the first person singular as I felt that this would avoid that form of 'scientific' writing that privileges authoritative knowledges and power discourses. Another reason is that the inclusion of letter 'I' in this research project, is that it avoids the concept of neutrality. The concept of neutrality produces structures of privilege and relational power of the mainstream culture (White 1997:122). 'These are structures of privilege and relations of domination that marginalize persons who seek help, maintain hierarchies of knowledge, disqualify alternative modes of life and thought, preserve the therapists monopoly on power, and render invisible the therapist's location in the worlds of gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual preference, class, etc (White 1997:123).

1.2. Introduction

This study began when I received a phone call from a young woman by the name of Lynne. She was crying and through her sobs told me that she wanted to talk to me. I agreed and waited with tentative anticipation. I was wondering what had made her so upset. Within half an hour she arrived with her husband and after the greetings Lynne

and myself went to my study. She proceeded to tell me about the church that they were attending and the isolation they were feeling as a result of the new resident minister's theology and subjugating practices. The minister had become very vocal and critical of her singing in the choir. He had stated that she was not up to the 'normal Christian standards' that they upheld in the church, so was instructed to stop 'helping out' in the churches various activities. This conversation over time led us on a journey were Lynne and her husband told me about abuse that they had experienced together by the clergy of various denominations. They are part of this study.

1.3.   My Personal Awareness over the Years

My interest in clerical abuse originated from stories like the above and from my own personal experience within the leadership structures of the church. I had been a minister in the Presbyterian Church for thirteen years. Eight of those years I occupied the position of colleague or assistant minister. It was during these years that I became aware of the position that the clergy can occupy regarding the concept of power. I witnessed these same clergy, in positions of power or authority who used their privileged position to manipulate individuals to subscribe to their own opinions regarding divinity, this arising out of their prejudiced theological discourses. They based this idea on the premise that they were doing this in the name of Christianity or for the 'good' of the church. Those individuals who experienced this type of 'instruction' from the clergy had no 'voice' or platform to air their differences or concerns as they were often instructed by the leadership regarding what to believe, what to do, where to go and what to say.

When I became aware of the above, a few years ago, I began to search for literature on how the position clergy occupy could result in abuse. I was only able to find literature on the abuse of 'divine messages' being delivered by, what I would call, the extreme radical type of clergy, through the medium of visions and ecstatic utterances Hanegraaf (1993) and McConnel (1988). However there was a paucity of literature about clergy being placed in positions of power, and how it impacted on the congregation. Certain history books discuss power abuse within the medieval church and fringe break-away groups. Tuchman (1984) has written a very informative book on power abuse which includes a section on the abuse of power by the renaissance

popes. This is however history. I wanted to find literature that was recent and applicable to our times. It was only once I was introduced to postmodernism that I became aware of the proliferation of material regarding this subject. Postmodernism is diverse and plural, complex and difficult to describe because it represents a network of ideas that appear in a wide variety of disciplines (Gergen 1991:xi; Lowe 1991; kotze 1995: 19-58; Capra 1996:3-13, quoted in Louw 2003).

Authors like Derrida (2004) and Foucault (1980) had much to say regarding power and its influences in society. Postmodernism also led me to feminist authors like Ackermann (2003), and Isherwood and Mc Ewan (1994), which also had much information regarding the abuse of power which I was interested in studying. Poling (1991) wrote a book entitled, 'The Abuse of Power. A theological Problem.' which has been particularly helpful regarding my topic for this dissertation.

1.4 Motivation for the study

I have always felt a deep concern for those who come to the church to find meaning and understanding about spiritual matters and about practical Christian living. Though there may well be others factors that bring humanity to seek out the church. It is these individuals, who have come to the church for nurture and spiritual insight, who have experienced disappointment instead of nurture, that I am interested in co-creating an alternate story regarding their spirituality.

The individuals that I am referring to in this study are what I would term the 'forced silenced minority', that is those who sit in the pews and who's voices have not been heard or respected. The reason for this is that so often the members of the denomination who seek God's blessing and His leading may decide to approach the leadership to possibly get some clarity on a confusing issue in their lives. However, if their personal experience of God falls outside the denomination's teaching or faith practices, they may find themselves being compelled into accepting the clergy's explanation of what they had experienced, even if the clergy's explanation is at odds with their perceived experience and needs. Or alternatively dogma, defined by the forefathers could be placed before a modern society as centuries-old spirituality and the norm to be upheld.

The example illustrated above could be that there are certain theological traditions that place the clergy in positions of power. It was during my theological training in Cape Town that I was taught about clerical power and the importance of upholding it within society. One verse that still stands out for me today regarding this concept of clerical power is Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 10 which states, '*See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant*'. This verse was quoted as proof that the clergy have a divine mandate which society should adhere to, as the clergy are the mouth piece of God. This verse can be one tool in justifying clerical abuse. As this concept of clerical power affects many individuals within certain congregations, there should be an appraisal of such theological academic disciplines that have taught ministers that they have been placed in the privileged position of the ordained ministry and that they, as God's ambassadors, have a 'divine right' to exercise authority over others. By 'divine right' I mean that the clergy are perceived as "masters of divine knowledge" which they are to teach others. This appraisal could be carried out by those who have experienced clerical abuse as well as the academic institutions that teach theology (see chapter 2.5 on the clericalization of theology).

Any theological teaching that has high-lighted leadership as a 'divine right' has lead to the abuse of their position within society. Leadership cannot just exist in a vacuum, it has an ethical and moral dimension to it. The clergy need to be accountable to the laity in all that they do. For those who exercise power within the church it must be perceived as positive and beneficial to all concerned. Patterson (1988:146) says, 'Most books are written in an optimistic tone which suggests that, if only the ideas and techniques contained in them are faithfully noted and applied, the pastor's care will become more and more effective and beneficial.' I include leadership under the generic term pastoral care as the 'care' given to the laity stems from those in leadership. If this 'leadership care' is applied, as laid down by certain denomination's praxis, it would be a success. Patterson goes on to say that 'the disparity between the perception of failure in pastoral care and the almost total lack of consideration of its possibility in the literature on the subject despite its prevalence lacks foresight' (Patterson 1988:147). The clergy would be reticent to publish any failures as regards leadership in our society, as it could blemish their image. Failure 'can seldom be easily talked about in the success and achievement orientated culture

which pervades the church as well as the society which surrounds it. It is, then, very difficult to deal openly with failure in a public way' (Patterson 1988:147).

The individual, who is caught between clerical abuse and their personal walk with God, needs to make meaning of their spiritual experiences, especially when they have had a negative experience within the church. Due to their experiences of disillusionment from the clergy, there is the possibility that they would look at the church and its teachings with scepticism. It is the laity that has experienced abuse in any form from the leadership that I would like to reach and together co- create a 'renaissance' in their spirituality. I am aware that there are numerous ministers (ordained clergy) who have experienced the reverse of abuse, that is the laity abusing the ministers, however to delve into that topic would take me beyond the parameters of this study. Abuse by the laity could well form an entire dissertation. This spiritual renaissance would come about by highlighting the insidious power of the modern philosophies perceptions of empirical reality as compared to the postmodern views of perceived reality. I have taken the word renaissance as described by the encyclopaedia Britannica and highlighted three concepts that are contained within the word which I will be using to explain how a renaissance can come about. The official meaning of the word renaissance as described by the Encyclopaedia Brittanica.com (consulted on 11/09/04) is explained below;

> Etymology: French, from Middle French, literally meaning rebirth, from *renaistre* to be born again, from Latin *renasci,* from *re- + nasci* to be born –rebirth or revival. This movement was also characterized by a surge of interest in classical learning and values.

The three concepts that come from the word renaissance that I will be applying for this thesis would be, **'rebirth, revival**, and **interest in learning'**. (See chapter 4) I want to collaborate with my research participants in co-creating a revival in the laities perception on spirituality and theological leadership, which would move us to a rebirth in formulating an alternate story to the negative dominant one which would come about by a surge of interest in learning about postmodern philosophy and its consequences. These ideas should be discussed with the clergy, so as to bring the two closer together, regarding doctrine and their personal experience of God. In the final chapter of this thesis I will be discussing spiritual renaissance in more detail (See

Chapter 4.4.2).   It would only become apparent when one has read the client's narratives to observe the 'renaissance' that could come about.

1.4.1 Excommunication; Formal and Informal/Official and Unofficial

In the light of what had been discussed above, namely clerical power, the theological principle of excommunication has a 'subtle' influence on the way the clergy and leadership can dominate the laity.

Theology has so often been interpreted through a modernist perspective which prescribes dogmas, axiomatic laws and rules that have to be adhered to regardless of nationality or culture or context. This has led many theologians to search for universal laws they could apply, regardless of the situation. Gergen (1996:6) states,

> From a constructionist perspective, the traditional attempt to test hypotheses about universal processes of the mind (cognition, motivation, perception, attitudes, prejudice, self-conception) seems at a minimum misguided, and more tragically, an enormous waste of resources (intellectual, monetary, temporal, material). Not only is the subject matter itself a social construction, thus not subject to empirical evaluation outside a particular tradition of interpretation, but such research represents the arrogation of a uniquely western ontology of the mind to the status of the universal.

The rationality of searching for universal processes has stemmed from evidence which is evident to every person or which can be checked empirically and independently by any other rational person. Any deductions made from that evidence should be done in a logically consistent way, so that any other rational person can similarly repeat the process of deduction (Rossouw 1993:896). The clergy influenced by the social construction of their academic institutions have searched for these universal processes which can be applied spiritually. Sadly, in this search the individual, with his/her felt needs and personal narrative were pushed aside. As long as the individual fitted neatly into some comfortable dogmatic 'box' they were accepted. However, to deviate or to express an alternate point of view has sometimes resulted in members being either disciplined, ignored or in extreme cases excommunicated.

The prospect of an excommunication in all its variations is one abusive tool which the clergy may access if the need arises. This could be perceived as another 'power' control function which the church can utilize. As I am a Presbyterian minister, thus falling into the Reformed tradition, I would like to discuss what Calvin taught about the subject of excommunication. Admitting that there are many early teachers that taught on this subject I have limited myself to Calvin as his views are formative within the reformed tradition.

The clergy are able to turn to Calvin's teachings (1960:1238), or quote him, whenever an individual member has been perceived as adhering to a facet of teaching that could be seen as detrimental to the polity of the church. The clergy would thus have a 'right' to excommunicate. It would be seen as a legitimate 'tool' to use as it would fall within the doctrinal praxis of the denomination. By adhering to these ideas the clergy possess a tool whereby they are able to justify their actions by turning to tradition. If the clergy happened to excommunicate a member there would be no need for an apology, as long as they were applying dogma that had been handed down by the forefathers. Today official excommunication is very rare. However there are many cases of unofficial excommunication within the churches. On a personal note, within my ministry at the small town of Eshowe, Northern Natal, I have come across five individuals from different denominations that were officially excommunicated because they were divorced and had re-married. I was some what taken aback that this form of discipline was still practiced.

Calvin (1960:1238) states that when our Savior promises that what his servants bound on earth should be bound in heaven, (Matth. 18: 18,) he confines the power of binding to the censure of the Church, which does not consign those who are excommunicated to perpetual ruin and damnation, but assures them, that perpetual damnation will follow if they do not repent. Excommunication rebukes and strongly disapproves people's behavior when it is at variance with the churches teachings; and although it punishes, it is to bring them to salvation, by forewarning them of their future doom. If it succeeds, reconciliation and restoration to communion are ready to be given. Hence, though ecclesiastical discipline does not allow us to be on familiar and intimate terms with excommunicated persons, still we ought to strive by all possible means to bring them to a better mind, and recover them to the fellowship and unity of

the Church: as the apostle also says, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother," (2 Thess. 3: 15.) If this humanity be not observed in private as well as public, the danger is that our discipline shall degenerate into destruction.

I would like to give an example of a form of excommunication. If some minister has a problem with a member, he/she would be able to make an appointment with the member and 'threaten' the member to adhere to the denominations or minister's point of view. In some cases the minister may even have an elder present. If the member refuses to co-operate in any way a subtle threat is normally issued. This could result in the individual resigning from the church, or a position of leadership/authority being taken away or given to another. As most of these types of meetings happen behind closed doors there is no official excommunication - only an unofficial one. Lynne, the young woman who has participated in this study, was a part of this unofficial excommunication. As an assistant minister I have been part of this process where members have been so heavily 'sidelined' that they were left with no choice but to resign. The affected member often feels at a loss, as they had been part of the life of the church, deriving a sense of purpose and enjoying fellowship, and that has now been wrenched from them. The resigned member is no longer the concern of the relevant church, so is easily forgotten. Thus, unofficial excommunication is far easier and less damaging to the position of the minister.

In the above paragraph regarding Calvin's discussion (1960:1238) on excommunication I want to bring the reader to the attention of the words 'better mind'. The question I would pose is who or what would decide what such a thing as a 'better mind' is. If it is only up to the clergy to decide what a 'better mind' is without negotiation with the laity, then that would be construed as abuse of their position as minister. What I would rather envisage is a co-creation of spiritual meaning where clergy and laity come together in dialogue. The clergy are often in a position were they can diseminate theological advice to the laity. Should some of the laity disagree with the theological point of view, excommunication can be applied if the clergy feel that the individual has breeched some theological dogma.

1.5 The Research Project Question

In relation to the discussion above I want to research the following question;

How can the laities understanding of power/knowledge abuse contribute to the co-creation of alternative narratives between the clergy and laity within the church?

1.5.1 The Research Project Methodology

In order to answer my research question I have chosen the following research method. This research method would hopefully lead each party' (clergy and laity) in reformulating its outlook on church dogma as well as counselling and preaching so as to make the church more relevant to a postmodern eclectic society. Before I discuss the research method I want to tell my narrative regarding the research project.

1.5.2 My Story

Research methodology in the modernistic era, was characterised by its desire for external legitimisation. It borrowed its positivistic methods and procedures from the natural sciences (Dill 1996). In the positivistic and modernistic paradigm, methodology seemed to promise a guarantee of eliminating all value- and ideologically biased research results. These methods claimed to enable scientists to be detached and objective observers of the very things they observe (Dill 1996). I experienced that this positivistic methodology has had a compelling influence on my own theology. The clergy who have studied the bible in detail, including the original languages, now are the experts in interpretation, exegesis and hermeneutics. The laity who in the main have not had such intensive studies regarding theology acknowledge the expertise of the clergy. The theologian is perceived as being similar to the objective scientist who is studying some experiment, and one completion of that experiment will have the objective answers. The clergy when approached for advice will be a detached and objective observer, and will be taken seriously.

From a personal point of view I believed in the modernist outlook totally. I believed that as I had a degree in theology I was the expert in preaching and in counselling. Whenever someone approached me for advice regarding something personal I would

often turn to the bible and quote. When these same individuals could not apply the scriptural verses to their lives I remember sometimes getting impatient with some of them sometimes! The answer for me and for all those who came to see me were if people could just apply certain objective teachings from the bible to their lives all would be well with them. If on the other hand they could not apply the objective scriptures, with the ministers' unbiased outlook, to their lives they would be 'on the road to destruction!'

The above description of myself may be a bit harsh, but that is how I see myself with the hindsight of postmodernism. When I was introduced to postmodernism and feminist theologies, and started studying I experienced a major paradigm shift. Suddenly objective truth became more personal and subjective. Social construction put an end to my 'objective truth'. Then I looked at my own Reformed theology and realised that the founding fathers were just as socially constructed as I was. For example John Calvin living in Geneva during the reformation, living in medieval Europe, living in a predominantly Christian society, living at a time when the church held much authority and sway over peoples everyday lives; would interpret scripture 'very' much differently if he happened to be living today. The challenges of his day as compared today could not really be compared at all. It dawned on me that every generation must make meaning for themselves that will benefit them and their society in whatever epoch they find themselves in. One cannot demand that ones personal theology be applied across all spectrums of culture and society for all time. To do so would result in theology been solidified for all time, and this could also result in a power struggle in forcing others to adhere to the theology as stipulated by a founding father or denomination. Bosch (1991: 448) states, ['Western Christians were unconscious of the fact that their theology was culturally conditioned; they simply assumed that it was supracultural and universally valid.' Yet our personal relationship with God and our culture are dynamic, and changing all the time, hence there can be no such thing as a universally applicable theology. Owing to this, my choice regarding research will be based on a postmodern research approach and its resultant praxis.

1.5.3 Research Project Approach

Regarding the postmodern philosophy's view of stressing the importance that reality can never be fully apprehended but only approximated, the method that I am following is what one would call the qualitative approach to research. Qualitative research implies;

> [a]n emphasis on processes and meaning that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.
>
> (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:4)

The relationship between the researcher and client determines the direction and the conversational input between the two. Each and every interview is unique and socially constructed according to the felt needs of both the researcher and client. This leads to what Denzin and Lincoln (1994:111) describe as the hermeneutic and dialectic nature of qualitative research;

> The variable and personal (instrumental) nature of social constructions suggest that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interactions between and among investigator and respondents. These varying constructions are interpreted using conventional hemeneutical techniques, and contrasted through dialectical interchange.

The interactions between the researcher and client are perceived as being important as both co-create a reality that will be meaningful to both. In this type of interaction one does not possess objective truth that the other would have to adhere to.

1.5.4 Participatory Action Research

The aim of participatory action research is to contribute and co-create a positive alternative to traditional outsider research and to simultaneously create new knowledge. 'By describing our research as participatory we acknowledge the democratic involvement and value of all the stakeholders, researcher, researched,

community, everybody collectively investigating and contributing to a meaning making process and new ways of understanding' (Louw 2003: 52). Coupled to this concept of participation is the natural outflow into action. This action results in active involvement by all concerned which leads to decision making processes that generate new possibilities and knowledge's that translate into further action of the re-claiming and re-authoring of their personal lives (Louw 2003:52). Therefore participatory action research encourages self-agency, empowerment and seeks to improve the situation of people, and to simultaneously solve problems and generate new knowledge (Mc Taggart 1997:27-28 in Louw 2003:52).

Once contacted, I will interview each participant personally. I will also explain to them that as they are part of a research thesis, I will give them a draft copy after each session to see if they agree with what has been written down before it would be incorporated in the study. In this way I would be double checking my personal understanding of the individual's concerns and felt needs and in turn I would be respecting their voices. This would result in a co-creation of meaning for both client and researcher. This idea would be dominant in the background of my mind. The clients will need to evaluate the participatory action research methodology, for as Louw (2003) states, 'Participatory evaluation emphasises that people, who are on the receiving end are the best judges of whether or not benefits have been produced.'

1.5.5 Letter Writing

Letter writing became an integral part of my overall approach with the research participants. One of the main rationales, which I found particularly useful, for writing a letter is that dialogue by its very nature is ephemeral (Epston 1998:95). Epston states regarding this that, 'Two of us reconstructing a conversation we had even minutes before may not agree on what was actually said because we each hear selectively. But the words in a letter don't fade and disappear the way conversation does; they endure through time and space, bearing witness to the work of therapy and immortalizing it (Epston 1998:95).

Another reason for letter writing is that it helped me to 'track' the therapeutic sessions that I held. It was also very informative hearing the research participants feedback

regarding the contents of the letters. Morgan (2000:103) states, **'**Therapeutic letters, which vary in length, content and form, become an extension of the therapeutic session. Receiving feedback from the people to whom the letters are written plays a large part in the process.' Epston (1998:69) states that often his job as a therapist could be likened to a kind of amanuensis, a scribe who faithfully records the research participants narrative, capturing on paper the particular thoughts and understanding with which they could make sense of their lives. Another aspect of letter writing that helped me was that it slowed the therapy down. Epston (1998:96) states, 'It allows me time to think as I write and to reiterate important points by reading them back to the clients.' I found that this practice helped me throughout all the interviews.

1.5.6 Research Method

McLeod (1994:105) says '[n]arrative case studies are concerned with making sense of the stories people tell about aspects of their experience' and suggests an "account-gathering" approach. However this gathering of information can be complex and needs an accurate gathering procedure. Due to this McLeod (1994:144) suggests a number of procedures, they are;

1.   Recording of the therapy sessions.
2.   Stimulated recall of the sessions.
3.   Interviews.
4.   Dairies.
5.   Journals.
6.   Open-ended questionnaires.
7.   Observation of meetings.

The procedures that I followed in my research were,

1.   Obtain the interviewees from the ranks of those who have experienced power/abuse within the church. As I personally know many of these individuals they will be approached by me.
2.   Gather the information which would be collated as follows;

2.1 From personal interviews conducted at a comfortable venue, which would be recorded.

2.2 The interviews will then be consolidated and used in this study, after been given to the research participants to 'see' if the written record resonated with their narrative.

2.3 The use of open-ended questions.

Following on from the above, the procedure that I would like to follow regarding this study is to invite a group of five individuals who have experienced negative theological power/abuse within their set churches and who have a desire to talk about the influence of the events on their personal lives. I would interview each person individually, and if they felt comfortable, I would interview them in front of others who are part of the same research project. My commitment regarding the conversations is to ensure authentic participation which 'means sharing in the way research is conceptualised, practised and brought to bear on the lifeworld' (McTaggart 1997:6). The methodology regarding the sharing of the clients narratives would be based on what is called 'Participatory Action Research', which is explained above.

1.5.7 The Rational for a Personal Questionnaire

I will base my interviews on a questionnaire that I had set up prior to the interview. Though I did not give it to the client I used it as a reference to track my progress as the interview progressed. I did not want to be trapped by the questionnaire but allowed myself and the client to create a narrative that was dynamic and not locked into some predefined structure. Though the questionnaire 'smacks' of a quantitative approach I felt it would be helpful in having a structure to work with , but one which would evolve during the narrative. The questionnaire would then be a personal reference that only I would use.

After reading the 'Handbook of Qualitative Research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994) there seems to be a bias in sociology and similar disciplines towards quantitive research. This type of study would have access to large survey datasets which could be applied universally as an 'ideal' type of statistics for almost any research topic. However in the light of social construction this type of information gathering would

be inappropriate as no single study could be universally appropriate. 'The bias against non-quantitive studies seems to be diminishing, with renewed awareness of the unique contribution of rigorous case study research and non-quantitive studies more generally' (Hakim 1987: 12).

