The Use of the Bible in Adult Christian Education:
A Case-Study in British Methodism

by

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The Use of the Bible in adult Christian education: a case study from British Methodism.

This investigation of how the Methodist Church uses the Bible in its adult Christian education is a work of description and analysis. Through a process of reflective practice I describe how the question arose and develop five polarities to enable investigation of the data. To further understand issues of power and knowledge in education I apply an analytical approach of Foucault’s to my case study material.

The question is a complex one. The Bible persists clearly and strongly as an epistemological resource despite the problems it creates. Education is being used in response to organisational decline and is ambiguous towards the Bible as an epistemological resource. The Book/Scripture polarity is central to my argument. It offers an understanding of the epistemological persistence of the Bible and facilitates exploration of its relation with tacit knowledge using the suggestion of a cultural ‘hauntology’. In that context I coin the term ‘hortatory power’ to describe techniques at work in the power games being played.

Two dominant uses emerge from my case study, the Narrative and the Communication. I offer a definition of each that enables me to reflect on their educational and epistemological consequences. The emergence from this discussion of the notions of ‘belonging not believing’ and the ‘learner as subject’ help to clarify and raise questions about the adult Christian educational project and its use of the Bible.

As a process for understanding the use of the Bible epistemologically and educationally the polarity and power analysis approaches that I have developed are effective and valuable. They offer ways forward for further exploring questions of education and knowledge as faith engages with culture in our plural society.
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Abbreviations

Disciple – the Disciple Course. Data analysed in Chapter 7

L&D – ‘Learning and Developing as the Whole People of God.’ Document analysed in Chapter 3

LAMP – ‘A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path.’ Document analysed in Chapter 4

OC – ‘Our Calling’ a vision statement of the Methodist Church adopted in 2000, focusing on Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism. Document analysed in Chapter 3

The Priorities – A development of Our Calling adopted 2004, a statement of principles focusing on worship, justice, evangelism and church life.

WWA – ‘Working With Adults’. A document analysed in Chapter 3


Methodist Terms

Conference – The democratically elected governing body of the Methodist Church which meets in June/July each year in a different District. It is a meeting of elected representatives, ministerial, diaconal and lay.

Connexion – The term used within Methodism to describe the Methodist Church in Britain, linked through the Circuits and Districts. These form the Connexion. A ‘Connexional Team’ is employed to serve the church at and from national level.
Circuit – One or a number of local Methodist churches in the pastoral charge of one or more ministers that work together under a Superintendent minister for purposes of ministry, mission, and administration. Several Circuits make up a District.

Class – A term less widely used now, but originally described the basic pastoral unit of the Methodist Church. Every member of the church is allocated to a class under the pastoral care of a class leader for purposes of fellowship, mutual encouragement and growth in faith.

District – A geographically defined group of Circuits. A Chair heads each District. Groups of Districts are sometimes referred to as a ‘Region’ as in the ‘London Region’ until 2006.

Local Preacher – An accredited lay person who leads worship and preaches. Local Preachers have completed a Connexionally agreed selection and training programme.

Other Term

Adult Christian education – Recognizing the problematic nature of the term I use it to define the area of my concern. It refers to the adult education of lay people in matters of faith, including belief and behaviour as well as, more broadly, management and leadership in various roles in the church. It takes place in a variety of settings, often informally. It does not include the training of ministers or Local Preachers.
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Rachel, my wife, who has graciously taken on the challenge of coping with me under the constraints of this research, deserves the greatest thanks and it is to her that I dedicate this work.

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INTRODUCTION

Worlds engage. For me there are at least two – although there are certainly others and larger ones clustering around constellation-like, held together by some cultural gravitation and there to be glimpsed from different perspectives. My two are the small, local and diminishing worlds of adult Christian education and the Bible. They engage at many points. They are cultures that configure and reconfigure in response to contexts. They shape new contexts to which they will in turn respond. A culture is never static; it is constantly developing. Every culture is its own world with the micro-cultures of its discourses contributing to ideologies that for a time will arrive at a position of hegemony and then fade as new patterns of power reflecting contextual change emerge to reshape discourse, ideology, culture and knowledge in the light of new experience and new questions.

My investigation is into one point of meeting of these two worlds - the way the Bible is used in adult Christian education in the context of British Methodism. It is a small case study, narrowly defined. However it raises significant questions for the nature of the two worlds, how they engage with each other, the issues they raise for the wider worlds to which they belong, and eventually the implications for knowledge itself.

I am an adult educator working in the Methodist Church. For more than twenty-five years I was a priest in the Church of England, often combining work in the local church with an adult education and lay training role. I have worked in the United Kingdom, in
Africa, and for a few months in Jerusalem. Those experiences and the questions they generated shape this thesis. This thesis will take the shape and character of a complex case study that explores what happens to the Bible in adult Christian education. It is not a simple process. The Bible shapes education even as education shapes the Bible, and the dynamics of that relationship are extraordinarily subtle and far reaching. Exploring them will engage me in questions about the nature of knowledge, culture and education.

A key question for me is whether it would be easier to follow one path, either Biblical or adult/educational? It would appear to make my task simpler. However, the use of the Bible in the church is wider than an educational one, so there is an immediate narrowing of the field of exploration. The same is true of adult Christian education. It is dominated and shaped at points by the Bible, but it is a wide discipline and growing wider as it engages with secular adult education. A Biblical focus is therefore helpfully limiting. Even so, the subject is potentially vast, and the way I approach it necessarily points to wider issues still. There will be many points at which fascinating and possibly crucial lines of thought will have to be noted rather than pursued in order to keep the argument coherent and manageable.

My question is about the way the church uses the Bible in its adult Christian education and how that can be understood in the light of contemporary writing. I set out for reasons that will become clear with an approach drawn from the human sciences, with a perspective that is shaped by educational disciplines, rather than theological ones.
The first chapter of the thesis will identify a number of episodes that led to the development of significant questions. I will explain how they were raised by reflection on practice, and outline the theoretical framework in which I will investigate them and the tools I will use. Five polarities will emerge from my reflections. They will serve as a tool for understanding and analyzing my case study data, and in the process I will be able to reflect on their value and further relevance. These essentially personal experiences will be set alongside an examination of key documents from the Methodist Church relating to the adult Christian education project and to issues of Bible use. This will enable me to identify a number of significant ways in which the Bible is used – at least potentially. Research data from the two case studies will narrow these uses to two dominant ones that will in turn allow major educational and epistemological issues to be raised and will be investigated in the final chapters.

In the penultimate chapter I will be able to return to a consideration of my question and a reexamination of the complex nature of the polarities.

My approach to reflecting on practice and the way I use that reflection is inevitably shaped by the intellectual habits of a lifetime. My training was in history before theology. The passion to identify key moments, the significant documents, to hear the voice of the people and interpret them carefully and in detail in order to understand is always with me. The process has the hallmarks of good historical investigation, I hope, but also inevitably and perhaps unfortunately of that pattern of mind that I will later define and criticize as ‘hortatory’. This I will suggest has been shaped by the practice of
preaching in the Protestant tradition and formed by the demands of communication in the sermon form, not least the developing of illustrations for it. For almost three decades that discipline was my constant intellectual exercise and some things are hard to escape!
CHAPTER ONE

THE EMERGENCE OF THE QUESTION

It would have been neater if the key experiences that I will reflect on corresponded to
particular topics, but life and its cultures are more interestingly organized and the issues
inevitably overlap and entwine. However, this is the way the questions did emerge, and
they have done so messily from practice rather than purely theoretically or in a
generalized way. The attempt to hold them and address them in such a context is a
challenge because of its inevitable tendency towards muddled thinking. Yet there are no
short cuts to clarity in the complex worlds, ideologies, discourses, truth games and
patterns of power that I aim to investigate. I will argue that the polarities I propose will
hold the complexities and divergences together.

My complex subject has been raised constantly for me throughout my life by the
experience of teaching and learning the Bible. Sketches of some key moments and
reflection upon them will identify the scope of my area of interest, offer a starting point
for analysis that will be refined and reworked in engagement with the writings of
Foucault.

SKETCH 1 – An encounter with fundamentalism.

The Bible was my first book. It was the book of home and of church. Not surprisingly,
because it featured at the start of every school day, I recognized it as well as the book of
school and therefore of education. This sort of connection reflects my own background and while it may have been tacitly there among my peers, it was for them on the way to oblivion for the majority and the culture. I cannot escape it and I know intimately its power to ‘haunt’. That can be no real surprise. It shaped my childhood world. It offered knowledge presented as truth and goodness. Through its stories it offered what I would later learn to call narrative space and so shaped the territory for my imagination.

The first people I met who like me took the Bible seriously and articulated its significance, albeit in a way that I was not familiar with were members of a rural Brethren congregation. I responded to their enthusiasm for the Bible, and with them began to study it with the help of Scripture Union daily Bible reading notes. A different sort of knowledge began to emerge. It gave immediate guidance for life that had ‘authority’ because it was ‘true’. God was speaking and the Bible was the place to hear His Word. This sort of authority gave a relatively uneducated group of people enormous self-confidence and a strong sense of identity. Much as this impressed me, more impressive still was their expertise in ‘Bible knowledge’. Respect for this expertise, a skill with which they could ‘navigate’, read, remember and apply the content was something the like of which I had not come across in any other walk of life. Their knowledge dealt with the great mysteries of life and its meaning and purpose. In a rural world of traditional authority structures the Bible was our liberator. Conservative as we were at many levels – rebellion in a poor rural setting in the 1960s was as much against what we perceived to be the impact of the permissive society as it was for it – we felt ourselves to be about turning the world upside down, claiming power in our
powerlessness. The Bible was our weapon and our inspiration, and it was ours, and our growing expertise made it more ours. In our evangelism, that same expertise, together of course with the joyously blinkered power-enthusiasm of the youthfully single-minded made us strong in teaching and argument. In such a small world we were essentially self-educated. Group meetings encouraged us but the real work of understanding was done individually. The 'quiet time' and the patterns of learning offered by Scripture Union notes were our techniques. At a personal level I had made the move from what Barton calls knowledge of the Bible as a 'classic' to 'revealed' knowledge (Barton 1993 p.66-67, 74) and been caught up in the impact that such knowledge could have psychologically and socially. Of course at the time I simply thought I had discovered the truth. Experience took only a short time to teach me some salutary lessons. Those lessons centred around what I perceived as power issues in that community.

There was the issue of how our fundamentalist style involved gaining a measure of cultural power over against others through an authority discourse (of the Scripture and of the book) that was culturally more acceptable and much more powerful then than now. However, the option of counter-cultural withdrawal from rather than engagement with the dominant culture was very strong and would become increasingly so in a pluralist context of other faiths and scriptures.

The suggestion of education as rebellion and the response of anger raises issues about the way fundamentalism, often tacitly, questions the authority of dominant cultures. It provides an interesting reflection whether the same anger/fear/rebellion pattern that found
a place in a fundamentalist style informal educational process has in later years found a new home in postmodernism.

These initial personal reflections on a misspent youth already identify a number of the themes I will explore: patterns of power; liberation and resistance; the nature of the authority and of the 'use' of a text/knowledge resource/artifact; the impact of education in the sense of expertise, of craftmanship; the use of the specialized knowledge to which access had been gained and the inevitable mixture of psychological, developmental and contextual circumstances that need to be taken into account to understand the whole picture.

SKETCH 2: Teaching and learning the Bible: Experiences of Reflection and Deconstruction

2:1 The experience of teaching.

I have always been a spontaneous teacher. I have found the meaning of life in sharing knowledge and finding more. With the Bible I started very young. I worked with a naïve theological world-view that suggested that when teaching failed it was because:

- I was not sufficiently expert
- I had been in some way (professionally or morally) unfaithful
- The learners were sinful
The heavy puritanically shaped agenda will be immediately noticeable. Patterns of power were at work. They arose from a particular ideology. In turn they reinforced and sustained and kept closed that ideology. This is not the moment for deconstruction of that ideology. In so far as it is relevant to this thesis, I will return below to the issues raised. I simply note that even intuitively well motivated education in this sort of ideological setting was about re-enforcement not exploration. It is also clear that this sort of ideological discourse constantly issues the challenge to and creates the habits of reflection in the practitioner, albeit on a distinctive set of criteria.

I became a teacher because I sensed within myself a need, vocation, enthusiasm, and passion to pass on the excitement of knowledge. I persisted not least because the experience taught me that to teach was to learn. The experience of attempting, even when not successful, to teach others was profoundly educational for me. Once content had been taught I knew it well, and understood it as never before. Reflection could be disturbing—perhaps teaching was an ultimately self-gratifying process? It might have nothing therefore necessarily to do with re-enforcement of ideology and its power issues and rather more to do with personal fulfillment and identity. When this becomes combined with leadership then power issues do come through very strongly. There is a move from narcissism to domination. The question becomes still more complex when the issue of ‘in whose interest?’ is brought in. Career structure, the approval of organizational success raises the matter of whether the educational project is self-directed, other-directed or institutionally directed, or indeed some mixture of them all.
2.2 Experiencing a clash of cultures.

As a priest, with many of my peers, I experienced disorientation when the attempt to communicate the critical approach to the Bible that we had absorbed in theological and ordination training proved of such limited appeal in the pulpit or study group. The questions of the Biblical scholars did not correspond with the interests of the people. It was possible that the open approach of the liberal or transformist/reformist educational agenda that we had also absorbed did not fit either\(^1\). This was particularly clear at the point at which the attempt to base adult education on experience seemed to be at odds with the passing on of specialized Biblical knowledge of dates, authorship and historical context, or the doctrines and ideas of faith. I felt it ought not to have been so difficult, but it was. Even attempts to make the Bible more approachable at the 'human level' by exploring Bible characters’ possible feelings seemed to be resisted. It was not easy to account for without returning to the puritanical worldview noted above.

My understanding of the Bible was beginning to be deconstructed through reflecting on this experience of preaching and teaching. With hindsight, in the colluding conservative culture that prevailing patterns of power had shaped in the church, it was only natural that the apparent deconstruction offered by the critical and experiential approaches I championed should have been resisted. Change was all around. Some things needed to be held on to. My attempt to make the Bible more relevant through critical methods and an experience-based approach missed the mark. It mistook the agenda of lay experience and misunderstood the nature of the role of the Bible. In technical theological terms, the

\(^1\) On these distinctions see e.g. Craig 1994, p.11-33

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educational method and critical approach to the Bible was inappropriate in a culture that had been shaped and sustained by the kerygmatic and doxological. Here was the emergence of what in this thesis I will describe as the polarity between book and scripture.

2:3 The Charismatic experience

In this context, the charismatic movement and its impact on the church was of major importance. From its roots in the Pentecostal revival, the movement filtered into mainline churches, not without some pain and conflict. At the heart of the experience was something like a relocation of the subject in which the immediacy of what was perceived as religious experience became authoritative for the individual. There was a strong democratizing impact in the life of the churches, characterized by the movement’s focus on the controversial practices of speaking with tongues, healing, and ‘words of prophecy or discernment’.

Increasingly as a church leader I found myself faced with requests from the most enthusiastic and committed lay people for new patterns in church life. These would often be backed with the statement that ‘the Lord has spoken to me...’. This was not part of the great systematic, authoritarian, theological tradition. Rather the authority and so the power rested in the identification of ‘what is true for me’ in individual experience. Taking a wider context than the church, there would clearly be similarities with the New Age movement.
The impact on the teaching environment was highly challenging. It was not enough to give knowledge as information. It had also to be ‘inspiring’. This need has interesting implications in that it can feed what I will describe below as ‘hortatory power’. It also moves towards a position where the authentic (what is perceived to be true for me) is distinguished from the authoritative (what is true for tradition or reason).

Despite this strong sense of immediate access to ‘God’ or as I will explore below to the ‘other’, the Bible still maintained a central place. It was no longer the bastion of puritan culture, but it was highly significant in its mediating role as a resource for narratives and for patterns of authentic engagement with the other that could provide material for understanding and shaping an individual’s authentic spiritual experience. So long as it was felt to be true to personal experience then Biblical material endorses that experience and gives it the authority of authenticity.

2:4 Diversity, control, persistence and the Bible

These cultural shifts further highlighted another key issue for the teaching of the Bible in the church. In its content and its literary style the Bible is highly inconsistent. It does not lend itself to a coherent syllabus. The church has therefore had to attempt control. It has done this by selection, interpretation and education. The Church’s Year and the Lectionary are tools of that control. Historical and literary critical engagement with the Bible made such control more obvious, despite as I will indicate in my Book/Scripture polarity, the impact of the use of the term ‘Scripture’ with its tacit ideological implications. More will be said below. For now it is enough to note that patterns of
power, some theologically motivated, all with tacit and often unacknowledged agendas, were at work in the church, and that began to dawn on me as I struggled to make sense of the teaching task. Furthermore these attempts at control were not simplistically ‘from above’, they could come as easily ‘from below’ and were thoroughly collusory and reflecting the nature of a culture, ideology and organization in defensive mode.

As I wrestled with these issues it became harder to account for the successes in my Bible teaching adventure, or the Bible’s apparent popularity educationally. People regularly asked for Bible teaching (though it was not always clear what they had in mind) and many were inspired by the experience of receiving it. How could the persistence of the Bible be explained? What are the roots of its popularity? It may be an oxymoron to raise the issue of the persistence of the book in a religion of the book, but there are reasons why the Bible might not persist, most notably its reputation as ‘unread bestseller’, and the dependence of many of the most fervent self proclaimed Bible learners and teachers on the ubiquitous Christian paperback.

2:5 Crossing cultures

The key experiences that made me a reflective practitioner developed dramatically when I first began to work in the obviously cross-cultural setting of Africa. Acute questions about teaching and learning were raised. One thing immediately clear in a highly oral culture was that the communication performance was important to a successful project. Respect appeared to be won and lost on the basis of speed and skill in responding to questions. Content was less significant than articulate flow. In addition it seemed to me
that relationship and relationship-defined ‘credibility’ were more important than knowledge considered in terms of cognitive content. In fact, so far as I could judge, relationship shaped knowledge. For instance, atheism was impossible not so much because of the intellectual challenge, but because it excluded one from the community of human being. Important epistemological issues were raised. Did knowledge or truth matter in an abstract/cognitive sense or was everything dependent on relationship?

Clearly that proposition is overstated, but it began to point to disturbing questions about the nature of knowledge, and the sorts of power that shape knowledge. Did knowledge only have power or the potential to give power when it was delivered in the culturally determined power games of the culture concerned?

If this was so, there were real problems for me as a teacher. I had recognized quickly how difficult it was for me to understand the culture with which I was engaging. I was present for two years and making continual efforts to understand the culture before I began even to glimpse the existence and nature of a ‘caste system’ at work in the society. It affected relationships and I questioned how much therefore it might affect knowledge. Would knowledge from a low caste tutor have the same weight, authority or indeed nature as from a high caste? (I think of the political issues around the designation of some knowledge in our culture with the derogatory title ‘old wives’ tales’ and of the threat to the popularity of narrative approaches to knowledge offered in popular culture by the imperative to children ‘not to tell stories’). There was a dawning awareness of how much social or cultural conditions might affect knowledge.
In such a cross cultural situation I was quickly made aware of the complexity and urgency of the issues when discussion in class ‘lapsed’ into the vernacular and then returned to English because its vocabulary alone enabled discussion of certain topics. What shape was knowledge taking at this point? In what sense could knowledge that could not be expressed in a particular vocabulary actually be knowledge? And what consequently was going on as I exercised the teaching role to which I felt called and had been appointed?

What I found myself attempting was somehow to enable my knowledge to ‘lay alongside’ the cultural experience of my students. They would then need to sort out the issues of integration, transference and interpretation. It was a gratifying and I felt non-dominating approach that seemed to reflect the essence of the adult educator’s task.²

There were problems even in what felt like a teacher’s paradise. The process of integrating knowledge taught with the culture experienced was elusive and I was not sure that my essentially transformative/liberal goals were in any way being fulfilled. Furthermore, I was becoming aware of the conflictive relationship between liberal and transformative/reformist educational goals. It came to represent a key issue for the practice of adult Christian education in a church setting. I found myself teaching to enable students to pass exams. Cultural pressures had started to become acute and I felt that was the best I could do. My time with them and my educational skills were short.

² Many of these questions are inevitably beyond the scope of my thesis. I record them because of their role in establishing the habit and necessity of deconstructive thinking for me and of setting the context for my further discussion.
Their needs for progress were urgent. So I persuaded myself that passing exams would be the gateway to further and 'proper' educational opportunities, and it was there I hoped that the real adult educational process could take place. On my part there was no real attempt to help my students with the integration of the knowledge into life skills or into discipleship in theological terms although there were occasional forays in that direction. These were I felt always too clumsy, too risky and in danger of that 'bête noir' of all culturally aware Christian educators, the cultural imperialism of confusing culture with 'gospel'.

This discipleship issue was crucial and the source of considerable missiological reflection which opened up of course into educational reflection. How can culturally limited knowledge be passed from one culture to another with minimal risk of distorting that knowledge which of course, because it is culturally held (it cannot be otherwise and remain human) is already 'culturally distorted'?

One quasi-theological answer of course is that the Bible has knowledge beyond human cultural conditioning – possibly in Barton's terms, Scripture conveys 'classical knowledge' (Barton 1993 p.9). This is not an issue that I will face in such terms in this thesis although the essentially culturally focussed approach that I will develop has

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3 My work in Africa involved a considerable degree of management in the church and I was soon aware of the context and nature of the power struggles that were taking place. It was a highly instructive moment when preparing to teach 1 and 2 Corinthians I turned to the distinguished British commentaries. There was a strong feeling that the configurations of power that were seen reflected in the text represented the culture of the Academy, a world away from the context in which I was teaching. It was noteworthy and depressing even so how readily the students seemed to endorse such points and glimpsed their potential relevance...should ever such a circumstance exist in their situation. In this way of course they were inclined to avoid the challenge of focused application to their culture.
bearing on an argument that is prevalent tacitly far beyond the boundaries of its classical fundamentalist formulation.

The awareness of my shortcomings raised the question of what more there might be to the teaching task. What place too for the Bible in a recently non-book culture? The Bible was the first book in the local language, shaped the nature of that language therefore, and provided an early educational tool. This might well have had significant consequences when education combined with the power of the book in a theological discourse of salvation, truth, judgement and condemnation.

By this point a number of difficult theological, educational and cultural questions were arising for me about the role of Bible as ‘book’ and as ‘Scripture’; the nature of knowledge in a psychology of education; the learning and teaching relationship in the adult context, its power patterns and its impact on knowledge; the problem of interpretation and translation in the widest sense; and of course the nature of knowledge that can move through cultures and how it does it. More fuel was added to the deconstructive fire.

SKETCH 3 – Meeting traditional and folk religion.