As no one study or questionnaire is universally appropriate, I take this to mean that each individual the world over is unique with unique concerns and narratives. Thus the importance of the qualitative type approach that I will be utilising. Hakim (1987:13) continues by stating that, 'Finally, there is growing recognition of the limitations of statistical analysis and linear logics for dealing with change processes that involve qualitative change, multiple causation or multiple outcomes.'

Due to the information that Hakim states above I will therefore regard my questionnaire as a personal guideline. Below is the questionnaire that I would like to use.

The Questionnaire

1. *What made you first aware that there was something 'wrong' as regards your personal theology and life-style within your denomination?*

2. *Who confronted you as regards your theology and worldview?*

3. *After confrontation what did you think, feel and do?*

4. *Did you experience power/knowledge manipulation from the leadership?*

5. *Did you leave the church and find another to worship in?*

6. *In which ways did you suffer as a result of the clergy's expert knowledges? Explain in your own words what you went through.*

7. *What has this experience told you about yourself?*

8. *Whose knowledges has been privileged as a result of expert knowledge and whose has not?*

9. *Has your theology changed in any way?*

10. *In what ways do you feel silenced or marginalised by these knowledges?*

11. *What advice would you give to some-one else in a similar situation?*

12. *Is there anything else which you feel is pertinent, which has not been covered in the above questions which you would like to discuss?*

Though I will be using the above questionnaire, after each interview I might review it as there may be some questions that could become irrelevant, or possibly including new ones that are more relevant to the study. This feedback I would be getting from the interviewees themselves. I would ask the interviewees their opinion on the questions asked.

1.6   Hearing their Stories

In listening to the client's stories as a researcher, I must rely on the explanation made by the interview partner himself or herself. Here the researcher joins with the client in a mutual exploration of their understanding and experience. Mc Namee & Gergen (1992:31) state:

> Such a position allows the therapist always to maintain continuity with the client's position and to grant primary importance to the clients world views, meanings, and understandings. This allows the client room for conventional movement and space, since they no longer have to promote, protect, or convince the therapist of their view. This relaxing, this releasing process is similar to a notion attributed to Bateson: specifically, in order to entertain new or novel ideas, there has to be room for the familiar.

This type of listening is the preferred one as I believe that it would promote the telling of their personal stories without any pre-conceived notions of having to prove their worth from either a theological or cultural perspective. Without 'pressure' telling a story will almost always be closest to a reality as seen by them.

1.7   Participatory Consciousness

Whenever a minister is called to a congregation, he/she should identify with those in his/her flock on a personal level, not only on a theological one. As the minister goes 'around' visiting the 'flock' he/she should identify with them and sense their felt needs and concerns. 'Connective understanding' is what is called for. By connective understanding I am referring to, 'Connective understanding is more than a matter of empathy, and very different from the 'insights' resulting from being informed by the theories or counselling models therapists or counsellors believe in' (Kotze 2002:4).

Heshusius (1994:15) describes connective understanding as a,

> participatory consciousness' as a freeing of ourselves from the categories imposed by the notions of objectivity and subjectivity; as a re-ordering of the understanding between the self and the other to a deep kinship of 'selfother', between the knower and the known. A participatory consciousness requires a 'deeper level of kinship… an attitude of profound openness and receptivity.

The clergy whenever that are called to a congregation should display this type of attitude. Heshusius (1996b: 131) calls 'the larger participatory consciousness of the 'hermeneutics of connection', where the self and the other are seen, not as separate entities, but as an ontological and epistemological unity'. Kotze (2002:6) states in similar vein;

> Such knowledge of the other becomes knowing with the other – a participatory process distinct from a western perspective of knowing the other or about the other. Within such a participatory consciousness, knowledge itself is quite different from knowledge discovered as the product of applying our theories to uncover an understanding of what 'is'. It is an ethical – political process, co-constructed in the course of relating with others in a specific context or situation, at a specific moment in time.

As the minister goes about his/her duties within the parish, this process will take time. He/she will get to know those who make up the congregation. Each individual will be different and will have to be 'related to' in a unique way. Each individual is on their own subjective paths of life/ reality and the minister is called to acknowledge this as life progresses.

1.8 Group Discussion/Reflection

Regarding my research question, the process of the group formulating their own experiences of God within this context, would hopefully allow them to grow in a direction that is meaningful to them. What I would like to do as regards group discussion/reflection is to get the five individuals together and let each individual share their experiences with the group regarding power/abuse. The others on hearing the one individual would then reflect on what had been said. 'This would create opportunities to co-create therapy, further dialogue and give the individual more possibilities and choices to listen to' (Kotze & Kotze 1997: 11). I hope that the group themselves will start identifying with each other as they hear other circumstances and responses. The group hopefully would form an identity and in this they would be able to give each other support, either in society or at a local church community.

As all the clients that I would be interviewing would either be in a local congregation or would have left due to some unfortunate experience, there would be a commitment to each other as they all would be Christians in this context. The meetings that I would schedule will ensure that we would have continuing contact with each other. As I would also be worshipping at the same congregation as some of the individuals that I used for this dissertation, there would also be continuing contact with them as well.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

1. The availability of the interviewees themselves.
2. The time constraints regarding the continuation/duration of the set interviews of the clients.
3. The researcher himself. As I have experienced the implications of power abuse personally it could influence my judgement on the research topic.

1.10 Descriptions of Salient Terms used in this Thesis

In this section I include some salient ideas that will be used in this thesis. This is not an exhaustive list, but one which will help the reader to grasp the direction of my thoughts.

1. *Social construction:* According to Gergen (1999:48) The individual mind does not originate meaning, create language, or discover the nature of the world. Meanings are born of co-ordinations among persons – agreements, negotiations, affirmations. From this standpoint, relationships stand prior to all that is intelligible. Nothing exists for us – as an intelligible world of objects and persons – until there are relationships. Thus individuals mentally construct the world, but they do so largely with categories supplied by social relationships.

2. *Modernism*; seeks objective truth which can be found 'out there'. This truth or reality is only accessible through the senses. Yet it lacks an overarching epistemic framework that includes human subjectivity as part of reality (Maimela & Konig 1998:216).

3. *Posmodernism*; Postmodern philosophy builds on the assumption that the human mind is an integral part of the reality it aspires to know. Truth is relational in the sense that it is both objective and subjective (Maimela & Konig 1998:219). Relational truth emphasises that there is no dualism between the external world and the subjective life of any individual.

4. *Power/Knowledge abuse;* for this to exist it must create the impression that objective truth is a perceived reality. Once believed then the concept of power and the idea of the expert follow. The expert is perceived as occupying a privileged position. These objective truths significantly shape peoples lives, that is those structured around knowledge, gender, class, culture, race, age, and so on (White 1997: 200).

5. *Deconstruction;* This is were the therapist is interested in discovering, acknowledging and 'taking apart' (deconstruction) the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the problem and the problem story (Morgan 2000:45*).* Derrida states that deconstruction is ' a happening thing!' (Lucy 2004: 14) which implies that it is a dynamic and an ongoing process were new meanings are promulgated.

6. *Paradigms;* According to Kuhn 1970:82f) this happens when a few individuals begin to perceive reality in ways qualitatively different from their predecessors. They then begin to search for a new model or theoretical structure, or a new 'paradigm', one that is, as it were, waiting in the wings, ready to replace the old.

7. *Context;* being aware of the context and the social context in which the problem is occurring is an important part of the research. People are never isolated individuals. They are social beings, who can never be severed from the network of relationships in which they exist (Bosch 1991:417).

8. *Relativism*; a theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and the conditions of knowing. (http://www. onelook.com). On a personal level one should adopt a sufficiently relativistic stance so as to

help one toward understanding and appreciation of another's narrative. This stance takes cognisance that there is no such thing as an absolute truth or ideal to adhere to.

1.11 Review of this chapter

In this chapter I have 'high-lighted' my personnel awareness of clerical abuse within the church. This growing awareness brought a deep sadness within me as I observed this phenomenon.   Though I was part of the structure, and often supported the modernist perspective, I found that my voice was silenced whenever abuse 'rose' its head. The growing awareness lead me to postmodernism and once introduced I felt that I could rewrite the dominant narrative of abuse.

1.12 Preview on chapter two

In this chapter I delve 'deeper' into the academic literature on postmodernism in general and the implications that this reading/research could have on anyone who studies such literature. The postmodern philosophy challenges traditional leadership and style. This type literature has made a deep impression on me, and I also want to introduce the reader to the literature that challenged me.

CHAPTER TWO

GROWTH TOWARDS A POSTMODERN VIEW OF MY THEOLOGY

In this chapter I will endeavour to explain the various academic narratives that have come to have an influence on how I perceive theology and its resultant praxis. What I envisage by the term theology is the totality of Christian practice. These religious practices or activities would include, what Astley (2002:2) includes under the broad term theology, they are; pastoral care, counselling and spiritual direction, the forming and maintenance of community, the teaching and the learning of religion. Under the term the learning of religion, it would include, preaching, education, evangelism and other forms of communication. Christian practice also includes social and political action, prayer, worship and liturgy, responses to moral issues at an individual level, interpersonal, communal and global level and so on. Postmodernism will have a profound influence on how one perceives these activities been performed within any given context. Personally whenever I applied these activities, in the past, to my praxis they were influenced by modernist views, however since my introduction to postmodernist views my praxis has changed. In the preceding headings I will high-light the academic narratives that have come to influence my theology.

2.1 The Challenge of Postmodern Theology

As we live in an eclectic society I would endeavour to empower the individual member to be aware of postmodern theology and how it impacts on one's reality in such a way that it would be both beneficial to them and the clergy. Broadly speaking postmodernist thinking has been perceived as a basic 'disenchantment with the critical consciousness of modernism, the fragmentary perspective of reality and reductionism. Postmodernism is a serious effort to restore the loss of meaning that is attributed to modernism' (Herholdt 1998:215).

2.1.1 A Symbiosis

Due to the modernists fragmentary perspective on reality I would rather envisage a unique symbiosis between the laity and the clergy where both meet each other on the same spiritual platform. The term symbiosis brings a picture to my mind that I saw a

few months ago on an animal documentary. It was about a great white shark and the programme highlighted its environment under the sea. For me the relationship between the great white and the sea represented a symbiosis. The great white would not survive without the sea. It needed the sea for its very survival. Similarly the clergy, in this analogy, would be like the great white shark and the laity the sea. The clergy would not exist if it were for the laity. The clergy 'need' the laity as much as the laity need the clergy, hence the unique relationship the one has on the other. It would therefore be beneficial for both to 'look' after the needs of the other. A toxic sea would see a dead great white. A society and laity who would turn their back on the church would result in a church that would have no voice, and thus be dead.

By the clergy and laity meeting each other on the same spiritual level, acknowledging each ones needs I believe that mutual respect and insight will be the net result. As there are so many cultures and sub-cultures today, it would literally be impossible for one leader to know all the local and national idiosyncrasies and knowledges. Thus, the need to meet each other half way, and to discuss points of contact that will be deemed relevant to a given situation.

2.1.2 The Contextual Nature of our Faith

I would like individual members of congregations to question the theological reproduction and maintenance of theologies that are so often, though not exclusively, 'foreign' imports from other countries. Bosch (1991:421) states that, '[t]he church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who embraced it. It is, however, only fairly recently that this essentially contextual nature of the faith has been recognised.' One thinks of the Presbyterian tradition coming from Scotland, the Anglican tradition emanating from the United Kingdom and the Lutheran tradition coming from Germany. The role of cultural, political, and social factors in the genesis of such movements was not recognised (Bosch 1991:421). The process of deconstructing these theologies by postmodern means should empower the laity to confront and challenge those theologies, enabling them to decide whether they are going to accept, change or discard the theologies, make informed decisions, and to no longer be ruled by other minister's expert opinions. Postmodern theology takes critical note of the

context in which one finds oneself and it '[e]ndevours to 'restore the value of human feelings as part of that experience (Herholdt 1998:216)

Due to the challenges that modern society presents to the church in general, I believe that a postmodern approach to theology will be the most relevant today. This approach will be explained in this chapter. I would like to start with a quote from Roussouw (1993:895) who states that,

> A theology that pretends to be a timeless and closed system of theological knowledge, unaffected by cultural shifts, runs the risk of becoming obsolete, and is itself a reaction to preceding cultural developments. Isolating theology from culture is a coping strategy by theology- to deal with the challenges that culture poses to a specific theological interpretation of the world.

As a result of this perception, the outcome is a rationalistic and logical theological exercise which is timeless and mostly irrelevant for the culture in which it is practiced. The ministers of religion who once taught these objective timeless truths now stand apart from humanity and culture, and as a result they can disseminate their 'truths' to the fallen world. They are now the experts and the laity must follow their "subjective proposals". There is now no thought of dialogue or narrative regarding certain theological principles, and all must conform to the objective timeless truth of the scriptures, as taught at the denomination's seminary regardless of circumstance or context. Astley (2002:13) states, 'If we ignore the learning context of a person's Christian theology we shall not be able adequately to understand and describe it'. What I would envisage is the laity and clergy having a dialogue regarding each one's context and narrative, and it is through this that they can co-create a more 'contextual' outlook on the world, the church, leadership and God.

> Christians of all kinds have a unique opportunity in this regard, but there is a big 'IF' involved. If their faith brings them to an understanding of reality – an understanding of the nature, meaning and value of life, and a lifestyle that fits that understanding of reality, then they can make a valuable contribution to restore a sense of wholeness wherever they are involved.
>
> (Shriver 1982:127)

No individual minister or denomination can trap God in the categories of their own subjective minds or denominational theology. Yet so often this seems to be the case.

'Building a spirituality of wholeness is nothing other than socializing people into the Christian understanding of reality' (Roussouw 1993:900). I take socializing here to mean that the ministers and laity socialise to co-create reality within their given cultures or contexts.

2.1.3 The Style of Theological Communication

The challenge for the church then is that it should re-appraise its style of communication. The church should abandon a style of communication that aims at downloading religious information on its members. The style of communication that the church needs is one which takes the experiences and expectations of its members, into consideration and which appeals to all their faculties and not solely their intellect. Due to the present structures of churches with their hierarchical structures and the dominating role some ascribe to the clergy, or the role that clergy sometimes prefer to play, the church has a long way to go in prescribing to the above form of co-communication. Roussouw (1993: 900) states regarding this;

> Their faith then fosters a spirituality of wholeness that provides them with the bigger picture, in which the different dimensions of personal and social life find their place and meaning. If, on the other hand, their faith consists of a set of rules – a collection of do's and don'ts (sic) – they will not have much to contribute, at least not in a manner that people who do not share their sets of do's and don'ts (sic) will be able to comprehend.

Active involvement by the minister and laity has much to offer, Roussouw (1993:901) continues with his thought as he acknowledges the above style of communication;

> Facilitation and negotiation of meaning, both buzzwords in the political and economic world, also have a role to play in the church. This process demands that they step down from a dominating position and become fellow players in the search for a meaningful Christian life in our contemporary culture. The result promises to have much more credibility for all involved, compared to pre-cooked solutions dished out to an audience. The aim is not to eliminate the theological expertise of the clergy and theologians, but to merge it with the experiences and expectations of the non-theologian and non-clergy believers-that is consistent with a Christian understanding of reality.

Closely related to the above is the challenge to shift the emphasis in spiritual formation from 'What do we believe?' to 'Who are we?' (Williams 1986:473). Who we are and what our felt needs are should be taken into consideration when espousing some doctrine. This would make the minister more amenable to other individuals points of view as well as being more aware of his/her own position and felt needs. 'Modernist rationality's emphasis on objective knowledge seduced the church to emphasize the former question at the cost of the latter' (Roussouw 1993:901). This has had serious consequences for the laity. For me this is possibly one of the most important questions any minister has to ask himself/herself. The question 'What we believe' when highlighted in the extreme has led to excommunication and genocide. A question then comes to mind and that is, how then does one believe? I believe that the answer to that questions lies in the connection that we have with other people. Disconnection from others results in personal ideology which so often excludes others. We need to live in community and hear other narratives and world views. Hopefully one would then respect the views of other denominations and see ourselves as a part of the quest for communication with God. For more information on this see chapter 4 section 4.4.2 (The narrative Group).

Fundamental beliefs and doctrines that ignore the personal and private belief systems of any given individual or culture have lead to much abuse. In this regard, Roussouw states;

> The postmodern culture, with its emphasis on the importance of the personal and private dimension of behaviour, offers the church the opportunity to correct this imbalance, and to inverse the order of the two questions.
>
> (Roussouw 1993:901)

This postmodern view may seem relativistic as it takes the individual just as seriously as it would any doctrine, but this view should be promoted as I believe that it would be more beneficial to society as it displays a more humane and diversified approach to theology and society. Roussouw continues with this thought and states; 'This process of identity and character formation is not a merely intellectual process, but is a comprehensive process of socialization within a community of believers' (1993:902).

2.2   Social Construction

The background against which social constructionism has taken shape is the postmodern movement.   Social constructionism as an approach draws its influence from a number of disciplines which include psychology, sociology, and linguistics (Burr 1995:2).   This makes it multidisciplinary in nature.   Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artefact of communal interchange (Gergen 1985:266).   It begins with radical doubt in the taken for granted world and knowledge in which we live and move.   In a specialized way it acts as a form of social criticism.   It cautions us to be ever suspicious of our personal assumptions about how the world appears to be.   The way in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are all historically and culturally specific (Burr 1995:3).   As a result of this, all our understandings about life are culturally relative.   Burr (1995:4) goes on to say that;

> Not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen as products of the culture and history, and are dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time.   Therefore what we regard as truth is a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other.

Therefore knowledge is negotiated meaning within the context of historically situated interaction between people (Gergen 1985b:5).

2.2.1 Participation between Clergy and Laity

Those individuals who have experienced clerical abuse had to accept what the clergy told them as they were the experts.   The laity who I had interviewed were denied the opportunity to participate and co-create a more meaningful narrative regarding their lives.   'Social constructionism informed by a postmodern discourse, works with participation and inclusion of the person consulting the therapist, as the expert and most experienced on the functioning of the problem (Louw 2003:125).   In similar vein the clergy should emulate the same approach as the therapist as described in the above quote.

Social constructionism challenges the idea of a singular truth, or of objective research in which the self of a person is reduced to a kind of irreducible inner reality represented by words like cognitions or emotions (Kotze 1996:3). These ideas become problematic the moment they take on the idea of objective truth. The clergy may feel that they have 'access' to a singular truth which they learnt at seminary, that can now be applied to any person, as deep down all are essentially the same regardless of culture or context. Lynne was exposed to this form of treatment were the clergy informed her of what was best for her, without taking her background or emotions into account (see chapter 3). She said, 'After being with them in the meeting I felt that I was a social misfit. I thought that maybe I should go to an institution to see what is wrong with me. They told me I was not 'lekker' in the head'. After this quote she laughed. I felt a twinge of sadness as she sat there looking at me. This was the outcome or result of telling people that there is something innately wrong with them when they do not conform to the denominations ideals or dogma. Lynne believed the diagnosis, as this 'condemnation' came from the experts, in this case the minister and psychologist.

2.2. 2 Denominational Traditions

The denomination is a spiritual community with set ideals and practices. These spiritual communities create traditions, dogmas, identities and goals. When an individual 'fails' to conform to the communities quest within society, they are often shunned. Gergen (1997) states: 'Flexibility diminishes, and those outside the tradition often become devalued. They are the "other" with different ways of making meaning, and possibly that are dangerous to one's own traditions and values'. Those individuals perceived thus, are disciplined to conform or are ousted as they might 'contaminate' the others within the community. Many Western denominations seem to cherish the idea of homogeneous beliefs that may not be challenged. Hence difference is frowned upon. Viv, Mark and Lynne felt sadness as they had to leave a community behind which they had grown up with due to their differences in opinion, (see chapter 5). They had to find another community and start all over again in finding spiritual acceptance and friends.

Flowing from the above ideas Freedman and Combs (1996:22) describe how postmodern and social construction ideas challenges the concept of any given reality. They say:

1. Realities are socially constructed.
2. Realities are constituted through language.
3. Realities are organised and maintained through narrative.
4. There are no essential truths.

The four points mentioned above will have serious consequences on the application of any spiritual advice given by the clergy. I want to translate the four points above in theological terms and in the context of this research;

1. Spiritual reality is a socially constructed concept in the context of the denomination, culture and epoch.
2. Spiritual reality is constituted through theological and denominational language.
3. Spiritual realities are organised and maintained through narrative.
4. There cannot be a singular spiritual truth for all time.

Due to the above mentioned four points, the clergy should take up a 'not-knowing' position regarding spirituality in general. According to Anderson & Goolishan (1992:37) this is accomplished where the therapist, and clergy included, asks questions, 'from a position of 'not knowing' rather than asking questions that are informed by method and that demand specific answers.' Through narrative, a collaborative effort will result in generating 'new meanings'.

Regarding the four points mentioned above a number of alternative ways of investigating and understanding spirituality and doctrine have emerged. One important idea that has come to the fore due to social constructionist ideas today is that social experience is now valued, as it is an integral process of seeking and gaining knowledge. Geertz quoted by Schwandt (1994) defines the analysis of human action as an 'interpretive science in search of meaning, not an experimental science in search of laws.'

In the light of what Geertz says, then there are a number of alternative ways of experimenting and understanding spirituality. It 'offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations' (Lather 1991:56). This implies that the individuals themselves are the 'experts' of their own lives. Self-reflection is axiomatic for self-development and maturing. Personal self-reflection by the laity should be encouraged in order for them to find meaning that is personal and meaningful in their spiritual 'walk' through life. Regarding self-reflection Lynne said, 'I was never allowed to do that, now I see that my spirituality is just as valid as theirs'. Here Lynne realised that her walk with the Lord was just as valid and meaningful as those in leadership. To have a meaningful spiritual relationship with her Lord she did not have to copy the minister's spirituality in order for hers to be meaningful.