An important part of my preparation for cross-cultural mission had been the study of what was variously described as traditional, primal or folk religions. As I recall the

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4 In contrast, the attempt was made to offer visual illustration and the use of pictures as another, parallel educational tool. In my experience, the culture was essentially oral not visual. Therefore words in any form had power and words that were placed in unchanging text and stood at the source of knowledge had special power.
central thesis of the course, and as it has been endorsed by my attempts to understand the nature of folk or implicit religion in this country, the goal of ritual was to achieve or to restore stability and to resist instability. In traditional societies life was precarious and experience had taught that change was almost always dangerous. Faith systems that would shape knowledge would therefore be fundamentally about achieving and maintaining equilibrium.

Further questions arose therefore about the purpose of education and the resulting nature of knowledge. If knowledge disturbs as it brings change, how is a culture to handle it educationally? In Cultural Action for Freedom Paulo Freire explores the contrast between education with a ‘utopian’ goal and those whose education aims to make the future repeat the present or see the future as something predetermined. Such approaches are in absolute contrast to his vision.

When education is no longer utopian, that is, when it no longer embodies the dramatic unity of denunciation and annunciation, it is either because the future has no more meaning for men, or because men are afraid to risk living the future as creative overcoming of the present, which has become old.

Freire 1972b, p.40

The question of the role of education in a culture, and the tension between utopia and equilibrium, bears on my concerns at a number of points. There is I would argue a strong intrinsic trend towards equilibrium in the motivation to establish patterns of church membership that reflect the stability demands of implicit religion. Adult Christian education programmes too can reflect the need for institutional maintenance. Such concerns can so easily be in dialectical tension with the utopia of the ‘Kingdom of God’.
This tension has its impact on the nature of education and the nature of knowledge. The Bible provides an interesting case study because the educational use of a resource that has such scope for disturbance – for denunciation and annunciation – focuses the equilibrium-utopian question particularly tightly.

Depending on how broadly it is defined, education may be the way a culture handles knowledge in order not so much to ‘develop’ as to attain a fresh equilibrium. In that case the pejorative term ‘domestication’ can accurately be used for the process – as Freire himself does. In that way new knowledge can be brought under the hegemony of existing cultural norms.

Education may also be the way in which new knowledge is brought in to transform culture, but how far is any ‘transformation point’ simply a new equilibrium with a new hegemony of a changed paradigm? How far is knowledge shaped to serve the equilibrium in this process? Can it be shaped in resistance to a disturbance of stability? Education as the process by which knowledge is handled can thus serve a number of ends that are likely to conflict. This battle at a subconscious, tacit level raises the question about the characteristics to be found in the power games in adult Christian education, not least its struggle to fulfil the vision of its keenest proponents in the church.

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5 Freire 1972b, p. 41
The question goes deeper still to the nature of human being and those myths that explore the handling of knowledge and the destabilizing of human community.\(^6\)

This is the point at which it seems to me that the insights of Argyris and Schon can be helpful. While their intention does not appear to have been the analysis of cross-cultural issues in the way I have experienced them, their analysis of institutional learning patterns and strategies of defensiveness are obviously relevant (1974 p.73f.).

SKETCH 4 – Glastonbury Tor … and the recognition of the pluralist context

While the details of this particular episode when a conversation with my eldest son, aged about eight, on the evocative summit of Glastonbury Tor will only be of marginal interest to the reader, the impact of the conversation focused clearly for me the new nature of contemporary British culture where my research is set. He had a young Hindu friend at school and asked about the relative merits of the two faiths. From my heavily Protestant Biblical perspective I set out a sort of inclusivist answer, with an ultimate recognition of the superiority of the Christian faith. His reply was that his friend’s father would say just the same about Hinduism.

Issues of an intra-cultural nature, of other faiths, generation gap and pedagogical approach now supplemented the cross-cultural issues that had so far encouraged my reflection. My essentially Biblical cognitive approach was met (yet again) by an approach based on experience of a relationship. A worldview had been shaped by a

\(^6\) E.g. Genesis, the Prometheus myth, the Mabinogion – a fascinating discussion is on offer here, but beyond the scope of this thesis.
primary education that was itself disturbingly new to me. If I were to educate and learn with and from my own children and those I met in the church, I had to get used to a relativist and pluralist territory that was unfamiliar and disturbing. It was one that I had been used to using the Bible to resist at a personal level and in my teaching.

Tools were at hand through the approaches of liberation, feminist and contextual theology, but they raised a complex set of issues. They problematised my approach to Bible and faith at two levels. Firstly, they raised the possibility of power games and the context of structural sin even in the teaching of the Bible with the supremely disturbing question, ‘In whose interest?’ Secondly they provided fresh hermeneutical approaches that opened up parts of the Bible conveniently marginalized or ignored. For instance, the possible potential of the wisdom literature emerged into a Biblical approach dominated by the prophetic literature and the patterns of power centered around the statement ‘This is the Word of the Lord’.

That phrase, drawn from prophetic literature and set at the heart of the liturgy, pointed to a particular educational approach and a particular style of knowledge - the one I shall explore as ‘hortatory’. This is an approach that can only function fully when its method and values are, or have recently been, culturally dominant. In a plural and relativist culture it has a different place and maybe no place at all. Curiously it produces a pedagogical approach that tacitly resists change in the name of seeking a utopia. The

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7 This suggestion is based on issues arising from Foucault’s notion of ‘pastoral power’ see below especially Chapter 10. Its etymology derives from the notion of ‘exhortation’ as a description of the preaching process.
commitment to an exclusivist/inclusivist ideology that accompanied it for me represented an essentially defensive response in the face of a changing cultural context. There is no doubt that I saw this as in the interests of serving the 'Kingdom of God', or at least a distinctively drawn version of that theological and Biblical metaphor. The very phrase itself is laden with cultural presupposition and irrelevance. Any Bible teacher, and certainly this one, has their work cut out to establish with students a 'Kingdom' worldview within which to begin teaching. At this point I became aware again of the tension between education for equilibrium, education for utopia and the complexity of the games played between them.

For example, this complexity could be seen at work in the hortatory power game I came to play myself. I could comfortably embrace writers such as Gutierrez (1974) from a liberation perspective, and Song (1984) from a contextual/cultural approach as part of its Bible teaching programme, but only so long as they remained illustrative of some marginal, exotic perspectives that could serve to reinforce the equilibrium. So long as they remained outside my culture they were illustrative and had no power to threaten. However, it was a rather different matter with feminism. Feminist writers like Trible (1984) and Fiorenza (1983) issued their challenge from within Anglo-Saxon culture engaging power, gender and authority issues that attacked the equilibrium in the interests of utopia. I could not use them in hortatory ways, and they exposed the hypocrisy of using other liberationists so.
Two polar possibilities in the issue of Bible use were emerging with more clarity at this point from an initial conversation that had emphasized the immediacy of cultural change in context and education. The relativist and pluralist context pointed to a shift away from authoritative prescription in my teaching approach, to something essentially authentic. This was the case particularly because of the personal, immediate and intimate way in which the issue had come to me and the way I had found it impossible to feel or to be both authoritative and authentic in response. In terms of understanding the goals and motivations of my Bible use, questions of utopia and equilibrium became the urgent focus of my reflections. I was being driven to a process of radical reassessment of my knowledge and teaching, in which traditional and personal ideological hegemonies were at issue.

Deconstruction was imperative. As I have indicted, it was taking place for me through the increasing openness to knowledge from ‘other’ places mediated through the writings I have noted that offered vision, space, and tools to redevelop and relocate my own knowledge. This more focused experience of the culturally other began to indicate ways in which knowledge can cross cultures. It may not necessarily do so intact, but given the appropriate contextual needs it can be creative there. It gave a measure of reassurance about my work in Nigeria, without necessarily resolving any of the reflective issues raised. It once again pointed to the question of Bible use.
SKETCH 5: Trainer and teacher – institutional survival and individual transformation.

Two jobs, as Lay training Adviser in the Carlisle Diocese of the Church of England and as Training and Development Officer for the London Region of the Methodist Church, each within a major denomination in this country have raised further questions to fuel this research.

I worked for 11 years as a Lay Training Adviser in an Anglican Diocese. There was much in the title. I was not an Adult Education Adviser as my immediate predecessor had been. My employers intended a new agenda. The role was about ‘equipping lay people’ - but for what? The answer was clear I think to Diocesan authorities – the better running of the church, particularly in the face of declining numbers of clergy. There were many ways to see the merit in this and programmes were projected for the better equipping of volunteers within the organization of the church.

A number of issues quickly became clear. Firstly there was resistance from those who were seen as needing training to receive it. Unless, that is, it included some aspects of ‘spiritual development’ and offered some measure of increased authority. To train for increased responsibility was not enough. Secondly my job description had been shaped out of an attempt to respond to particular features of institutional decline – the falling numbers of vocations to ordained ministry. Thirdly that amongst the lay people there was a two-fold response. Some would undertake further training only if there were a significant component of and opportunity for individual transformation. Others would
undertake training for the skills of a particular role only if it were brief, clearly delimited in terms of the scope of the role, did not involve long-term commitment or any suggestion of personal transformation. Another not insignificant group was keen simply for the educational component and wanted no real institutional involvement. This would, I judge, not be very different from any other secular adult educational project. Given the ‘discipleship’ ideology of the church however, that is significant and disturbing in itself.

There was therefore always in the background of this job an intractable discussion about the aims of education and training – was it about institutional renewal or individual transformation? When it came to the use of limited resources it was especially difficult. Should these resources be used if the result was the growth in faith of an individual who might well discover that their new enlightened discipleship led them to move away from a traditional institutional pattern? There were strong and ultimately unresolved arguments on all sides. Adult Christian education continues to be caught on the horns of such a dilemma especially in times of decline. Individual transformation or institutional renewal, can there be both or is one always sacrificed to the other?

The Bible was always a key resource in the teaching, whether the goals were focused on skills, vocation or transformation. It was interesting that studies on ‘Jesus (or David or Peter or Paul) the pastor or leader’ were very common and often the most popular part of the course, but the question persisted for me, just what use was the Bible (in form or content) filling at these points? There are issues here about the educational power of

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8 For an exploration of the possibility of education as a middle class leisure pursuit: see Courtney (1992)
shared stories and the authority of shared text and how each variously serves the needs of individuals and institutions. Further questions arise about the relative valuing of skills that develop management abilities, and those that confer authority in pastoral, liturgical and spiritual areas. Adults were very often motivated by the latter, but were offered resources by an institution hoping for the former. Intricate power games were played out as a result.

In terms of the use of the Bible, intricacy increased. The institution offered the Bible because it appeared to retain the power, lost elsewhere, to attract students. The individual adult responded because the Bible offered a particular epistemological resource, accessible as a book, and yet somehow authoritative as 'scripture'. The institution that had accorded the Bible its position as scripture used in its teaching hermeneutical tools appropriate to the book to interpret, teach and persuade students of its attractiveness. Polar tensions are developing here in terms of individual and institution motivations for education, and around the Bible as scripture or as book in its use as a teaching and epistemological resource.

SKETCH 6: ‘The Shepherd and His Work’

At the time when I was working for the Anglican Church in Nigeria with the Church Missionary Society, Theological Education by Extension (TEE) was the emerging educational force in that context. The paucity of educational resources and the huge

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9 Now Church ‘Mission’ Society.
needs for trained leadership in a burgeoning church meant that TEE seemed to hold the promise to meet all needs. There were too few staff with too little time to meet the demands of potential students. There was too little resource for residential education, and in many parts of the country lifestyle and distance of travel meant that it was not a realistic option. Even meeting on an occasional basis could be difficult.

*The Shepherd and His Work*\(^\text{10}\) was the title of one of a series of TEE texts that I used for a time. Described as an ‘Evangelical Programmed Text’, its aim was ‘to train pastors and leaders to do God’s work’. It provided daily ‘homework’ tasks that would be reviewed weekly in a class with others on the course and a leader. The daily tasks followed the patterns of programmed instruction: ‘a method of teaching which helps students go through a carefully designed sequence of small steps to reach a specific objective’. The students would ‘interact with the material by answering carefully selected questions’ in response to information provided in the text itself or in Biblical passages to be looked up. Students were assured that ‘the book is your teacher ... you must do what the teacher, the book tells you if you are to learn well’. Answering the question showed that the student had understood the material and at the same time helped them to remember it. ‘If the student carefully does each section he will get the right answer’, claimed the editors, and in addition, ‘...we think that you will like this kind of learning. As you study you will try hard to get the right answers and you will be pleased when you get them.’\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{10}\) Msweli & Crider (1974)

\(^{11}\) Msweli & Crider – all quotations from ‘Introduction’ – pages not numbered.
The problems of this approach from most sorts of educational perspectives are obvious. At the time I shared them, I was won over enough to work with the material because in a particular cultural setting it met a desperate need. It provided a sense of shared project for participants. The body of knowledge and the habits of study also acted to give students some measure of confidence in a volatile context where the power games of a charismatic or manipulative teacher, leader or movement could have an impact that might be judged to be destructive.

It was of a piece with a pedagogical system where there was a clear expectation of right and wrong answers and of the authority of the teacher. It provided an effective starting point for learning amongst those to whom no other resources were available. The simple tasks that could be successfully performed did enable the acquisition of knowledge and the confidence in that achievement encouraged the development of learning habits amongst those who had no other realistic access to such resources of knowledge and learning. It is harder to say how far the system produced effective leaders for the church, but considerable evidence of its success was claimed.

The challenge for me was the pragmatic justification for this approach in the face of the problems of lack of teachers, resources and of the individual's educational self-confidence. As a result I used the approach again in this country in the 'Footsteps' Course that I developed working in Cumbria when faced with a shortage of suitably

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12 This does of course beg the wider question about culturally appropriate education and educational imperialism, that extends beyond the scope of this thesis.

13 Unpublished material used in the Carlisle Diocese, 1988 onwards.
qualified teachers for students who were keen to learn but lacking in self-confidence.
The method enabled the provision of a controlled body of material that reflected institutional needs and the perceived interests of the students, and rescued both from the idiosyncrasies and incompetence of potential teachers.

The significant addition in my approach was the omission of the notion of right or wrong answers. I was concerned to expose the students to challenging material and to help them take time by answering simple content-based questions to reflect on that material as a means to help them engage with its detail in a more confident way that could enable discussion and the challenge of application. In that sense it retained distinctive features of a programmed approach.

It was well received by a number of different types of participant: those frustrated by the low quality of teaching in the local church and seeking a wider range of input, those who needed confidence in their ability to learn built up, and those who wanted to engage in an exploration of vocation beyond the local situation. Many students were comfortable to move on to other patterns of learning after the course and that was encouraged. It was popular with facilitators since it made minimal demands on their time in terms of preparation, and they were comfortable with a less authoritative approach to the teaching/facilitator role. Of course, only those who did not offer a dogmatic starting point were invited to participate in that role!
Working with the programmed approach raised a number of questions. Can it be justified in other than a resource-limited context? How far is programmed control educationally justifiable? How far can it be justified as an inaugural or ‘redemptive’ learning experience if it is able to equip students for other educational approaches?

The fact that it can be effective and that its principles extend beyond the immediate TEE context into, for instance, ‘Disciple’¹⁴, means that I need to take it seriously. Doing so helps to focus on a programme with clear aims, tight controls and disciplined ‘training’ approach. In that respect it contrasts with the intermittent style of much of what is offered as adult Christian education by the church that essentially relies on the energy of the moment, the charisma of the teacher and the mood and enthusiasm of the learner. The latter is dominant in a church that finds it hard to make concerted demands on its members for any educational programme. There are pointers here towards an area of further ‘polar tension’ that is about where control and motivation lies, and how it is accessed and developed. My suggestion is that the opposites can be described in terms of method as ‘Training’ and ‘Inspiration’.

The way in which the Bible is used in the programmed approach is interesting. As a book it lends itself to such an approach particularly given its neatly subdivided layout. Careful design can enable the Bible to appear as the ‘teacher’, a role that many bibliophiles are keen to accept.

¹⁴ Disciple, my second case study. Details in Chapter 7.
As I will argue below, Disciple is highly effective through the programmed nature of the course in making local group and educational leadership easier by the way it has tight control of the learning process. This is an important consideration in a situation of declining resources or where only inexperienced leaders or those with very little preparation time are available. Leaders do not need to be an expert or especially knowledgeable in Biblical studies. They do not need to give major time to preparation. The material does the teaching, as in all programmed learning. It is enough to be a good facilitator. Facilitation skills are easier to acquire than Biblical expertise and much less problematic. Reduction of leader power not only makes it easier to recruit leaders, and easier for them to lead, it also reduces the issue of personality impact that can be a problem in the power games of any learning situation, and especially, of course with the Bible. The reduction of leadership differential also works in favour of the fellowship of the group, as it increases the sense of non-hierarchical togetherness.¹⁵

The Inspiration/Training polarity will be developed further below.

SKETCH 7: Israel – the Bible and cultural hegemony.

A final sketch from reflective practice arises from some initial study I carried out into these questions in a period of sabbatical study in 1996 when I spent time in Jerusalem and contacted various Christian groups there to explore issues around Bible teaching. It was a highly disconcerting experience. The atmosphere of engagement with issues around the

¹⁵ The clear leadership training with its high costs to participants and the discipline/structure language demonstrate the attempt by the institution offering the course to exert some sort of control. As with Alpha, this choice has been made in the face of market pressures that would have offered a quick sale.
Bible was intense and of a piece with the tension in the political situation. The answers I received to the simple question, 'What parts of the Bible do you use most in your preaching and teaching?' were passionate and greatly at variance with one another. If I needed further proof of the power and significance of the Bible on the one hand and its erratic content and potential explosiveness on the other I certainly found it.

The study I was attempting had been inspired by the writings of a Palestinian Christian group who had gathered round the liberation theology approach and were exploring what its principles might mean for them. (Ateek 1989) In the immediate context of the Anglican Cathedral there was fierce debate about the appropriateness in the current context of assertive Jewish nationalism of using certain Psalms in the daily liturgy that included the term 'Zion'. The Palestinian Christians argued that use of such material reinforced a 'Christian Zionist' worldview at a tacit level. Those who recited them tended to give subconsciously uncritical support to the policies of the Israeli government. Such unthought out, vague attitudes to a generalized notion of a Jewish community that went on to identify its Biblical manifestation with the present day Israel, could, it was argued, lead people to remain unheeding of the existence of the Palestinian Christian community and the injustices they endured. One leading Jewish scholar who had taken up the Palestinian cause even advocated the cessation of Jewish-Christian dialogue because it concentrated on religious and spiritual issues and marginalized the political ones. (Ellis 1987)
For instance, the story of David and Goliath had been one of the earliest Bible stories taught to me, and is one consistently popular in Sunday and secular schools. Amongst the Brethren group of Sketch 1, it was a source of continual inspiration, as we perceived ourselves encountering the giants of sin in their various manifestations. It was a source of identity for the 'underdog'. It created a notion of powerless, yet faithful and courageous David (and so by association in the present sketch and contemporary situation, Israel) faced with the giant of the Philistines (Palestinians). This is the reverse of the current political situation.

Using the Bible with its Scriptural status this way can, as my illustration suggests, sow the seeds of such attitudes deep in our cultural mindset. In terms of Bible use a very difficult question emerges: what happens to knowledge that has formed in a context of the resistance against oppressors, when it is used to educate those who have a position of dominating power? It has the potential to distort values in ways that issue in tragedy. In this instance the relation of power and knowledge takes current political form around the use of the Bible. In talking about that sort of issue on my return I encountered considerable resistance. The power of the Bible to shape and to haunt culture is considerable. In no small measure its haunting is achieved through its educational use, particularly with children, when values are taught so early simply as stories.16

Further reflection would need to take account of the huge shadow of post-holocaust reflection that has shaped the thought and theology around Israel and Jewish-Christian

16 Song, 1984, p.ix
dialogue in any extensive investigation of the Bible in that context. For the purposes of this thesis, it is enough to note the power that the Bible can exercise in a culture to shape values and attitudes and to remain alert to the relations between knowledge, power and education. This power was evident in the way in which cultural hegemony was established, maintained and fought. It was evident too in the power that a book could exert. It was interesting, although at the time it formed no part of my research that the Bible as book when set alongside the Torah and the Quran of the other ‘religions of the Book’ might find its role echoing, shaped by, challenged and even clarified by the roles they played. It is not just content that haunts the religions of the book, but book-shaped patterns of power and authority.

To ask how the Bible is being used here is also to ask how knowledge is being used. The Bible can be so sinister because it concentrates knowledge into an artifact or text that becomes a hegemonic embodiment limiting exploration; a ‘scold’s bridle’ that curtails discussion; a ‘ring of power’ that intimidates and controls; a Pandora’s box that when opened offers resources that can as well enslave as liberate. How adult Christian education uses such a source of knowledge, and such a pedagogical tool, how knowledge can be shaped and reshaped by the context and motivation of that educational process is the focus of this thesis.

Conclusions
Reflecting on the sort of experiences in the ways that I have described is what has forced me to my question ‘How is the Bible being used?’ To ask such a question is to be
intentionally deconstructive. Answering the question in the terms that I have begun to address it needs resources from education and from the human sciences.

A set of tools that will of course need to be further refined have begun to emerge from my reflections – the five ‘polarities’.

- Individual/Institution – which opens the question, ‘In whose interest?’
- Equilibrium/Utopia – that opens discussion of context and motivation in the educational process.
- Inspiration/Training – that addresses particularly the educational methods adopted.
- Authenticity/Authority – that opens up a way to explore the relocation of the subject in the case study.
- Book/Scripture - the polarity that asks the epistemological question about the nature of the knowledge resource that is being used.

Caught between these polarities and their gravitational force, knowledge is shaped and reshaped by culture and culture’s educational operation. Analyzing the patterns of power at work in adult Christian education’s use of the Bible will help me to answer my question in a way that suggests possibilities about the nature and place of knowledge in the church today. I will suggest that what can be argued for the limited but highly significant case of Bible and the church, can be generalized in a way that raises important questions for other, wider contexts.
In this thesis I bring the five polarities I have provisionally identified together with the method that Foucault suggests for analyzing power relations. There is no exact ‘fit’ between the two tools, but there is an advantage in this. The polarities can not only inform aspects of Foucault’s approach in the early stages of analysis, but as the argument develops, they can point beyond its general conclusions to a closer application to my chosen area.

The value, challenges and consequences of using Foucault’s writings in this way will be examined in the following chapter.

In addition to the identification of these polarities, three other areas are noteworthy from this process of reflection.

- Issues of culture, and their more local manifestations in ideologies and discourses, the hegemonies they facilitate and the way that knowledge is thereby legitimized have been ever-present epistemological themes. I am greatly indebted to a number of writers who have helped me develop insights in these areas.