The clergy should portray an attitude of reticence when it comes to the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. As they are in positions of authority what they say can have profound consequences on their listeners. Kotze & Kotze (2002:70) point out that it is necessary to constantly critique our practices by asking ourselves the following questions;

> Whose knowledges are these?
> For whose purpose?
> To whose benefit are these knowledges?
> Who is silenced or marginalized by these knowledges?
> Who suffers as a result of these knowledges?

These questions challenge the modernist positivist scientific notions, such as neutrality, objectivity, accountability and theory-practice distinctions. These questions should make the clergy more circumspect in their spiritual counselling. Spiritual knowledge and counselling could have the 'power' of ostracizing those who do not conform to the denominations teachings. With the above questions in mind and the influence of social constructionism the clergy have at their disposal a 'check' on what they teach as regards spirituality and the implantation of it in ones life.

2.2.3 Socially Constructed Reader Involvement regarding the Scriptures

In this section I want to discuss the importance of social constructionism and the implications it would have on one's reading of the scriptures. These views should alter ones perception on how subjective experience influences the 'objective' scriptures. The clergy and laity are both an integral part of the subjective/objective teachings that have been handed down to them due to modernist thought processes. Once an individual is aware of modernist and social constructionist philosophies, there should be a re-appraisal of one's perception on spiritual knowledge and how it is attained. Spiritual knowledge and dogma is obtained via the reading of the scriptures. Ones perception on the methodology of the reading of the scriptures and how knowledge is obtained thereby can have profound consequences in ones outlook on the church and theology in general. Marguerat and Bourquin (1999:7) state that, 'Narrative criticism is primarily orientated neither on the author nor on the message, but on the reader: it has in view the effect of the narrative on the readers and the way in which the text makes them cooperate in deciphering the message.'

Regarding the importance of the reading of the scriptures Herholdt (1998:216) states;

> Postmodernists hold that the empirical scientific method, with its conviction that truth is bound to objective information, caused an undesirable split between subject and object. This result is an external world distanced from the subject. In theology, this is formulated as the hermeneutical problem.

Regarding the above quote, Herholdt refers to Barth who made a significant contribution regarding the relation between the subject and the object and how the two influence each other. In his commentary on the book of Romans in 1919 he stated that the wisdom of Paul's time is also the wisdom of today. 'This is seeing a parallel between Paul's questions and answers and those of any other period in history in terms of the eternal Spirit of God that gives continuity between yesterday and today' (Herholdt 1998:452). Interestingly, the theology espoused by Barth, states that the subject may not just interrogate the text, (the scriptures), as object, but in a reversed sense, the object puts the subject in question. 'This means that the object

demands that the right questions be asked because the object is the ultimate' (Herholdt 1998:452). James Robertson (1964:23) sums up Barth's contribution:

> The view of the relation of subject to object basic to the historical method, to the effect that the subjective element is to be eliminated so as to attain the highest possible objectivity, has been relativized by the recognition of the hermeneutical relevance of the subject. This means that in the role of the subject as a heuristic medium of understanding, the text is taken into consideration by the subject.

Regarding the above, this would mean that the reader is now seen as being an active and participatory element in constructing meaning of the said text from the perspective of the social context in which he/she stands. An important question to ask at this point is whether textual meaning is only intertextually understood, or whether it is intersubjectively understood, as social conditioning aspects also influence the process of understanding. In the light of what is stated above Sampson (1989:6) has a interesting suggestion;

> The reality of personhood cannot be grasped either at the extreme pole of individualism – in which the seemingly autonomous individual is the ontological reality and prime mover – or the pole of mechanical collectivism – in which the individual is merely a mechanical copy of the underlying social order. There is a dialectical interprenetration of subject and object in which neither has full primacy.

2.2.4 Narratology and Context

These theories/approaches emphasized above, stress reader involvement, interaction and response. 'This is sometimes referred to as narratology, which means that the text is read as a narrative that involves the reader through identification with characters of the narrative' (Herholdt 1998: 453). The reader's creative imagination constantly makes new connections and discovers new possibilities of human action. This is a concept that needs to be taken seriously by any clergy when confronting views expressed by the laity that may be at variance with their interpretations and dogma. Coupled to the above, is the context that the individual member may find themselves in. The context of the reader in this regard is largely extended to that of the whole world that may be used as semiotic apparatus. Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida developed from semiotics a hermeneutics of deconstruction (Herholdt 1998:454). Deconstruction views both the subject and text as part of an intertextual world.

Intertextuality is a network that constitutes a new 'text' with a transformed meaning (Herholdt 1998:454). The laity would therefore view empirical reality and spirituality from their subjective contexts. They would create a reality that would fit their personal worldview in the context in which they find themselves. Their worldview will meet their felt needs as life progresses. It would be very difficult for someone else to 'dictate' to them a more relevant meaning that they have created for themselves within community. Those in power should not prescribe a new worldview that will be at variance with their felt needs. In this context, it is understood that every individual's grasp on reality is contextual. 'It follows that contexts are quite local, and the more one generalizes, the more one loses or fails to notice context. All that one can do is to voice local truth' (Brueggemann 1993:9). Hence the importance of listening and co-creating a reality that will be beneficial to the individual concerned. Brueggemann (1993:9) states;

> It follows from contextualism and localism that knowledge is inherently pluralistic, a cacophony of claims, each of which rings true to its own advocates. Indeed, pluralism is the only alternative to objectivism once the dominant centre is no longer able to impose its view and to silence by force all alternative or dissenting opinion. Thus I shall want to argue that the practice of Christian interpretation in preaching and liturgy is contextual, local and pluralistic.

2.2.5 Interpenetetrative Creativity

As we look at the abuse of power within the church, we should be aware of the implications of localised truth and how it also impacts on the individual and his/her belief system. Once an individual has become aware of socially constructed theologies and doctrines, there is a possibility that they may think that total relativism would seem to be the only way. In the light of this it would be expedient to highlight what Husserl, as quoted by McHoul and Grace (1993:8), states regarding this concern;

> According to the existential interpretation of Husserl, the basic principle underlying historical change and transformation was not an abstract spirit but the irremediable freedom of individuals to create anew out of the raw material from which they had been created. On this (idealist) interpretation, human thought or consciousness is supreme and capable of transcending any apparent fixed, given or determining conditions.

The individual, who has grasped this existential principle of Husserl, would be in a position to challenge and deconstruct traditional dogma which adheres to fixed laws and prescriptions within the church so as to make it more relevant in a modern eclectic society. The individual member would be 'free' to allow his/her thoughts to mature around the reading of the scriptures. Thus the dialectical interpenetration of subject (reader) and object (scripture) would allow for creativity of spiritual experience. With the conversational partners I discussed the above implications of this when it came to our quiet times. I also explained the importance of each person having their own spiritual narrative under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the light of this Mark said, 'Though I am still trying to complete my studies in theology it is interesting to hear that each person is part of the whole process. Who then is the expert?' This statement of Mark's would be a challenge that we need to take note of as it would be with us for the rest of our lives.

2.3 The Concept of Power and how it Impacts the Individual

In the previous two paragraphs I highlighted the challenges that postmodern theology and social construction would bring to any spiritual teachings and dogma that maintains that there could be such a thing as 'objective truth'. Once 'objective truth' is perceived as a reality then the concept of power follows closely behind. I believe that traditional theology and power are closely associated and there is a need for this concept to be deconstructed.

A question that needs to be raised is; what then is power? Burr states that, 'Power can be thought of as the extent of a person's access to sought after resources, such as money, leisure time, rewarding jobs, and as the extent to which they have the capacity to have some effect on their world.' According to this definition there are those in society that will have more power than others which results in structural inequalities. With these resources available a person's knowledge would be increased due to the opportunities presented to them. Thus there is a relationship between power and knowledge. For knowledge increases a persons power (Burr 1995:63). The clergy having studied have much theological knowledge about God so are perceived by the laity as being in a position of authority or power.

In the light of the above then, the '[C]oncept of power represents an epistemological error, and secondly that the idea of power is potentially unethical and toxic in its effects' (Kotze & Kotze. 1997: 9). Due to this it is necessary to include conversations on these issues and how it relates to spirituality and dogma within denominations. 'Not attending to these issues would mean to be 'double blind' (Von Foerster 1984a, 1984b, 1991) and in such a way to be insensitive to difference and the way in which power constitutes lives and relationships' (Kotze & Kotze 1997: 9).

Those within the church who have experienced this type of abuse of power need to reappraiseszf the idea of self-empowerment under the umbrella of social constructionism. So often power and control of the laity has been imposed from those in leadership. This control which results in submission by the laity to the ideals of the denomination need to be checked.

Power has an insidious side, as it can portray insensitivity to other individual's points of view and religious praxis especially if these do not conform to some theology or dogma that others hold sacrosanct. Power also has an influence on how knowledge is created and on the subjugation (Gordon 1980:81) or marginalization of 'alternative' knowledges (Flaskas & Humphreys 1993:42). The minister is often in a position of power, either due to the congregants placing him/her on a 'pedestal' or due to his/her academic's training that taught them to espouse such a view. Historically, society itself has possibly been unaware of placing certain individuals in positions of power. Therefore there is a need to deconstruct these views.

2.3.1 Foucault's Concept of Power

Foucault's (1926-1984) understandings of power relations have had a profound influence on how one perceives power and its relation to society. He studied power and its effects and determined that power is relational. Power for him was normally seen as emanating from and being in the service of institutions. He wrote that 'one must analyse institutions from the standpoint of power relations – not vice versa' (Foucault 1980:98). In the church context it is not that power has been given to the church in any way, but that the church has created a power base for itself. To

question the churches concept of power today could be seen as challenging God and therefore seen as heretical. Townley referring to Foucault, observes that;

> [f]or Foucault, therefore, power is associated with practices, techniques and procedures. Power is relational: it is not a possession. Reconceptualizing power as a relational activity has several implications for the way that it is studied. Power can no longer be portrayed as 'external', something which operates on something else. It is integral to that relation. Though this power exists in such a form it is however contestable. They are, Foucault says, 'changeable, reversible and unstable'. Power is ambiguous and plurivocal, a site of conflict and contestation.
>
> (Townley 1994:8)

After viewing power as relational Foucault offers a relational and dynamic model of identity. Townley again referring to Foucault states that;

> [t]he individual is continuously constituted and constructed through social relationships, discourses and practices. When Foucault writes that power produces reality, he concludes, 'the individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production' (Foucault 1977:194). The individual is constituted through power/knowledge. 'Certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be constituted as individuals. The individual…is I believe one of [power's] prime effects' (Foucault 1980:98). Individuals and their identity are the product of the social techniques of power. Rather than being reducible to an inner core of meaning, the individual is continuously being constituted and constructed, through discipline.
>
> (Townley 1994:9)

Recognising the effects of power in this way opens up the possibility of challenge. In this regard Foucault raises the possibility of critique. Townley quotes Kritzman when Foucault stresses the importance of the above:

> A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept ….criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self evident will no longer be accepted as such…criticism is absolutely indispensable for any transformation…as soon as one can no longer

think things as one formerly thought through them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible.

(Foucault, in Kritzman, 1988:154).

In keeping with Foucault's ideas on power and how it affects the individual, it is vital that there be an interactional element in the construction of meaning. This interactional element should be proposed with particular reference to the clergy and laity.

2.3.2 The Emphasis on Co-creation

If the clergy, studied postmodern philosophy and narrative therapy, they could find themselves seriously thinking about being in a position of co-creating spirituality and reality with the laity. There would be less emphasis on power and more on co-creation. Kotze and Kotze (1997:10) quote Minuchin (1991) regarding this,

'From a narrative point of view though, power is questioned and deconstructed in the everyday life of a person. In this respect the narrative and constructivist idea of opening more choices doesn't mean to help people stay within an oppressive situation, but to empower them to challenge from their strengths the dominant stories that constitute their life-stories and help them to change their roles'.

If the clergy were aware of the above there could be a beneficial meeting of clergy with laity as they grow towards ever more open dialogue. Lynne always had thought that whatever the minister said was truth and had to be adhered to regardless of her personal point of view. She said, 'When you spoke about power being a human thing which can change over time, that really made me think of how easy it is just to agree to everything the minister says. I now don't have to anymore!' Though Lynne might have expressed herself in a negative way in which she could challenge the clergy, this was a new thing for her. She was aware that her experience and spirituality also needed to be listened to, and taken seriously. These ideas on power and the influence it has on one allowed Lynne to challenge that very notion of power itself.

This is not to say that all congregants are in oppressive situations. However, there are those who are, including those who hold information about themselves which diverge

from the so called established theological categories that 'others' deem normal. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the worldview that any given individual has created for themselves they can be in a position to genuinely question meta-theological discourses that may be forced on them due to a denominations theological subjective stance or point of view.

Though the conversational partners had all left their respective churches they still felt that they as Christians had a lot to offer, regardless of what the leadership told them. Although these individuals may not be considered 'experts' in their own right, they do have important insights that need to be disseminated. This would also be empowering them within their own lives. Roussouw (1993:902) states, 'Expertise must be enriched and informed by the experience of those on the receiving side of expert opinion.' The leadership should check whenever there is some form of dispute within the church as they may learn something from the laity that they were not aware of. This would allow growth that would be beneficial to both parties.

2.4   The importance of Practical Theology

As I am interested in the individual who attends church with his/her spiritual concerns and worship, practical theology has an important contribution to make when it comes to individual perceptions of spirituality and its praxis.

Practical theology focuses on people's religious practices. As practical theology is concerned about praxis it develops practical theological theories that function in practice, evaluates these theories and, if necessary, evolves new theories for praxis (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:10). Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) quotes Otto (1974:201) when he states that practical theology is the critical theory of religious actions in society. The above statements need to be taken seriously if the clergy are to make the church relevant in an increasingly secular society. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) continues by stating that practical theology is that part of theology that concerns itself with the encounter between God and humanity and particularly with the role of human beings in this encounter. Human beings, each with their felt own needs, will perceive and interpret the message of salvation differently. Due to each individuals socially constructed perspectives regarding spirituality, which would have been influenced by their society, home life, and personal sub-cultures that influence them

no two perspectives will be the same. Therefore ideas and concepts of God will vary according to each person's perspective. There can be no one concept or doctrine that can be applied to all. The clergy should acknowledge each individual perception of God and His outworking in life according to their personal worldviews. By acknowledging the individual's perceptions of spirituality and its resultant praxis, the clergy would be empowering them and giving them 'voice' according to their felt needs. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) quoting 'Heitink (1984:22) maintains that whereas other theological subjects have the bible as their text, the text of practical theology is the religious person.' The religious person that Heitink refers to would have a wide range of views and perceptions, each one as real and concerning to that individual as the next.

Dingemans (1996:82) states the above ideas succinctly;

> Formerly, practical theologians had first studied the bible and the doctrine of the church in order to apply the results of their findings to the practice of the church, more recently, under the influence of social sciences they have changed their approach: in recent decades practical theologians worldwide have agreed on starting their investigations in practice itself. Practical theology has become description of and reflection on the "self-understanding of a particular religious tradition." This approach moves from practice to theory, then back to practice.

2.4.1 The church in Society

If a doctrine or spiritual concept becomes irrelevant for a particular reason, the clergy need to reflect on that idea and co-create a new perception that would cater for the culture's newly perceived felt needs. This co-creation would include both clergy and laity. "Practical theology has been extended from the functions of the pastor to the functions of the church as a whole (Dingemans 1996: 84). When one observes society, one should also include those individuals within that society who are not church attendees. One would need to ascertain what their personal felt needs are and how they 'see' the church and its role in society. Dingermans (1996:84) states that emphasis has been laid on the internal functioning of the congregation as well as the external impact that the church has on secular society. This impact can have a powerful insight on the clergy in observing how effective the church really is in a given society.

Regarding the individual in society Dingemans (1996:86) quotes Henning Luther (1992) who wrote a book where he emphasized the praxis of the church moving in the opposite direction; that is not the clerical and church paradigm moving in the direction of society, but in the direction of individual believers. 'He asked for attention to the point of view of lay people who want to seek their own way in our complicated world full of confusing information'(Dingemans 1996:86). The point of view of the learning individual, the hearer in the pew, and the person who seeks meaning in life is stressed. Their point of view is just as valid as church dogma, or the pastor's personal point regarding some theological point.

2.4.2 Pneumatology

Taking cognisance of the individual within the congregation the pneumatological angle in ecclesiology makes room for human cooperation. This means that humans are afforded their own place as partners in the covenant with God. 'Members of the congregation, having received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, constitute a gifted congregation, and bring forth their own contributions and charismata, rather than being absolutely dependent on the "christopraxis" of the clergy' (Dingemans 1996:94). The gifted congregation has an important part to play in co-creating spiritual meanings that would be beneficial not only to themselves but to the wider community in which they exist. 'Neither theology nor practice is confined to the boundaries of the church or restricted to its concerns' (Ballard 1995: 117). It is the laity who are 'rubbing shoulders' every day with people in society where they observe the impact or the relevance that the church would have. It is they who are so often more aware of the needs in the workplace, home or society in general.

The Holy Spirit who has empowered the congregation (see Galatians chapter 5 verses 22-23) would give them the encouragement and will to express their concerns and spiritual insights. It should become clear that in spirituality all believers, clergy as well as laity, are illuminated by the Holy Spirit to help and support each other regardless of personal preferences or points of view. In this regard it would be vital that theological statements correspond to human experience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

However in pre-modern times religious leaders were acknowledged to be entitled to the ability to speak on behalf of the deity, or interpret the word of God. 'They were regarded as able and were empowered to tell people the "right way", what to do and what not to do.' (Kotze et.el. 2002:12). The individuals that I have been seeing felt this form of power displayed by the clergy 'almost as a divine right' that they were entitled to exercise. They also felt that decisions were made on their behalf with other leaders without them been present to represent their personal points of view, (see chapter 3). Mark stated in regard to this, 'As you have said, it was as if we were not qualified, not professional enough to allow our points of view. We weren't even there to defend ourselves! ' It was as if they would have been an embarrassment to the leadership or that the leadership would have been uncomfortable in facing them personally. It was easier to discuss them in camera and decide what was best for them. Kotze et.el (2002) states regarding this point, 'Those people directly affected by these decisions were (and are) never or seldom invited to participate and they were not privileged to take part in arguing right and wrong – their voices were silenced.'

2.4.3 The Clergy's Perception

Another important aspect that would have an impact on the congregation and its view of the clergy and ecclesiology is the individual clergy's perception of them. 'The practical theologian wants to know whether the preacher understands the audience and context properly - their experiential and thought worlds, their hopes, fears and experience of God - in order that he may communicate the message effectively' (Heyns & Pieterse 1990: 7). By displaying this understanding the preacher would have synthesized his/her perceptions with that of the congregation. This perception would benefit all within the congregation as there would be a harmonious relation displayed between clergy and laity. This understanding or empathy should also include those that possibly do not fit the congregations profile of what is a 'healthy' believer or those that always accept the status quo. I personally feel that a harmonious fellowship is one of the most important aspects to be displayed in the congregation. 'Practical theology is a study that seeks to help humans to encounter God and to live in fellowship with God and other people' (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 7). The congregation or fellowship of believers is also a 'cultural thing' each displaying its own worldviews and concerns. Like individuals no one congregation

will be the same as the other. Hence the need for the clergy to 'tune in' and resonate with the felt needs of the congregation as a whole as well as each individuals concern's and felt needs. Personally, before I was introduced to postmodernism I felt that the laity had to adhere to what I preached and taught, as after all I was the one who had the degree in theology. This attitude of mine made me somewhat callous sometimes. When people came to me for advice I would often point to the scriptures and give a 'little sermonette on the pro's and cons of their concerns in the light of my subjective opinion regarding the bible. There was no thought of co-creation. The above example of myself has made almost embarrassed in what I said prior to postmodernism. I have a passion now to inform my colleagues of the importance of my paradigm shift which they hopefully would emulate.

2.5 Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is one of the 'fundamental' pillars on which the church stands. To do theological studies without a conscious awareness of pastoral care can give the impression that the personal lives of the members and their felt needs are not as important as theological theory. Today contemporary pastoral theology is gradually revising its own implicit ideals of studying the individual within context. Within the paradigm of context, 'the subject of care is shifting from that of a self-actualised individual for whom care functions primarily at times of crises towards one of a person in need of nurture and support as she or he negotiates a complexity of moral and theological challenges in a rapidly-changing economic and social context (Graham 1996:51).

2.5.1 Pastoral Care in a Postmodern World

Gerkin (1997) maintains that the pastoral task today is to facilitate Christian living in the modern world. This task would be to relate actions and behaviours to the deeper underlying meanings, by analysing concrete events, their contexts and causes, their significance and desirable outcome. Pastoral actions are planned on the basis of the meanings thereby disclosed, the aim being to facilitate effective and appropriate pastoral practice. (Graham 1996:118). This outlook would be perceived by the laity and the community as being one of concern and care. The church has been placed

within a concrete historical context and therefore needs to discern the practical needs as well as the metaphysical needs of the members and individuals within the immediate context.

It would be noted that pastoral theology, as a discipline should not be legislative or prescriptive, but interpretive. This would enable the community of faith to give critical and public account of its purposeful presence in the world and the values that give shape to its actions. This concept is a refutation of prescriptive pastoral care which seeks to enforce moral conformity to absolute norms on behalf of controlling and dominating interests, be that of the clergy or denomination (Graham 1996:208). Thus the axiomatic need of society perceiving the church to be a caring 'organisation' which they could not do without.

2.5.2 Pastoral Care and the Clergy

The clergy are not in a position today to demand that their concepts of spirituality or ethics is the norm to be adhered to. To do so they would be insinuating that their concept spirituality is innately superior to that of the laity. 'Much current writing on ecclesiology and ministry is critical of any 'clerical spirituality and sense of oneness with God' that is presented 'as inherently superior' (Astley 2002:62). Instead, 'the new way of being church requires an ecclesial community that is being created by people, rather than provided for people. In our postmodern world with ever increasing complexity the laity have a vital contribution to make to the effectiveness of the churches witness in the world.