- The ‘other’, its role in education, as knowledge resource, its place in cultural movement mediated by education, and the Bible itself as ‘other’ is also implicit in much of my thinking. It will become explicit and increasingly significant as my argument develops.

- The impact of the decline of the church. The decline numerically of the traditional denominational churches including the Methodist Church has been regularly charted.
In round terms, Methodist membership has declined from over 750,000 in 1950 to 370,000 by 2000.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} Details can be found in Davie 1994 p.45ff and other information available through a variety of sources in particular, www.methodistchurch.org.uk/information, building on the Church Life Profile, based on the work of Escott, P. & Gelder, A., published by Churches Information for Mission 2002.
CHAPTER TWO

DEVELOPING A METHOD

The influence of Foucault

As I have already indicated, in the move from personal reflection to the analysis that arises from it I will be heavily indebted to the writings of Michel Foucault. I will draw on his thought to refine the problematizing and deconstructive approach on which I have set out. The archaeological and genealogical methods he has developed will be essential to the analysis of my case study material. His insights into the nature of power and its relationship with knowledge will stimulate my thinking and enable me to address my question. The approach he brings to analyzing power relations will supplement the polarities I have developed to enable me to handle the data provided by my case study material.

The deconstructive approach

There are strong reasons for turning to Foucault in this way. The questions I am dealing with are complex, in the sense that they are overlapping and multidisciplinary, and emerge from the ideologically plural context of Western Europe that is reflected in the style and the context of Foucault’s writings. My approach is at heart deconstructive, questioning the patterns of power operating behind the practice. I understand this process as essentially emancipative, recognizing that in a plural culture, cultural hegemonies are necessarily relativised.

'Two Lectures' from 'Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977' (Foucault 1980) have been a seminal text in my approach to Foucault. There he
explores the notion of ‘a return to knowledge’ He detects in this journey a process that he
describes as ‘an insurrection of subjugated knowledges’. These knowledges are subjugated
because they have been ‘buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or
systematization’, and because they ‘have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or
insufficiently elaborated’. For Foucault ‘it is through the reappearance of this knowledge,
of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its
work’ (1980 p82-84). The questions and resulting polarities I have described, and the case
study of the Methodist church which I will undertake, open up the possibility of discerning
such ‘local’ knowledges, and not just in terms of content but in terms of ‘local’ methodology
and context as well.

Such an approach clearly sets the deconstructive course. As I analyze my data,
watching for traces of such knowledges and discerning mechanisms of control and
disqualification or marginalization and localization, the role that adult Christian
education and the wider church has and is playing in this through its engagement with
the Bible will provide the major component of my deconstructive approach. In so far
as the problematizing, deconstructive process gives voice to the other, the notions of
local, popular, marginal and disqualified knowledges are highly significant in my
context. It is there that the voice of the unconfined other can often begin to be heard
and recognized, and the Bible, which has in itself a strong sense of the other, used to
endorse and support it. The pejorative terms often used to marginalize such
knowledges is evidence of tactics used to control them and the other they represent.
Such engagement with the other and its management is a recurring theme of this
thesis. It has already begun to appear in the sketches of Chapter 1. The polarities that
emerged provide tools for recognizing the power games and the problematizing and
deconstruction process necessary to understand them.

The reflections from Chapter 1 already suggest too that in terms of power relations a complex set of games is being played out at a number of levels. The appropriate analogy would be the school playground, with its appearance of chaos, but discrete games being played each with their own rules and boundaries that nevertheless overlap, merge, interfere with each other and reconfigure. The case study will tighten the focus, but never quite exclude other movements.

In part these power games played in the arena of adult Christian education are about attempts at control of content in Bible use. They are made at a number of levels from the central (denominational) authority, using lectionary for content and accreditation for teachers,¹ to essentially local games played by individual churches and teachers, and of course the learner. The motivation and goals of attempts at control will appear from the analysis of uses.

A constant is the problematic nature of the Bible as an epistemological resource, expressed not only in terms of content, but also in thoughts about otherness and hauntology, that makes it at one and the same time so powerful and persistent in its appeal and so unreliable in its diversity. These will be explored by examining the role it plays in the course of the analysis of power relations.

¹ Various forms of ‘accreditation’ from ordination training to Local preacher training to other lay training courses, e.g. Disciple see below Chapter 7.
A particular question arises over the legitimacy of applying deconstructive techniques and language from other disciplines to the religious context. There is, of course, something in the nature both of Christianity and of education that is already problematizing and deconstructive. As I have made clear my approach is shaped by liberation and contextual theologies based on a hermeneutic of suspicion and the identification of structural sin that generates an analysis of power and cultural domination reflecting an increasing awareness of the human sciences. That this approach coheres with Foucault’s writings is made clear by Carrette,

Religion for Foucault was always a set of force relations and discursive practices which order human life. ... Religion is therefore positioned inside a political struggle of knowledge-power. In this way Foucault provides a radical framework to question the politics of all religious and theological thinking. He brings religion back into history and back into the immanent struggle of identity and subjectivity.

Carrette 2000 p.32

Carrette therefore makes the case for the use of a Foucauldian approach to matters within the religious field:

Foucault’s work provides a critical apparatus in which to challenge the epistemological assumptions of religious and theological thinking. He provides us with new ways to reconceptualize and ‘think differently’ about religion. Foucault’s work is a critical project which strategically breaks open the hegemonic structures which have ordered Western religious thinking and subjectivity. He provides ways to allow ‘difference’ and the ‘other’ a voice.

Carrette 2000 p.9

Since education within the churches can be understood as one of the ways of establishing and maintaining such hegemonic structures, deconstructing such a

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2 The notion of sin in a traditional theological perspective operates in a deconstructive way with its problematizing of all human motivation and action, and in effect points towards a decentering of the subject.

3 In addition, some writers have noticed the parallels in Foucault’s work with the ‘apophatic’ tradition in theology that emphasizes the absolute transcendence of God making every statement about God problematic as a result. As far as the former is concerned, it links with the notion of transcendence, and if I am correct in understanding that the French word ‘enfranchissement’ used for transcendence also translates as ‘transgress’ then the category of sin could also function in that way.
process goes to the heart of the matter. The providing of ways to allow ‘difference’ and ‘the other’ a voice, takes me to the heart of the Bible education project as will become clear in the second part of this thesis. In response to the possibility that such a process is entirely destructive, Carrette continues, ‘what Foucault offers is a project of political disruption, not an anarchic chaos, but a ‘problematization’ of the practices of normalization and control (Carrette 2000 p.9).

In Foucault’s terms the critic or intellectual has a responsibility to adopt the processes of problematization and deconstruction:

The role of an intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. By what right would he do so? ... The work of an intellectual is not to shape others’ political will; it is, though the analysis that he carries out in this field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people’s mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to re-examine rules and institutions and on the basis of this re-problematization (in which he carries out his specific task as an intellectual) to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role as citizen to play).

Carrette 2000 p.11

Put in this way, the process though painful is entirely creative in the longer term if appropriate change can be developed from critique.

To suggest therefore that the religious field is in some way beyond the legitimate scope of a deconstruction or more precisely that it constitutes a separate territory in which it is illegitimate to apply analytical tools from other disciplines would be mistaken. Carrette makes the case that,

Foucault’s work demonstrates ... a culture cannot understand itself without first understanding its implicit connection and development within the constructs of religious belief and practice. (I would argue

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4 Education can take on many functions, not all of them problematizing, but within the transformative and emancipative parts part of the spectrum there are clear problematizing features.
that the reverse is also true) Contemporary culture is born out of religious traditions and the conditions of our knowledge are therefore embedded in religious discourse. [Emphasis mine] The so-called secular space is itself a hybrid of past religious traditions, and in order to understand contemporary culture Foucault recognized (and was fascinated by) the religious influences upon thought and practice.

Carrette 2000 p.33

I will return to this point regularly. It stands as a summary of significant parts of my argument. It makes the task of deconstruction in order to understand imperative for me. It is what lies behind my simple question ‘How...?’ It raises the issue of the impact of cultural diversity on a particular micro-culture, ideology, discourse or hegemony and points up the complexity of the questions I will be facing. It raises the question of the way tradition has shaped the conditions of knowledge. Particularly when I explore the importance of Derrida’s notion of ‘hauntology’ with reference to the Bible, the way it has shaped the traditions and conditions of our knowledge, the relation of contemporary cultures and religious traditions will be a constant concern. It also warns against too simple a view of institutional or cultural power tactics. Foucault recognizes that power relations are ‘rooted deep in the social nexus’, they are ‘not a supplementary structure over and above ‘society’ whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of’ (Foucault 2002 p.343). The fundamental point of anchorage for relationships, Foucault insists, is to be found outside the institution, and this needs to be reflected in any conclusions about power relations. This raises cautionary questions for adult Christian education and the need eventually to set the power games of Bible use in adult Christian education in the wider context of contemporary society and culture. The values and practices of adult Christian education are not separate from those of wider society nor can they avoid their impact. Cultural norms work tacitly and are often unacknowledged in adult Christian education’s discourse about itself.
Archeology and Genealogy

Foucault’s deconstructive process uses methods of archaeology and genealogy.

The genealogical path of investigating the ‘historical knowledge of struggles’ and ‘the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today’ (Foucault 1980 p. 83) has many attractions. Rabinow describes the intention of the processes and their relationship as follows:

Criticism is ‘a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not (sic) that of making a metaphysics possible; it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method...[I]t will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think...it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and as wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.

Foucault 2000a p.xxxv

A genealogical design will be at the heart of my method, and its chronological, historical style will be in evidence in my examination of the documents of my case study. For the main part of my data analysis however I will be following rather his path of ‘archaeology’ – albeit a rather contemporary archaeology. I will investigate my contemporary complex educational case study to discern what patterns of power emerge, what are their epistemological consequences and how my question can be answered.5

5 Such methodology has great appeal. Intuitively it appears to me to be the way things work. That is not an attempt to avoid establishing an argument. It is rather about recognizing the context and culture of my thought.
I recognize that there are risks attached to using this sort of categorization as the terms are not always clearly defined, and there are persistent questions in addition about the nature of the archive as it is seen to be applied in Foucault's own writings.

Nevertheless, and despite their possibly problematic status, archaeology and genealogy together provide an invaluable tool of deconstruction. My area is bedevilled by lack of clarity. The theological discourse and particularly the hortatory techniques that are used to sustain it can make a virtue of obscurity. Confusion is commonplace when dealing with the power issues associated with culture, the role and processes of education, the dominant ideologies and hegemonies. Foucault's tools enable investigation of a range of issues that are found in the same 'archaeological layer', but that because of the domination of particular discourses at the point of analysis, be it theological, educational, epistemological or sociological, may not usually be engaged with together. The archaeological approach enables a multi-disciplinary investigation. It also works particularly well with the case study method that has so much resonance with Foucault's own approach (Carrette 2000 p.11).

My approach is essentially descriptive and interpretative. Again that matches well with Foucault's own. Faubion describes how Foucault uses archaeology to attempt to describe the domain of knowledge by aiming the technique at the 'threshold of epistemologization', that point at which it is possible to uncover discursive practices as they give rise to a corpus of knowledge. Education can be seen as a key

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6 The focus is on knowledge as 'savoir' – 'things to be known with greater rigor from one instance to the next', made up of discourses, in contrast with the Foucauldian use of 'connaissance' suggesting 'knowledge tied to highly developed apparatuses of justification and modes of competence.' (Faubion in Foucault 2002 p.xxv)
discursive practice the impact of which can be detected at this threshold. The question 'how?' can expose the nature of that impact within my chosen area.

My research suggests such practices are inevitably varied. There are those that are clearly intentional, or at least aiming to be so. The point Foucault makes that power relations are rooted outside the social nexus means that any intention partakes of an intentionality beyond itself. There will consequently be a significant presence of tacit intention in every practice that will only begin to manifest itself at the threshold point. Other discursive practices might be interpreted as deteriorations from a more coherent original, the result of traditions ‘wearing out’ by losing early vision or experiencing contextual change. Others may be entirely unarticulated or unreflected, a movement of the creative impulse towards Foucault’s knowledge as ‘savoir’.

I would argue that the discursive practices in which education engages with knowledge in the adult Christian education use of the Bible are ‘actions upon the actions of others’, and can therefore be appropriately investigated in Foucault’s terms as power relations. At a number of key points his writings on the nature of power and approaches to its analysis are therefore of the greatest importance for me.

The Nature of Power

Power ... operates on the field of possibilities in which the behaviour of active subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions.

Foucault 2002 p.341

The whole issue of the way that cultural norms act tacitly within actions is also reflected in educational theory in the writings of Argyris and Schon 1974 when they explore theories ‘in use’ and ‘espoused’.
For someone attempting the description and analysis of educational issues such a
description is irresistible in its echoes of the educational task. For my purposes
therefore it is all the more surprising that Foucault does not engage more with
education in his exploration of the nature of power. This is particularly the case with
his writing on Pastoral Power and the resulting analyses.

In *The Subject and Power* Foucault (2002 p.326ff) traces the power technique that he
designates ‘pastoral power’ from its origins in the church to its further development in
the modern state. It is interesting in terms of sources how Foucault develops his
description from the twin sources of ancient Christian literature, including
monasticism, and the Bible.\(^8\) He offers a four point description of its original
character:

1. It is a form of power whose ultimate aim is to assure individual
salvation in the next world.
2. Pastoral power is not merely a form of power that commands; it
must also be prepared to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of
the flock. Therefore it is different from royal power, which
demands a sacrifice from its subjects to save the throne.
3. It is a form of power that looks after not just the whole community
but each individual in particular, during his entire life.
4. Finally, this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing
the inside of people’s minds, without exploring their souls, without
making them reveal their inmost secrets. It implies a knowledge of
the conscience and an ability to direct it …it is linked with a
production of truth – the truth of the individual himself.\(^7\)

Foucault 2002 p333

These four features will be an important part of my archaeological context as I reflect
on my question and the data. They are foundational for any understanding of power
relations in the church, but Foucault suggests that these power techniques were taken
up by the state, and three modifications resulted:

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\(^8\) In *Omnes et Singulatum*, Foucault 2002 p.308ff.
1. A change in objective, as a result of which salvation takes on different meanings and becomes located in this world.

2. The officials of pastoral power increased through emerging public institutions such as the police; ancient institutions such as the family taking on pastoral functions and the development of ‘complex structures’ such as medicine.

3. Finally, the multiplication of the aims and agents of pastoral power focused the development of knowledge of man around two roles: one, globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population; the other, analytical, concerning the individual.

Foucault 2002 p.335-6

What has resulted Foucault argues is a form of power that is ‘both individualizing and totalizing’ (Foucault 2002 p.332).

This is all too brief a summary of Foucault’s analysis of pastoral power. There are a number of contentious points about such a theory that are beyond the scope of this present thesis. As a basis for my argument therefore I will work with the notion of pastoral power as a given and focus my concerns about its adequacy at one particular point.

Given the totalizing and individualizing technique of pastoral power and the intentionally adult educational nature of much of the ancient Christian literature that Foucault makes his starting point, education is arguably the significant method by which hegemonies assert themselves and ideologies are passed on, imposed or embraced. It is the point at which power and knowledge engage critically in the shaping of the values of a culture, of developing and sustaining a ‘habitus’. It is a point at which individuality engages with totalizing movements, be they of the state,
of the churches, of the culture or of sub-cultural movements. As children and again as adults involved as learners education raises acutely the issue of subjectivity. In schools, colleges and churches the educational, and, in special ways, the adult educational project is the location of antagonisms of strategies generating points of resistance to mechanisms of subjection. In terms of ‘pastoral power’ I would argue that education, and adult Christian education in particular within its specific context, is its major mechanism.\(^9\) The reason for such neglect of education may lie in a personal ‘hauntology’ of Foucault’s, the confessional. This institution dominates his thinking at a number of points.\(^10\) Its presence is particularly evident in the fourth of the characteristics of the original pastoral power that he offers, the need ‘to know the inside of minds’ in order to exercise power. While such an insight springing from a Roman Catholic context clearly has weight, it needs to be set alongside the different experience that develops in a Protestant context where the key institution is likely to be the pulpit, and preaching rather than confession is the point at which the exercise of power is attempted.

It was from the pulpit that the attempt to educate in order to shape, control or otherwise exercise power developed, particularly in the Puritan tradition that has been such a major influence. The pulpit and its sermons were the tool for creating and sustaining a culture and its values. As such, of course the pulpit provides an early and dominant locus of adult education, training or teaching.

\(^9\)Foucault does not address education as a distinct issue in relation to religion. He touches on it when he writes, ‘it (the revolutionary movement in Iran) had the institutional solidity of clergy whose hold over the people was strong and whose political ambitions were intense.’ (Foucault 1999 p.132) Unfortunately for my thesis and for the issue of understanding education Foucault makes no analysis of the techniques of this power or of the possible role of the Quran in it. He therefore did not investigate how the ‘hold’ had been developed, which surely must have involved educational elements.

\(^10\) E.g. Foucault 1999 p.154
The totalizing intention and potential of the pulpit and its descendants appears considerable. Given its Reformation origins as a reaction against the manipulative possibilities and implicit power structures of the confessional its individualization possibilities are inevitably much less. A number of techniques, among them the hortatory that I shall investigate below, have developed to counter that. The huge educational effort over the centuries is evidence of an attempt both to respect individual subjectivity and at the same time to exert increasing control. Education in such a context can serve as a more effective instrument of individualization and totalization than the pulpit. There is an epistemological difference at this point, to do with the use of knowledge. The knowledge education engages with is not the knowledge of intimate investigation of the soul. The subject is located in a different place.

It is interesting that Foucault is able to recognize something approaching this point in the writings that I have been drawing from, and his insight points to the key educational resource and tool of the pulpit, the Bible. In his overview of historical power developments he identifies the Reformation as the main ‘expression and result’ of struggles against subjectivity and submission, and identifies particularly ‘the need to take a direct part in spiritual life, in the work of salvation, in the truth that lies in the book- all that was a struggle for a new subjectivity.’ As I will argue, the struggle continues in a different context, and on different fronts, but the Bible at least remains part of the conflict\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{11} Reflection on pastoral power and the shepherd metaphor (Foucault 2002 p.309) suggests a subversion in the technology of pastoral power when the shepherd is re-identified as Christ through the Bible. This might be called ‘the pentecostal move’. These reflections of Foucault on the Lost Sheep and its development in the church are very interesting. However, the root parable and metaphor are ones of benevolent control and individualization within that context, not of individualizing education that puts the future of the flock and the responsibility of the shepherd at risk.
Foucault does, of course, recognize the significance of educational institutions if only briefly. In a discussion of ‘How Power is Exercised?’ he identifies the educational institution as a place where the disciplining of societies has been effected as an increasingly controlled, more rational, and economic process of adjustment has been sought between productive activities, communications networks and the play of power relations.

Foucault 2002 p.339

The question that is being faced in such a context is how ‘new forms of subjectivity’ can be promoted given the need that he argues to ‘refuse the kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries’, by pastoral power patterns. This can be done only when the exercise of power is understood, and so Foucault invites the question, ‘How?’ not in the sense of ‘How does it manifest itself?’ but, ‘How is it exercised?’ and ‘What happens when individuals exert (as we say) power over others?’(Foucault 2002 p.336)

For Foucault, pastoral power is characteristic of the modern state. Having emerged from the church however, such power techniques still linger there however much the ecclesiastical has lost its vitality since the eighteenth century (Foucault 2002 p.333).

In my playground metaphor, pastoral power can provide the analytical framework not only for the whole, but also for individual games that partake of that whole, particularly if they have contributed so significantly to its character. Foucault’s suggestions on the analysis of power relations can therefore provide an effective way forward, and the question ‘How?’ that opens up the area of use provides the way forward.
An analysis of power relations

I would like to suggest another way to go further toward a new economy of power relations, a way that is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and one that implies more relation between theory and practice. It consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategy.

Foucault 2002 p.329

As I address my question ‘How?’ this examination of the points of resistance will provide an entry point for me. Contested areas provide in my data a clear indication of where forms of resistance are taking place, and following Foucault will provide a starting point or catalyst for my analysis.

In his examination of these antagonisms, Foucault lists a number of characteristics that they share. They are not limited by geographical or political context; their target is power effects, presumably rather than root causes; they look therefore at the immediate enemy rather than the chief enemy; they are struggles that question the status of the individual, that is against the ‘government of individualization’; and of particular interest to me,

they are an opposition to the effects of power linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification – struggles against the privileges of knowledge. But they are also an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and mystifying representations imposed on people ... What is questioned is the way in which knowledge circulates and functions, its relations to power. In short the regime of knowledge.\(^\text{12}\)

Foucault 2002 p.330

\(^\text{12}\) Once again this last category points directly to education and its methods as an arena of essential investigation. The notion of ‘mystifying representations’ will be significant in my discussion of hortatory power.
Foucault suggests that three types of struggles share these characteristics: against forms of domination; against exploitation; and ‘against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission.’ (Foucault 2002 p.331) Elements of each struggle will appear in my data and need to be considered in any analysis, but of course, as Foucault himself points out, the struggle against forms of subjection is the one that is of greatest concern in my context. It is likely to be most helpful in identifying any point of contestation, but I will need to take into account his warning about the characteristic of focusing on the immediate rather than chief enemy.

Foucault offers a pattern of analysis of power relations that I will set out to work with in this thesis. It provides a process of analysis that can develop a start from contested areas observed in my data and offers possibilities for the application of the polarities that I developed in Chapter 1. Its use also tests the applicability of its usefulness as an analytical tool.

There are five elements or ‘points to be established’ in Foucault’s analysis of power relations. As will become clear I am not treating them as necessarily consecutive. They are:

1. **The system of differentiations** that permits one to act upon the actions of others – ‘every relationship of power puts into operation differences that are, at the same time, its conditions and its results.’

2. **The types of objectives** pursued by those who act upon the actions of others, through maintenance, accumulation, or exercise of power or resource.

3. **Instrumental modes**: the examination of these modes is crucial in this analysis for me. They offer the starting point when the question of use is asked and the
evidence that is provided of resistance or points of contestation provide the entry for me to the analytical process.

4. **Forms of institutionalization**: from traditional forms like the family with its customary and legal characteristics; ‘closed’ organizations with specific regulations, location and structures such as military, educational or presumably ecclesiastical organizations to very complex organizations like the state.

5. **Degrees of rationalization**: that indicates how the exercise of power is elaborated, transformed, organized, and how it endows itself with processes adjusted to the situation.

I would argue that this analysis can clarify the point at which legitimizing ideological resources are deployed, although the way in which Foucault describes this area suggests it may be more about technique rather than articulation and so account has to be taken of the tacit nature of this element. In that case articulation and legitimation may be a further development and an additional point to be established. For the purposes of my analysis however I will extend Foucault’s definition to include the ideological legitimation element (Foucault 2002 p.334).