Regarding the above, Astley (2002:62) has a important point to make regarding the clergy and their academic training. He states:

> [T]heology in the past was not defined by its subject matter but by a particular (and limited) goal, namely, the training of the clergy. In its functional form, the clerical paradigm elevated the tasks of the ordained ministry as the (often sole) rationale for theological studies. Theology then becomes restricted in its scope to knowledge by the professional leadership of the Christian community.

This 'clericalization' of theology has been a dominant narrative within modernist thinking and has led to a separation between formal theological education and 'church education' which has resulted in a difference in status, power and influence between the laity and clergy (Astley 2002:63). It is for this reason that there has arisen a criticism regarding the education in institutions, such as seminaries, theological colleges, theological courses or divinity schools, that teach theology with both eyes on the ministry of the church and its professional formation. As long as these institutions continue to separate theological training from the laity, their concept of power and influence will continue.

2.5.3 Pastoral Care, the Individual and Social Awareness

Coupled to the above is the Western academic institutions perception of academics or theory as being the most important facet to study. This sometimes creates the impression that in western society there is so often an imbalance between academic discipline and social awareness. Academic achievement is important, but so is social awareness. The one is not more important than the other. For example, a minister who has a degree is not automatically more compassionate with the congregation. Theory is important but so are people's lives. Love, concern and care of others are possibly the main focus of the churches praxis within society. To be a pastor one has to 'nurture' one's flock. I believe that individual's personal growth is one main aim of pastoral care and the minister should be aware of this. One just has to think of the parable of the lost sheep where the shepherd has a concern for the one that was lost.

The pastoral therapist has a responsibility to facilitate the maintenance and further development of the person's spiritual or faith story and the dialogue with its tradition, on the one hand, and to facilitate the growth and creative development of particular life stories, on the other (Gerkin 1997:113). Care of individuals is so often fraught with difficulties. The therapist, without taking cognisance of his/her position, may display an authority which may be accepted by the person seeking help. Pastoral power must always be checked and kept at the back of the minister's mind. As Sevenhuijsen (1998:138) warns:

> Think about the way social practices give rise to certain attitudes and moral frameworks, and vice versa… and to adapt our judgements about care politics to the fact that power and conflict are involved in every phase of the caring process…. Deliberations about what constitutes necessary care are structured by power and depend upon the position from which one speaks.

In a similar vein Hunter (1995:30) states:

> Therapeutic pastoral care and counselling is defined by its fundamental commitment to the concept of healing. This involves a holistic understanding of salvation, and the relation between the sacred and the secular. It also involves a distinctive style of pastoral practice whose defining features include; an orientation to health and well-being as the goal of care, a phenomenological, empathetic mode of pastoral relationship, a conversational style of care giving that accents its personal qualities and the pastors subjective sense of pastoral identity….'.

Gerkin (1997:113), Sevenhuijsen (1998:138) and Hunter (1995:30) emphasize aspects of pastoral care that any minister should take cognisance of. Their position regarding the care of the individual within the sacred and secular aspects of life is one that I will be applying when I interview the clients relevant for this study. The other aspect of care that I have become acutely aware of is the position that one occupies, and this has to do with power. In my interviews I will always be aware of this and try and curb it as much as possible. When I listened to the conversational partners I allowed them to express themselves freely without inter-jecting with theological quotes to make sure that they remained on the correct path. This allowed freedom of expression and was a sense of relief to the conversational partners as they felt that no-one was criticizing their ideas. Viv said, 'I like it that one can talk, talk about concerns, without been shown the correct way to think all the time. It's as you said, they are the experts and we are the followers.'

2.6   A Members Possible Three Phases of Experience

I want to highlight the three phases that any given individual may experience in the light of the abuse of power. In this regard, the work of White and Epston (1990) has an interesting contribution to make regarding this study, Epston and White (1992) and White (2000:27), Michael White is worth noting as he draws on the work of van

Gennep and Turner, where they describe three stages that any individual may find themselves in:

> First is the *separation phase*, at which a person breaks from their life, as they know it. This marks the beginning of the journey. Second, there is the *liminal phase*. This is a 'betwixt and between' phase, in which one's sense of being in the world is absent, and where nothing means quite what it was before. This phase is invariably characterized by periods of disorientation and confusion, and times of significant despair. Third, there is the *reincorporation phase*. Reincorporation is achieved when a person finds that they've arrived at another place in life, where they experience a 'fit' that provides for them a sense of once again being at home with themselves and with a way of life. At this time, a person regains a sense of being knowledged and skilled in matters of living.

Therefore if a given individual remains at the 'liminal phase'and decides to turn their backs on a spiritual journey that they have grown up with their whole lives, this could unsettle them profoundly. Or alternatively if some individuals find themselves in the 'reincorporation phase' they may never attend church again due to their disillusionments. In chapter four I will continue to discuss these three phases, as they impacted the client's outlook on theological abuse.

2.7 Review of this Chapter

In this chapter I high-lighted the academic challenge that postmodernism and social constructionism brings in its wake. In a sense there was a co-construction between myself and the literature. If it were not for my introduction to this type of literature I would possibly still be in a modernist frame of reference. I have found this literature challenging not only regarding praxis but also the more subtle challenge it brings to metaphysics in general.

2.8 Preview of Chapter Three

'The table' has been set as it were, for the introduction of the personnel interviews themselves. Now that the reader is familiar with views/ideas as explained above, I now introduce the client's voices.

CHAPTER THREE
THE PERSONAL NARRATIVES

3.1 The Interviews

The methodology that I have used in recording the two families narratives was to record their personal stories without any of my personal reflections inserted in the text. I want the story to flow and allow the reader to 'feel' the emotions that have come through their personal narratives. After the narratives I then reflect on what had been said and this reflection continues into chapter four.

Before I come to the personal interviews themselves I want to high-light the type of questions that I used.

3.1.1 Relative Influence Type Questions

The way one asks questions is vital in trying to gather information that would be helpful to the client as well as the therapist if they are to co-create new meanings regarding their lives. In this research I limited my questioning to an approach that is called 'Relative Influence Questioning'. In searching for an alternate story the therapist is interested in discovering as much information and detail as they can regarding the story as told to them. The particularities of the unique outcome must be explored in detail. White (1987:37) states regarding this format of questions;

> Relative influence questioning invites family members to derive two different descriptions of their association with the problem that they present for therapy. The first is a description of the influence of the problem in the lives and relationships of family members; the second is a description of the influence of family members and their relationships in the life of the problem.

This form of questioning also invites the client to participate in the construction of new meanings regarding a concern/problem in their lives. In this situation the therapist encourages the client to firstly; find a unique outcome regarding a problem, secondly; ascribing meaning to this unique outcome and thirdly; what new future can they perceive as a result of the new outcome.

White (1987:40-45) classifies 4 kinds of relative influencing questions that invite;

1. **Direct selection of unique outcomes**. These questions encourage the client to speculate about their own perception, and to embrace significances that would otherwise be lost.

2. **Indirect selection of unique outcomes.** These types of questions invite the client to speculate on the perceptions of others. This allows them to 'see' the significance that others see in them.

3. **A review and re-appraisal of one's relationship to oneself.** These type of questions encourage the client to speculate about what changes in their experience of themselves could be accompanying the unique outcomes.

4. **A review and re-appraisal of one's relationship to others.** These types of questions encourage the client to speculate about what changes in their experience of others are accompanying the unique outcomes, redescriptions, and possibilities.

By the conversation partners listening to each other and applying these types of questions to themselves, they will hopefully become aware of those influences that have had a dominate say in their lives and outlook. In chapter five the conversation partner's experience of themselves will be high-lighted based on the four types of questions mentioned.

3.2 The Keen Family

The Keen family were all members of a traditional type of church that had a Reformed background, when they came face to face with power/manipulation from the leadership. The process that they all went through is highlighted below. Viv, the mother had been the church secretary, Jeremy ,the younger son, was the youth leader and Steve ,the older, an elder.

3.2.1 The Mother, Viv

Viv is the mother of three children; the third son does not live with them anymore as he has taken up a teaching position in Mafekeng. Viv's husband died of cancer about eight years ago. Viv had been the church secretary for three years when the minister

took a call to another part of the country. As a result of this, the church set up a vacancy committee to look for a suitable minister to replace the one who had just left. Another minister acted as the interim moderator, which means that he runs the vacant church until a replacement is found. This minister has a big influence on the vacancy committee, and often, he can sway the committee one way or the other.

The vacant church set up a committee and Viv happened to be a part of this process. During the meetings that they had over time, she became acutely aware that the whole committee and the process were being manipulated by the interim moderator because he had personally decided on a minister he felt should take up the charge. The vacancy took twenty two months and during this time the minister manipulated the whole process to suit his personal agenda. He went so far as to manipulate the votes in his favour. Viv felt that the minister had abused his position as the interim moderator but could do nothing about it.

Viv, being the church secretary, knew the type of person that the church needed but whenever she tried to approach the interim moderator regarding this he would just fob her off. When another minister applied, she asked the interim moderator, 'I want to know if you received the application from 'John' regarding the vacancy?' He said, 'Oh I lost that one and have asked him to send another.' Viv continued, 'I knew that he had received it, but he hid the form as he knew that it would have jeopardised the other minister's prospect. He told me to forget about the other man!' Viv was also convinced that the minister had a personal grudge against the other man, and so refused to consider him. Viv was then tasked with writing to the other man telling him that his application was unsuccessful. She said, 'This really made me very angry as he was not considered at all due to the interim moderator's bias.'

During the vacancy process the interim moderator started manipulating other members on the committee to support him. 'This saddened me as I really felt that some of the members who were elders should have stood up to the interim moderator regarding the blatant manipulation. But no-one dared.' When I asked about her ideas on leadership or lack thereof she said, 'My trust in the leadership was compromised as they seemed to say one thing and then change their mind as the need or situation arose. There seemed to be no consistency.'

Viv continued, 'In time, the interim moderator got his way and his man arrived.' Viv worked with him for three and a half years. She went out of her way to try and understand him. In time she felt that he never really heard her or took cognisance of the needs of the congregation. She said,' He did not seem to reflect in depth on any of the issues that I brought forward.' She then became aware that the minister had no pastoral heart and that he hardly ever went out to visit the sick. She approached him as regards this and she said,' He had an excuse for every argument that I brought forward. There was no evidence of care even though, in the original interview, he had told the committee that he was a pastoral caring man. Yet there was no evidence of this at all!' Viv also started feeling that he was using the church to further his career. The church that he was now minister at was a fairly large congregation and an affluent one as well. She said, 'I felt that he was using this church as a stepping stone to becoming moderator. This, as you know became a reality, as he eventually became moderator of the 'relevant' Church.' She continued, 'Sadly, some ministers take calls to affluent churches that have a powerful role to play in society, only to use them as positions of power and prestige.'

Viv sat thinking for awhile then continued, 'One day he approached me and told me that he wanted me to become a pastoral assistant. He then discussed this with me in great detail.' During this time she had been his prayer partner and had visited many of the folk in the church. She was a logical choice. Viv said, 'On one Sunday during the morning service he announced to the congregation that he was appointing me as the pastoral assistant. Many were pleased with this and told me so after the service. Many phoned me and congratulated me as well.' Viv had been studying theology through Unisa for a year at that time and so was more than qualified to fill the post.

Viv said, 'During the next week the minister called me into his office and told me that I could not become the pastoral assistant! He said the session had decided against this move. I knew that he was lying, for there was no reason for this sudden change.' She also felt that she, in challenging him on some of his pastoral practices, may have had a part to play in him rescinding the call to her. She continued, 'I felt that he was a minister who liked to be in charge and was not good at tolerating other people's ideas, especially if they went against his.' She looked sad when she said, 'In time, he also became known as a minister who would promise a lot but the promises were all

empty! This was the last straw for me, and so I decided to resign.' She did this with a heavy heart as she had grown fond of many people. To be promised a position, only for it to be taken away in front of the congregation was belittling for her. She said, 'It really saddened me to say good-bye to all my friends and prayer partners. During this time I had no idea were I should go and worship. Though I decided to remain a member.'

Today she only goes to services at the church when she is required to help in certain activities on Sundays. She does not attend the church when the minister preaches. I asked her how she felt whenever she saw him. She said, 'I am happy to see him but do not want to be around him!' A few months later she joined another church and has grown to appreciate that minister and congregants there. She said, 'Even though I have found another spiritual home and am comfortable there, I do find that sometimes resentment raises its head in my life whenever I think of him.'

After she had told me this I asked her what advice would she give herself if she were me and I were her. This is what she said;

'God is always present no matter where one finds oneself. God sometimes moves people out of their comfort zones and pushes them into the byways. I have always known that God works powerfully within the confines of the church. Now that I am away from the church I am so much more aware of Him working everywhere. It is as if a new awareness has been presented to me regarding His influence in society.'

Viv continued, 'When I go around society today, I realise that the church can be very restricting at times. Out in society humanity is free to find God anywhere without the proverbial red tape and theological justifications for not getting involved in certain areas of ministry. It is as if God has kicked me out of my nest. It was not nice at the time but now I feel emancipated. I no longer have to adhere to the minister in authority. I am not restricted by the session and ministers ideas about what I should be doing in society.'

Viv then brought up her concern again about the church and the new minister. Even though she had resigned people still seek her out. After a-while she said, 'While still

acting as secretary, numerous people came to me complaining about how the minister was conducting himself in the life of the church. I then felt that had I stayed or become the assistant pastor, there would have arisen a division within the church. I got to a point where I could not support the ministers approach and started supporting the peoples complaints against him. This affected me badly and my conscience started worrying me. I felt that the elders supporting the minister and the people supporting me was not good for the life of church. Because of this it was easier to leave.' She also felt that the minister knew about these feelings so decided to protect his power base by denying her the pastoral position.

The last thing she said was, 'Today I feel emancipated but sad as well. I feel betrayed by the minister. He also betrayed my two sons by lying to them. I am now pleased to be free of that man!'

3.2.2 The Son Jeremy (Youth Leader)

Jeremy had been a member of this church for many years. When the minister arrived he happened to be in the position of youth leader. He is a qualified school teacher and really has a heart for the youth.

He started by saying,'Early on, when I met him for the first time and made contact with him, I felt uncomfortable. I had a feeling that he was false.' The minister made many attempts to reach out to the youth, but none were really done in earnest. Jeremy continued, 'During the services I felt that his sermons were often pointless.' Jeremy got the impression that the minister did not really bother to understand the people really well. He said, 'He had his own ideas and the people were to adhere to them. Often he would end the sermon by challenging the congregants by means of a question. Yet I felt that he would not be able to handle the question himself, yet expected everyone else to.'
'The final break for me occurred during the time of a youth camp that I had organised.' He continued, 'I asked the minister to come along and to be part of the life of the youth on the camp. He was not interested at all as he was too busy with other things. I then challenged him by saying if he was not interested in the youth then they would not support him either.'

A few weeks later the minister called Jeremy and told him that many parents were dissatisfied with his ministry to the youth. He was receiving complaints that the youth were having too much fun with no theological input. Jeremy said, 'I was furious with him as I felt that I was wasting my time with the youth as I got no support at all from the leadership, especially him. Now that I had challenged him earlier there was suddenly a supposed interest in the youth.' This lame accusation had no foundation as Jeremy was acutely aware of theological input during the youth gatherings. It was a ploy to get rid of him.

Jeremy then said, 'I started feeling tired of trying to run the youth without support. I must admit that apathy set in and I started feeling that my interest in the church started to wane as well.' Coupled to this he also felt that he was betrayed by the leadership due to their lack of interest. He continued, 'I started feeling judged by the leadership's view that the youth was not working out successfully. It was as if they knew what the youth wanted and how it should be run, yet they never came to visit the youth or show any interest at all.'

As a result of this, Jeremy resigned as youth leader and from the church. He has not been back to the church for a year, and is enjoying the break. He feels that there is nothing to go back to the church for and in the interim has found a new church which he attends. He has found solace in the Lord by himself, and this has been a major source of comfort for him. Today he still feels anger at certain of the church leaders whenever he thinks back.

3.2.3 The Son Steve (The Elder)

Steve had been an elder in the church for about two years before he resigned as well. He started out by saying, 'I was saddened at what I saw happening at the session meetings under the leadership of the new minister. I think that the reason for this is that as an engineer in a major company, and also what I have seen in the corporate world has made me sit up and take notice of what is happening as regards leadership within the church.' He started to feel that there are better people in the corporate world than there are in many churches. If the new minister was in the corporate world

as a leader he would have been dismissed a long time ago due to his lies and false promises.

Steve continued, 'The new minister and the leadership seemed to be very concerned about money matters and gave scant attention to the building of the kingdom of God. Due to this I challenged the minister as regards outreach and as a result of this concern the two of us had a stand up argument in front of the session.' Steve went away with a great sense of loss. Steve said, 'I had lost faith in the leadership of the church, especially the minister. I really wanted to make a difference and thought that I could have done so from the position of elder. I must admit that I was in for a shock when I saw the infighting and different agendas each elder seemed to have. So many elders just sit quietly and allowed the minister to dictate what policy and strategies were to be given priority and what he determined were of no practical concern.' The minister was truly in a position were no-one was prepared to challenge his views. I asked Steve what challenge he wanted to bring to the minister. He said, 'The challenge was one were the Kingdom of God would take precedence. I really felt that this was getting neglected. Any-one could have debated with me regarding my point of view. But to be verbally attacked in front of session for this was disturbing.'

Steve also felt that the minister wanted the lime light. He said, 'He never once went out of the service to visit the Sunday school or youth. To do so would have meant that he would have to have given the pulpit to someone else, thus missing the lime light.' What really stood out for Steve regarding the ministers lack of concern was one Sunday when the minister called for a prayer counselling session and asked people to come forward for prayer. Steve said, 'One woman broke down emotionally in the front of the church and was in need of much counselling. As time was moving on and it was time to preach the sermon, the minister just left the woman standing after a minute or so of support. He just went to the pulpit and started to preach. This shocked a few people as he could have asked one of the elders to come forward to assist. But the new minister had no sincerity or compassion!'

Steve also felt that the church had become like a club where all the members were just there to keep the status quo and make sure everything was running smoothly

according to the minister's leadership. The issues that he really felt strong about came to nothing.

As an elder Steve was chosen to go to a church elders meeting once a month. The 'elders gathering' meets once a month in various churches within the area to discuss local policies as well as the running of the wider church in South Africa. At these meetings the same ministers always seemed to get up and discuss their personal issues. Steve said, 'Money seems to be a big concern with everything else being of second importance. Again, the 'elders gathering' seems to be there to keep the status quo. The 'elders gathering' seems to have committees for committee's sake with a lot of talking and no practical application.' Steve felt that he was not made an elder to witness this, so decided to resign from the church. If there was no dedication to a worthy cause, he may as well leave. Steve continued, 'In the corporate world there would never be such futile meetings, as there would not be so much time to waste.'

Today Steve feels sad when he thinks back on the way that the minister has treated his mother, brother and friends within the congregation. He felt totally disempowered and as a result decided to leave the church. He does not worship anywhere else at the moment as he feels that it is not necessary.

After hearing the three family members telling their personal narratives, I felt a twinge of pain. Here was one minister who had brought sadness and disillusionment to one family. The one thing that I did notice was the love the three had for each other. In addition, due to the three going through very similar experiences, they were in a good position to support and empathise with each other. I asked them if they felt mutual support one for each other and Viv said, 'It is so wonderful to have son's such as this. We are all here for each other and it is just so sad that we had a bad run in with the same minister.' As we sat there I was wondering how many other individuals there were out in society who had experienced similar sadness and disillusionments with the leadership of the church. I asked them if they would like to meet with other individuals who had experienced similar situations and they said that they would.

3.2.4 My letter

The next day as I reflected on what they had said I wrote them this letter.

Dear Keen Family

I first of all want to thank you for seeing me and sharing your experiences regarding the leadership of the church. I noticed a few things and would like to bring them to your attention. The next time we meet I would like to hear your feedback.

Viv, after sharing your narrative with me I noticed that there was no hint of despair or bitterness. These two emotions have not entered your life and have had no say at all. I was wondering what this was telling you about yourself? Was the lack of these emotions telling you that you are not one to be manipulated or pulled down by other people's selfish agendas? Is that a strength or would you call it by some other name? Your concern for other people is foremost in your life. Has this trait always been with you? The love and support the three of you have for each other is very strong. Do you think that this experience that you have all gone through has made the family bond stronger?

Jeremy, now that you are no longer in a leadership role regarding the youth, have you noticed other areas were you could place your love and concern for them? Or are you doing that already? As with your Mom, I noticed that there is no bitterness but sadness has reared its head in your life. What has this sadness done to you and what strengths has it awoken?

Steve, now that you are in the corporate world and have learnt a lot from that world, what lessons would you want to bring into church leadership to make them more proficient? You value Christian leadership very highly, and I was wondering what that was telling you about yourself? I was wondering if frustration has come into your life regarding church leadership. If this is so, how would you want to change that?

Folk's I know that there is much that we can talk about but feel that the above
is enough for you to think about for now. I hope these experiences will make
us all stronger. I am looking forward to seeing you all next week to discuss
this letter.
Regards
Paul.

3.2.5 Reflection on Power/Manipulation regarding the Keen Family

Regarding the Keen family, I became aware of certain epistemological factors that were playing themselves out in the background. By epistemological factors I mean the difference between expert and lay knowledges that have been a product of history, socially constructed within certain paradigms or cultures.

The Keen family had much experience and insight to give to the church. Yet their knowledges were marginalised because they had openly challenged the leadership regarding areas where the leadership needed to reappraise their praxis. This was perceived as a threat and a challenge so the leadership silenced their concerns. Due to this the Keen family is suffering as a result of the expert knowledges portrayed by the minister. Though the Keen family went to the leadership out of genuine concern, they were perceived as a threat and were thus marginalised.

Had the minister and leadership displayed a 'not knowing position' regarding the Keen families concerns, they could have co-created a new awareness together. The Keen family were not prepared to be passive recipients of expert knowledge being 'dumped' on them from above and took a stand against that. Sadly, they paid the price for their concerns.

Heshusius (1994:15) describes participatory consciousness 'as a freeing of ourselves from the categories imposed by the notions of objectivity and subjectivity: as a re-ordering of the understanding between the self and the other to a deep kinship of "selfother", between the knower and the known.' This consciousness frees one of a preoccupation with self and to see the other as a 'self other' not the other as an object/subject other. The subject/object epistemology breeds an attitude where one has the expert opinion that all objects have to adhere to. There could have been a

merging of experiences and expectations where both parties would have benefited from the situation that arose. If the leadership had replaced their expert knowledges from 'what do we believe' to 'who are we', there could have been a beneficial co-creation of each parties meaning. So often those in power are insensitive to difference and force 'difference' to conform to their opinions or ideals.

3.2.6 Feedback Session regarding the Letter

I met with the Keen family two weeks later and they gave me feedback as regards the letter.

3.2.6.1 Viv

When I met with Viv the first thing she said was, 'It is so nice to receive a letter; it seems to be a forgotten trade these days. It is a lovely way of caring and showing a personal relationship. E-mails are just not the same as this.' She continued, 'It was a relief for me to see that I did not see bitterness and anger taking over her life. I do not want to carry bitterness as I am in the healing ministry as well. I would rather move out than allow some-one to destroy this trait in me.' She continued by saying that she had been taught to be assertive not aggressive as this goes nowhere. She has a burning passion to help people and has learnt through life how many in positions of power have abused their right. She would stay clear of that.

I asked how her family was getting along and she said, 'I feel that the family has grown stronger through this experience and I now find that we talk more freely about certain deep issues, we now seem to know that we are there for each other. We are there for each other all the time. This has made me grateful. Quite possibly this awareness has come about due to the experience we all had with the same man.'

3.2.6.2 Jeremy

Jeremy said, 'Like mom, I think letter writing is a nice way of putting things across. I feel that sadness has starting to raise its head in my life. It is just sad to realise that one cannot just trust anybody anymore, even if they are Christians.' He continued, 'I

am so much more careful with whom I can trust today.' He enjoys responsible leadership and as a school teacher he has become acutely aware of this. He said, 'This awareness has risen as a result of the experience that we all went through. It has made me wiser I think.'

He then said, 'At school I have met a minister (Jeremy teaches at an Anglican school) who has taught me much regarding responsible leadership, and I am continuing my relationship with him. He said, 'I have debated with him regarding leadership as well as leadership within the church. These talks have made my sense of observation and analysing what is going on around me far wiser.'

3.2.6.3 Steve

Steve said, 'Whenever I think of leadership, there has to be a few character traits in place. For me they are sincerity, integrity, openness, genuine care, honesty and courage, these are what is called for, especially in the church.' He continued, 'I really feel that I did not see Christ in the previous churches leadership, and it was because of this that I left. He added, 'I did not just want to run away, to have done so would have been cowardly. Like mom I was assertive and stated my point of view. Then I realised that I was not been taken seriously, so I did the only thing that was left. I left.'

After this session I asked the Keen family if they were prepared to have a get-together with the other family. They felt that as there is so much sadness and hardship in life it would be a great privilege to stand by others and give each other mutual support.

3.3. The Robson Family

3.3.1 Mark

Mark's narrative starts ten years ago regarding power/manipulation within the church. He had always been interested in theology and has for some time been contemplating entering the ministry. He had completed the three year lay preacher's course through the relevant denomination and is at present studying theology through Unisa. He is

on the master's level, but is finding it difficult to complete his studies due to work pressure.

Ten tears ago he was a member of the said church and, as he had been a regular member, the minister and he became friendly. He was allowed to preach sometimes and was in charge of leading the worship team. Mark said, 'We occasionally met and counselled each other. We really got on very well.' At this time he had just started going out with a young woman by the name of Lynne. She was also helping him in the leading of worship.

In time a young minister arrived to help run the congregation. Mark said, 'We did not get on very well and I felt that he was a rather arrogant individual.' As Mark was studying theology, he could have in-depth conversations with him regarding this topic. It was during these conversations that Mark started having some serious problems with the young minister's theology. Mark said, 'For example this minister told me that he could see Christ as a drunkard as this would have been a good way to reach those who are fallible and are struggling with life. This really worried me!'

As time went by the minister started interfering in the leading of the worship and often he and Mark would clash regarding certain issues. This was after Mark had been running the worship team with no problems for two years. One Sunday night the worship team went out to a restaurant together and while there, a young waitress served them. The men in the team started teasing her in a very suggestive and sexual way. Mark was very embarrassed by this and approached the senior minister regarding their behaviour. Mark did this carefully as he knew that it was a sensitive issue. He even phoned the waitress at the restaurant and apologised to her for their bad behaviour. The senior minister took exception to this and told Mark so. Mark said, 'As the other minister was there I felt that the senior minister was trying to protect the younger colleague and as a result of this our relationship started to deteriorate.' In time due to the other minister trying to challenge Mark's influence in the church, he and Lynne decided to leave.

Lynne had been a member of an independent charismatic church and even though she helped Mark in the 'other' church, she had never resigned as a member. The two of

them decided to start worshipping at that church together. Again Mark and Lynne were regular members and in time they became very friendly with the youth pastor who was about forty-five years of age. Mark started helping again in the worship team and he was even running a few bible study groups. Mark said, 'The 'church' had a study programme through the ICI University which was run by the Americans. I registered with them and studied successfully for a year.'

He and Lynne decided to get married and approached the youth minister to officiate at their marriage. They set a date according to the minister's availability. Lynne has had a life in which depression has had a powerful say. Sometimes it is latent; sometimes it comes to the fore in a devastating way. Due to this Mark felt that the two of them should receive marriage counselling but the minister told them that that was not necessary. The youth pastor was elated to have Mark around and during this time talked about Mark becoming a full time pastor in their church.

Mark continued, 'This was a happy time for the two of us and both sets of parents supported us regarding their marriage.' Due to depression having a say in Lynne's life and the resultant consequences of this, the situation in their lives was about to change.

Mark said, 'One day the youth pastor called me in and told me that he now had serious doubts about my relationship with Lynne. He started telling him what the Lord had told him regarding Lynne and even started dictating theology to me to support his subjective views about our relationship.' Mark refused to adhere to his views and told him so. The youth pastor again called him in and told him that his offer of Mark becoming a full time pastor had been frozen. Mark was upset with this and decided to approach the senior minister regarding this. The senior minister was disgusted with this offer as the youth pastor had no authority to offer something like that and said that he had never been informed of these developments.

As the New Year was starting, Mark re-registered for the second year at the ICI University. Mark said, 'The church would take all the students forms and register for them. I waited for my papers to arrive and after about two months approached the church to find out, only to be told that my registration had not been processed!

Somehow my forms must have got lost in the post they told me.' Mark was upset about this as his was the only application not to have been registered.

Mark said, 'As time went on, and with all these hassles about, Lynne started getting depressed again. Due to this we decided to go for counselling with a psychologist whom we had got to know over the years. This woman was a member of a church that our parents attended, so we decided to see her. Mark went on to say, 'The youth pastor and this woman both started counselling us in depth. We told them of the other counsellor and in time the two would consult with each other regarding both of us.'

Eventually Mark was called in by the youth minister who told him that Lynne was the wrong woman to marry. In fact, she was so bad that if he did marry her, his life would be destroyed financially and spiritually. The Lord was telling him to tell Mark that he should not marry Lynne. Mark said, 'I then got the impression that had I not carried on with Lynne I would have become a full time pastor. The pastor was using this as a carrot so that I would break up with Lynne.' Mark continued, 'It was as if he were saying, 'Mark if you don't marry Lynne I will get you the full time position!'

Later on the psychologist and the pastor called Mark to come and see them. Mark said, 'When I met with them they told me that my life view was clouded and that I could not see clearly. God had not told them that I must not marry Lynne! They then subtly warned that he should listen to the two of them as they were unbiased and knew what was best for him.' Mark then told them that he was adamant that he was in love with Lynne and that he wanted to marry her.

Due to Mark's expression of love for Lynne the psychologist and pastor then went without Mark or Lynne's permission to Mark's parents to tell them of this 'dire' situation. Mark said, 'I felt that the two of them had betrayed our trust as they told his parents certain personal information which they had no right to do. They even went so far as to say that Lynne's parents were somehow involved in the underworld and were basically evil!' Marks parents were very upset by this information and started to try and talk him out of marrying Lynne. Mark said, 'The two counsellors then approached Lynne's parents and warned them of the relationship that Lynne and I were in. They were trying everything to break us down!'

Due to all this information and the tensions that now arose, the two families' started arguing. It got so bad that for three years the two families refused to speak to each other. During this time Lynne was hospitalised and came out three weeks before the marriage date. The two counsellors decided to cancel the wedding as Lynne was too unstable. This was a unilateral decision without Mark or Lynne having a say.

The counsellors after deciding this, called Mark and Lynne in for a session. Mark said, 'This session lasted for about half an hour. They told the two of us candidly about their decision and that we had no choice but to accept their views. Lynne on hearing this jumped up, fled to her car and drove off. I was so devastated by these circumstances that as I was leaving, I collapsed onto the floor.' He was unconscious for a few seconds but no one bothered to come to his aid. With a dazed vision he left the counselling room alone. Lynne then said, 'I was so devastated about what had been said that I tried to commit suicide.' In the next few days the two of them decided to break off the engagement. The pressure from the parents and church was just too much to bare.

Mark went to the senior minister to inform him of the events and was devastated by what he heard. He promised Mark that he would look into the situation but never did. Due to this the two of them left the church.

Mark and Lynne had no contact with each other for three months after this. But eventually the two drifted towards each other and they re-established contact. They both decided to join another church and in time got involved in the life of that church again. They became friendly with a young minister and he agreed to marry them. Mark and Lynne were then engaged for six months. Mark's parents were devastated that he had re-initiated contact with Lynne and started to put pressure on him to break it off. The situation got so bad that Mark had to move out of his parents home. One day his father was berating him very badly when Mark lashed out, punching his father in the ribs. The net result was that Mark broke three of his father's ribs! Tension and anger and infighting were having a devastating effect on Mark's life and family settings. Mark said, 'I just could not believe that the situation had deteriorated so badly.'

Eventually after six months Mark and Lynne got married near the Drakensburg Mountains at a hotel by the name of Cathedral Peak. Sadly Mark's parents refused to be a part of this and did not attend. They were married for two years before Mark spoke to his parents again!

I asked Mark what he had learnt from everything that had transpired. He told me that it could be summed up in four aspects, they are;

1. He is now scared to become too involved in the life of the church.
2. When he takes a stand on any issue, he must not challenge too heavily.
3. He has learnt about manipulation and its insidious effects in the leadership of some churches.
4. He has never turned from God and knows that He will always be there for them.

3.3.2 Lynne

I now turned to Lynne after a-while and she said,' I met Mark after I had just come out of a very manipulative relationship. The two of us really enjoyed each others company and we got on very well. Our parents supported us in our new adventure together.' Over the next few weeks Mark noticed that Lynne was reticent to get deeply physically involved with him. While at the church they informed the youth pastor (same one as above) that they were going to get married. He was elated and told them that they were perfect for each other.

Before continuing with Lynne's narrative I want to go back into her history before I pick up the story again. This I believe will put the whole narrative into better perspective.

Lynne came to see me one night and informed me of what had transpired in her life. At first she was reticent to talk but as I listened she started feeling more relaxed and so spoke freely. She informed me that she had been raped repeatedly by her brother for about six years in the home. This started when she was about six years of age. She loved her brother dearly and did not mention this to her parents. Years later when

she was in matric she started having flashbacks. These grew in intensity, so much so that she found herself mutilating her body in places that no-one could see. I asked her why she did this and she said,' I was dealing with pain, feeling the physical pain somehow makes the emotional pain less'. She then gingerly showed me one scare on her arm and said, 'This is a mild one, I won't show you the others…ha ha!' I really felt awful and was at a loss of words for a-while. I then told her that I appreciated her giving me this very personal information about her life. I also was aware that I did not want to sound pedantic and put her off.

She then continued. Before she started dating Mark she was going out with a young man in the church. He was in a leadership role and was known and liked by every-one. At some point in the relationship he raped Lynne. She was horrified by this but kept it to herself. She said. 'There were many times when we experienced deep intimacy, but the rape changed our relationship for the worse. Eventually we ended the relationship.'

As a result of her history she started counselling with a woman psychologist and the youth pastor of her church. She told them what had happened between her and the ex-boy friend. The two counsellors felt that it would be in the best interests of everybody concerned to confront the ex-boyfriend during a session. Lynne at this point was terrified of him and had many nasty flashbacks. She was very reticent but agreed with the two counsellors.

At the next session there were five individuals: the two counsellors, another youth pastor and the ex-boyfriend. Lynne was a little put out by the other youth pastor's presence as she did not want to share intimate information in front of him. Not only that, but the ex-boyfriend was at this point dating this youth pastors sister-in-law. She was very uncomfortable.

They both told their sides of the story. The counsellors felt that the ex-boy friend was telling the truth and that there had in fact been no rape. They decided, based on what they had heard in the session that if there had been any sex, it had been consensual. Lynne said, 'I felt that the others were ganging up on me and had this information leaked out into the congregation it would have hurt the youth pastor's family. They

then told me to drop the charges as nobody would ever believe me.' Lynne left this session feeling somewhat betrayed.

Lynne had not told her parents about this, as she had wanted to protect them from worrying about something that was now in the past. Mark's parents also had no idea of what had happened in Lynne's previous relationship. However, the two counsellors decided on their own, without Mark or Lynne's permission to 'warn' Mark's parents about Lynne and her 'stories'. They also informed Mark's parents that they felt that Lynne was schizophrenic and as a result of her past history, would destroy him. Not only that, but that she also had a history of depression. Mark and Lynne were shattered by these events. Lynne said, 'We had gone to the counsellors in total confidence and here they were going behind our backs and warning our parents about what they considered to be dire consequences.'

Lynne continued, 'Due to these circumstances, the ex-boyfriend then told the youth pastor about me being raped by my brother. The youth pastor then told my mother and wanted to have a meeting with my brother. I did not want this meeting to happen as I felt that it would have driven a wedge between me and my brother. I was scared to lose his friendship and threatened the counsellors not to meet with him.' The two counsellors continued to put much pressure on Lynne but she refused to compromise her decision.

After this the youth pastor contacted Mark's parents and informed them of the new information that had come forward. He also warned them about Lynne's lying. There was a pattern in Lynne's life regarding sexual intimacy and she was the one to blame for all the stories that she had been fabricating. Nobody would believe her. The two counsellors continued informing Mark's parents that in their expert opinion, Lynne would cause irreparable damage to their family. She would never be able to hold down a job, and she was unfortunately 'not normal'. As a result, they should discourage their son from becoming involved with such an unstable person and assist in breaking the bond that the two had with each other.

Lynne said, 'I do have a problem with depression and I was placed on rather heavy medication in the past. I believe that these drugs 'stuffed me up' more.' She was so bad at one point that the psychologist (the same woman mentioned above) admitted

her to the Sterkfontein state mental institution. After some time Lynne was no better, so her parents decided to get a second opinion. Lynne said, 'I went to see a general practioner and he was horrified at the amount of drugs I was on!' At this point she had become addicted to the tranquilizer, Ativan. He made her stop all drugs immediately. Lynne said, 'I went through a week of serious withdrawal, and during this time my parents never left my side. After the withdrawal symptoms I found that I was full of energy and could see through crisp, clear eyes.' She said that she was now one hundred percent fine. She then wondered aloud, 'I wonder what would have happened if I had not gone for a second opinion?' She the mused, 'I suppose I would still be sitting in Sterkfontien, still being drugged up.' With a sense of relief she said, 'I sure am pleased to have escaped a medical nightmare!'

During this time and between all the interruptions in her life she had registered at RAU to study social work. Due to what was happening in her life and the trauma she was going through, she stopped her studies, as anorexia had now come to dominate her life. She said, 'It got so bad that I had to be hospitalised at a rehab centre.' It was after she had come out of the rehab centre that she met Mark.

Armed with this information, Mark's parents felt that he must have been out of his mind to fall for a girl with such an unstable personal history.

The two were now engaged. However, it seemed that the whole church was against them and they were going to do everything in their power to stop this marriage.

Weeks later the two counsellors asked Mark and Lynne to come for a meeting with them. It was at this meeting that they informed them that they refused to acknowledge their plans for marriage. The youth pastor told them that he could not stand before God and marry the two of them when he knew that it was wrong. He could not be held accountable. This was where Lynne dashed out and where Mark passed out (see section 3.3.1).

Lynne said, 'That day I left in a daze not quiet knowing what I was doing. I got hold of a knife and one hundred Panado pills. I then drove to a dam near where I stay and drank all one hundred pills before slashing my arms badly. I now sat and waited. A

security car happened to be patrolling the area and noticed a woman sitting in the car with her head swaying and nodding oddly. They approached me. They saw that I was bleeding rather badly and attempted to get me out of the car. I refused. The security personal then phoned the fire department and they arrived and forced me out of the car. I was then rushed to hospital. After this I can't remember much during that time!

Lynne recalls that as she woke up, she looked around and said to herself, 'God! I can't even kill myself! I stuff everything up!' As she was lying there, her first visitor happened to be the youth pastor. He castigated her and accused her of selfish attention seeking. Lynne said that at that time, she thought that committing suicide was the most logical thing to do. 'I was in such an emotional state, attention was the last thing that I was looking for', she said sadly. The pastor told her that she was not to contact any of her friends at church and he would be informing them that they were not to come and see her. She could only see them after she had asked them for their forgiveness for trying to commit suicide. He said that this had been a terribly selfish thing to do, as her friends, who included some elders and the pastors, had been praying for her! By trying to commit suicide she had let them all down, and implied that their hard earned prays had come to nothing! Suicide was a slap in their faces, he told her. Lynne continued, 'I remember this as being the lowest point in my life!'

When Mark and his parents came to see her later, she got out of bed, got onto her knees and begged them to forgive her for trying to commit suicide. Later, she started thinking of forgiveness as a farce. Lynne said, 'I was being instructed by the church to ask for their forgiveness. I had to meet them on their terms only. It was as if they had decided what, how and who should be forgiven. If that individual did not fit their model of practice, no forgiveness would be forthcoming. This made me very angry and confused.' After she was discharged from hospital, life just seemed to be a blur due to all the medication. Since she has stopped medication she has not had such a devastating depression ever. 'Looking back I was wondering if the issues in my life had become bigger due to other people's influences and advice? If I could have worked through them by myself, I am sure it would not have been so traumatic,' she said staring in front of her.

In concern her mother contacted another minister and asked for his advice regarding the mutilations. Lynne said, 'This minister who happened to be a rather radical charismatic informed me and my parents that I was demon possessed as only demon possessed people mutilated themselves. Not knowing anything else, I accepted their prognosis.' So as a result of this she then went for numerous deliverance sessions. At some of them she would be passed out for up to two hours. Sometimes the person leading the exorcism would punch her very hard in the stomach so that the demon would leave. Also on collapsing on the church floor during these sessions she would wake up with carpet scratches on her face and often would have a blue eye. 'If only they had known that my problems were emotional and not spiritual they would not have abused me more, the way they did with all their exorcisms.' she said.

Today as she walks around her home town she feels anger at being abused by other people's opinions. These leaders seemed to know everything that was going on in her life. Nobody ever bothered to ask her what the problems may have been from her perspective. They did not know her history. They dictated the symptoms and she complied with their expert opinions.

She also feels betrayed by the two counsellors, as they told other people in the church as well as her and Mark's parents what was going on in their personal lives. She said, 'It is not a nice thing to walk around town when you feel that everybody knows about your personal issues!' The general practitioner who helped her and after hearing her story still wants her to report the psychologist to the health professional's council for her unethical behaviour. This she will not do, but some day's anger rears its head and she feels that she wants to. At one point after a session with the woman she was so angry with all that had happened that over a period of time she happened to crack two of her back teeth from grinding them constantly.

After quite some time when we were just having a general chat over a cup of tea I asked her what she felt that she had learnt from all this. This is what she stated;

1. Don't talk to people. They don't need to know. Rather deal with issues yourself.
2. Don't trust ministers. Be careful who lays hands on you.

3. Learn not to judge, people cannot know all the circumstances.

With Mark and Lynne sitting together in front of me I felt anger and sadness. I then told them as an ex-minister, I was embarrassed at the way other ministers handled the whole situation. It is so easy for people in positions of power to abuse others according to their personal agendas, especially within the realm of religion. They both stated that they had learnt from this and were the stronger for it. Lynne at this point is running her own beauty therapy business which is going well. She says that there were many people who confide in her and many have had similar circumstances in their lives, and she feels that she can motivate them regarding life, especially after what she has been through. Mark said that if he did ever enter the ministry he would be far more 'wiser' with people who happened to find themselves in similar situations.

3.3.3 My letter

The next day I wrote them this letter;

> *Dear Mark and Lynne*
>
> *I want to thank you for making yourselves available to me regarding your lives. I considered it a privilege that you shared so openly with me. There are a few things that I would like to highlight regarding what you said and at our next meeting we can discuss this.*
>
> *Mark, after everything that you have gone through you have not allowed disappointment or bitterness to have a say in your life. I was wondering what you would call that? Would you call it determination or insight? I also noticed that through all this time you stuck to your principles and would not allow other people to manipulate you regarding this, especially your relationship with Lynne.*

Lynne, similarly to Mark you have also not allowed bitterness to pull you down. After all the 'experts' dictating to you how to act and what to do you have still retained your own thoughts. Could we call that a strength?

For both of you I would like to discuss your parents next time. More specifically, how they also grew through this time of manipulation and what the two of you feel they have learnt from you.