Foucault is careful to provide a disclaimer for the analysis of power he provides. It is, he says, neither a theory nor a methodology. Given the inevitable academic caution this is a salutary note for me, and one that I am happy to work with. However the tentative nature of the approach while on the one hand creatively open is also frustrating in its limited number of checks and guidelines. Foucault has opened the area up for me with brilliant illumination; the map he provides for this new territory feels somewhat impressionistic. I hope to provide more detail however by using the
polarities I identified in Chapter 1 alongside his analytical suggestions as part of my archaeological approach.

These polarities will prove of considerable value in supplementing Foucault’s various proposals and precautions in dealing with power and knowledge. As I have already noted in establishing the value of contested areas as an entry point, Foucault suggests that in moving toward a new economy of power relations, the consideration of ‘antagonisms of strategies’ is essential. Such a sense of tension has strong echoes with my own development of polarities. I chose that term rather than, for instance, ‘dichotomies’ because I wanted so suggest the gravitational pull, the relationship that each pole exerted on the other, rather than their separateness. Their difference binds them together. They are in opposition, but one would not survive without the other. They determine each other’s characteristics and operation. This point is regularly made by Foucault, that each movement of power produces its counter movement, its opposition.

This is particularly endorsed by Foucault’s contention that power and freedom are not mutually exclusive facts, but offer a much more complicated interplay. ‘The power relationship and freedom’s refusal to submit cannot (therefore) be separated’ (Foucault 2002 p.342). Again, I would argue that education is perhaps the major strategy servicing this relationship and resource of freedom’s refusal. When the balance in the educational project tips too far one way or the other the relationship breaks down and a level of panic can produce attempts at coercion and certainly in adult education that is almost by definition voluntary, the failure of the project, the
loss of polar tension, and for instance in the case of the church, the decline of the institution.

**Power and Education**

As I have already noted, *Two Lectures* has been profoundly influential for me in my engagement with Foucault. A number of the points made there need to be considered in the light of the case study I am undertaking, particularly the ‘precautions’ that usefully supplement the analytical tools I intend to work with.

Foucault suggests two ‘mechanisms’ of power – the sovereignty model and ‘disciplinary power’ – where a ‘polymorphous disciplinary mechanism’ allows a society of normalization to emerge. There are clear implications of this notion for understanding the origins of Methodism in the eighteenth century. Given the way in which Methodist ideology so fervently recalls its origins in forming its policies, strategies and tactics, there will be implications for my research as well. The issue of the valuing and understanding of ‘fellowship’ with its roots in the disciplinary mechanism of Methodist classes together with the decay of disciplinary power and of the classes as institutional will emerge as key themes and will give Foucault’s suggestion significance. The role that education plays, and the nature of the education and knowledge developed at this ‘threshold of epistemologization’, in the development of fellowship arguably has its roots in disciplinary power and there are likely to be relics of that in current discursive practices.

The sovereignty model is always likely to make an appearance where theology, worship and the pulpit work with the rhetoric of the ‘Kingdom of God’ and sovereignty language. Hortatory power regularly develops its rhetoric and ideology if only fitfully. However,
Methodism is a product of disciplinary power although the ideologies and techniques of pastoral power remain dominant.

Precautions

In his second lecture Foucault recommends five ‘methodological precautions’ to be observed in examining the mechanisms of power.

A number of points are important. In his discussion of the sovereignty model of power, Foucault says that we should be concerned not with power at the centre where it is observable in its regulated form, but with power in local manifestations ‘at the extreme points of its exercise’ (Foucault 1980 p.97). His second precaution extends this concern, aiming to locate power ‘where it installs itself and produces its real effects’. This is significant as it is in these marginal and local church situations beyond the academically competent ‘centre’ that I want to understand what is going on in the ‘power games’ associated with the use of the Bible. My case study will make that possible, but because of the complexity of Methodist structures this is not such a straightforward point as it might appear. As noted above, Methodism is not founded on a sovereignty model. There are points in the playground of games at which it is convenient to local players to act as if it is. Part of the fascination and the challenge of my case study is to recognize when such games

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13 The Methodist Church is a voluntary organization. It has a democratic structure to allow its members a voice in its operations. It also has a bureaucratic national management body in the Connexional Team. The gatherings of District Chairs add a further locus of power. Great power resides at local level as well, although not as much as in some ecclesiological patterns. At work across all these groups are a variety of discourses. For example, a characteristically Anglican agenda with a concern for the geographical expression of the church community sits uneasily alongside a style of gathered church congregationalism. Both in different ways struggle with the notion of Connexionalism as a network of mutual unity and support. The centralizing tendencies are therefore inevitably diffuse. They work at a dispersed ideological level every bit as effectively as a centralized body might. This is an issue that I will need to return to later in the thesis, in particular to my developing notions of ‘hortatory power’. For now I note that Foucault raises it in the theoretical framework that I will work with.
are played, and in particular of course the ways both adult Christian education and the Bible become part of them. Local hegemonies can in some circumstances appear to suggest a locally sovereign model at work, but there is no simple hierarchical pattern at work and these precautions remind us of that. Foucault’s suggestion is timely, that ‘rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us...we should try to discover how it is that the subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted....’(Foucault 1980 p.97) The constitution of the subject through adult Christian education and its use of the Bible within the contexts of pastoral and hortatory power will be the major focus of the later chapters of this thesis.

A third precaution requires the analysis of power using metaphors of a chain or net. Power is something that circulates and individuals ‘are always in the position of undergoing and exercising this power’ and are ‘at the same time an effect of power or... the element of its articulation’ (Foucault 1980 p.98). I have made this point in different ways above. My playground metaphor echoes it although with less sense of constraining inevitability. Certainly I would see education as constituting significant links in the chain, and the Bible a resilient resource. This leads to the fourth precaution, which is the need for ‘an ascending analysis of power’, dealing with ‘the procedures of power entering into play at the most basic level’ (Foucault 1980 p.99). My case study process will enable me to deal with my question in this way. With the fifth precaution, Foucault suggests that major mechanisms of power have been accompanied by ideological productions. There are ideological productions indicating major mechanisms of power at work very clearly in my area and their identification will be a major part of my task. Ideological production, its resources and processes, is used to legitimate practices of power. Education and narrative are used to shape contexts and cultures. The way such resources operate is precisely the area of my
investigation. At this point, and particularly as the Bible is so closely involved in the issues I will turn to the approach to ideological understanding offered by Ricoeur.

Critique

To adopt a methodology inspired by Foucault’s approach is filled with both threat and promise. Foucault himself is fully aware of this issue as can be seen in his own various disclaimers. This is a helpful reminder of the fluidity, openness and unfinished nature of his work.

There are two areas that impact on this thesis. The first concerns understandings of power, and in the light of what has already been written, is relatively easily dealt with. The second raises fundamental questions about case study as a research method.

Power

In the first of Two Lectures, Foucault raises the question of the ‘mechanism’ of power (as I want to do with relation to adult education and the Bible). He suggests that ‘power is essentially that which represses’ (Foucault 1980 p.89-90), but goes on alongside this domination-repression model to offer a model of struggle, conflict and war.

I am uncomfortable, particularly in my present context, with this Marxist/Freudian generated sense of struggle that appears in the earlier writings. In his later writings

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14 Foucault's writings have come under serious critique from a number of writers. A full discussion of the issues is beyond the scope of this thesis, although clearly, further developments of the arguments explored here, as suggested in Chapter 12, would require a more extensive debate.
and as he develops a theory of pastoral power and engages with the notion of the ‘care of self’ a more benign interpretation appears of power as the currency of human relationships – something closer to the ‘integrative function’ of ideologies that I find in Ricoeur, below.

Case study

Foucault faces considerable criticism over the problems of ‘archive’. In terms of this thesis there are two issues. The first concerns the arbitrariness of choices of the data he investigates. In response to this point, Carrette makes the point that Foucault’s work needs to be considered on grounds other than those that would be applied to history for instance. What Foucault does is more akin to ‘case study’ than to history and on those grounds criticism of the archive can be handled.

Foucault’s work has so easily been criticized from the perspective of the archive that it should now be apparent that Foucault is not an ‘historian’ in any traditional sense, but someone using historical material to illuminate ‘specific’ struggles. … Cousins and Hussain made this point early on in Foucault scholarship. They saw Foucault’s works as more like ‘case studies’ than historical records, and to confuse the genre is to misunderstand Foucault.

Carrette 2000 p.11

In his discussion of the way in which Foucault handles the subject of confession, Carrette emphasizes the point:

If we accept that Foucault is not concerned with the Christian confession, but with the techniques of ‘truth’ within Christianity, then his study is freed from being weighed down by specific chronologies of history; it is as Cousins and Hussain indicate, to see Foucault’s work

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15 Foucault, 2000a, p.223ff.

16 ‘You’ll object: “but that’s only the utopia of some obscure author. You can hardly deduce any significant consequences from it!” But I say: Turquet’s book is but one example of a huge literature circulating in most European countries of the day. ….’ (Foucault, 2002 p. 319)

‘Foucault’s entire discussion of the concept of confession lacks sufficient theoretical weight from which to establish any coherent position’ … ‘Foucault is strategically utilizing ‘confession’ to exemplify a number of underlying practices’ (Carrette 2000 p.38)
as a ‘case history’. Such case histories ‘make a problem intelligible by reconstituting its conditions of existence and its conditions of emergence. This does not make them indifferent to evidence but merely means they handle evidence in a different way.’ Foucault makes use of ‘true documents’ from Christian history to bring about a new understanding of the religious subject.

Carrette 2002 p.39

There is a danger here of special pleading, and also perhaps of a lack of recognition of the selectivity that is part of historical methodology. However, the problem for the case study is the scope of its possible generalization given the data under investigation. Foucault is often cautious in his claims, and if a similar caution is observed the case study can be valuable research tool.\(^\text{17}\)

A second problem is closely linked and in terms of practical application in this thesis, more acute. It is that of determining limits to the data under consideration. That of the tension between a terribly diffuse and ill-defined area of concern, one that links inevitably into other areas until you feel driven to consider the whole culture and history, and at the other extreme, an over-determined area such as the theologically controlled discussion of Bible and education. Such a tension is a constant challenge to me and Foucault faced the same sorts of issue. How far he was or even could be successful in resolving them is open to question even in the light of Carrette’s defence.\(^\text{18}\)

The archive of a case study such as mine not only has a ‘horizontal’ cultural context (a sort of geographical/archaeological dimension) it also has ‘depth’, in terms of

\(^{17}\) See Appendix 2, below.

\(^{18}\) See for instance the criticism made by Dews in McNay 1994, p.101.
cultural history (a sort of time/genealogical dimension). Any of the human sciences can provide roads to travel on and the project thus becomes very complex and is always open the charge of arbitrariness.

The points at which I consider I have enough evidence to justify description and analysis will have to be my own decision, controlled by resources and time, and by my own judgment in the light of research goals and criteria. At the root of the problem is the fact that the areas I am dealing with, religious and theological systems with potentially endless local variations and complications are highly undifferentiated. My approach to the Bible is not one that has been written on in detail before, so I am left with a mass of potential material to handle and the location of useful writings is highly serendipitous. Education of course provides both theory and methodology to help make the question manageable. Even so, some of the educational problems generated by the use of the Bible, for instance the authority of ‘book’, or the epistemological functioning of sacred texts in shaping educational processes are new questions that have not been widely written on.

It is of the nature of case study that it invites a multi-disciplinary approach. I start with data gathered in a way in which I am concerned not to miss any unanticipated nuance. I need to remain open to allow for the possible impact on interpretation of the range of human sciences. The study of a particular micro-culture demands to be understood in its totality, its local diversity and its context. A case study may focus on discreet elements, but it cannot disregard the others.
Moreover once the process of problematizing begins, by its very nature of questioning and deconstruction its possibilities can expand exponentially. The question has to be asked - is there a point at which problematizing stops? I would argue that there is not, but that does create issues when it has to be recognized that ‘points of triangulation’ themselves are problematic.\textsuperscript{19}

The other problem of course is the danger of avoiding the complexity by being too narrow in scope. I have attempted to address that by using a multiple case study with data from two Biblical adult educational projects each with distinctive features, both firmly within the Methodist context. I have extended that context with documentary analysis and personal reflection that identifies some of the presuppositions with which I am working and the limits that they will set for my thinking.

Fundamentally these problems are endemic to the case study method, yet I would strongly contend that it is entirely appropriate for my subject, not least because of the success Foucault has demonstrated with his essentially similar approach in other problematic areas.

I settled on the case study methodology, above all in the light of the fourth ‘precaution’, because it enables me to investigate ‘the procedures of power entering into play at the most basic level’ (Foucault 1980 p.99). I have shown that the question emerged from reflections on personal experiences that demonstrated a case study quality. The case study offers a valuable way of asking my open-ended questions

\textsuperscript{19} ‘These religious systems (or the validity claims they raise) are too undifferentiated to be accessible to rational critique; the ideological method in other words, is wrapped up in a mishmash of sacred and profane beliefs.’ (Outhwaite 1994 p.93)
about power relations demonstrated in and facilitated by the use of particular epistemological resources. It can set the question in its context in a way that can take account of the various factors, local and more widely cultural that impact on those relations. It can identify discourses and the way they shape and are shaped by values and norms, and in doing this it can avoid the imprecision of data and the unverifiable generalization that is a constant threat to qualitative research by its examination of evidence in a restricted territory.

Epistemological tools
Ricoeur provides an additional range of tools for my task, particularly in the light of the fifth of Foucault’s precautions about the way major mechanisms of power are accompanied by ideological productions. Given his regular engagement with Biblical themes in his writings he offers both help and a warning. Drawing on the writings of Kuhn, Habermas and Geertz, he explores a further understanding of ideologies. An ideology, he suggests, encompasses in human community just that sort of ‘constellation of beliefs’ that Kuhn claimed for paradigms - a worldview that purports to explain, contain and define everything. Ricoeur develops his discussion of ideologies by a comparison with psychoanalysis. I found this particularly helpful, but disturbing in respect of Ricoeur’s comment that ‘the difference finally between psychoanalysis and ideology-critique is that the element of utopia in the latter is irreducible’ (Ricoeur 1981 p.171). This utopian impulse of emancipatory knowledge troubles me. Ricoeur does seem to question it himself. My reservation is one that arises from the way hortatory power uses the tactic of talk of a deliberately vague and abstract utopia to produce something that has none of the necessary utopian cutting
edge needed for ideology critique. It is a theme with which I will need to engage later in my argument at points when I examine the utopia-equilibrium polarity.

Ricoeur suggests that Habermas offers the characteristics of ideology as distortion and as a legitimation of a system of power or order. Given the nature of the suspicion that Marx and Freud have generated for me and that was so evident in Foucault, I am all too comfortable with this. It is clear to me that the Bible has been used by and can be seen as responsible for generating these sorts of ideological features. However that is clearly not the whole story even in Foucault and Ricoeur's approach is to be welcomed.

In his discussion of Geertz, (Ricoeur 1981 p.182ff) Ricoeur introduces a third feature of ideologies. This is the integrative function. 'What a group fears most', says Ricoeur, 'is no longer being able to identify itself because of crises and confusions...creating strain: the task (of ideology) is to cope with strain'. This is likely to be especially the case in a context of decline such as that in which my case study is located. It raises pastoral and ethical issues for my research that I need to investigate below. He also notes that 'Ideology functions integratively not only in the synchronic dimension (space) but also in the diachronic (time) dimension.' (Ricoeur 1981 p.189)

The exploration of this integrative function and the part played by founding events, their textual record, and the narratives generated is full of possibilities for me. The further suggestion that the integrative function identifies the ideological struggle as being about recognition not power, and the consequences of the integrative function becoming 'frozen' (Ricoeur 1981 p.191, 194) are also extremely significant.
There is a strong sense in which my whole attempt in addressing the question of use is establishing some measure of what Ricoeur describes as 'distanciation, - without which we would never become conscious of belonging to a world, a culture, a tradition.' Distanciation seems at its roots to be a way of decentering the subject, a process that will be at the heart of my argument about the consequences of deconstructing the adult educational process of the Bible. It also requires the attempt to identify the 'tacit' within ideological and cultural operation – an area where the writings of Argyris and Schon (1974) offer appropriate tools.

Ricoeur's emphasis on the metaphorical nature of Biblical language will enable me to consider the epistemological and educational nature of the function of text and sacred text, particularly in relation to narrative. His suggestion that 'all reflection is mediated, there is no immediate self-consciousness' will offer some theoretical impetus to my arguments around issues of power and control of the teaching process. His question 'what kind of being is it whose being consists in understanding?' is highly suggestive for understanding the learning process, and provides a direction to explore further my emerging epistemological conclusions.

Ricoeur is a writer who has investigated the epistemological implications of engaging with text, and with the Bible as text in particular. There will be a number of points in my archaeological sifting and analysis at which his understanding of the questions will be significant. The temptation that I will constantly face in reflecting on Ricoeur's writings is that of being drawn into the form of hermeneutical discussion located so distinctively in the theological world. If I do so I fear I will lose my grip on the issue which is of course hermeneutical, but a hermeneutics of 'function' and so
located in the world of the human sciences where patterns of power using the Bible in their distinctive ways demonstrate their nature and their impact on the shape and nature of knowledge. It is by the constant return to the archaeological task and the challenges of Foucault that I will stay on course.

**Discerning the tacit.**

Identifying the area of the tacit epistemologically and educationally will be a major issue in my deconstructive process and I need to be alert to the nature of that area and the insights and tools available for its investigation.

Glimpses of its potential impact have already been obvious in the sketches of Chapter 1. The conversation at Glastonbury exposed the contextually (culturally) shaped tacit agenda of one generation encountering another with major differences of epistemological perspective appearing. Teaching across cultures in Africa pointed up the constant challenge of ‘cultural blinkers’ and the limits of understanding and of educational processes in such situations. This is the case where divisions appear between knowledge and language. In any investigation of the truth and power games of Bible use in adult Christian education I will need to be particularly alert to this area.

The writings of Polanyi are clearly seminal in this area. His investigation of ‘the great and indispensable tacit power by which all knowledge is discovered and once discovered is held to be true’, (Polanyi 1967 p.6) ‘the whole network of tacit interactions on which the sharing of cultural life depends’ (Polanyi 1962 p.203), and
in particular the discussion of ‘the two terms of tacit knowing’ (Polanyi 1967 p.9)\textsuperscript{20} bear significantly on my findings. A full discussion of his work is beyond the scope of this thesis. My use of the notion derives additionally from the writings of Foucault and to some extent, Habermas. However, the value of the term for me is mainly to designate and explore those areas of knowledge that have fallen out of use, and thus become tacit.

The tacit is problematic. There can be no doubt that it develops, for instance, in a situation of struggle and antagonism. It can therefore be that which Foucault describes as ‘subjugated knowledge’, and that deconstruction might articulate. Carrette suggests this antagonism when he describes Foucault as having a non-essentialist view of silence, it is that which is ‘unheard, crushed or denied validity in the dominant systems of power’ (Carrette 2000 p.29).

Habermas appears to share a somewhat similar perspective. He offers an almost conspiratorial view in which the impact of ‘systems imperatives’ relies on certain knowledge remaining tacit and therefore unarticulated.

Late capitalist modernity is stabilized by the ‘fragmentation’ of everyday consciousness, in which ‘everyday knowledge ... remains diffuse, or at least never attains that level of articulation at which alone knowledge can be accepted as valid according to the standards of cultural modernity ... it is only with this that the conditions for a colonization of the lifeworld are met ... [in which] scattered perspectives of local culture cannot comprehend the intrusion of systems imperatives.

Outhwaite 1994 p.99

Of the competition between knowledges there can be no doubt. The pejorative

\textsuperscript{20}This insight bears particularly on the way that the need for belonging shapes knowledge and the uses of the Bible and education as discussed in Chapter 8, below.
discourse surrounding for instance ‘telling stories’ or ‘old wives’ tales’ and the contextual dissonance between the use of Bible stories in Sunday School with children and the use of the same stories in adult Christian education with adults offer two examples from the context of my case study.

Insights from Habermas are helpful in pointing towards a technique of recognizing the tacit. Wuthnow writes: ‘Habermas recognizes that there is a gap between the intuitively felt meanings that individuals construct as they go about their daily lives and the more generalized expressions of these meanings that are possible in language’ (Wuthnow 1984 p.195). He continues to suggest that subjective understandings may not be conscious. It is obviously the triumph of any discourse, epistemological or other, when it succeeds in driving its rivals into non-consciousness. However such understandings will ‘surface’ as part of individuals’ utterances and actions. Individual utterances therefore serve as

An indication of how seriously something is meant, whether the communicating subject is deceiving itself or others, to what degree it wants to or may identify itself with an actual expression of its own life, and how broad is the spectrum of connotation, concealment or contrary intentions.

Wuthnow 1984 p.195

It is in an attempt to recognize and work with such concerns that I adopted the semi-structured interview approach in the gathering of my data. A major challenge facing my attempt to analyze it will be my success in being sensitive to the tacit.

I would argue however that my task is made more difficult because this sense of ‘oppositional’ origin for the tacit cannot be sustained at every point. It may be that understandings, knowledge or values are not articulated because, simply, there is no need to do so. They have been accepted as cultural or ideological norms, as the
currency of life. The tacit on this view is not what has been produced by struggle but by consensus. As such it is of enormous significance to education. It provides a given arena in which discourse and encounter can take place that does not have to be constructed or argued anew at every point. It is possible in such a context that it is not the tracing of antagonisms that will reveal the tacit. What is being faced is an ideological ‘celebration’. A hegemonic completion that is welcomed, or certainly was once, colluded with, built upon and essentially forgotten. Inevitably key values, attitudes and behaviours become tacit in such a context. They are then accepted without demur, without thought. It is this area of the tacit that distanciation can give perspective on and deconstruction can address critically.

As I suggested above, it is Argyris and Schon who offer particular help at this point. Their investigation of Model 1 and Model 2 learning with its use of ‘theories-in-use’ and ‘espoused theories’ provides important insights for me into ‘the repertoire of devices by which we try to protect our theories-in-use…’ and the tactics of defence. Their recognition of the way that change can be introduced… ‘but only into espoused theory leaving theory-in-use unchanged’ provides a powerful tool for identifying the processes shaping the truth and power games at work in the educational processes of my case study (Argyris & Schon 1974 p.32-33). While I will not in this research be engaging in the attempt to implement a process of change in the way that Argyris and Schon report in ‘Theory in Practice’, I take to heart their warning that those with whom I am working in my case studies ‘are now confronted with what seems like an insurmountable challenge, since the complicated and difficult task of constructing (in my case identifying) their theories-in-use depends on simultaneously overcoming and altering the dynamics of the group in which they are trying to learn.’
Educational tools and the church

Working for the purposes of this thesis with such tools makes it clear that despite my starting point in the church, the world of theology, ecclesiology, faith and Biblical hermeneutics is not where I find the techniques for my research. Clearly though it is with aspects of the church world and its distinctive discourses that I will be engaging at significant points. Receiving and interpreting data across the discourse boundaries and being able to be critically fair to both will be a constant challenge. The two worlds have an uncomfortable record of dialogue given the truth claims of traditional approaches. They do meet, but often the process is one only of raiding, attempted colonization or imperialism. Very often this happens at a tacit level, and then it is only some deconstructive process that can adequately explore the territory.