Looking forward to seeing you all next week

Regards

Paul

3.3.4 Reflection on power/manipulation regarding the Robson family

When one reads the above regarding the Robson family I was struck first of all by those who suffer as a result of expert knowledge's. Not only had the couple suffered but their parents as well. The 'hangover' from the way they were handled by the church I believe will always be with them.

When one looks at Lynne, her knowledge's of what she had experienced were silenced and marginalised. Due to her rather traumatic background the 'experts' decided that her perception of reality was suspect and she needed them to correct her perception. They refused to take her seriously, and gave her advice based on what they thought was the truth. However had the counsellors applied a 'not knowing position' and worked towards a participatory mode of consciousness position I believe the outcome would have been totally different. Anderson and Goolishan 1992:29 define a 'not knowing position' as one in which, the therapist's action and attitude express a need to know more about what is said, rather than convey preconceived opinions and expectations about the client, the problem, or what must be changed. By moving away from 'expert knowledge' (an attitude of thinking that a person can know everything about a subject or person) the counsellors would have displayed an attitude of 'respect for what people themselves could contribute from the

knowledge of their lives (Payne 2000:27).' Payne goes on to say that if peoples knowledge about themselves are valued and taken seriously, not subsumed to some culturally biases theories which attempts to generalise common elements out of diverse examples, participatory growth would be the result. With this attitude in mind the counsellors could have invited participation into the ideas and possibilities of Mark and Lynne's experiences and growth.

Mark and Lynne refused to be passive recipients during their ordeal. By taking this stance they were abused by the experts who believed that their position was unacceptable in the light of the knowledge's that they had gleaned from them. The councillors had their expert knowledge which equates to power, and power in its turn is insensitive to difference. This was portrayed powerfully in their 'advice' that they gave to Mark and Lynne.

3.3.5 Feedback session regarding the letter

I gave them the letter to read and after finishing it they sat there for a–while in silence. They agreed with what was written and stated that they had indeed grown and become stronger. However Mark said, 'Disappointment and sadness does come forward every now and again.' In agreeing with what was said in the letter they were pleased at my personal view of them and were pleased that someone like me was prepared to hear their narrative without condemnation or of taking sides. As they did not have much to say as regards the letter I decided to broach the subject of their parents.

Both of their parents have now become very concerned for the two of them and go out of their way to support them in any way that they can. Lynne then said, 'I feel that they had to go through this process before they also realised how they too were being manipulated by the experts.' Mark nodded his head and said, 'It is just so sad that they had to go through such an ordeal like that before they also saw the love that we have for each other.' As Mark and Lynne enjoy caravanning the parents sometimes join them as they travel around the country. Mark said, 'Peace and harmony are within the family settings again, and this is something that we have learnt never to take for granted.'

I also asked them if they would like to meet with the other family and they agreed. They both are looking forward to the narrative group's get-together and want to continue meeting at set venues as they feel that support would always be welcome from people who can identify with them

3.3.7 The Narrative Group.

Later I contacted both families and arranged to have a 'morning tea' at my residence. I explained to them that this gathering would be of an informal nature. I arranged the appropriate number of chairs around a table in my back garden. Once they had all met and introduced themselves and had sat down, I asked them how they were before continuing where we had last 'left-off' with the therapy. Unfortunately Jeremy had by now taken a teaching post at Mafekeng and only came home during the school holidays. We proceeded without him, but I did meet with him personally and spoke to him about what we had discussed at this meeting.

Once we were all settled I started by saying that, 'Any person who has experienced any form of abuse, be it anything, could find themselves in one of three stages', (see section 2.6 page 46 above). After explaining the three phases, I asked them for their inputs. I allowed this conversation to flow without any interjections from my side. It was during the times of silence reflection that stimulated the others to contribute to the overall conversation.

Viv stated, 'I think I am now in the reincorporation phase, but the overall experience has been bitter/sweet. You leave the people you love behind, and find others. However there is a sadness and an expectation that what one went through could reappear again. I think the loss of familiarity has also been sad, for I have been pushed out of my comfort zone.' I nodded and turned to Steve, and he stated,' I feel as if I am still in the second phase. Indecision is around me still and I definitely do not want to be involved in any leadership activities at all. I enjoy been a pew sitter. I now have no loyalty to one church. Though the experience has left me always double checking myself, to ascertain if I am at fault anywhere. The future is more exciting as I know that the Lord will lead me in new directions. I am freer to do what God wants now, and there is no-one to tell me what to do.'

I then looked at Mark and he stated, 'I am definitely in the reincorporation phase. I know that I have to move on, but I am not the same. I am similar to Steve, I now go to church and just sit back and enjoy worship. I will never put myself in a leadership position again, I feel free. I feel that to be involved in leadership will automatically lead to abuse. Leadership has the same voice as abuse. By not been involved one is safer from abuse. When I was in leadership I sometimes felt trapped, it was as if I could not do what God wanted me to do. I always had to do what other leaders were doing and saying. There seems to a pattern here. It always seems as though leadership has abuse following close behind.'

Lynne sat quietly for a-while then said, 'I am between the first and second phase and I feel lonely being there. Leadership is a circular thing. It always starts out well but ends in the same way. I know that I am sensitive, but whenever I go to church my barriers are always up. I don't need any-one to label me. As I walk around and see things in the church I sometimes detect the same leadership abuse arising and I just go to ground. I am now freer and can express my own views openly, I really enjoy that. There is no criticism anymore.'

Viv then said, 'I have been reaffirmed in the new church that I worship at now. The people there and my friends helped me to get there. Another thing that upset me was that the minister would always delegate, and when something went wrong the ones doing the work were then blamed. Now I find it far more comfortable working outside the church structures. God is leading me and not what others are saying where that leading should go. Jealousy is apart of this whole thing as well I think.'

Steve said,' I used to be like a sheep, I just obeyed and followed the leadership. Sadly though the abuse has made me overly sensitive for I find myself always questioning if this or that is my fault whenever something goes wrong. My foundations have been shaken. The leadership do not like it when you question them. I was not questioning them in any critical way, I just wanted to know the reason behind a request sometimes. They did not see it in the same light.' Steve I thought, who had been made an elder was not allowed to challenge the status quo, so left in silence. Maybe he was blaming himself for other leaders not siding with him.

Viv said, 'Truth and God go together. Look at Jesus. He was not scared to ask questions. One just has to read how he tackled the Pharisees and Sadducees. When you question the minister they seem to think that you are challenging their authority. Maybe it's better to be quiet and maintain the status quo.' I felt that Viv had withdrawn from leadership, as she had asked questions which she felt were relevant for the life of the church. Yet thought she had this concern for the church she and her questions were either ignored or perceived to have been a challenge.

Mark said, 'We do not go to church anymore. Our fundamental beliefs are still there, I feel that this is not right, but we really have been put off.' Due to mark and Lynne's experiences I identified with their reticence to go back to church just yet. I wondered if they would go back when the time was right. I decided to leave this thought with me and would bring it up again some time at our next meeting.