At this stage I am setting out to approach my questions from a secular educational, human sciences perspective. This has a clear precedent in the work of Lee. It is possible of course and many writers have done so, to approach the same questions from within a theological discourse, and the Biblical questions from within a textual hermeneutical tradition. The reasons why I have chosen the former way and the consequences my arguments might have for the latter will become clear as my argument develops. At this stage, the reflections arising from my initial sketches demonstrate that my approach is necessarily undertaken from a pluralist and relativist position.

21 "The reluctance of the wider theological community to explore ideas in contemporary continental philosophy because of the principle alliance of theology with analytic certainties and the resulting anxiety about ‘truth’ created by post-structuralist thinkers like Foucault.” (Carrette 2000 p.4)

22 The whole ‘pastoral’ discourse that is a feature of contemporary theological education shows clear signs of this sort of partly tacit engagement with the human sciences.

Ethical issues

The area of the tacit opens up the ethical dilemma at the heart of my research. Issues of method, ethics and intention in my research are closely associated and hard to disentangle. This is even more the case when the often unacknowledged presuppositions are taken into account. The problem has two aspects.

The first is more easily dealt with. It has to do with my relationship with my employers who are sponsoring my research into the organization for which I work, an organization in decline. Is a deconstructive approach ethical in such a situation? Is it in any way appropriate to be risking further undermining an organization in which the twin centres of my research, the Bible and adult education are seen to provide hope in the face of severe decline? When an organization is desperately looking to education to defend its ideology and therefore its own continued existence (of which I am an employed agent), should its education project be deconstructed? Could it be justified on the grounds of its liberative impact? Such a question goes to the heart of the ethical intention of education, and because it does not operate in a vacuum to the ethical implications of its power games. The equilibrium/utopia polarity is powerfully engaged at this point.

My approach is to justify the educational project as ultimately liberative, therapeutic and hopeful. Foucault can be quoted to this effect. Carrette describes how Foucault suggests that the task of reflection or thought is to be deconstructive as a basis for appropriate hopefulness.

Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom.
in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.

Foucault 2000a p.xxxv.

Carrette emphasizes the ethical consequences of the argument, ‘Precisely because thought is not a given, thought is an action: and actions arising from experience and formed by thought are ethical ones.’ He continues to quote,

Despair and hopelessness are one thing; suspicion is another. And if you are suspicious, it is because, of course you have a certain hope. The problem is to know which kind of hope you have, and which kind of hope it is reasonable to have in order to avoid what I would call not the ‘pessimistic circle’ you speak of, but the political circle which reintroduces your hopes, and through your hopes, the things you want to avoid by these hopes.”

Carrette 2000 p.xvi

However, Toll and Grumpier call attention to an aspect of Foucault’s thinking that pertains to this issue and opens up the second more difficult issue\(^2^4\). The end may be justifiable but what of the means and their cost? They quote Foucault’s description of three ‘domains’ in his genealogy of ethics:

First an historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, an historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third an historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.

Toll & Crumpler in Baker & Heyning 2004 p.237

It could be justifiable ethically to argue that my deconstruction is in the long term interests of an organization and its members even though they feel themselves to be ‘betrayed’ by deconstruction. However, such a genealogy raises the issue of whether mine might be a personal power game following just such an ethical genealogy, even

if it does not explicitly reach (and I have no intention that it should reach it) the third
‘domain’.

There is probably no way to avoid such a possible charge and it becomes more serious
when a key method of my research comes under scrutiny. It has to do with the
research interview as a method of gathering data. Toll and Crumpler have already
opened up this area with some candour*, but their context is possibly less tendentious
than my own. Their reflections make me aware that both my style of interviewing, devel oped as part of my personal history in the context of pastoral care in a local
church setting, and the position and authority I carry in virtue of my status and role in
the church may mean that I am in danger of not conducting a genuinely research
interview.25 That is of course if in the light of their strictures such a thing could
exist. However I need to take seriously that the dynamics of what for me is
intentionally and methodologically a research interview is for the interviewees
something of the nature of the traditional pastoral conversation.

They may be experiencing a sort of pastoral/research ‘sleight of hand’, where the data
they share is being treated and used in ways they did not suspect and could not
anticipate. No pastoral intention was offered, but the tacit culture in which the
interviews took place was of traditional pastoral care with its presumed intention to
value and to build up the individual and the church. I did my best to dispel this notion
without moving to the opposite extreme of causing confusion or suspicion, but as I
have said my style is tacitly pastoral and difficult to avoid. They could conceivably

25 I can echo the situation of personal need that Toll and Crumpler recognize when they note ‘the
salvation of being a reassuring mentor’, Baker & Heyning p.389.
feel betrayed, that they had been treated as subjects, but in reality used as objects.

This issue of the researcher as located in some sense ‘outside of the inside’ and the ethical weight it carries is one at which I have had constantly to work.

Toll and Crumpler speak of the danger of the researcher ‘finding the salvation of being a good mentor’. They argue that

When the pastoral intent of researchers is understood as discursively created rather than a personal characteristic that ennobles the researcher, the dangers of interviews will be increasingly evident.

Such dangers are represented by,

The subjectivities we create, normalize or reinforce through the interview and how we are constructed by the discourses of the interview, [and suggest the appropriate response is that] our research gains integrity when we recognize and make visible in each study the manner in which the discourse of the interview constructs subjectivities and knowledges.

Toll & Crumpler in Baker & Heyning 2004 p.398

It is easier to recognize these ethical problems than to resolve them. The tacit discourse is very powerful, and the approach I am adopting beyond the scope of those who have so willingly provided data. The very difficulty offers insight into the effectiveness of the techniques of pastoral power with its simultaneous individualizing and totalizing impact. I am clearly encountering, with Foucault’s help, an ethical issue that effects other research than my own. Resolution may be impossible. The best I can offer in response is the effort at making the issue visible and the caution to be set against an easy attempt to generalize my findings.26

26 ‘When we recognize the limitation of the interview and our limitations as interviewers we are left with choices. We can construct ourselves differently, relinquishing our pastoral postures, and continue our interviews despite the risk to participants; we can construct our interviews differently, in order to make the dangers more visible to ourselves and the participants; or we can conduct our research differently, perhaps taking a genealogical approach that focuses on the effects of power’s circulation and the construction of our subjectivities in our interaction .... These issues provide ethical as well as methodological dilemmas, which may be best understood by continuing to trouble the research interview.’ Toll and Crumpler in Baker & Heyning 2004 p.401
And yet I suspect the problem is not just mine, but attaches to the whole pastoral
discourse as it has been developed in the caring structures and culture of the local
church and as Foucault has discerned it in his analysis of pastoral power. The ethics
of the pastoral discourse in either case is beyond the scope of this present thesis.
However I will venture into some areas of this territory in matters of technique and
ethics when I offer reflections on hortatory power in Chapter 10.\footnote{27}

\textbf{Case Study data}

In this chapter so far I have set out the methodological approaches I will adopt as I
engage with my reading, reflection and the data from my multiple case study. A
discussion of key aspects of the case study approach and the gathering and analysis of
data can be found in Appendix 2. Following the approach of Yin (1994), a multiple
case study coheres with the direction and analysis that I have drawn from the writings
of Foucault and others that I have explored in this chapter. With my own reflections
from Chapter 1 it has enabled me to investigate my question in its context, relying on
a number of sources of evidence.

I have gathered data for this thesis from four areas:

- My own reflective practice as contained initially in Chapter 1.
- The documentary evidence found in Chapters 3 and 4, supported by interviews.
- Interviews of participants in Whitby and Disciple in Chapters 6 and 7.
- Participant observation at Whitby.

\footnote{27 "The main objective of these struggles is to attack not so much such-and-such institution of power or
group, or elite, or class but, rather a technique or form of power. This form of power that applies itself
to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches
him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to
recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects ..." Foucault 2002 p.331}
My own involvement in the data gathering processes needs to be noted.

- Of the interviewees for the documentary data, three were colleagues in the Methodist Connexional Team. I had no involvement in the shaping of any of the documents.
- I gathered the Whitby data as a participant observer.
- I have had no involvement in the Disciple course before the data gathering processes.

Such variety means that I have had to be consistent and appropriate in the application of my analytical tools.

Yin (1994 p.123) identifies four principles necessary for high quality case study analysis methodology. Three of them have been important for me – the need to rely on all relevant evidence, to address the most significant aspect of the cases that emerge from that evidence and to bring my own prior knowledge to the case.\(^\text{28}\)

Of Yin’s required sources of evidence I bring three of the possible six that he lists (1994 p.80): documentary evidence, interviews, and participant observation.\(^\text{29}\) The chapters that follow are based on the resulting data. They enable me to follow the process that Yin sees as a strength of the case study method, of generalizing to theory (1994 p.37).

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\(^{28}\) The fourth, the inclusion of all major rival interpretations, was not open to me given the distinctive nature of my question, except on individual points that I discuss as they arise below.

\(^{29}\) I omit archival material and artifacts, the former beyond the scope of this thesis and the latter not relevant. Direct observation is Yin’s other method. I explain below why I did not use this in the Disciple groups. There is a strong sense in which my reflective practice and the experience I bring is significantly based on direct observation.
Interview data: documents and context

The documents explored in Chapters 3 and 4 were supported by five interviews. They were conducted with past and present contributors to the Methodist adult Christian education and Bible projects. The interviewees were selected because of their involvement in the production of the documents, their availability and their willingness to be interviewed. These interviews set the context for the case studies - two related to WWA, two to L&D and one to L&D and LAMP. One of the interviewees was happy to be quoted while the others accepted my offer of anonymity and confidentiality. I approached them for interview because they had been involved at some level in each of the projects. I was able to clarify with them the exact nature and purpose of my research before gaining their agreement to proceed with the interviews. I kept written notes of the interviews.

Interview data: Whitby

'The Word at Whitby' was an official project of the Connexional Team. It was a three-day conference in May 2004. Further details can be found in Chapter 6 and Appendix 2. I interviewed 12 volunteers among the participants, contributors and organizers, selected on a broadly representative basis.

Selection: The interviewees were selected on three bases:

1. I approached all members of the London Region (my area of work responsibility) who were attending the conference. Of the six approached that way, five agreed to be interviewed.

2. The four regular members of the planning group agreed to give interviews.
3. I approached three other members of the conference to provide a balance of age, gender, ordained and lay to broadly reflect the conference participation.

The results were:

- 8 lay people/4 ordained
- 6 male/6 female
- Age groups:
  - 2 aged 20-29 years,
  - 3 aged 30-39
  - 2 aged 40-49
  - 4 aged 50-59
  - 1 aged 60+
- 4 contributors and organizers/8 participants
- 1 contributor was from an Afro-Caribbean background, the others were white, British.

The interviews took place during the conference or within the following two weeks. I described as fully as possible the research purpose of the interviews, the nature of my research question and the open-ended, conversational approach I would take. I explained that the material would be anonymous and gained permission to use unaccredited quotes from the interviews if appropriate. Each interview was recorded on tape and later transcribed.

As a member of the planning group and a contributor I was involved with the project from 2002 and had access to the minutes of meetings and other information not in the public domain. As a participant observer at the conference I was party to many
informal conversations as well as the formal programme. I kept notes of these in a daily journal of personal reflections.

The analysis of the Whitby data is in Chapter 6.

*Interview data: Disciple*

‘Disciple’ is an intensive, highly structured group-based course of Bible Study for lay people. It is very popular within Methodism. Full details are to be found in Chapter 7 and Appendix 2.

*Selection:* I approached Disciple groups located geographically within the area of my work responsibility, the then London Region of the Methodist Church. I asked to meet members and leaders for individual interview, and possibly group observation. I accepted the first responses that met the timing for my research programme and that were broadly representative of the social background of the groups listed. Having received agreement in principle to meet with group members, I contacted them individually and arranged to meet them in their homes. This was the most convenient way of working and they were as a result clearly more relaxed about the process than they would have been had the meetings taken place elsewhere. However, I was aware of the ‘pastoral’ atmosphere that was inevitably created and the ethical and research issues noted above.

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30 A survey conducted in 2001 as part of my work in the London District had provided me with information about Disciple groups in each Circuit.
I also interviewed two individuals who have been leaders or members of other groups. In addition I met with the person who is responsible for Disciple at MPH and one of the national trainers.

I therefore interviewed 15 individuals in the depth and had interviews in pairs or small groups with 12 others. I was able to gather evidence from eight different Disciple groups. The two main sources were from a Circuit based around a commuter town and another based around a market town. Of the other groups amongst the eight, two were based in city Circuits, two in rural and two in suburban Circuits.

My work brings me into contact with many people who have done Disciple, and I have been able to use informal conversations with them to check the generalisability of my findings and to reflect on the material from the groups. From these wider discussions it is clear that the groups I studied were characteristic of Disciple groups generally.

The interviewees fell into the following categories:

The fifteen in-depth interviews:

- 12 lay people/3 ordained
- 5 male/10 female
- Age groups (approximate):
  - 1 aged 30-39
  - 4 aged 40-49
  - 3 aged 50-59
  - 7 aged 60+
• 4 leaders/11 students
• 1 student was of Asian origin the others were white British.

The interviews were of about 45 minutes each. They were tape recorded and transcribed. The interviewees were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. I guaranteed that any direct quotes used would be untraceable. I explained the nature and purpose of my research and took time to ensure the maximum clarity with each person.

The twelve individuals in small group interviews:
• 9 lay people/3 ordained
• 6 male/6 female
• Age groups (approximate):
  1 aged 20-29
  2 aged 40-49
  3 aged 50-59
  6 aged 60+
• 1 leader/11 students
• 2 students were black British, the others were white British.

I made hand-written notes of the conversations. I explained my research as fully as possible and assured the group of anonymity and confidentiality.

I considered taking the opportunity for direct observation of a session of the course, but I was doubtful about the quality of the material likely to be obtained. Disciple groups are intentionally tight knit with a long-term commitment. The dynamics of the session would have been significantly changed by the presence of a non-member with the sort of agenda they would be aware that I brought.
The analysis of the Disciple data is in Chapter 7.

**Interview Methods**

My approach was to encourage the interviewees to talk as openly as possible about their experience, selecting their own issues with the minimum of direction from me. However, I worked with a basic set of questions that were the same for each case to ensure that data emerged from the same 'territory' in each interview. I aimed to encourage the interviewees to talk about their motivation, experience and its perceived results. Being semi-structured in this way participants had the opportunity to develop the conversation in a way that best expressed their feelings, opinions and concerns.

**Analysis of data**

I adopted the semi-structured approach because I wanted to gain as wide a sweep of material as possible and to avoid forcing any but the broadest agenda on the interviewees. That approach would enable the most significant aspects of the case to emerge, as Yin recommends. (Yin 1994 p.123)

However a number of problems had to be faced. I was left with a relatively large amount to data to work though. Levels of articulacy varied considerably amongst the interviewees. In addition and because of that, this area of investigation is fraught with problems of terminology. The simple use of a term (e.g. 'the word of God') was no guarantee that the same thing was meant each time, even when used by the same
interviewee. Also, even with the best of interviewee intentions there was the tendency for them on the one hand to express defensiveness in support of their experience or on the other to attempt to respond to the perceived expectations of the interviewer. The ethical issues noted above needed to be taken into account again at this point.

As I set out on the task of analyzing the data, I aimed to identify dominant themes that would indicate the significant aspects of the material. I then reviewed the results in the light of the polarities and the analysis of power relations. I was aware of the problems of subjectivism, and have aimed to assess the information with due caution. At a number of points I have discussed my developing interpretations with colleagues who were not involved in the interviews or other aspects of my research and they have helped me to reflect critically upon them.

The data gathered and the analysis developed have provided me with the material I have used in the later chapters, as noted above, to generalize to theory and to draw the descriptive and analytical conclusions that are at the heart of this thesis.

\[31\] Some consequences of theological inarticulacy are explored below in the discussion of hortatory power in Chapter 10.
CHAPTER THREE

THE EDUCATION DOCUMENTS

'Training and development is not new to Methodism; it is central to its origins and core to its identity.' ('Learning and Developing as the Whole People of God': 2002^1)

In this chapter, I will:

• Identify key documents in the adult Christian education discourse of British Methodism and examine in turn:-
  • Working With Adults^2
  • Learning and Developing as the Whole People of God and Our Calling
• Identify the contested areas,
• Offer an approach to power analysis following Foucault’s model
• Reflect on the polarities in the light of the analysis

Part 1: the adult Christian education documents

To set the context for my archeological investigation I will examine a number of documents from the Methodist Church. They have official or semi-official status. They represent key moments in the Church’s attempts at Connexional level to address the issues of adult Christian education and the use of the Bible. As will be seen, only one

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1 Methodist Church 2002 p.295-304, referenced throughout as L&D
2 Smith, 1970, referenced throughout as WWA
document ‘Working with Adults’ (WWA) deals with that relationship explicitly. As a result I will spend more time on it.

Immediately, of course, I am plunged into the problem of the ‘archive’ and where to put its limits. I have identified two key constraints. The areas of ordination training and the training of local preachers are beyond the scope of my thesis. To include them would lead to an unmanageable piece of work. They need analyses as discrete areas. The latter is a more contentious omission because it is clearly training aimed at lay people and deals in considerable measure with the Bible. I hope that the tools of analysis that I develop in this thesis can be applied to it at some future point, and the conclusions that I develop tested against it. There is a considerable resource of training materials produced through the Methodist Publishing House (MPH). These are focused on skills training for church offices or pastoral care in its many aspects. Because of their limited engagement with the Bible they too fall beyond the scope of this thesis, although I will need to note their impact at certain points in my argument. ³

Three documents will enable me to explore the Methodist discourse in adult Christian education: WWA - a booklet from 1970 which saw itself very clearly as putting adult Christian education on the church’s agenda, and ‘Learning and Developing as the whole people of God’ (L&D) a section of the Connexional Training Strategies report to the 2002 Conference. I will also make reference to the Connexional mission statement, ‘Our

³ See website: www.mph.org.uk/resources
Calling’ (OC) (Methodist Church 2000) that provides an important part of the context for L&D.

For my purposes these documents offer distinct archaeological ‘moments’. They represent two strands of Methodism’s adult Christian educational project and its engagement with the Bible that are current in the church. They reflect different visions of the educational task that have given rise to my two case studies. ‘Disciple’ reflects an agenda that sees the Bible as the main resource and tool of adult Christian education, which suggests a shared agenda with WWA. ‘The Word at Whitby’ (Whitby) emerges from L&D, with some of the same personnel responsible. The two highlight major responses to the Bible emerging from a self-consciously educational concern and set in different cultural contexts.

In this chapter I will follow the pattern suggested by my chosen method. Following a brief survey of the data, I will identify contested areas and use them to develop Foucault’s outline for analyzing power relations. I will then use the information to reflect on the material in the light of the polarities.

*Working With Adults (WWA) – the model of ‘the mature person in Christ’*

*Context*

This book was published in 1970, at a time after the publication of ‘Honest to God’.

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4 The publication of ‘Honest to God’ was widely seen as a point at which the theological insights which had been developing in the academic context through e.g. the writings of Barth, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer gained widespread popular circulation and a sense of authority given that the author, Rt. Revd. J. A. T. Robinson was a Bishop in the C. of E.
which was so central a feature of church and even cultural life at that time. WWA set the
terms and shaped the vision for my own engagement with adult Christian education
during my theological education. It reflects the spirit of the time and its protagonists
continue to exert considerable influence.\(^5\)

This was the ideological climate in which I trained for ordination. Its impact is still
strong and I encounter it not just in my own reflection but in the approaches of my peers
who were trained at a similar time. Some personal reflection may help to set the scene.
When as a group of students were asked what vision we had for ministry, the reply was
conceived and couched in the broadly educational terms of helping others to grow in
faith, to have resources to transform the world according to a ‘Kingdom of God’,
mission-shaped agenda and to take on leadership roles with confidence in the institution
of the church – ‘to make ourselves redundant’ (as professional ministers). The vision
was one of building a community of educated and thoughtful Christians, able to answer
for the faith that was in them, who would not need the leadership elite with all its
perceived drawbacks that had characterized the church in previous generations to engage
in the mission of witness, service and increasingly of liberation.\(^6\) We sensed that such
leadership was responsible for the precarious place of the church in the world. We were
not asked where the sort of vision expressed in ‘WWA’ had come from and we might
have struggled for an answer. We could, no doubt have turned to the Bible and to the

\(^5\) Although many of the contributors to WWA have retired, some are still active in church leadership
(Pauline Webb), the students of others are in leadership roles in the church (Trevor Rowe) and the books of
others are still used in church worship (Donald Hilton).

\(^6\) See for example Stott 1969 p.15-16.
notion of 'discipleship', but of course that is a category which can conveniently be made
to accommodate all too wide a range of ideas and experience.7

There are plenty of clues to the origin of the vision. There was questioning of power and
authority, a touch of anti-clericalism or anti-institutionalism characteristic of the climate
in society in the early 1970s and of education as liberative - the theology of liberation
was emerging, and the work of Paulo Freire was becoming known. Perhaps as
significant is the fact that many of us were products of an educational system through
which our talents had found expression. Education had been our path into adulthood and
towards a new opportunity in society.8 There was no reason why it should stop taking us
reliably forward. The beginnings of the Open University and of the learning/knowledge
society were much in the air and further encouraged this vision of the time.9

Content

WWA was a ‘joint production of three major publishing houses in the field of Christian
education. It also carries the support of the Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian

7 It is a truism to suggest that general Biblical terms (like 'disciple') and of course most spectacularly of
the figure of Jesus himself, are so open as to take on whatever characteristics the protagonist wishes to
endow them with. The emerging discussion of discipleship was marked by books like Bonhoeffer 1959
and at a more popular and pentecostal level by Ortiz 1975. Watson 1981 would provide a magisterial
popular definition.

8 This is personal reflection on cultural experience. So far I am not aware of any writing on this
ideological change, though it way well exist. It has been suggested that the church or the military offered
paths of improvement in society to previous generations. While there is over simplification in such a
suggestion, these paths are important and education I would argue is clearly one widely available today.
The policy of successive governments to increase the numbers at university would indicate that point
amongst others.

9 From an interview with Rev Dr. Roger Walton conducted in the course of preliminary research.
Churches.' It was produced to follow up the extension of the 'Syllabus of the British Lessons Council (BLC) to include material for adults.' The list of authors indicates its predominantly Methodist provenance. There is a semi-official feel about the book, and a sense of enthusiastic pioneers breaking new ground. The audience is clearly identified: 'This book is intended to cater for those whose primary work is among the adult congregation and to stimulate practical ideas.' (WWA 1970 p.18). A rather touching caveat sets the scene more clearly still when the writer remarks of the team and no doubt of the readers, 'Most of us are learning about adult education by experimenting in what sometimes seem like deep waters.' (WWA 1970 p.72). It is faith and mutual support that keeps them going.

From the start the booklet strikes an optimistic note by recalling the first manned landing on the moon... 'A new age has dawned.' Adult Christian education is set in this context of adventure and continues as adventure. The case for it had to be made, the clear current presupposition was that education was for and ended with children. The authors make the bold claim that 'the supposed distinctions which divide adults from children in Christian education are often non-existent and certainly cannot provide the ground for treating adult Christian education as something apart' (WWA 1970 p.12-13). While clearly education was not just for children this rather bald statement indicates how much work there was to do in clarifying the distinctives of adult education and the nature of adulthood and how far the educational models were essentially developments of child models. The authors guard themselves against the (apparently keenly felt) charge of 'over-organizing' — 'God is a God of order not chaos' — and seek to establish the case for
a programme of Christian education to be organized rather than piecemeal. The aims of Christian education are clearly stated as:

- **Grounding in the Christian faith** – ‘Christian education is to provide the basis for growth in the Christian life. This growth is achieved by experience and discovery on the part of the individual, but it is based on the revelation of God to him.’ (WWA 1970 p.16). There are unique starting points for each individual, but there are also the guidelines of the revelation which God has made of ‘himself’ in history. Such sources of knowledge are very clear. The Church Year is identified as one of them. A host of questions are raised about the notion of ‘grounding in the Christian faith’. It appears to be a process of reflection in the light of Bible and the Bible events marked by the Church Year. The reflection focuses only on human inadequacy without God – a limited perspective. There is a confidence that Christian faith was the sort of entity, be it cultural or ideological, in which grounding could take place. What is being attempted is a process of socialization or even benign indoctrination into a particular ideology. Questions arise, does such a process require ‘training’ or ‘education’ or both? How does such a process relate to the sought after ‘maturity’?

- **To prepare us to live as Christ would have us live** is the second aim. Here there is an attempt to integrate ‘faith’ with ‘everyday life’, not in generalities or piecemeal, but patiently covering all aspects. This raises the question of what has gone on before in this major area of concern for the church’s teaching ministry. What it points to is a feature of the dawning awareness of the decline of the church with its resulting
marginalization within culture and the dissociation of the ‘Christian world view’ from
the emerging new issues of the secular and plural society. It is likely too that as the
notion of the ‘Christian world view’ came under critical pressure its problematic
nature became clearer. There is here too an implicit attempt at authoritative control
through the unarguable but rather elusive medium of Jesus Christ. A utopian agenda
is running very strong.

• *Preparation for personal evangelism* is the third of the aims. ‘We must learn how to
win others for Christ’. (WWA 1970 p.17) There is no doubt in the writers’ minds that
the evangelistic agenda is a natural result of the fulfillment of the other two aims,
although care is taken to avoid the suggestion that all should be evangelists. Aim two
had rather prepared the ground for a style of Christian living that would make its own
‘convincing example’ and then would have the opportunity, used sensitively, to speak
about faith. The language of the ‘mission field’ once reserved for ‘foreign parts’ is
now being used within British culture, and by implication its multifarious nature
recognized. The sort of apologetic identified as necessary here is the one needed
when cultures and ideologies lose hegemony and become increasingly relativised.

A fourfold basis of Christian education is offered to ‘energize’ the syllabus.

1. *To understand and use the Bible rightly* – because what was once a central authority
has come under question from the impact of the scientific revolution and consequent
questioning rather than accepting, and from the ‘theological revolution of our own
day’ (WWA 1970 p.23). This immediately identifies the Bible and its use as a contested area, in the light of the sort of scientific, liberal, humanist approach characteristic of the educational system of children and young people.

2. To appreciate the Church as a fundamental factor in Christian education – being Christian is promoted as essentially a community project. There is a strong sense of the importance of the community experience that is characteristic of the gathered church and its identification with institution. It is also a sort of utopia regularly evoked with strong Biblical reference. There is nothing articulated here about authority, control and power. However there is a strong tacit suggestion of the need to assert institutional control and a somewhat over-confident sense that it can be done.

3. To make appropriate use of the main seasons of the Christian Year – which ensures the coverage of the great Christian truths and avoids the lack of balance that can result in ‘heresy’. The use of that term is interesting and presumably intentionally reflects a time when the attempt to set boundaries by measures of (doctrinal) exclusion strengthened the community acting in that way. It is a way of establishing hegemony. It fits ill with some of the later evidence that comes to light in my data of the possibility of belonging before believing. It raises issues about the nature of the educational exercise being proposed. Of course it has to be noted that the production of a range of materials for the Church’s Year also offers a potential publishing coup.

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10 E.g. 1 Corinthians 12, etc. It is my suspicion that the use of this and similar passages are in direct proportion to the changing patterns of community.

11 The notion of ‘heresy’ is an interesting power-filled term, somewhat at variance with the questioning and open approach of the rest of WWA. Its connection with the notion of ‘lack of balance’ and the use of the Christian Year is also instructive!
4. To recognize that it is the living experience ... within which alone true Christian education can develop – the use of the word ‘experience’ reflects the still formative notions of experience as a source of learning in education – and refers essentially only to experiential methods advocated as a teaching technique. However this is a significant ‘energizer’ in the light of the data offered by Disciple where the experience of group is an overwhelming feature of the learning and where the mimetic experience is very strong. It also points to an implicit issue that WWA has not raised, the notion of what constitutes being ‘adult’.

The place of the Bible

The Bible plays a key role in this project. A full section of the book is devoted to ‘The Bible in Christian Education’. The excitement of the writers over the ‘revolution that is going on around us in educational insight and method’, is intense. ‘The Bible and our attitude to it stand at the centre of this revolution’. There is no doubting the relevance of the Bible ‘It has the ability to speak decisively to our present human condition.’ And yet, of course, popular wisdom knows, as the writers acknowledge, the reality of the inevitable non-sequitur, that ‘we have produced a generation of Christians who are biblically illiterate.’ No analytical explanation is offered for this situation. It is perhaps unfair to expect one in a popular book such as this. What takes the place of explanation, however, is exhortation. These remarks made at the start of this particular

12 The Bible as the ‘unread best seller’ was a commonplace description at this time. (See Smart 1972) There are a number of questions beyond the scope of this thesis about exactly what such a problematic depiction of the Bible actually meant, how the phrase was used in Christian discourse, and as usual, to what purpose and in whose interest.
discourse of adult education are profoundly significant for my research, and the questions they raise will need to be examined. The writers recognize both the complex issue of the use of the Bible, and fail to develop the point even when they note that ‘The Bible is a tool that needs wielding skilfully.’ (WWA 1970 p.67)\textsuperscript{13}

Having recognized the level of Biblical illiteracy in the contemporary church, there is an acute sense of failure at the ‘deep-seated uncertainty about how to use the Bible’. The reasons for this are relatively unexplored in the chapter. Instead there is an appeal for a wider acceptance of the historical-critical hermeneutical approach as the answer to this failure, supported by a range of suggested practical responses.

The writers point out that the ‘Bible has been up for reexamination to a degree unequalled by any other book’, and the question asked is ‘how?’ (WWA 1970 p.31) A description of Biblical critical methods follows. The argument is extended to include the implicit suggestion that the failure is the result of persisting with dated educational methods. An ‘old pattern’ that set out to ensure passages were learnt by heart is contrasted unfavourably with a more contemporary approach that endeavours to relate the Bible to the experience of the reader through the critical method.\textsuperscript{14} This it is claimed will establish the link between the Bible and everyday life. Experience then enriches understanding of the Bible and vice versa. The reverse might cogently be argued. An

\textsuperscript{13} The image offered suggests the need for a process of learning a craft, and that poor technique has been at fault.

\textsuperscript{14} See further the discussion on oral/aural approaches to the Bible, Chapter 4, below
important contested area is emerging here. The historical-critical approach with its academic standing and its essential expertise and background knowledge is triumphing over more traditional, less organized ways of interpreting and knowing the Bible. The Book/Scripture polarity is making its influence felt. Knowledges are being subjugated because they were apparently unable to compete with the challenges of the scientific worldview.

This process, so simply presented by WWA, hides a variety of power games that is no doubt indicative of the compromises of the committee method by which the book was produced. Unsurprisingly the writers indicate no awareness of such issues. What we have is not so much an attempt to analyze and address the perceived problems but a piece of advocacy for the historical-critical hermeneutical approach to the Bible that has clearly energized the writers themselves and because of their charisma may inspire others. It provides information of relevance to the hermeneutical task, but inevitably restricts full engagement with the Bible to the expert. Others can approach it only in a secondary way.\(^{15}\) The key to that way is education and training.

That this is a contested area is confirmed by the list of ‘immature attitudes’ that follows. Bible study group leaders, it is suggested, will encounter problems with:

- ‘Those for whom the Bible retains an element of magic’ – ‘They will have to learn that the Bible, like any other book, yields its truth only to those who are prepared to grapple with the same basic principles with which its authors grappled’. Here the

\(^{15}\) E.g. the discussions recorded in Cardenal 1977 gives a fascinating demonstration of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.
hermeneutical function is firmly in the hands of one who has become a hermeneutical expert and has time for the ‘grappling’ task.

- Those for whom ‘true can only mean ‘literally and historically true”’. What is needed is a good commentary that can reveal ‘the idea behind the story’. It is noteworthy how the term ‘true’ is being used in this discourse and the wider ideology of which it is a part. ‘Truth’ is removed from story and narrative and relocated in the realm of ideas – a move from epistemological praxis to metaphysical abstraction. This is a position not easily achieved and with some consequences for understanding the nature of adulthood. ‘We cannot assume that all adults have necessarily passed through to the stage where they can think in fully abstract terms...’. (WWA 1970 p.34) The issue of control is evident. I would argue that it is easier to control ideas than stories, propositions than narrative, which is why in a context of this sort story and narrative are devalued.

- Those adults who are willing ‘to live in two worlds’, suspending their critical faculties when they engage with the Bible, and failing to question it. There is a strong deconstructive impulse here, with the tools of a scientific worldview being wielded. Fundamentalism is no doubt firmly in the writers’ sights. However, the Book/Scripture pole is also operating, and that I will argue, makes such an issue more complex. Moreover the sense of engagement with the ‘other’ that I will show is characteristic of what I will call the ‘Communication Use’ operates with a clear sense of two worlds.
• Those who approach the Bible as a book, not as 'a library'. The latter approach ensures that group members understand the chronology of the Bible and the way that the development of ideas can subsequently be discerned.\textsuperscript{16} The complexity of the Bible project is reinforced. The need for trained knowledge is implicitly endorsed. This is entirely justifiable, the Bible is a collection of books, but there are clear implications of control. The Bible is distanced from the lay person as the need for a more advanced set of skills than simply reading is established.

The parting shot of this chapter that has so firmly focussed on the value of the hermeneutical approach is also interesting. It comments on the authority of the Bible and locates it firmly in a timeless experiential realm where it can offer 'insights into human life and experience which are crucial for this and every generation'. 'It has the authority to speak decisively to our present human condition', despite the obvious cultural changes that set the tone for this book. (WWA 1970 p.39) This is an interesting and problematic approach to Biblical authority. The appeal to experience and its advocacy as an educational method for adults moves from the authority pole towards the authentic in a relativist context. The power games being played in this chapter of WWA will prove despite the best of intentions to be in opposition with themselves. This feature occurs regularly and relentlessly in the documents under examination and in the wider discourse when the Bible is assiduously deconstructed.

\textsuperscript{16} That the chronology and the development of ideas are not independent, and that the implications of the canonical organization of the Bible may be significant has not been considered.
Conclusions

‘Working with Adults’ is a document that reflects clearly the adult Christian education discourse in 1970. Three further observations need to be made.

The first is the huge set of expectations involved in the discourse. Visionary they may be, but the attempt to provide careful, fail-safe instructions in areas of group-work, drama and music about how the vision might be implemented in fact fill the over half of the book. Are the suggestions realistic? They require great commitment from leaders and participants. The issues of changing attitudes in society beyond the church means that cultural change is involved and that is not simple or easy in a culture which has self-selected on the basis of given norms. A further problem with expectations that are too great is that disillusionment is a constant danger and needs to be guarded against by a process of continual envisioning and exhortation.\(^{17}\) The motives behind the demand for commitment and high expectation would bear examination. They lie beyond the scope of this thesis. However they do point to a highly contested area around the nature of leadership that inevitably becomes more fraught in a failing organization.

Secondly there is a strong sense of the church at the centre – indeed a particular style of church is envisaged in the document, an ecumenical one. That particular institutional church pattern has not emerged in the way the writers envisaged. Something significantly different is emerging, and that process points up questions about the nature of the church in terms of the expectations centred around it and as an inevitable

\(^{17}\) The resort to exhortation is a clear feature of the techniques of hortatory power, see below Chapter 10.
consequence, of its role in adult Christian education. When the church engages with the Bible and with adult Christian education there are inevitable issues of power. If the Bible is a tool to be wielded, then in the protestant tradition it is the individual (if they have not been disillusioned by such views as WWA’s sense of the complexity of the task) who turns the pages who has control, not the institution. The institutional task of shaping the individuals’ use falls to the pulpit and to education.

Thirdly, and the case is quickly made, using Bible text in compelling support, that education is at the heart of Christian faith. To be a Christian is to be in the process of education. It may be a matter of definition of that elusive term, ‘education’, but I would argue, the experience of many Christians is that this case has not been made. The fact that it has not been made is at least consonant with the arguments John Hull (1985) develops in *What prevents Adult Christians from Learning?* that suggest other priorities than learning for the adult Christian and church member. It is not either just a question of the nature of education but its necessity that creates with this point another area of contestation.

WWA as a document presents a startling ambiguity. There can be no doubt that in terms of the ‘adventure’ of the promotion of a publishing project to contribute to the life of the church, particularly its Sunday worship, the agenda of the writers has been spectacularly fulfilled. A recent survey indicated the huge use of the ‘Roots’ material that is the direct

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18 The ecumenical movement was at its height around 1970, the nature of the church as institution was in a fluid state, so questions of organization, authority and power were sidelined in the face of the overwhelming and of course ultimately disappointed optimism.
successor of the proposed syllabus. Other schemes such as ‘Salt’ that cover the same aims are also widely used. The Church’s Year dominates liturgical worship. WWA has succeeded. Its hegemony is established and there seems to be no challenge in sight. However in terms of arresting decline in church life, or of promoting the sense of adventure in the educational agenda, at best it has only contributed to the slowing of decline. There is also evidence that many of the churches that appear to be growing are not those that have adopted the lectionary or the Church’s Year, although there is no doubt that their commitment to Bible study and of the need to grow in faith is very high. Of course the power games at work there may well not be educationally motivated.

‘Hortatory’ language

It is important to note the strength of conviction, the sheer exuberance of the style in WWA. Not everyone had found the new world and its revolutions quite so attractive. Societal changes were profound. The church was already facing serious challenges to belief. Signs of decline were clear. While it might be possible to interpret this as a divine ‘slimming down’ of an over-weight institution burdened by ‘dead wood’, it would be justified to draw entirely other conclusions.¹⁹

We are dealing here with that particular form of advocacy so prevalent in the church, the ‘hortatory’ mode, born of, or at least expressed in, preaching and nurtured by a

¹⁹ The notion of ‘dead wood’ was anecdotally popular in the 1970s. Ortiz 1975 among others, suggested the notion of a church as ‘fat, not fit’. These are clear examples of the masking function of hortatory power in response to ongoing decline.
complementary style of ‘doing theology’. It is part of the argument that will emerge in this thesis that that form or style of discourse has its effect on epistemology, shaping the nature of knowledge. Knowledge is power and is shaped by power. Inevitably there are subtleties in the techniques and exercise of that power that cannot leave knowledge untouched.

**Education and ‘training’**

I have already suggested that the church has seen education as an appropriate response to decline. That is not the tone of WWA. There is confidence in the Christian faith to meet the challenges of a new adventure, and education is its tool. Aspects of decline which were certainly evident had I suspect not yet reached such proportions as to suggest that education might be the best resource to arrest that decline. Over the next few years that sense of adventure diminished, and adult Christian education in the church was in danger of becoming essentially defensive. The language that is used demonstrates this. WWA has a vocabulary in which ‘education’, ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ predominate, pointing to the utopian pole. The word ‘training’ rarely appears and when it does it is in the context of training the educators and teachers in the appropriate skills. The years since have seen a constant discussion of the usefulness or otherwise of the term ‘training’. With all the ambiguities it brings, ‘training’ as a term is widely used in the second document from Methodism that I will examine. It is used in a careful, often tentative, but above all intermittent way that indicates the chequered history of the term in this context.

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20 As a practitioner researcher, I am of course not free of this style that has nurtured my own style of thought and presentation – I fear lapses into it will become all too obvious at certain points – when I am not concentrating or the argument is weak.

21 See further discussion, particularly in Chapter 10, below.
Summary

What is presented thus far is a theory of adult Christian education as having to do with the inculcation of a coherent body of knowledge that can and should be learnt and then applied. Such knowledge offers a worldview that can and should shape and be reflected in worship. It is a knowledge and educational process that is expected to be transformative both for the individual and institution that stand in need of such transformation if they are to have integrity consistent with confession of faith. The ability to articulate the content of the knowledge and experience it describes is part of the adult Christian’s evangelistic responsibility.

The fact that worship and a strong sense of community and changed lifestyle are part of these aims suggests that the educational process has behavioural as well as cognitive aims.

I have highlighted a need for integrity in that brief description, but other needs suggest themselves and point to a theory-in-use concerned with the need for education to sustain and develop a cultural movement which believes itself to have access to truth that is of significance and relevance to the wider culture. To develop expertise in such a cultural movement is the goal of bringing the individual to ‘maturity in Christ’ and education is the process. The corollary of such a theory is that without education’s role the institution, the culture it embodies and the knowledge it holds is vulnerable. The acknowledged aims indicate such need and point to an educational and epistemological crisis sensed, but unarticulated.
Learning and Developing as the Whole People of God (L&D) – the model of ‘the disciple as reflective practitioner’.

Thirty years separates ‘Working with Adults’ from ‘Learning and Developing as the Whole People of God’. The culture and the context have changed. Caution is needed in any comparison. The two documents are not only separated by time, they are produced for different purposes. The one, as we have seen, is the work of a group of enthusiasts, advocating a cause of which they had great expectations. The other is also, of course authored by enthusiasts, but is essentially a working policy document reflecting on and analyzing experience. Neither has been written with academic precision in mind.

L&D traces its origins to the Methodist Conference resolution 12/5 in the Making of Ministry Report 1997:

The Conference affirms the principles of life-long training and of sharing resources between lay and ordained, and authorizes further work to be done by the relevant members of the Connexional Team ... to implement them [emphasis mine]22

The Methodist Connexional Training Forum was appointed in 1997, and included in its membership ‘those with experience in training in industry, formal and informal education and local authority, as well as in church contexts...’. Its remit was ‘To develop and maintain an overview of all training in the Methodist Church’. The use of secular expertise in such a project is noteworthy - an early indication of the impact of the secular upon the adult Christian education discourse, raising a key contested area. A draft policy

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22Note the commitment to life-long training, which is a new development and one that has proved demanding to develop in the church. The case for the church as a learning society as part of the learning and knowledge societies is proposed, but not made and certainly not realized in practice. Note also the lay/ordained relationship with its implicit suggestion of the continuity not only of training resources but also of power, authority and ideology.
was taken up by the Training Strategy and Resources Executive formed in 2000. That body requested a mapping exercise to be done 'of training currently offered across the Connexion'. The results of this exercise contributed to the shaping of the report and a summary of its findings are included in it.

The report title picks up immediately on the ambiguity of the term 'training'. 'Learning' and 'developing' are its chosen terms. 'Developing' is regularly linked with 'training', not least because of the significant group of 'Training and Development Officers' who were a key resource in the research that backs the report. Where WWA might have used 'educational programme', L&D uses 'training'.

The picture implied at the start of the report is one of fulfillment of the dreams of WWA. An impressive list of those engaged in training is offered, as is the existence of 'local training policies' that need monitoring. The principles and recommendations in the report will help to provide evidence of commitment to best practice 'when funds are sought from potential external bodies...'. Such a setting reflects accurately the nature of activity in terms of training and educational activity found in the church. As institution the church has moved from pioneering to policing, and external authorities have significance, not least because they can offer funding. There is a concern for control here, that of strategy and management, in contrast to the control as advocacy of WWA.

When L&D spells out the principles it wishes to establish, there are immediate echoes of WWA, 'The Church expects that each one of us, young and old, will grow and develop in
our Christian discipleship. An interesting level of authority (and possibly anonymity) is given to the church in this sentence. ‘The Methodist Church’ which appears in the next sentence ‘believes’ in the principles then listed. The appearance of the word ‘discipleship’ is noteworthy. It was present in WWA, but not with a high profile, nor needing to be identified as ‘Christian’.

Four groups of ‘Recommendations for Practice’ are offered: valuing the individual, fostering a culture of life-long learning, enabling the Church to fulfil its mission and promoting equality of opportunity to participate in learning. Each one indicates a more or less acutely contested area. Only the third is distinctively Christian, an indicator of how far the discourse has shifted in the intervening thirty years.

The place of the Bible in this discourse has changed even more dramatically. It suggests its contested nature by its absence. It is in the section on ‘The findings’, that the Bible, so significant for WWA finally appears. It is mentioned under ‘Specific Discipleship programmes’, in the shape of the ‘Disciple’ Bible Study Programme’, and again in the category ‘Biblical and Evangelistic ministry’ at the head of the list of a range of courses open to anyone or to those with appropriate qualifications. The Bible no longer appears as the central tool, it has been limited and controlled by marginalization in this discourse. It has been given a particular political and theological location in church life. Its place has been taken by ‘reflective practice’.

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23 The hortatory power-laden language is in evidence here.
Our Calling (OC)

As noted above L&D must be set in the context of ‘Our Calling’ (Methodist Church 2000). OC is a brief but complex document that seeks to develop understanding of the Methodist Church mission statement with which it begins – ‘The Methodist Church is to respond to the Gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission’, - note the somewhat challenging (and institutionally affirmative?) grammar of the first part and the discipleship language of the second. Discipleship is clarified by focusing on ‘worship’, a term that is relatively straightforward, and ‘mission’, which is vaguer. The title has a twofold emphasis implying a notion of corporateness and vocation – strong institutional language.