As the flow of the above narratives started to wane I then decided to hand the conversational partners a sheet of paper with four different theological views with related questions on it. Before they could give their personal narratives regarding the four parameters I gave them a brief explanation of all four. This was a natural leading on from what they had just been saying about church leadership. The hand-out is represented below;

```
FEEDBACK SESSION ON CLERICAL ABUSE


    ↓ Traditional Theology
      Leadership;
      What does it mean to you?


    ↓ Postmodern Philosophy
      Leadership;
      What does it mean to you?


    ↓ Feminist Theology
      Leadership;
      What does it mean to you?


    ↓ Reflexivity
      Regarding Leadership in the Church
      What does it mean to you?
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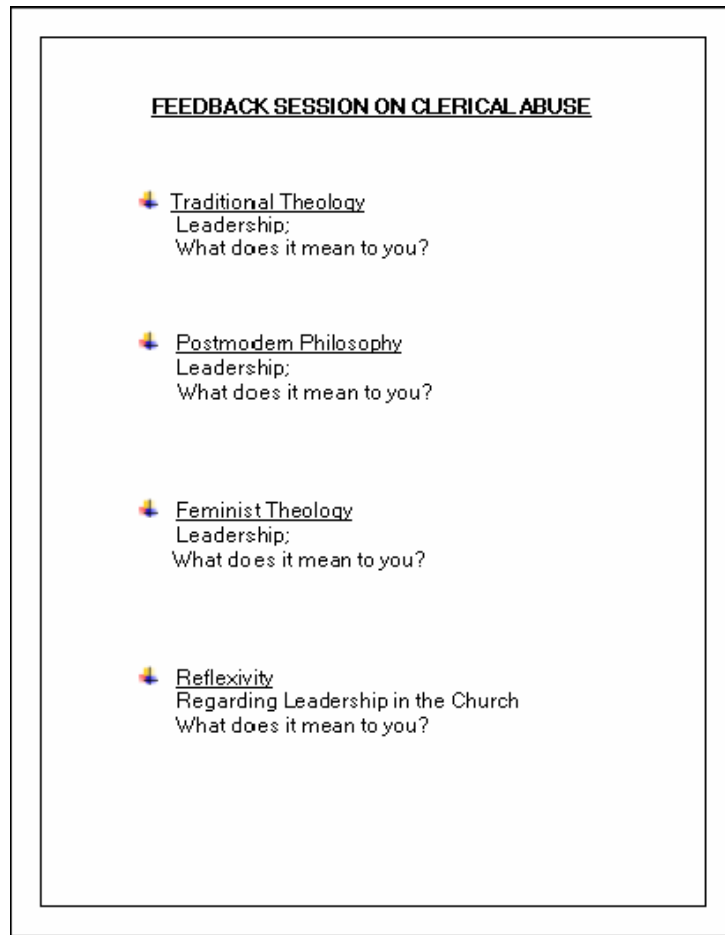
I wanted them to associate and discuss the above views about its relevance on clerical abuse. After my explanations I allowed them to think about it for awhile before they commented. This was a challenge to them as they had never thought of theology having more than one dominant, generic outlook. Regardless of various denominations they thought theology could not differ so much. However they all agreed that they liked the three ideas on postmodernism, feminist theology and reflexivity. I asked them if they felt uneasy about the relativeness of postmodern thought. They all nodded. Mark then said, 'It may be a scary place to be but it is freer.' Steve said, 'I agree with postmodernism and its implications. I remember a preacher once saying that he was a self made man, and I thought how stupid. No-one is self made. As you said we are all socially inter-linked to each other. We need each other.'

As I observed the participants sitting and chatting I wondered what change or transformation had occurred during their initial gathering. In reflecting on this question it also lead me to greater clarity regarding the research question of how to deal with clerical abuse. I wondered if honest open acceptance of some-one

regardless of what stereo-type society had given them, would bring about a transformation. It could be that acceptance could be a dynamic catalyst for positive growth. With this thought in mind, I asked them if they needed further counselling for personal growth or would a coming together be adequate. Steve said, 'When I see what traditional theology stands for, it will always be there. It will not go away. They may always think of us as upstarts. I feel that a get together of like minded people will bring about a change. I feel elated at having met others who have gone through what I have. When I sit in church now I can think of you all, then I feel energised to carry on. The more people we meet the better for all and growth.' Viv said, 'We don't need further counselling but I feel that the get-together's are important. Its in compassionate caring that growth takes place.' The others nodded. It seemed to me that transformation for the group would continue to be dynamic with no noticeable landmarks to be passed. The transformation would take place within the get-togethers. There would be no stages or tests to pass, the transformation would be internal and personal.

Due to the above I believe that the narrative group approach facilitates transformation to take place in peoples lives. Transformation or the sense of it, allows the participants to co-construct new meanings regarding their personal narratives. In the light of this Lynne said, 'By not going to church no-one can put me in a box.' I felt that she could say this to the group as she felt confident that no-one there would label her. She felt accepted by the group, thus was able to verbalize a fear that had been with her when-ever she enters any church. This 'confession' of hers could well be a start on her transformation journey.

When we tell our stories and participate in the stories of others, we not only identify with the other narrative but we also re-author our lives around what we had experienced. This act of story telling is a step towards what Peterson calls 'story-making. He says that when people first tell their stories they are often 'unable to comprehend their stories as connected narratives that have meaning and make sense, (Peterson 1980:65). When theses stories are retold within a caring environment, the story-tellers involved find themselves invited to create more meaningful and coherent narratives (Peterson 198-0:74).

Within the narrative group approach story tellers and story participants connect with each other in a special way. Viv said, 'This was fun. We have to do this again!' After saying this the others agreed. I then asked if we could bring in others who had gone through something similar. Mark said, 'I know of a few out there. It would really be beneficial for them to come to a meeting such as this.' Though the participants were initially quiet after meeting each other for the first time, I found them opening up more as the other individuals narratives resonated with their own.

Crabb (1997) states that, when we connect with each other, such connection will accomplish most of the healing and life-change that we now depend on mental health professionals to provide. He continues by stating that one crises of modern culture is the disconnection from each other, Crabb (1997:xvi) argues that, rather 'than fixing psyches or scolding sinners, we must provide nourishment for the disconnected soul that only a community of connected people can offer'. He continues, 'Either we can live as unique members of a connected community… or we can live as terrified, demanding, self-absorbed islands, disconnected from community and desperately determined to get by with whatever resources we brought to island with us' (Crabb 1997:38). These ideas and the narratives of the conversational partners made me aware of how much story-telling and story-participating can contribute towards the formation of a connected community. This happened the day they all first met.

Another important aspect of the narrative group approach is that it allows trust to grow among the participants. Hearing other personnel narratives being told from the 'heart' as it were allowed the others to enter the emotional pain the other was grappling with. This vulnerability within the group allowed an honest sharing to come forward.

3.3.8 The Conversational Partners Renaissance

After the discussion regarding traditional theology and postmodernism I spoke to them about the idea of a renaissance. I high-lighted the three aspects taken from the word as described in section 2.6. I told them that we had created an alternative story to the dominant one where they did not allow clerical abuse to overtake them completely. I asked them if this was a strength that they possibly were not aware of.

Viv said, 'I have never thought of it that way, but now that you mention it, yes it is strength. But this strength had come not only from within but also from my friends.' Lynne laughed then said, 'Its nice to know that I have strength, I also never thought of it that way.' I continued and told them that for me we were witnessing a rebirth in allowing an alternative story to grow in our lives. A story that would allow us to grow out of the thought that we were totally in the wrong and that clerical leadership was always in the right. That we had to blame ourselves for a socially constructed concept of clerical leadership. This rebirth I told them was allowed to mature within our group. By hearing the stories of others we identify, reflect and allow others to stimulate growth in our lives.

I then asked them about the idea of a revival within their spirituality. What I meant by this was that our spirituality is something totally different to the concept of religion. Lynne said, 'I know, or I feel that it is wrong that we do not go to church but I am still a Christian and spiritual. I have my quiet times still.' Steve followed saying, 'Jesus was spiritual and he was not allows allowed to worship at the temple. The early Christians met at their homes. So who says a good Christian is always one who goes to church.' I agreed with them, but told them that fellowship is important for continual growth. Both Mark and Lynne felt that when the time was right they would go back to church.

The idea of learning about leadership and postmodernism was my explaining the different forms of theology and philosophy. I have made a précis of the first two chapters and gave it them to read at our last get-together. They all were interested in reading about the different concepts regarding theology. Viv said, 'I am really looking forward to reading this.' I told them that they could contact me anytime to discuss the contents of the précis. We would not have to have a get-together for this. This was due to their work pressures which would mean that we could not meet for some time. So I thought a one on one session discussing the contents would do. They agreed to this. Steve said,' Unfortunately work just does not allow me to meet as often as I like. Mark said, 'I think these get-togethers are important and wish we could meet more often, or sooner, but work just gets in the way.'

CHAPTER FOUR
GROWTH TOWARDS A SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE

4.1 An Overview of what has Transpired in the Previous Chapters

I will begin this chapter with a revisit of the academic methodology which I followed with the research participants. The relevant sections will be highlightened, that is those that had a practical bearing on what had transpired between the research participants and myself during our times together. After this I will continue in more detail regarding the relevant sections that 'touched' the research participant's lives and mine.

I recorded the interviews as well as writing what the research participants said. It was during these interviews that the participatory action research concept was adhered to. In this I wanted the research participants to co-create an alternative to modernistic outlooks that influenced their lives. (Section 1.7). As I interviewed and met with the research participants I tried to identify with them regarding their personal narratives. I tried to display a 'connective understanding' as much as possible so as to resonate with them regarding their personal pain. (Section 1.7).

The group discussions and reflections concept had the biggest impact on the research participants as it was during these times that they met with others who had experienced the same abuse. This was not some theoretical exercise but one where practical exposure allowed them to resonate with the other participants and in so doing helped each co-create an alternative narrative regarding their lives. (Section 1.8).

I introduced the ideas around postmodern theology and the influence it has had on the church in recent decades. This helped the research participants to situate themselves spiritually within the denomination. (Section 2.1). Flowing on from this the ideas around social construction was of particular interest to the research participants as they had never thought of perceiving society or the church in this way. (Section 2.2).
 Coupled to social construction the concept of power was discussed. The research participants felt that they had been in a position of submission within the church.

Describing the influence of power allowed them to discern which narrative was dominant and which was to be embraced or shunned. (Section 2.3).

The research participants recognized the validity of pastoral care encompassing the whole of one's life. This care is not just applicable during times of crises. (Section 2.5).

The research participants spent some time discussing the three phases in fair detail as they all felt that these phases were particularly relevant to their lives and where they situated themselves within the three phases. (Section 2.6).
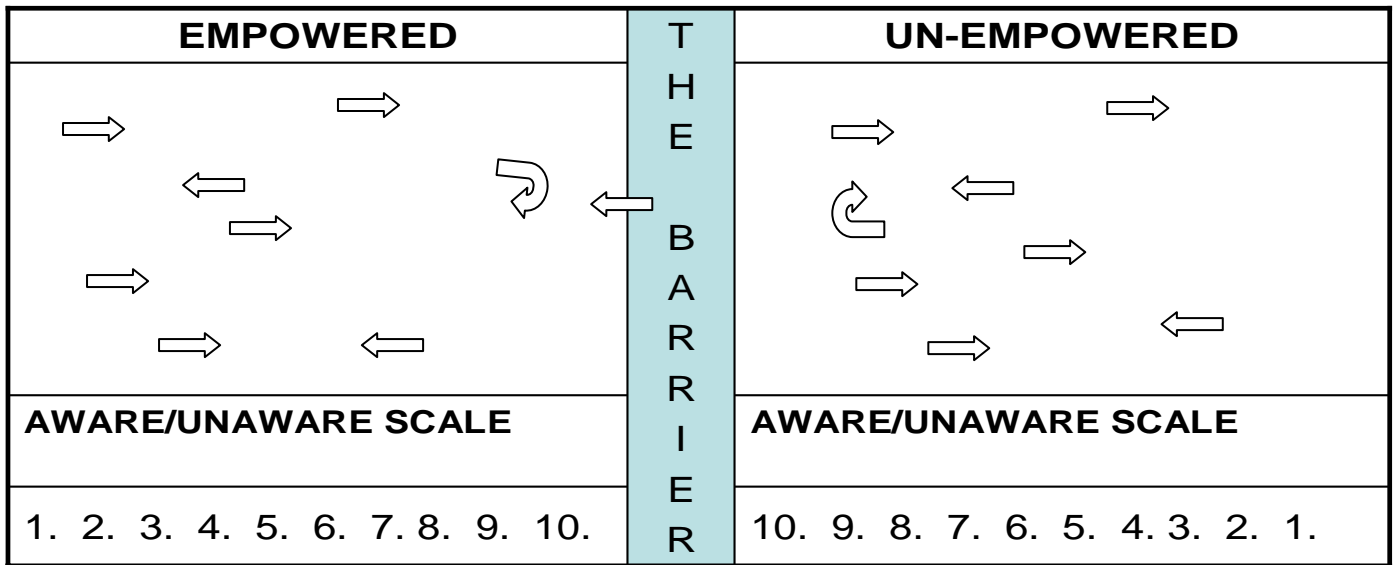
4.2 My Personal Thoughts

After having met with the research participants above I was struck by their support of each other within their family settings. Coupled to this was their lack of bitterness towards the church and those who had abused them. I believe that they found themselves in that position due to the support not only of each other but also from many others in society who had experienced the same and together have realised that the church as any organisation is not exempt from human error or arrogance. Even so they still felt a twinge of disappointment in that they had to go through the experience of abuse. Coupled with this was a sense of loneliness. Loneliness as they had all left friends and communities behind due to the situations they found themselves in regarding clerical leadership.

In interviewing the research participants and hearing about their experiences, and of them telling me about their friends who had experienced the same, I felt somewhat nervous in hearing about so many individuals out in society who have had a negative experience in the church as regards leadership. Nervous also that some might say that I have an axe to grind regarding the church leadership. I would be very reticent to give this document to some church leaders as they in reading this would feel that their position in society could be compromised as a result. Society I believe needs the church but that same society should not place the personnel within the church on any kind of pedestal, to do so could lead to abuse. If the church is perceived as all

powerful in society, that society would be very reticent to point out its mistakes when they arose.

Regarding the concept of clerical power within society I remember a debate I had once with a senior minister of the church that I was officiating at. At this time I was part of a group of ministers on course before we were entitled to be ordained. I remember reading in the book of Acts chapter two verse 42-47 that the early Christians met in each others homes and broke bread. They did not have to wait for the apostles to arrive in order to continue worshiping. There was no leadership or structures in place at that time as we are accustomed today. They just met. I was wondering if the church leadership would be challenged by this early view of Christianities praxis of communion. So I remember asking the relevant minister about communion in the early church. I then asked why any elder from any denomination could not serve communion in the member's homes or at a Sunday service. I was told that that would basically lead to spiritual anarchy as there would be no way to control who officiated at that communion. Today that argument seems to be very thin as the church itself is also incapable of controlling itself in every sphere of life. I got the distinct impression that the clergy would rather hang on to their power in society than opening up leadership to men and women, that is those who are sitting in the pews. Sometimes it seems that the priesthood of all believers is limited to the ordained clergy. The Holy Spirit is the one who qualifies people regarding doing various spiritual functions. Today it seems as if the Holy Spirit and his influence in society have been curtailed by those that adhere to traditional leadership styles.

4.3 The importance of Dynamic Empowerment for the Laity

EMPOWERED	T	UN-EMPOWERED
	H	
	E	
	B	
	A	
	R	
	R	
AWARE/UNAWARE SCALE	I	AWARE/UNAWARE SCALE
	E	
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	R	10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. 1.

The above diagram is based on K. Weingarten's (2003:50) diagram regarding witness positions and C. Kraft's (1979:241) dynamic view regarding evangelism. I have combined the two diagrams to produce one which explains the dynamic changes in empowerment for the laity.

4.3.1 The Empowered Awareness Position

The aware position has arrows which could represent any individual who finds themselves in this position in the life of the church. As life is not static but dynamic and socially constructed these individuals are always in flux. Therefore the individuals are represented as arrows and not as static points. For it is the direction of the process in which a person is involved in, that is crucial, not the position. Some of the arrows are pointing away from the central block, which represents the barrier of abuse, and this means that they are becoming ever more powerful and oblivious of the other individuals in the un-empowered position. The further they move away the less emotionally concerned they become. The arrows that are pointing towards the central block stands for those who are becoming more aware of their position and desire to change it as they have seen the devastating influence of the abuse of power. The closer they get to the central block the more emotionally concerned they become. These individuals would want to empower the others in the other paradigm by making them aware of the socially constructed position they find themselves in. According to

the scale one would want the individuals to move as close to the central block as possible where ten on the scale is where they are acutely aware of what is happening as regards abuse and its influence. The arrows that are curved stand for those individuals who are turning away from the central block as they have become aware of their position and want to implement change but find it too difficult to actually embark on such a mission. They therefore turn their back on their new found awareness. It is these individuals who need to be approached and nurtured so that they can empower themselves in having the courage to continue with their convictions and go forward. I personally believe the only way one can change those individuals who are in positions of authority is by introducing them to postmodern philosophy and the impact of social construction. To try and convince them of change by adhering to traditional modernist thinking philosophy would be difficult.

Poling (1991:27) states that the;

> Abuse of power for the individual is motivated by fear and by the resulting desire to control the power of life. This fear and arrogance are then used to create societies in which structures of dominance create special possibilities for the privileged at the expense of shared power for all persons. The power that is intended by God for everyone who lives is used to destroy relationships in exchange for control. Rather than live in insecurity, some persons choose to create structures that dominate and control others for personal gratification and false security

In many cases the clergy are un-aware of this disposition and by sensitising them to these ideas would allow for growth by the clergy as well as the laity.

4.3.2 The Un-Empowered Awareness Position

Similarly this paradigm has similar arrows as in the other paradigm and displays the same kind of behaviour. The arrows that are pointing away from the central block are those who are becoming increasingly unaware of the position they find themselves in. The arrows that are pointing towards the central block are those individuals who are becoming increasingly aware of the position they find themselves in, and desire to change it. By making these individuals aware of the dynamic positions they find themselves in a paradigm shift could be the result. That is, a new found awareness

could be kindled in their thinking, where they go through the barrier to the empowered position. See the arrow going through barrier in diagram above. Similarly as above, ten on the scale is what is aimed for, where the ten on each side of the scale is synonymous. The curved arrows are those individuals who have become aware of their position and desire change but turn back as the task before them seems too daunting. They are those who possibly feel that by challenging the status quo they would be seen as upstarts wanting to change structures that have been in place for centuries, and seemed to have worked well in the past. Again, as above, by introducing these individuals to postmodern philosophy and social construction and Foucault's analysis on power and resistance, they would possibly have the courage to go forward with their convictions. These individuals know something but fear talking about it. K Weingarten (2000: 391) states regarding this silence;

> If I don't tell you what I really think and feel, I will feel disconnected from you. I will end up withdrawing from you. In silence. But, if I do tell you what I really think and feel, you will withdraw from me. What I have to say is so heinous, horrible, toxic, unacceptable, that you will not be able to stand me

Though Weingarten is talking about something horrific that happened to some individual, similar feelings may arise in those who have been abused by some monolithic religious structure. The thought of challenging this structure seems too daunting, thus they withdraw.

What I have done with the individuals that I have been seeing is that I have introduced them to this diagram explaining the post modern view. They have all agreed with the diagram and it was interesting to me to see where they placed themselves as regards the positioning of the arrows. They all seek a better balance as regards themselves and their subjective outlook on power wherever it may be found.

4.4 The Minister, the Laity and Positions of Power/Knowledge.

The conversation partners that I interviewed felt that the minister was always making decisions about them and for them and that there was little that they could do about it.

They felt that they also had a perspective and an analysis of what was going on, even if this was sublimated or suppressed by the circumstances around them.

It seems at times that the minister occupies an 'already knowing' position which prohibits them from pursuing an approach which allows the minister and laity to co-create multiple realities together. The minister may feel that he/she has certainty regarding spirituality which needs no compromise. Griffith (1995) discusses four certainties which she calls 'The entrapment of Knowing'. They are;

1. I know what God is like for you because I know your religious denomination.
2. I know what God is like for you because I know what your language about God means
3. I know what God is like for you because your image of God is a reflection of your early attachment figures
4. I know what God is like and you need to know God as I do

If a minister thinks or feels that they are the experts regarding spirituality the four certainties discussed above will have an impact on how they receive the laity. In both the Keen and Robson families I felt that the ministers felt that they were in positions of certainty and they would tolerate no deviation, or offer any apologies for the counselling that they gave. I must admit from a personal point of view that before I was introduced to postmodernism I also portrayed a knowing position as stated above. I felt that I was the expert and I could tell and authorise people's religious experiences. Postmodernism has made me very humble as regards my theological training today.

Discernment is what is called for and this is the privilege of the whole congregation. 'This gift of discernment is not the exclusive possession of the pastor; it is a gift given to the community and is exercised by the community' (Cohraine, de Gruchy and Petersen 1991: 90). Once this has been cognisanced within certain individuals they will realise that all members should be involved in the life and decision making process of the church. If this does not happen then the laity will [take the gospel out of the possession of those with power and formal authority and take it for their own, to struggle in faith and out of their life experience with the meaning of Christian experience' Cohraine, de Gruchy and Petersen 1991: 91. It is then that the laity

would find a dynamic meaning to their spiritual life, a meaning that will not be dictated to them by someone else. A meaning that will come from their own life experience.

Discernment is imperative if the clergy are to be perceived as relevant to their contexts. If the clergy turn their backs on society and its intellectual quest, and rather adhere to the past and find solace in tradition they will become increasingly irrelevant to a modern eclectic society. In the light of leadership and its importance today Cochraine, de Gruchy and Petersen (1991:93) state;

> All too often leadership is understood and exercised in an authoritarian fashion. The minister is effectively the 'boss' in the church. This position is secured with many props. In the Catholic and Anglican traditions it is bolstered both by the fairly rigid separation of laity and clergy and the hierarchical ordering of the clergy. In Protestant traditions lacking these structural props, it is often achieved by the personal exercise of power and authority. Straddling both traditions, and reinforcing these practises, are cultural patterns of respect and subordination.

> Leadership in the new context can best be described as an enabling ministry, where in the words of Paul, the gifts of leadership are given to 'prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ'. (Eph 4:12) In an 'outstation' situation therefore, the role of the ordained minister is not simply to dispense the sacraments, but to concentrate on developing the leadership of the local congregation under his or her care. The minister is to accompany, or facilitate the growth of the community and of its own leadership

Yet in my heart I feel that clergy in the traditional type of churches would be very reticent to give up their positions of authority. The clergy often display an overt concern for church structure, combined with a tendency to view tradition as sacred, and this has only enforced oppressive hierarchies which they adhere to. Denise Ackermann (1991:101) quotes Rosemary Ruether regarding clericalism as 'the separation of ministry from mutual interaction with community and its transformation into hierarchically ordered castes of clergy and laity' This has the unfortunate effect of disempowering both the clergy and the laity as the former is trapped into its own tradition and power structures. There cannot be mutual growth in a situation like this, but only stagnation. Regarding the conversational partners that I interviewed, and

them going to those who were in positions of authority, they were only told what to do according to the leaderships subjective opinions. They had no choice they had to comply with what was pontificated. Rather what is called for is an identity of the faith in whatever form it presents itself and it must be relevant to the experiences of that human life.

4.5 My Continuing Ethical Responsibility

In my continuing responsibility to the individuals I want to continue with the narrative group approach, though, with their permission and inputs. We could then meet occasionally at some venue and continue to support each other. It would be during these 'get together's 'that we all together could find the alternate stories of their lives and together co-create a renaissance of their spirituality. This spiritual renaissance would take time as we continue to find new meanings to each spiritual narrative. In the next section below is the methodology and specific information of how one could apply a spiritual renaissance and of how the laities understanding can contribute to the co-creation of an alternative narrative between the clergy and laity.

4.6 Reflexivity

In this final section on spirituality and the problem of power/abuse affecting both the clergy and laity I want to high-light the importance of reflexivity, as this position could be the catalyst in bringing the clergy and laity closer regarding the area of power/abuse. According to Steier (1991:163) reflexivity is a turning back onto oneself. This turning back is a way in which circularity and self-reference appear in inquiry. It could be likened to a turning back of one's experience upon oneself (showing ourselves to ourselves). This forces the observer to accept responsibility for his/her observations, descriptions and explanations (Steier 1991:163). If the clergy and laity both apply reflexivity to themselves regarding their spirituality they both could meet each other 'half-way' being aware of the others experience and how it 'plays' itself out in praxis. There would be a mutual respect for the others deeply personal relationship with God. Both parties been aware of the others personal dimension in spirituality would allow for dialogue and a sharing of experiences.

As all spiritual people belong in community there is a need for 'free expression' of spirituality regarding their own walk before the Lord. This freedom of expression could allow others to learn from each other regarding spirituality in general. Maturana (1991: 42-43) states this point clearly;

> Spiritual experience is an experience of belonging in a community or cosmic realm that happens to us human beings in one way or another along the paths of our lives, and it has frequently been of basic significance for the harmony and health of our human social life. As such spiritual experiences cannot be denied, and science does not deny them. Indeed, experiences are never the problem in the domain of human coexistence: it is in the domain of explanations and of use of our experiences where we may enter into deadly disputes. It is the fanaticism that may arise around the explanation of experience when someone claims to have access to some transcendental truth that constitutes a source of strife and suffering in human coexistence.

What Maturana states above can also be applied to the clergy in positions of power and authority. If they decide that their explanations and access to transcendental truth claims are the norm to be adhered to, problems of abuse can come to the fore. Maturana (1991:49) states, 'Experience, the happening of living, is not a problem for us; our problems arise with our explanations of our experiences and the demands that they impose upon us and those other human beings with whom we coexist'. This type of thinking can lead to a form of fanaticism were Maturana (1991:49) warns that as ; 'Humans beings live in a world of explanations and descriptions in language of our experiences as we bring them forth in language, and we even kill each other defending our explanations when we are in discordance about them.'

When one reads about the history of religion it is sad to note that every religion at some time in its existence has murdered those 'others' who held different points of view. It is with sadness that Tuchman (1956:3) notes that the 'holy land' has seen more bloodshed over the centuries than any other place on earth. It seems that religions cannot tolerate differences of opinion when it comes to metaphysics in general. This type of extreme thinking or fanaticism put into theological terms could be called fundamentalism. Fundamentalism in any form 'demands' that other individuals adhere to its teachings without questioning its premise or methodology. This type of thinking has lead to abuse within the individual, the family, society and

the denomination. By applying reflexivity to oneself one protects oneself against fanaticism/fundamentalism when it comes to differing opinions regarding spirituality and life itself. Reflexivity makes one aware of his/her emotions and ideas and how they may influence their outlook. Steier (1991:179) states,' Rather than trying to eliminate our motioning from entering into our research, we must seek to understand how it does enter'. This awareness will allow the individual to take cognisance of these influences and how it determines one's outlook. Coupled to the idea above Steier states 'By recognizing our own role in research, our reciprocators are, seemingly paradoxically given greater voice.' If the clergy do take cognisance of their personal preferences and points of view and express this opinion openly, the laity would perceive the clergy as being one with them, as all try to experience God and his dealings with humanity. We all together grapple with the idea of God as we progress through life. We also try and comprehend and understand how he deals with humanity. All this takes place on the same 'platform' of life. It is not that there are two tiers to the 'platform of life', one for the clergy, the other for the laity. By recognising that the whole of humanity has contributions to make regarding spirituality, harmony and fellowship will be the end result. 'As researchers, we construct a world that our reciprocators (and we) co-inhabit, and both we do it and how we do it may indeed have consequences for them and for us.' (Steier 1991: 180).

The above information about reflexivity should lead one into an attitude of critical reflection that could result in a new praxis.

4.7 Reflection