The document falls into four parts. They share a common pattern. Each begins with a prescriptive statement about the Church and what it exists to do – Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism. A list of questions facilitates discussion and is presumably intended to offer clarification of the initial statement. However the questions as a style of engagement are not without significance. They demonstrate the move from advocacy to reflective practice, from authority to authenticity. The use of a question hints at the relocation of the subject that will be explored more fully in later chapters of this thesis. A final question asks about plans and targets for the identified concern ‘over the coming year’, a clear indicator of the managerial approach.

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24 OC is found in Appendix 4
25 Again there is a pervasive monitoring process. Monitoring is clearly to do with patterns of power, maintaining or establishing them. There are issues about responsibility and authority embedded here that are masked not clarified by the approach of OC.
The section on 'Worship' opens with the statement 'The Church exists to increase awareness of God’s presence and to celebrate God’s love'. It is amongst the seven questions offered for discussion that the Bible makes its solitary appearance in the document: ‘What motivates us to study the Bible?’ Bible study is clearly set in the context of worship. WWA does that, but also goes to some pains to move it beyond worship as well.

‘Learning’ is given a strong pastoral context in the next section, ‘Learning and Caring’. This section opens with the statement ‘The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care’. What looks like (and is widely taken to be) the weight of the church’s adult Christian education agenda is set in a particular context that reflects the utopia/equilibrium polarity creating its usual problems for the church. There is an echo of WWA’s ‘Grounding in the Christian Faith’ here. There is a further echo in a question that asks about the effectiveness of small groups ‘in linking faith to everyday life’. A second question asks what we learn about the challenges of Christian life today from churches elsewhere in Britain and the wider world, extending the ecumenical and world church context. A third and final question with a clear managerial background asks ‘Are there peripheral activities we should stop, to make time for our training and learning needs?’ In a document as short as this there is bound to be compression of thought. Two learning needs have been identified, (linking faith to everyday life, and challenges to Christian life today) but no explicit training needs. This is of some significance because the satisfying of such needs is in contrast to activities that are potentially ‘peripheral’ and a power game that labels activities
‘peripheral’ is in play in a similar way to the one that might once have labeled views ‘heresy’. The learning and training agenda is established as a priority, albeit somewhat surreptitiously. This is a clear indicator of an awareness of a crisis of skills and knowledge. The language of need is noteworthy. It stands in contrast to WWA’s language of adventure.

Of the three other questions in this section, the first asks about the church activities that ‘help us most to deepen our faith in God?’ There is, of course, a training agenda implied here, but it is not a clear one. The final questions ask about activities that make it easy for others to join, links with groups using our premises, and pastoral care issues. Belonging is clearly indicated as an issue, rather than believing.

This theme is continued in the ‘plans and targets for the next year’ question about ‘developing our life together’. For the adult educator this comes as a disappointment. There is no reason suggested here that education, learning or training should necessarily be any part of that agenda, although of course it might be. Either education is so deeply a part of church life that it does not need to be mentioned – which is arguable – or the question opens the door to a pattern of fellowship which may well not include an adult Christian educational element at all. Again, a crisis of belonging seems to be implicitly identified, rather than one of believing.

There is the sense from this document that Bible and adult Christian education are implicitly important, but the notion of discipleship as learning is dominated by a sense
that discipleship is above all about worship, fellowship, service and evangelism. It is certainly also envisaged as a highly corporate activity.

It is interesting that the form of ‘Our Calling’ – a widely distributed A4 leaflet, was followed by the ‘bookmark’ extract of principles from L&D. This was also widely distributed and advertised the work of the Training and Development Officers team. The formation of that team since 1999 represents a considerable financial commitment by the Connexion to the principle of training and development. This bookmark document adds a significant gloss on the principles.

‘They are relevant to all contexts, at local church level and beyond, where learning happens, e.g.: house group discussions – bible studies – fellowship meetings – sermons – workshops – junior church or youth club sessions – synod presentations – course tutoring – church reviews.’

It continues: ‘If you are looking for help in improving training skills, undertaking a church review or assessing and meeting training needs in your church, circuit or district, contact your regional Training and Development Officer…’

There is a sense, though not an unambiguous one, of a profound commitment to and considerable experience of adult Christian education along with a lack of real clarity about what it might mean. The equilibrium/utopia and individual/institutional polarities are at work here, dragging the documents I have examined in their gravitational wake. Theories in use are not far from espoused theories – sometimes too close for easy identification as one or the other.

See Appendix 4
WWW and L&D

There are clear differences between the two documents. Some can be explained by the difference in purpose. Others reflect the changing cultural background not least in adult education with its increasing concern for ensuring quality, establishing accreditation, and providing access for everyone. With the exception of the first, these are not issues that concerned the authors of WWA.

The crucial difference may be that L&D is an official document not one produced by enthusiasts alone. There is a much more sophisticated understanding of adult education both within and beyond the church. There is a clear awareness of a cultural situation that is pluralist and relativist and where the reality of the institutional decline of the church is recognized.

The ‘Principles’ of L&D could be seen as replacing the aims of WWA. If there is some fairness in such a comparison, then aims 1 and 3 have gone from WWA. It could be argued that the second aim, ‘to have us live as Christ would have us live,’ is strongly implied in the principles. The notion of ‘discipleship’ prefices them, and Christian values are implicit in the ensuing principles. It may be that L&D stands so strongly in the light of ‘Our Calling’ that it does not need to articulate aims in the way that WWA did. However, the breezy confidence in the Christian faith has gone. Its absence is reflected in the contrasting place of the Bible in the two documents. It is seen in L&D as an aspect of discipleship. As suggested above, that is not the whole story. The resources committed to ‘The Word at Whitby’ are evidence of the dominant place of the Bible in
theology, worship and practice. LAMP\textsuperscript{27} had also been relatively recently produced and may have been seen as reducing the need for exploring the Bible. However the confidence and enthusiasm of WWA is gone.

The approach of the two documents reflects a different ecclesial agenda. In WWA there is much more confidence about what the church is and thinks. The church as organization was strongly in evidence for that group of enthusiasts, expecting, challenging, resourcing, encouraging, and offering adventure as well as launching a bid to enrich the Church’s worship life and to provide leadership. In L&D there is an edginess about the church as an institution whether local or centralized denominationally. Hints of funding from outside sources suggest a wider partnership in the educational task, not even just an ecumenical one. The church is answerable for its educational and training programmes to other authorities than itself, and needs to research them in order to justify them. Gone is the sense of adventure. In L&D the whole project has become much more complex. It is not blessed with the simplicity of advocating a single resource, but with keeping track of many. In the 30 years that separate the two documents, huge educational developments have taken place inside as well as outside the church. Yet the church does not seem more confident as a result. The passage quoted from ‘The Making of the Ministry’ report spoke of the context for training as ‘the world, and the Church insofar as it serves God’s purposes in creation.’ (my emphasis) Such a statement drips with theological presupposition and lack of confidence in the institution.

\textsuperscript{27} See below, Chapter 4
No doubt this is why the notion of the disciple as reflective practitioner has replaced that of ‘the mature person in Christ’, moving towards the individual pole.\textsuperscript{28}

It is likely these same reasons are behind the ambiguity and inconsistency in the use of the term ‘training’. Training needs clarity of purpose to commend itself. Where clarity is not to be found, the choice is learning and the sort of reflection that enables a learning that can adapt to new and uncertain situations. And yet of course, as L&D bears witness, however unevenly, training persists in parts of its discourse.\textsuperscript{29}

A major feature in the background of the two documents is the role of the ordained ministry. WWA aims its agenda predominantly at ministers. They have the power to facilitate and lead this new educational and Biblical adventure. In L&D they are part of the learning constituency. Of course it is recognized that in the process, ‘trainers learn from those they are training’. The ‘Making of the Ministry’ report offered a vision of the linkage of ordination training with the training of lay Christian adults. This has been paralleled in other denominations.\textsuperscript{30} There is a pointer here to one of the key contested areas, the definition of ‘adult’. The attempt to provide leadership in response to the crises of falling vocations and shortage of money for increasingly expensive training, by incorporating adult Christian education into the ordained leadership agenda is certainly a

\textsuperscript{28} This is also a feature of the polarity between the individual (as reflective practitioner) and the institution, since maturity can most fully be found according to the some approaches to the adult Christian education discourse only in community.

\textsuperscript{29} Again, there seems to be a some sense of muddle between ordination, vocation and reflective practice and their discreet patterns of educational and training response.

\textsuperscript{30} For example the training programmes provided by St Albans and Chester Dioceses
factor in the redefinition of the adult Christian. It may be a pragmatic response of desperate policy. However, the closer association of training for lay discipleship and ordained ministry reflects the changing notion of what it means to be adult in relation to faith. This is a direct product of the changing understanding of the nature of adulthood.

Contested Areas

Context

The areas of contestation emerge in a particular context that has provoked them within the adult Christian education discourse of the Methodist Church. That context has been shaped by the twin factors of institutional decline taking place in the secular, liberal humanist context of the second half of the twentieth century. Of course the decline and its context are closely related. The context produced has its impact epistemologically on the body of knowledge assumed as the content of faith to be taught to the disciple. It also has its impact at a number of points educationally. The approaches of the two main documents reflect this, with a strong sense of epistemological concern in WWA, and a dominant sense of the educational skills of reflective practice in L&D. There is an obvious chronological development, but as I will argue below on the basis of the data I have gathered, the two approaches have produced current alternative patterns of Bible use in adult Christian education.

Control

Both documents represent attempts at control. The abundant practical advice on offer is a clear attempt to establish new practice, although in fairness, it is couched throughout as
advice and there is no suggestion of a centralized monitoring. As noted above, advocacy accompanying this advice is the method of WWA, and of course in a different style of OC. This is the method of the church as voluntary organization where the shaping and inspiring of values and action is the only option for a church that has lost its active disciplinary power and can only seek to persuade. As a result, the attempt to control is characteristically hortatory. It resorts to the methods of preaching and education. L&D seeks to assert control by management with the tools of secular adult education, good practice, accreditation and the system of recognition that goes with it. The sanction is the recognition and funding that powerful, secular, educational bodies can provide. There are clear power games at work here that point to other contested areas of particular concern to me in the matter of Bible use.

The nature of adulthood

The concern for ‘maturity’ in WWA had only an implicit definition. Its origin was in the need to continue learning, and its model pedagogical. I have noted the contest on this issue above. The ‘disciple’ metaphor, itself a contested area, with its strong learning and teaching implications is one that has not been fully accepted in the church. The high expectations in terms of learning and leadership that accompany the notion of the Christian adult have also been noted. It is characteristic of the sort of discourse encountered characteristically in WWA that espousing the theory that every adult Christian should be a learner can slip into an approach where the theory appears to be ‘in use’. It is no longer argued. It has been assumed to be part of the culture and is implicit in the use of discipleship terminology. The resistance encountered at local church level
to the notion that every Christian is a learner can be understood from this perspective. The situation is not even that simple however. As I will show below in the context of engagement with the Bible, a further range of practices relating to adult learning emerges. Their theory too seems to shift between espoused and ‘in use’.

The example of Methodist methodology of adult Christian education, only embryonic in WWA, has seen a clear and natural development over the years that separate the documents. This has produced a further contested area that could be expressed in inevitably over-simple terms as the contest between the experience of the adult in reflective practice and the cognitive epistemological resources of the expert or professional, shaped in line with the academic style of higher education. This issue lies behind the strong negatives shown in data below about the role of the academic expert, and the way that their knowledge excludes.

Note has also been made of the contest emerging between lay and ordained with the blurring of expectations and the roles of leadership. The blurring gives energy to a contested area that might once have been expressed as simple anti-clericalism, but now issues as something more complex.

*The nature of education*

There is considerable overlap between this point and the previous one. However it emerges clearly at points such as the consternation around the term ‘training’. Is the model at work educationally the apprentice model of skills and knowledge for the
workplace, and the disciple a better trained and more productive church operative? This could fit very neatly with the discipleship metaphor. Or is education for the benefit of individual transformation towards maturity? In such a model the church becomes simply a facilitator to an end beyond itself. The question also arises, ‘who are the educators?’

The accreditation and competency models point in a different direction from the heavily epistemological model of WWA. If experience is the key to successful adult education, then it is the facilitation of such skills that is essential. However, the case made implicitly in WWA for a more expert approach, and the enthusiasm of learners for the more didactic approach of courses like Alpha and Disciple indicate the measure of contestation.

A further contested area is raised by the purpose of education. There is considerable emphasis on the corporate nature of the educational project. However it is not clear what this means and the issue will be pointed up by my data below. Is education a valuable tool in itself in the life of the individual Christian adult, making possible new levels of maturity? Or is education an activity tool that enables the building up of a social group? In the latter case it is the shared activity that matters and its social consequences, not the ideological reinforcement provided by access to a greater body of knowledge, which may of course be a happy by-product.

The nature of the church

The root contest could be convincingly argued to be about the nature of the church, who defines it and how. The questions have not been thought through in the documents.
Tacit assumptions about its nature abound in them. Ecclesiological research is not the aim of this thesis, but questions about the church's nature as an institution and how that is demonstrated in its educational activity are. A number of points could be made. The 'archaeology' I am conducting falls almost entirely within the institution. It is significant that the documents suggest engagement with society beyond the church in terms of what might be described as witness rather than dialogue. A role towards that society that in WWA was expressed in strongly educational terms through its truth discourse has diminished in L&D as activity within the institution has increased. In the educational context this seems to be in response to the ambiguous pressures from wider society.

Adult Christian education in the strand I have been investigating is about the sustaining of the institution and its ideologies. It is possible to argue that this internal focus has, significantly, become the main area of activity in the face of the marginalization of the church and its knowledge.

A further question is then generated. Who is the church for? It can be seen as for the individual's transformation, for the development of a social group, or for the shaping of wider society through the transformative values the mission of God. There are institutional and individual implications at each point that will be explored below with the help of that polarity.

Finally of course there is the inevitable contest that is an intrinsic part of the church, between the central and the local. The documents explored here belong to the centre.
Their intention, despite the deference to the local of the style of OC is highly centralizing and in the Methodist context, Connexional.

**Analysis of power relations**

Foucault’s approach to an analysis of power relations enables me to complete the archaeological task before reflecting on the polarities. Having identified some contested areas, it is a simpler matter to explore each element of the analysis.

*The System of Differentiations*

A number of differentiations are immediately clear. The distinction that arises within the context of the church and the secular world is one that is convenient to use, although its actuality in the lives of all church members is problematic. Tacitly, they will all belong to both ‘worlds’. It is that fact that makes the rationalization built on this differentiation more significant. Alongside this distinction are others – those outside and inside, belonging and not belonging whether the belonging is measured in terms of belief or knowledge or social engagement or for my purposes educational participation.

A strong differentiation is indicated around the area of lay and ordained and with it as pointed out above, the place of the academic expert. Such a differentiation opens up the way in which the attempt is made by the protagonists of the ‘scientific’ historical critical hermeneutical approach to the Bible to subjugate other knowledges. A task made easier by the disorganized state of such knowledges and their relative powerlessness in the face of the rationalization of that position.
The emergence of the adult, as mature person or reflective practitioner disciple is highly significant, as is the implicit challenge to commitment and to participation within the leadership or organization of the institution. Such a person also has the ability to articulate faith, to provide a rationalization of their belief system that can become legitimate in the eyes of others. WWA sought to do it through the adoption of the critical approach that offers a sort of scientific basis for faith; the approach of L&D is through liberal humanist values expressed by good practice recognizable in the contemporary educational setting of the learning society. It is this search for legitimation as a marker of maturity that is at the root of the dichotomy of approaches to be found in this archaeological and analytical exercise.

The educational distinctions arising from understandings of ‘good practice’ and the accreditation process are also highly significant, not least in that they marginalize a great deal of what might and indeed has been considered educational activity in the church.

*Types of Objectives*

The issue of control looms large at every point in this analysis. Its objectives are somewhat less clear. Maintenance in the face of decline is the clearest, although the power games are much more complex and competitively oriented than a simple control thesis would suggest. The cluster of issues around lay and ordained point to something like an assertion of identity. This could be understood particularly in the context of an overplaying of the hortatory power game.
In the face of the tendency to focus inwards, the impact of secular models and principles indicates another aspect of that same differentiation and the games associated. A further aspect is inevitably the game associated with ownership of the institution and control of its resources and identity conferring potential.

Instrumental Modes

Instrumental modes have been made clear. The advocacy model with its strong hortatory component is one; the management model with its focus on competency, accreditation and good practice the other. Both models see that engagement with experience is essential to the educational methodology of teaching and learning as adults. This skills focus does tend to force the academic body of knowledge into the background. Its usefulness is as a resource for legitimizing such processes as 'the making of meanings' as explored in the chapter on the Word at Whitby.

In terms of the practical implementation of Bible teaching, all documents appear to promote the group learning experience together with learning through and in worship, hence the profitable business of producing resources supporting the Church Year and the Lectionary.

Forms of Institutionalization

There are already clear clues in what has been noted so far about the way power relations are institutionalized. The Church Year and the Lectionary are strong forms promoting, controlling and developing the institution. The Methodist heritage of belonging is
expressed through the small group and their networking in the local church. The assertion of Connexional interest, resourcing and control of the adult educational project gives it a strong centralized feel, although the local institution of the congregation remains very strong.

Degrees of Rationalization

The first point to note is that there is no complete rationalization in these power relations. In fact the two main strands at work draw their strength from their incompleteness. The vagueness of the boundaries can be seen as a virtue when dealing with ultimate mystery. It does mean however that clear rationalization can be avoided and that can serve the institutional aims of enabling diverse groups and ideologies to live together. It can even be rationalized, and diversity and plurality in the church may arguably be the dominant rationalization, except that it exists in tension with a constant critique that flourishes in the vagueness.

Two strands of rationalization undergird the analysis. The quests for the adult is shared by all the documents and there is a good deal of overlap, but the central issues remain the nature of adulthood and maturity. Christian maturity dominated by a body of knowledge that finds a point of special mediation in the Bible is faced with human maturity that is dominated by the challenge of developing transformational skills for living. Of course, as this thesis will demonstrate at a number of points that contrast is too stark. Even so, it points up the momentum of rationalization operating in the documents under investigation. They all share degrees of both patterns of rationalization. For instance, the
‘discipleship’ discourse that dominates L&D might suggest a highly vocational educational approach, with a body of knowledge to be learnt. Instead it tends to focus on skills for living. It can of course be argued that this is also a genuine path of discipleship within Christian tradition, despite its difference in emphasis and its neglect of the epistemological resource of the Bible.

Within this set of Methodist discourses under examination, the attempt to draw Christian tradition together with secular liberal humanism in a way that provides rationalization of the educational project is the main feature. The question remains can such rationalization be legitimized? Investigating the use of the Bible provides a way of developing and responding to that question.

The Polarities

What emerges so far from these documents is, unsurprisingly, a picture of uncertainty. The polarities help to illustrate it. Institutional survival is often at odds with individual development. As I will argue below, ‘Disciple’ makes the attempt to bridge that gap, but other approaches, such as ‘The Word at Whitby’ are more circumspect. Such circumspection is reflected in the ambiguities of L&D, and for instance in the tension between education and training.
Individual/Institution

Because of the institutional provenance of the documents it is not surprising that there is a strong institutional emphasis. The pull of the individual pole is clear in L&D. This I would argue is a feature of the relocation of the subject in the discourses under investigation. The subject once located within institutional identity as teacher or trainer is now located within individual identity as learner. This is in some measure the result of engaging with the notion of maturity. Paradoxically it exists in polar tension with the more institutional notion of discipleship, which responds to the individual pole, but locates the learning/teaching project in the vocational setting provided by an institution, its knowledge and traditions.

The context of individual need in the face of an institutional agenda explains the needs and so the aims of individually shaped educational requirements and provision. L&D, as pointed out above, has a sort of 'review for policing' aim that suggests a need perceived around individuals who are insufficiently nurtured by education. This might be because of education’s inadequacy qualitatively or its inaccessibility to the marginalized. It might also reflect a theory of the individual that sits ill with the institutional sense of vulnerability. In the face of institutional disequilibrium, the answer has come to be the discovery of individual utopia. It would be a highly self-sacrificing institution that would be comfortable with such a theory. The church however is at that point caught out by its own hortatory vision and techniques.
Argyris and Schon provide interesting insights at this point with their proposals about 'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use' (Argyris & Schon 1974). In the 'Principles' of L&D two closely related theories are at work. Their implications are indicative of a particular theory-in-use and potentially destructive of the institutional needs their espoused theory aims to meet.

Education is about the individual spiritual journey. It is in tune with what is popularly described as the individualism of contemporary culture, with its strong interest in spirituality. Typically this aim covers a family of approaches focussed on individual development and dialogue with traditional sources of authority. They can range from aims to do explicitly with Christian discipleship narrowly interpreted with a strong moral agenda, to aims of spiritual exploration which may for instance on a mystical 'path' lead beyond traditional notions of Christian or church. It affirms the importance of the experiential approach to education. Yet it is beset with tensions in the church context. Issues of the nature of the individual and the community and of personal and traditional authority arise. These come to a head when educational resources are devoted to an end in the growth and the development of the individual which may take them beyond the scope the church offers for vocation or journeying. The institution would like to formalize this area into a 'formation' approach, with an infrastructure of spiritual direction. The individual, increasingly the subject of learning, resists.

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31 E.g. those writings which become increasingly spiritually inclusive of other faiths and of the 'New Age' movement: De Mello, the Dalai Lama, Idries Shah, et al.
• Education is about the vocation of the individual. Vocation suggests a clear sense of role in the setting of an institution or institutional movement for which training is needed. In L&D as I have pointed out ‘training’ theory sits uneasily alongside ‘learning’. There are clear meeting places, but the institutional/individual agenda is potentially unresolvable because the role/training language of vocation is at variance with the notion of the individual journey. We see the emergence with all its epistemological consequences of education or learning as a theory-in-use based on a Foucauldian technology of an ‘aesthetics of the self’.32

**Equilibrium/Utopia**

The equilibrium/utopia polarity is recognizable in the way in the documents respond to needs generated by a sense of vulnerability. The theory suggested by the language of ‘adventure’ points to the response that in the face of disequilibrium, advancing to utopia rather than recovery of balance should be the aim. However, that might be the result of hortatory rhetoric with its easy and paradoxical use of terms like ‘vision’ and ‘mission’ that generates only a ‘dream’ of utopia.