Poling (1991:187) has highlighted five essential components regarding practical theology which he applies to himself. These five components are as a result of reflexivity as it has led to a critical reflection on praxis and theory. I have found these to be very informative and a great 'help' towards a new outlook and praxis in my theological thinking. I have kept these five components at the back of my mind in my counselling regarding those individuals who had experienced clergy abuse.

1. **Reflection begins with the presence of difference and otherness in experience**.

'Difference provokes thought. When persons or communities become aware of some desire that contrasts with identity, the potential contradiction requires reflection.'(Poling 1991:187). This reflection on a different opinion or identity regarding the individuals I interviewed allowed them to meditate on what happened and through disclosure changed their outlook. It was informative to them to realise that there was an alternate view to the one they had been instructed to emulate. 'Self conscious lived experience is filled with the tension of similarity and difference, and identity becomes stronger as these tensions are faced and worked through.' (Poling 1991:187). Instead of remaining silent and allowing their personal points of view and life style to be dictated to them by the clergy, they challenged the clergy's knowledge. Reflection on postmodernism and social construction allowed the individuals to build the alternate stories that they had suppressed due to the clergy's subjective opinions. They felt emancipated, freed from the cultural ideology that instructed them to accept the teachings from the clergy without question. They realised that the 'self' has its own narrative that is unique and in need of maturation. The realisation that the clergy too are caught up in their own narratives, that are subjective and therefore relative allowed them to assimilate advice that also was in need of filtration.

2. **Reflection leads to awareness of tensions within the self.**

'Reflection requires a reformulation of one's personal identity, and eventually of ones theological anthropology or theology of humankind.' (Poling 1991:188). The self is a fragile construction that needs continual transformation as life progresses. Previous assumptions about themselves, the clergy and God need to be assessed through dialogue with those who have experienced the same abuse. The individuals that I saw were elated at finding others who had experienced the same form of abuse and had overcome their internal doubt and identity. They found in the others an alternate theological view on leadership ands its impact on themselves and their family members. This awareness made them more 'comfortable' with their new found identity.

3. Reflection leads to an awareness of tension between oppression and liberation in the institutions and ideologies of community.

'Communities extend power to some persons and withhold it from others.' (Poling 1991:188). By community here I mean those churches that shape and control individuals physically and spiritually. Through the reality of social construction and its impact on theory, previous assumptions about clerical power can be challenged. 'Reflection requires a reformulation of corporate identity, and eventually of ecclesiology, or theology of community' (Poling 1991:188). These individuals may form a counter-community for healing and a new awareness of theology and its leadership. One way that this can be achieved is through the process of the definitional group ceremonies where there can be a gathering of those with similar hurts and concerns.

4. Reflection leads one to one's ultimate horizon, one's understanding of Truth or God, and questions whether these metaphors and images are abusive or redemptive.

'Parts of our inherited and constructed religious vision are abusive, and parts are redemptive.' (Poling: 1991:188). When one reflects on the above statement, previous assumptions about God and church are challenged. This reflection requires a reformulation of the position that the clergy occupy within the church. The individuals who had been on the receiving end of clerical abuse may acknowledge that doctrine can portray the subliminal affects of a socially constructed society. Clerical leadership and its influence on society has been relative according to the power that society allowed it to portray through the ages. The clergy are not the ultimate holders of truth for they too are a product of that society which they represent. Being aware of this releases the individual from acquiescing too much authority to the clergy. This can result in a relieving attitude were the individual is released from placing church dogma as defined by their denomination as representing 'objective' truth. Given our standpoint regarding the above, what generalisations then can we make about the nature of truth? Where then can we find it, or who can we turn to?

An important aspect to note, under the umbrella of postmodern thinking, is that truth has a narrative structure. Poling (1991:189) mentions in regard to this;

> In theological terms, God is the story of stories. There are deeper narratives of which we are a part, and to which our stories relate. The human soul hopes that its own self-conscious stories will be congruent with the great stories of divine life. We want our stories to be true rather than false. But we fear that the deeper truth of our lives will destroy the pseudo-stories we have created in order to defend ourselves against non-being. One way to know God is to deconstruct and reconstruct our individual and collective narratives.

Therefore the individual's narrative regarding spirituality is dynamic and in constant flux. As each individual 'looks' back on their spiritual journey this will be confirmed. Yet the past spiritual narrative, though not adhered to at present, was just as real and true for that point in one's life. Who then has the right to determine at what point in life a given epoch has more truth than others? We cannot 'freeze' some experience in life and say that that was the most determining point in our spiritual walk. Each situation, each context, each narrative has a uniqueness about it that that was relevant and meaningful for that time. Therefore no-one can say with certainty which spiritual experience was more defining than another. It is only the individual with their deep spiritual narratives who knows what is true and meaningful for its own sense of identity and being.

Secondly one has to note that truth is relational. 'The discovery of the radical interdependence of all things is a basic paradigm shift from the world of the imperial self and the isolated object.' (Poling 1991:189). The prospect that each and every human is dependent on the other for meaning and existence means that there can be no such thing as object truth or 'pure' doctrine. Each person will perceive and comprehend the God of the scriptures according to their personal perspective. There is no one human with a 'pure, untainted' perspective. This means that each and every person has a unique contribution to make to the dynamic living reality of doctrine that is contained in every human heart. 'Within the internal movement of our own spiritual experiences, our memories of the past, and our interactions with other persons and communities, God is present. One way to know God is to reflect on the vital immediacy of our experience.' (Poling 1991:190). Therefore the clergy and laity

are in need of each other in co-creating a spiritual reality that would be relative and meaningful to them in their epoch.

5 Reflection on the tension between faithful and unfaithful ministry practice

[The] 'more clearly we see the truth that difference and otherness brings to experience, to the self, to community, and to God, we find that ministry practice must be changed. Reflection requires a reformulation of one's professional identity and eventually of one's definition of ministry. (Poling 1991:190). The change that I envisage is not a large one. The ministry does not require a huge quantum leap into the morass of a modern eclectic society that seems to have lost its way with a myriad of theologies, philosophies and governance. What I would like to see is the church still adhering to its traditions and cultures. The experiences and narratives of past theologians still have a vital and stabilising influence for us today. As Christians we all belong to each other as people of God, both present and past. What we need is a deep appreciation and validation of each and every person's unique contribution to the collective experience of God. We need an approach that provides space for an ongoing and open-ended meaning-making negotiation between dogma and personal experience. For example Martin Luther's experience of God cannot be the norm for each and every Christian the world over. Neither for that matter can mine be. Therefore the clergy should listen to each person's narrative and together co-create a spirituality that would be meaningful to both under the guidance of the scriptures and the influence of the Holy Spirit. It should make one very reticent to demand that there is only one way to understand some theological point to the exclusion of all else.

In the light of the five components above, my own perception on ministry and counselling has been transformed by postmodernism and feminist theologies. Due to these influences my new focus on counselling includes:

1. Seeking alternate spirituality in individuals who have experienced abuse from the clergy,
2. Challenging the community to be conscious of social construction,
3. Co-creating new awareness's of God, community and doctrine,
4. Teaching about the importance of reflexivity and reflection,
5. Being aware of the bible as a narrative about God.

If both parties apply reflexivity and reflection to themselves there could be a new awareness and a self analysis, a spiritual renaissance could be the result. Being aware that this reflexivity and reflection can only really be applied once an individual has been introduced to postmodern thinking and it praxis. However there is a subtle warning regarding reflection. Gergen (1996:8) states, 'To reflect critically on one's pursuits, using the very rationalities that legitimate these pursuits, one can scarcely do other than rationalize the status quo. More importantly, those who do not share the premises are rendered "other", often dismissed, disparaged, or denigrated.' Reflection for reflection sake will accomplish nothing. It must take cognisance of the parameters and the horizon of understandings and reflect on these as well. It would be counter-productive to reflect on issues while remaining within the traditional/historical parameters. Reflection must take no socially constructed ideas as beyond critique.

Personally I have experienced a paradigm shift that led to what I would call a spiritual renaissance. This shift has had a powerful impact on how I perceive my own theology, and I would like to bring this attention to those who have experienced power/abuse within the church. This only happened once I was introduced to postmodern philosophy. Following on from this my research of practical theology led me to the point where reflexivity and reflection was a logical next step. The growth that I experienced could be presented diagrammatically as follows;

<div align="center">

Traditional Theology

⇩

Postmodern Philosophy

⇩

Practical Theology

⇩

Reflexivity/Reflection

</div>
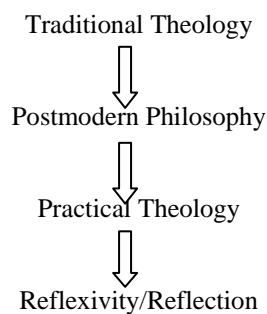
The above diagramme represents my growing awareness of the different academic disciplines, yet each continues to have an impact on each other. No one academic discipline stands by itself as each is interconnected to each other. To fully comprehend the impact of any one discipline one would have to know what the other disciplines stood for. For example one would not know what postmodernism was if there was no such thing as traditional theology and visa-versa. It is as if each discipline needs the other in order to make sense. So for me personally each

discipline has a dynamic interrelation with each other. Each one discipline has made me what I am today. I still read and study all the various disciplines, yet the difference now is that I apply reflexivity and reflection on each study. This could be diagrammatically represented as below;
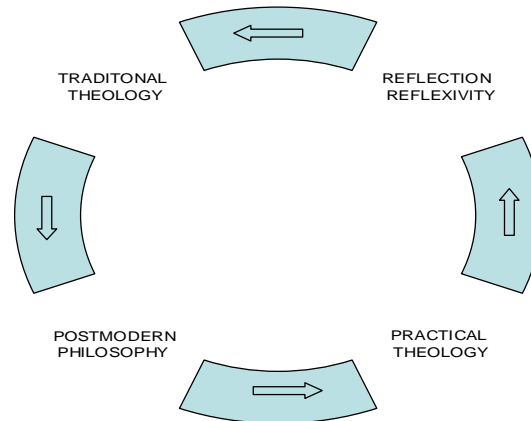
This circle is ever moving as one studies the various disciplines. Before this I was locked only into traditional theology to the exclusion of the others. This for me resulted in my becoming 'rather' fundamentalistic. It was as if one discipline was enough! Now that I am aware of the other disciplines I find myself forever seeking a balance between all. This has resulted in my own emancipation from fundamentalism. I want the individuals that have experienced abuse to understand the above diagramme and its implications as I have. So often individuals allow themselves to be abused unwittingly as they assume that there is only one way of looking at something. That something was their belief in traditional theology. They were taught that that was the only 'truth' to be adhered to. By applying reflexivity and its dynamic interaction with the other disciplines one will allow alternate stories to come to the fore resulting in an alternate story of their lives that is meaningful and without a false sense of guilt.

As I applied postmodern philosophy, reflexivity, reflection and feminist theologies I had to situate myself in relation to these options. I found myself turning away from two possible outlooks, and applying a third. I found that I had turned away from the traditional dogmatic theology of the past, as if that was above question or reflection. Secondly I wanted to turn away from a rampant relativism regarding theology, in teaching that anything goes. 'This option could easily encourage a kind of religious

consumerism, nurture a kind of individualism that betrays our belonging to each other as people of God, both present and past.' (Kotze et al 2002: 283). The third option that I apply to myself is one in which there will be an ongoing and open-ended meaning-making negotiation between dogma and personal experience, pursued by people of faith in community. (Kotze et al 2002: 283). The conversational partners who I had interviewed, I would want them to apply the third option, as explained above, to their own lives where open-ended meaning-making negotiation could lead them to alternative narratives regarding their lives.

Regarding the conversational partners that I interviewed I believe that reflexivity and reflection can only be applied in a narrative group approach type setting. It would be at these gatherings that one would get to know about traditional theology, postmodernism, reflexivity and reflection. One will also get to hear of various individuals' narratives and their journeys through their respective dilemmas regarding clerical abuse. It is here that the leader/facilitator would be able to guide the conversational participants regarding the different academic disciplines that have had such a powerful impact on their lives. The importance of reflexivity and the impact that it could have on ones outlook is part of the narrative journey

4.8   The Narrative Life Cycle Dynamic

After meeting with the conversational partners for some time I found the idea of the 'The Narrative Life Cycle Dynamic' a useful guide in my research This idea is my own and it allowed me to reflect on what the conversational partners had told me.

Below is a representation of the ever occurring 'narrative life cycle' in any individual's life. The central concern in the first cycle has to do with theological abuse which is the concern of this study. The next two cycles which are examples could be societal abuse and family abuse. These examples could incorporate any concern in any individual's life, and would not necessarily be as represented in the examples below. These cycles are continuous through out ones life. The time line represents the continuation flow of the cycles throughout ones life. As this is only a model the time span between the reoccurring concerns is not represented as these

would depend on a myriad of factors, therefore they would not be evenly spaced as represented below.

NARRATIVE LIFE CYCLE DYNAMIC

Theological Abuse

Towards next cycle

TIME LINE
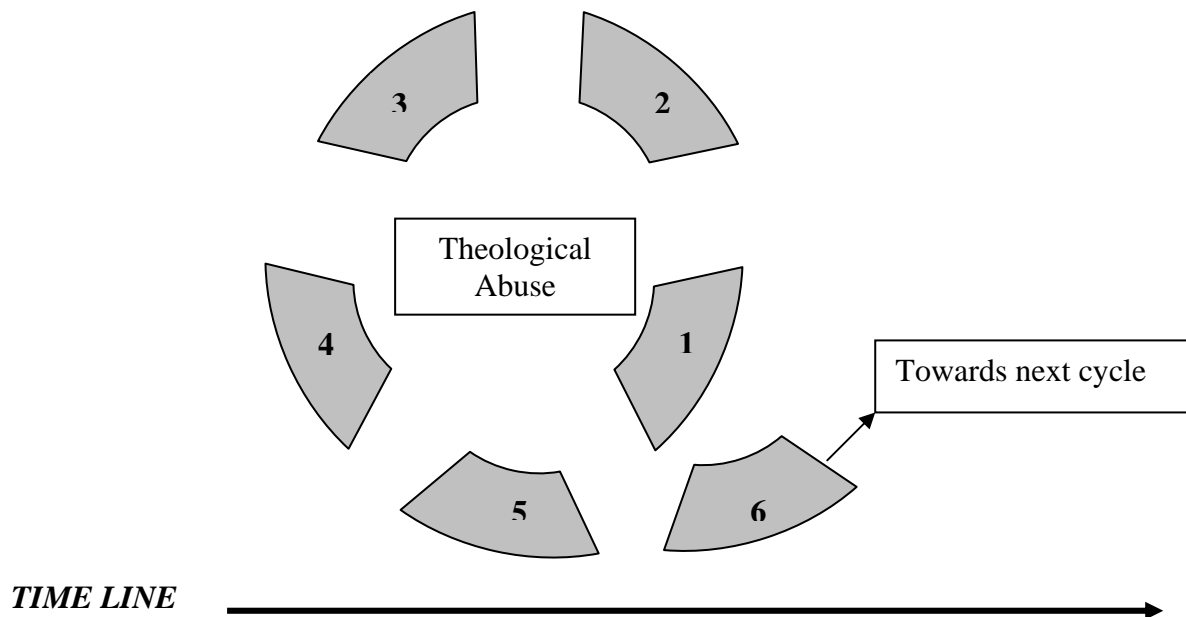
This cycle starts when the individual's perception of their own personal narrative leads them to a point were they were **concerned** about some aspect of their life, represented by number 1 in the diagramme.

This concern of theirs led them on a journey of **reflection** which differed in time according to each person concerned, number 2 in the diagramme.

 Over time the individuals then **verbalised** their concerns to a confidant, which in this case was the clergy. This verbalisation and 'opening up of one-self' was perceived by the individuals as being openly vulnerable to the clergy. They had verbalised some aspect or their lives which was private and now had come under the authority of the minister in determining the 'advice' given and the instructions to follow. Unfortunately regarding the individuals above, the 'advice' given was perceived by them as negative in the main. They remained in this 'stage' until I approached them

and asked their permission in allowing me to converse with them, number 3 in the diagramme.

Over time this led to the next logical step, and that was the concept of the **narrative group dynamic**. It was here that the individuals could verbalise their concerns openly particularly after hearing other voices that had been marginalized and silenced.

This then led the individuals to an **alternative narrative** of their lives, number 5 in the diagramme. Their alternative narrative was sublimated and the dominant story was 'allowed' to mature. However after hearing other narratives of individuals in similar circumstances and how they had grappled with the issues in their lives, this listening to the others gave them a sense of commaradie where their personal narratives resonated with the others. This gave them the strength through identification with the others to challenge the status quo of society's acceptance of what is acceptable and what is not.

However this narrative cycle will never stop here. As life is dynamic and as it progresses into the future, inevitably a new concern will arise and the narrative life cycle will begin all over again. Hopefully the individuals concerned would have grasped the dynamics of the narrative life cycle and would be in a 'stronger' position to confront the personal issue that may arise in their lives. This is represented by number 6 in the model. This represents the 'bridging' into a new narrative cycle that would have arisen. For example the next cycle could lead them through societal abuse or family abuse.

4.6 The Clergy and Laity Meeting

In the research that I conducted with the research participants I as well as they felt that once the clergy and laity have been introduced to postmodern theology and the concept of the narrative group approach, that there could be an amicable meeting between the two parties. However this meeting would take place under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, represented by the Meeting Place in the diagramme below. Both parties would be aware that they would be meeting at the 'foot of the cross' and should allow the influence of the Judeo-Christian ethic to influence their

personal narratives. The clergy meet the laity on the same level under the cross. The meeting place represents the narrative group between the two parties. Here both meet each other as equals so as to co-create an alternative narrative regarding themselves and their church polity.

THE NARRATIVE GET-TOGETHER

THE CLERGY   THE LAITY

THE MEETING PLACE
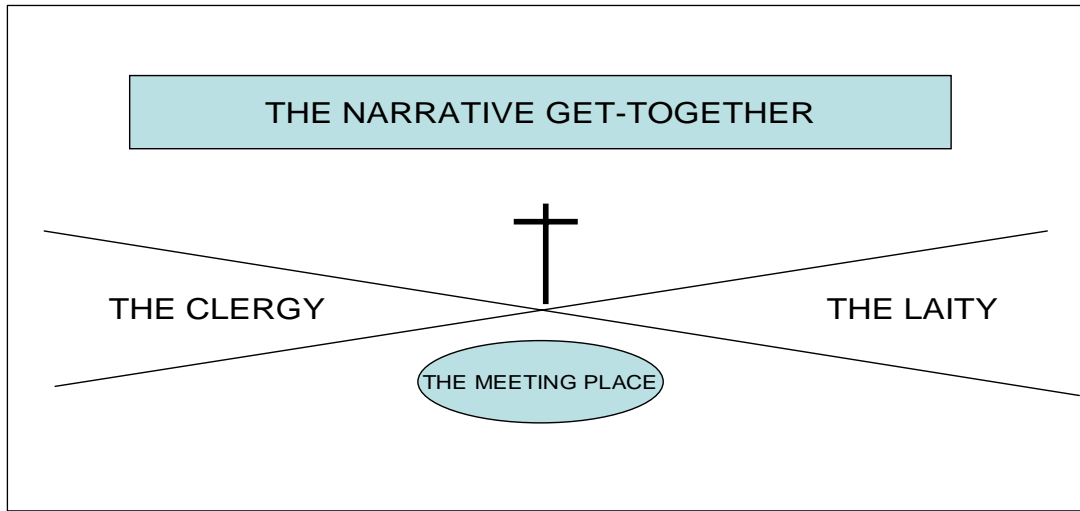
The individuals that met with me were 'pleased' that I as an ex-minister had met with them. They told me that it was pleasing to hear another minister verbalise an alternative point of view regarding ministry and theology. As they told me this I wondered if those who had experienced clerical abuse would only 'allow' the clergy to be present at times like this or would any counsellor do? It seemed important to them that a representative of the ordained ministry should have been present. It then dawned on me that I was an integral part of the whole process. As Hess (1998: 54) states regarding research, 'it consciously involves the location of the researcher as part of the enquiry.' I started this thesis/study by seeking to co-create an alternative reality with the clients. It was almost as if I was initially distant, apart from the abuse that they had experienced. Then the realisation; that I was totally a part of the whole process, and they possibly would not have verbalised their concerns to another person, but only to the clergy. Here I was the representative of the clergy, even though I am not in the full time ministry today. Together we had co-created a new reality and I found myself changed due to their inputs and challenges that they presented to me. I could not have been anything else than an integral part of the narrative process that I had with the clients. This study has changed me as much as it had changed the

research participants. Together we had grown and matured and I could not have done it without them.

4.10 Celebration

After the process of the interviews and the narrative group get-togethers, a celebration is a logical 'conclusion' to what had gone on before. A celebration is a cause for any sense of victory or a overcoming of some event that was perceived to be an obstacle. Morgan (2000:111) states 'Celebrations mark significant steps in the journey away from a problem story to a new and preferred version of life.'

Normally a celebration is a special gathering where the participants, and where possible, other friends are present. The individuals present are those who have either gone through something similar or are part of the growth process. Due to time constraints however I decided to have a celebration get-together after the narrative group meeting.

The only 'outside witnesses' during the celebration would be myself and the opposite family. I found that the other family in hearing of the abuse experienced in the other helped them all to identify with each other, and this resulted in them being open and frank regarding their personal narratives. As they sat down I handed out to each one a certificate of celebration. This certificate resonated with what they had been through in the past few months. I wanted to do this so that whenever they looked at the certificate, it would remind them of the time that we all got together and co-created a new outlook on the clergy, leadership and dogma. I designed the certificate around what the research participants had verbalized to me over the months that I saw them. The certificate has six categories that I felt resonated with what they had told me and so designed the certificate with the categories in mind. This is a unique certificate, as it is only applicable to them and their felt needs, concerns and alternative narratives. Thus the certificate is not one that can be handed out to any group of people. The certificate looked like this;

REINCORPORATION
CERTIFICATE OF CELEBRATION

RE: *RE-APPRAISAL, RE-VIEW, RE-AVALUATION*

INCORP: *CORPUS CHRISTI, THE BODY OF CHRIST*

ORATION: *CELEBRATION, OUR VOICES NOT SILENCED*

The meaning of the certificate is stated below, I explained this to them as they all received their certificates;

The word **reincorporation** has been split up into three so as to represent their personal journey.

1. Re; Together we have made a re-appraisal of theology and leadership. This re-appraisal came about during our discussions on postmodernism and social construction.

2. Incorp; We belong to the body of Christ regardless of what we have been through or where we decide to worship. This discussion high-lighted the importance of fellowship. This fellowship, they decided, was not limited to the boundaries of the church.

3. Oration; A play on the word oratory, as our voices were not silenced, we verbalized our concerns and allowed an alternative narrative to mature. In our meetings together we emphasised the personal side of worship, and as this was very private and just as 'real' to them as any other. No-one else, they decided, could dictate to them a more meaningful walk with the Lord that they had found.

 4. The image is St. Anthony is there as he preached against doctrinal errors. We take our courage from him. When the research participants looked back on the way the clergy had treated them they found encouragement when introduced to postmodern theology and social construction. They want to be like St. Anthony as they want to 'preach' against clerical abuse wherever they find it.

5. The keys represent our personal alternative stories that need to be opened and not locked away. After being through the sessions the research participants decided that they have a wealth of knowledge that needs to be verbalized within their circle of

friends. These alternative knowledge's need not be 'locked away' but need to be emancipated and there is a need to be able to express themselves freely.

6. The stamp represents a letter. We are to spread the message of reflection, postmodernism and social construction to all who have experienced clerical abuse in any form. The stamp they felt also stood for the intellectual knowledge that they had gained by being together. This knowledge was now written on their hearts and wherever they go they will carry this letter with them. They are the letter of encouragement and hope.

Viv on receiving the certificate laughed, as she shared the picture with Steven. Mark smiled and said, 'Very, very, good. Thank you'.

4.11 Re-authoring of their Lives

I now told them that this was the last part of the get-together and asked them how they had experienced everything that we had been through. Lynne was the first to comment, she said, 'I have enjoyed this time and the thing that stands out for me is that no-one has placed me in a category, a box on which to close the lid. I felt that Lynne had arrived at a place where she could feel accepted. She could re-author her spiritual life around a group of like minded believers, within an environment that had an acceptance of the individual regardless of what they had been through. Mark said, 'I also have enjoyed this time together and it was nice to have no professional diagnosis, the expert telling you what to do. There was no force, not once, forcing you into a mould.' Mark could re-author his spiritual life around a group of people were there was no placing of one in categories. This would allow him to grow into a leadership position that would come naturally. Within this group there would be no coercion.

Viv said, 'I like this narrative approach as it labels no-one. Listening to God is important, and we can hear him speak through the other.' Viv found an alternative spirituality that was not reliant on any form of leadership. This re-authoring came about due to the inputs from the group as well as the academic ideas around postmodern theology.

Steve said, 'I agree with everything that we have been through.' Steve had re-authored his spirituality around the ideas on postmodern theology. This outlook would allow him to question and appreciate difference within any church. He would not have to conform to any doctrine just because it was 'handed' down by the church fathers.

My thoughts on the last get-together left me pondering the importance of fellowship with like minded people. This like mindedness had been forged through their experiences of abuse. The Robson family though they do not attend church found their voice through the meeting of the others. I wondered if a gathering such as this one would be a parenthesis before gaining strength to face the church again some-time in the future. The Keen family though attending a different church still needed to voice their concerns to others whom they could trust and who identified with what had gone on before.
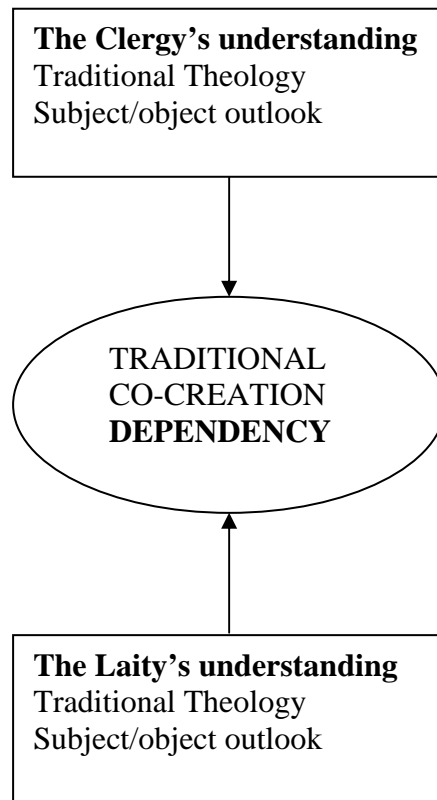
I then wondered about the alternative stories of their lives. I found that through their expressing of their narratives to each other they found a small community of people who identified with each other. This identification could be a start on a journey where they draw on each others strength and insights. It is not as if the alternative story of their lives would happen all at once, but the important aspect for me was that the journey or alternative story had begun. Thus the importance of continuing to meet every now and again to allow for nurturing and growth, but also, importantly, in allowing them to re-author their personal lives.

4.12 Final Thoughts around the Research Question

At the end of the research journey I want to explore how the research question was answered.

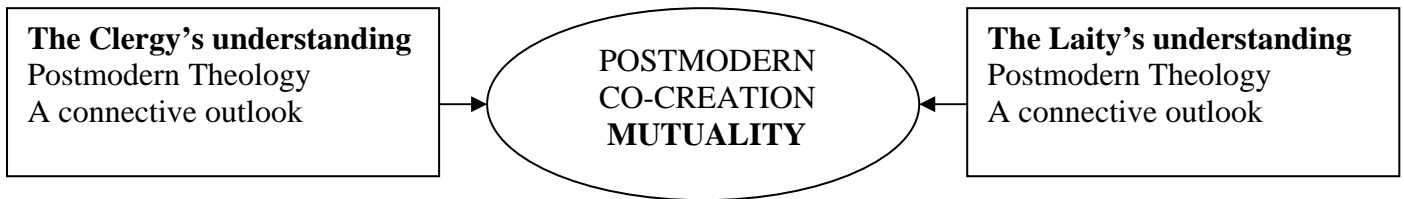Before I started out on this research the diagramme below represented the research participant's, mine included, concept of the clergy and laity. We both had a traditional outlook on theology which resulted in a dependency type concept. The laity needed the clergy for spiritual growth and leading. The clergy believing that this outlook was the correct one, as they were the experts who had studied theology,

implying they knew more about God and his dealings with humanity than the laity did. Hence the clergy were perceived to be on an elevated plain which the laity looked up to. Thus the concept of dependency stood between the clergy and laity. The prospect of power/abuse in this illustration could be easily maintained and utilised

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ The Clergy's understanding  │
│ Traditional Theology        │
│ Subject/object outlook      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
         ╭─────────────╮
         │ TRADITIONAL │
         │ CO-CREATION │
         │ DEPENDENCY  │
         ╰─────────────╯
              ▲
              │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ The Laity's understanding   │
│ Traditional Theology        │
│ Subject/object outlook      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```

After journeying with the research participants with the research question being at the back of my mind we arrived at a position high-lighted below. This diagramme should be seen in the light of the one above to appreciate the alternative narrative regarding clerical knowledge and power. We arrived at this position after a few salient aspects were high-lighted. By introducing the research participants to postmodernism, feminist theologies and social constructionism they were in a position to reposition themselves regarding their theology. Once this occurred they were able to create an alternative narrative regarding their spiritual lives. Now that they have been empowered regarding their spirituality, they desire co-creating this new awareness with the clergy. The proviso is that the clergy would have to be prepared to meet them on the same footing as regards theology, tradition and the challenge of

postmodern theology. See section 4.4.5 were I high-lighted the importance of the clergy and laity meeting each other the 'foot of the cross' and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the diagramme below there would be a symbiosis between the clergy and laity, and together they would be able to co-create a meaningful spirituality for themselves and the community they find themselves in. Note that the clergy do not have an elevated status, but are seen as being on the same level as the laity.

| **The Clergy's understanding** Postmodern Theology A connective outlook | → | POSTMODERN CO-CREATION **MUTUALITY** | ← | **The Laity's understanding** Postmodern Theology A connective outlook |

This meeting as described above would take the form of the narrative group approach with the same disciplines, as described above, applied within the said group. Herein lies the answer to the research question.

4.13 Further Reflections

After journeying with the research participants I have four personal reflections to make. They are;

1. The clergy should be introduced to postmodern theology (particularly at the seminaries).
2. The laity should be introduced to postmodern theology (within the church environment).
3. The clergy and laity should meet periodically in a narrative group setting.
4. Visions and goals arrived from the group meetings should be applied within the church setting as well as the community around them.

So we come to end of one chapter in the lives of the conversational partners. My final thought is that though I have journeyed with these individuals mentioned above in this thesis, there is no final conclusion. This thesis is a 'living' document as I continue to interact and grow with those who have been mentioned above. We still meet

occasionally, though not with both families but mostly one on one. Our conversations continue around theology and church as described above.

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