Utopian visions of various types, shaped by Bible – the Kingdom of God, or by the Bible and a more humanist ideology - individual fulfillment or liberation, are in evidence at a number of points at the institutional and individual levels. They struggle, however, to be more than a dream, with the pressure always towards equilibrium. This is symptomatic of what can happen to the utopian vision when it becomes unattractive, because the

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32 See Foucault 2000a, p.223ff.
equilibrium is so desirable, or unattainable, because the vision has proved empty. This latter is especially the case where the vision is pushed as far to the margins as it tends to be in the current situation of church and faith decline today.\textsuperscript{33}

While that is certainly the case with an institutional utopia, the utopia of individual development (and with it possibly unintentionally the resulting relocation of the subject as learner) appears to be perceived increasingly as strongly motivating for adult Christian education. There is some sense of an attempt to use that utopia and the idealism associated with it to establish institutional equilibrium.\textsuperscript{34}

The equilibrium/utopia polarity can be enlisted as a sort of tactic in the power play of the individual/institutional polarity. The language of utopia (and only the language, the reality is out of reach) – evoking vision in the Christian context through prophetic style language notions of ‘the Kingdom of God’ or of ‘life in the Spirit’ – is at the heart of the current Christian discourse and so of the adult Christian education discourse. This ‘hortatory’ tactic uses such powerfully evocative phrases to mask uncertainty. As a result it can serve to generate uncertainty not to end it. It can be understood as part of a ‘defensive’ strategy on the part of the institution, but it causes as many problems as it solves, as I will argue further below.

\textsuperscript{33} When a possible utopian goal becomes too marginalized it ceases to be effective. The life of faith as a concept is now so marginal to our culture that it is seen as idiosyncrasy rather than cultural dream or goal. Within the sub-culture of church it may linger effectively, but in so secularized a community as the Methodist Church I would argue that it is, as in wider society, essentially marginal. I would argue too that unless an ideal of life or conduct finds some wide cultural affirmation it cannot long remain effective. Thus notions of, for example sacrificial heroism – the laying down of life for the country or for God - are problematic in a way they were not to previous generations nor to other contemporary cultures.

\textsuperscript{34} For an exploration of idealism and education see Rikowski: Only Charybdis, in Ranson 1998 p.214.
While the espoused/in-use theories of Argyris and Schon proved helpful above, it is less certain that they do so at this point. The distinction does provide a very useful analytical and descriptive tool, but theories in adult Christian education, particularly when explored in the context of this polarity within Methodism can serve as either by turn. This inevitably increases uncertainty in the adult Christian education discourse and more widely in the church. I will need to investigate below whether this ‘theory slippage’ is a feature, as I suspect, of hortatory power tactics in its search for apparent legitimation.

Another possible reason behind this ‘espoused/in use’ theory slippage is the impact on the church of discussions and developments within the wider adult education discourse. While the church and its adult educators are by no means unaware of these developments, far from it, they have not succeeded in bringing them into the centre of the church’s understanding of itself. The theological hegemony holds sway. It tends to be popularizations of the debate that penetrate furthest into church life, and those with the relativist approach that while quietly subversive nevertheless defer to theology.\(^\text{35}\) I would argue that the education/training uncertainty in L&D reflects the ambiguities generated by the resistance of the theological hegemony to intrusion from the human sciences. A full understanding of the issues involved there are beyond the scope of this thesis, although it is hoped that the evidence gathered here will contribute to the debate.\(^\text{36}\)

\(^{35}\) E.g. Craig 1994

\(^{36}\) There is a real need to see theology as one ideology among others competing for power, particularly in its hortatory manifestation. The deferring to theology that is a major feature of church discourse constantly returns power to the institution or the individuals who already hold it. This is a clear defensive tactic, and a way once more of masking uncertainty, because the theological discourse is highly exclusive.
Inspiration/Training

This polarity relates rather more to techniques of education and will be more in evidence in the case studies. However, elements of the inspirational pole are clear in WWA where the advocacy of enthusiasts seems to give strength to the argument, paradoxically for training. In L&D and OC there are elements of the inspirational pole and the hortatory style closely associated with it, but the training pole with all its uncertainties naturally dominates.

Authenticity/Authority

L&D with its aim of educating disciples as reflective practitioners suggests a need that was embryonically there for WWA (and found if anywhere in the Bible interpreted critically) of a body of knowledge in which to ‘ground’ Christians. Such knowledge is needed and presumed but not articulated by L&D and OC. This suggests that the church in the face of challenges to notions of propositional truth and a knowledge resource embodying them simply cannot provide it in a way that is meaningful. What it offers is a collection of skills that help people to ‘live off the land’. Which raises the question for the disciple, where is knowledge to be found and how is it to be legitimated? There are no clear answers to this in the later documents and given their nature perhaps it is unfair to expect it. In terms of this polarity, while there are suggestions of authority not least in the Bible from WWA, L&D with its emphasis on reflective practice and experience shows the impact of the authenticity pole. The marginalization of the Bible emphasizes this point.
It is striking that the Bible, WWA’s knowledge resource, has lost its central place in L&D. The insights of Argyris and Schon are helpful again here. It may be that in WWA the epistemological place of the Bible is espoused theory and as such has to be argued and developed. In L&D it is assumed, ‘in use’ and is mentioned only in passing. There is a sense in which this would represent the triumph of WWA. Its discourse has established a measure of ideological hegemony. However, ‘The Word at Whitby’ project, a part as I will show of the L&D discourse, suggests that the place of the Bible in adult Christian education is still a theory that has to be argued for. It still has to be espoused – or at least ‘re-espoused’ - in a new way. Its place as ‘in use’ is not therefore secure after all. Once again the issue of uncertainty emerges. It is in this sort of situation that ‘defensiveness’ with the characteristics that Argyris and Schon (1974) have described develops. As a key tool of defensiveness, hortatory techniques of power become especially significant.

Such debate bears directly on this polarity. The theoretical slippage is reflected in the uncertain notions of ‘Scripture’ with its sense of ‘in use’ and therefore tacit authority and ‘Book’ with its range of espoused and in use features that work both for authority and against it. I will develop this point and the polarity as a whole more fully in the course of the thesis.
Conclusion

There is both uncertainty and hope in the documentary part of my archaeology of adult Christian education within the Methodist Church. I have noted the impact of secular adult education and the discourse of the learning and knowledge society as part of that pattern. However as I turn to the key Bible document it is significant to note that alongside this official Methodist discourse, growing churches, usually evangelical and charismatic, and sitting light to denominational contexts, are distinguished by their ‘clear Bible teaching’ as central to their committed and flourishing adult Christian educational programmes. It is a reminder that the Bible continues to offer ‘a grounding’ in knowledge that some adult Christians value, but in both an educational methodology and an understanding of the biblical with which Methodism finds it hard to come to terms. The impact of this issue at local level leads to the complexity and pain of many power games, the subjugation of certain knowledges and the intensity of debate that surrounds the Bible.

37 Organizations such as Rick Warren’s ‘Purpose Driven Movement’, The Willow Creek Movement, and events like ‘Easter People’ and ‘Spring Harvest’ that provide high levels of enthusiastically sought and received adult Christian ‘teaching’. The list is very long.
The Methodist Church 'acknowledges the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and practice. 

'Thou hast more truth and light to break 
Forth from thy holy word.'

Those two brief quotations point to the dilemma at the heart of my question, the relation of an epistemological resource to the 'other'. They are both found in the document that will be my archaeological focus in this chapter, 'A Lamp to my Feet' (LAMP). The analysis of its power relations which can be handled relatively quickly will pave the way for an exploration of key questions about the Bible as an epistemological and educational resource.

In this chapter therefore I will:

- Examine A Lamp to my Feet...
- Identify contested areas as a basis for analyzing power relations

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1 Methodist Church 1998 A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path, (subsequently referred to as 'LAMP'). The passage quoted is from p.16 and from Clause 4 of the Deed of Union, 1932.

- Discuss the consequences for the Bible as a knowledge resource with reference to the Book/Scripture polarity
- Note the 'Bible Teaching Use'
- Describe the 'Communication Use'
- Reflect further on the polarities

\textit{A Lamp to my feet and a light to my path (LAMP)}

At the 1998 Methodist Conference the Faith and Order Committee produced a report into 'the nature of authority and the place of the Bible in the Methodist Church', titled 'A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path'. Following the 1993 Conference debate on human sexuality, (where 'widely differing opinions were voiced on the subject of human sexuality, based on differing interpretations of the Bible') the Committee had been asked 'to consider the nature of biblical authority and how it is implemented in the life of the Methodist Church'. The Committee responded by restating the terms of the request. It questioned the second part of the request and rejected it as being meaningless, 'How for example can biblical authority be said to be "implemented" in the life of the Church?'

Instead the Committee set itself the task of producing 'a relatively short document setting out, within the wider context of authority, the different views of biblical authority which exist within Methodism.'

\footnote{As above: note 1.}
Power games are clearly in evidence. The shift from a task that would face normative issues to an essentially descriptive project is a neat sidestepping of a contentious issue. Those given the responsibility are hardly at fault. The original task as usually conceived in the church would be highly contested and divisive. They would be caught in the polarity of utopia and equilibrium at its most menacing.

While I can sympathize with this rejection of the original task in some respects, the issues of how the Bible is used in the Methodist Church that is my starting point bears directly upon this concern. Beginning from an educational/social scientific perspective rather than the pastoral/theological and church political one that I suspect led to its rejection, enables as I have indicated above, the adoption of an approach that can address precisely issues pertaining to the ‘implementation of Biblical authority’. Like the writers of LAMP I approach the task descriptively, but that is consistent with my approach. Unlike them I am not engaged in the heat of politics, nor with theological territory.

Biblical authority is of the utmost significance to the Methodist Church. It shaped and inspired its origins. The Methodist Church as the report makes clear ‘acknowledges the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and practice’. Bible scholarship is central to the ministerial and Local Preacher training that so significantly shapes the culture of the church. As I have shown, the adult education project that has developed at least since 1970 with its focus on training and developing lay people considered in its early stages that the Bible was unquestionably important.

4 As above, note 1
And yet, LAMP is clearly a hastily put together document with inadequate argumentation. Points are made and then immediately undermined — presumably in the interests of balance, but the effect is confusion. In large measure of course this is the direct effect of the committee process.

LAMP was offered as a ‘study document’, ‘an attempt to stimulate the serious exploration of (the) issue by members of individual Methodist congregations.’ This shift from the nature of the request to the actual result indicates both the complexity and the highly contested nature of the issues facing the Methodist Church with regard to the Bible, and of course with the question of its ‘authority’.

It is interesting that its presentation as a study document moves discussion out of a contested political arena in church life to the world of adult Christian education. The result of this appears to have been a reduction of power issues and their impact. The document does not lend itself easily to study, and no study guide is provided.

Such a move suggests that adult Christian education is considered a safe area for dealing with the highly contested issue and this can only be because it does not seriously impact on church life. It is a sign that within Methodism there is either too much wisdom or not enough energy to deal with the Bible, particularly when it is separated from the contentious political and ethical issue that provoked the original debate. There is an inherent ambiguity between the investment in adult Christian education resources that suggests it as an answer to hegemonic threat and its use as a ‘safe haven’ for contentious
issues. The use of education to establish equilibrium is very clear at this point. Certain conclusions might well follow. The reality may be that adult Christian education is seen as and may indeed be a leisure pursuit for the intellectually inclined; that it is about individual gratification; that it can prove a useful device for maintaining institutional equilibrium or that engaging people in study processes that relativize content is an effective way of diffusing conflict. It may be that in certain of its aspects adult Christian education is a tool in a power game that enables issues to be marginalized rather than resolved, a sort of backwater where highly contentious issues can be ‘parked’ under the guise nevertheless of creative engagement. The polarity is in evidence with equilibrium posing as utopia. It is open to question of course whether such attitudes are conscious. Anecdotal evidence from wider church life might be read both ways.

There may be some interesting suggestions here for reflection on the notion of the ‘learning society’.

That there is a ‘broad area of agreement’ about the place of the Bible in church life is not in doubt for the authors of LAMP. That there is diversity of understanding is also clear. In the interests of understanding this diversity a series of examples of different perspectives on Biblical authority are offered. Plurality of approach leads to a relativist perspective that is inevitably deconstructive.
A deconstructive tone is characteristic of much of LAMP\(^5\). This is evidently the result of a deep concern over the dangers of a debate of difficult moral issues where Bible use provides a way of establishing ideological positions that becoming hegemonic would preclude discussion and generate division. The tactic of identifying a plurality of approaches to relativize competing hegemonies and safeguard the institution is an obvious one. The consequences of such a tactic are considerable. Many Methodists can be left simply confused and alienated.\(^6\) However the resort to such a method emphasizes the continuing power of the Bible in the Church.

One further issue is raised by LAMP as by other parts of my research. It concerns the ‘level’ of language with which I am dealing. LAMP is not a rigorously crafted piece of academic writing. It would be unfair to treat it as such. The question arises though as to what exactly it is? Many of the views that I have encountered in my research interviews are likewise unthought out. They are expressed by people of a variety of educational backgrounds articulating, perhaps for the first time, their understandings of the Bible and its impact on them. It would be easy to be critical of such information. However, it works for them, and this for many is at the heart of what learning is about and the problem of learning.

\(^5\)It is not my intention to use the word ‘deconstructive’ in a pejorative sense. It is a tactic in the church’s engagement with the Bible, particularly with that section of the church, currently perceived to be in the ascendant, whose theology is understood to be based on an approach to the Bible that has been described as literalist, as ‘bibliolatry’, ‘book religion’ or ‘fundamentalist’. More sensitively it has been referred to as ‘evangelical’ or ‘conservative’.

\(^6\) In the confusion it can mean an abandonment of the more concerted educational and epistemological approaches in favour of the more immediate ‘rewards’ of what I shall call the Communication Use.
It seems to me that faced with such material I am dealing with ‘local’ knowledges, I have to take this situation and the information offered seriously as part of my research. It will not always lead to welcome conclusions or even precisely accurate ones. However, while Foucault would seem implicitly to give a positive note to ‘local knowledges’, I am not so sure that all of this type of material in my research is so deserving. A good deal of it I will argue below, particularly when offered from an institutional source, but not only then, actually results from tactics in the hortatory power game, where vagueness or the evocation of certain values deliberately obscures issues.

Contested areas

The challenge for me here, faced with a document born out of contest is not to stray too far from my area of adult Christian educational concern. LAMP has a dominant church political agenda, although as I have indicated it also presents itself in terms of adult Christian education.

The authority of the Bible

The authority of the Bible is the clear contested issue. This is the direct result of a power struggle within the church over issues of morality that would lead to a redefinition of the nature of church, of humanity and community. It also raises the question of who has authority to interpret the Bible, teach it or to implement its teaching.
However, the notion of authority becomes problematic the moment that it is an issue. Authority that has to establish its legitimacy has begun to shift towards the authenticity pole. It has lost the essential hegemony that confers authority. So far as the Bible is concerned, while it retains a measure of distinctive status and popular appeal that can pass for authority as the body of ancient texts providing epistemological resources for the origins of Christian faith, how the resulting knowledge is acquired, developed and used is open to question. Authority has gone except (and it is of course an important exception) within particular closed and local ideologies. The best that can be done is to establish a measure of legitimacy that is essentially at the authenticity pole. LAMP given its provenance sets out to do that theologically. Choosing the relativist and pluralist route makes closed ideologies unavailable. The individual subject may be persuaded or decide to confer authority when there is felt or discovered to be a measure of authenticity to the legitimizing claims and the ideologies that they support and emerge from. In such a process education is the main tool.

As I have noted the issue was addressed by a relativizing deconstructive approach. Within a theologically dominated discourse seven models or approaches providing theological legitimacy of its knowledge resources for use in church life were offered. They were conveniently grouped around the ‘quadrilateral’ of Scripture, experience, reason and tradition, suggesting the theological adequacy of that approach. Whether this approach achieved what it set out to do is not the issue for me since I am not engaging in theological debate. My question is the educationally driven one about how the Bible is
being used. The contested area is one of legitimate use. Other contested areas are implied by that conclusion and are clear in LAMP.

The adequacy of the Bible as a knowledge resource is a closely related contested area. The nature of the knowledge it contains is explored by LAMP in ways that seek to defend theological hegemony. The contest ranges around the issue of whether this knowledge relates to all of life that matters, or only the more narrowly defined faith aspects. In large measure that also depends on the extent and quality of mediation required to access such knowledge and opens up the contest over how far is the Bible accessible to a person of faith, or only to faith when enabled by scholarship. This has inevitable and direct consequences for adult education in that it raises the issue about the possible purposes of education. Is it a training in critical expertise that additionally points towards resources where that skill can be exercised, or is it catechismal style training in the skills of answering the questions the faith tradition has shaped and is accustomed to?

Furthermore, is the knowledge that the Bible contains accessible legitimately only to scholarship, or is it accessible, legitimately at a more intuitive level to individuals of faith. As will be seen below, the question is handled by affirming both possibilities. A number of issues about education, theology and the exercise of hortatory power tactics are raised and will be explored further. The issue of control of Bible knowledge, a key area of contestation in LAMP, is immediately raised.

7 While the Bible contains 'all things necessary for eternal salvation,' it does not tell us 'everything we would like to know' about God, or of the meaning of life, the universe and everything.' (Methodist Church 1998 p.21) Quite what we are to make of the unacknowledged quote from Douglas Adams is not clear!
Before moving to that point, however, a further area of contestation that bears directly on it needs to be noted, the contest between the ‘local’ and the ‘central’ or Connexional. Once again the issue is about who has the authority to interpret and so to legitimize the Bible for use. The thrust of LAMP is that the Bible is only adequate to the task when the experts interpret it. Yet LAMP’s writers can never quite bring themselves to resolution of this point. The ‘other’, whether as God, Holy Spirit, the ‘beyond’, the local or individual cannot finally be excluded. Inevitably this creates problems and energizes the contest. In Chapter 5 of LAMP there is a clear example and further development of this question. ‘The nature of authority and the shape of decision-making processes in Methodism’ are described. In the context of church ‘polity’ it is noted ‘that some Methodist churches are congregational in outlook, hardly looking outwards even as far as the Circuit let alone the Connexion.’ In terms of the Bible teaching that is foundational and authoritative for Christians, what is produced and on offer locally needs to be interpreted by the Church in order to be legitimate. It is the interpretation and guidance offered by trained Church leaders and accredited preachers that provides authoritative, legitimate teaching. Church tradition is thus identified as of high importance as a practical source of authority, and that tradition is held centrally.

Control

LAMP provides another example of just how problematic the Bible is for the church. As Scripture and as Book its potential for both the shaping and then disruption of church and
congregational life is enormous. Much of the story of the church’s engagement with the Bible concerns the way some sort of control has been attempted.

I have already noted a number of control techniques. The widespread use of the ‘Lectionary’ is evidence of selection as a means of controlling the areas of text to which people are allowed access and the terms upon which such access is developed. I have noted above that Lectionary and Church Year control represents a major achievement for WWA, intentionally or not. The huge investment of time and resources in the hermeneutical and teaching tasks can be understood in large part as a further example of control. Such controls have a venerable tradition. They are strongly in evidence in LAMP, counting as part of the tradition that is kept safe centrally. The deconstruction through relativism approach so characteristic of LAMP is another manifestation of the need to control. It attempts to reduce the risks of Bible impact on the life of a church where the Bible has always been seen as of central importance. This is a precarious undertaking, as I noted above. Emphasizing the sheer difficulty of engagement with the Bible, it seeks to put the task in the hands of the experts. Emphasizing the discourse of communal interpretation shifts it in the direction of the discussion group. On the one

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8 See e.g. Barrett 1968, p268/9

9 See Farley quoted below p. 152 from Kelsey 1975 p.172. These are far from being the only ways of controlling the Bible. They are the ones that are identifiable within LAMP and the other documents. A wider discussion of this issue could explore this important area. Translation as a means of control is a lost cause in the face of the multitude of Bible versions available, although now the sheer variety of translations available has a relativizing effect. The comparative popularity of courses to enable lay people to read the Bible in its original languages speaks both of issues of control and of the leisure opportunity for adult education. People are enabled and potentially at least have the time, technology and resources to investigate where hitherto only the experts have been able to move. The consequences for authority patterns as well as educational ones are highly significant. The experience of groups like the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and in terms of individual educational interest, the work of the late John Dobson in developing Greek and Hebrew ‘in a week’ courses at St. Deiniol’s Library would be instructive.
hand the non-academic constituency and on the other the individual reader is liable to feel
the attempt at control and become resistant or alienated.

The deconstructive tone of LAMP is an attempt to control the Bible. It is no doubt driven
by intellectual rigor, but also by the need to reduce the power of the Bible by containing
it in reliable, trained hands. This is not simply because of what it says, it can be found to
say so many things, but because of the power with which it can say some things for some
constituencies – particularly the power with which it by turns sustains or threatens the
conservative/fundamentalist ideological hegemony.

Exploration of the area of control in any educational project is significantly indebted to
the writings of Apple. The loose power structure of the church contrasts markedly with
the educational system that is Apple’s main focus where the structures of power are more
formal and efficient.

Apple asks, for instance,

‘whose cultural capital, both overt and covert, is placed within the (school)
curriculum? Whose knowledge is it? Why is it being taught to this
particular group in this particular way? What are its real or latent
functions in the complex connections between cultural power and
control...?’

Apple 1979 p14

These are vital issues that reflect the concerns Foucault has raised for me even if the
context in which they are asked is different. They can be applied to the presuppositions
evidenced in LAMP. I will need to return to them below in the light of my further research.

The Bible and the ‘other’

As noted already, a contest that LAMP cannot avoid and is uncertain in handling is shared with the wider church. It is central to any theological or faith discourse, and takes on particular features within the Protestant tradition that has emphasized the individual. Whether the other is described or defined as ‘God’, ‘Jesus’ or ‘Holy Spirit’ as is traditional within Christian thought, space has always to be allowed for the ‘beyond’ or the ‘other’ to transcend or transgress.

It is clear that the presence of the ‘other’ is a major point of contestation in LAMP. It is central to my notion of the ‘Communication Use’ of the Bible that will be a focus of later sections of this thesis, but that clearly is in evidence in Chapter 6 of LAMP. The chapter is a short section outlining points at which doctrinal or ethical judgements have been made by Methodists. Some have relied on Biblical material and others have not. The final paragraph brings in a mention of the Holy Spirit and leaves into a quotation that leaves argument curiously and intentionally open:

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10 This short chapter provides a fascinating commentary of the use of the Bible in decision making. Given the record which indicates its unreliability and widely varied use, the interesting question arises, ‘Why does it still persist?’ The anecdotal evidence of distaste for the Bible is not uncommon in Methodism and the poor response to LAMP in its role as discussion document is in some measure explained by this evidence of its unreliability. It is noteworthy that it is still seen as a resource for so much of church life.
In our struggle to interpret the Bible and to apply it to our lives, we look to the same Spirit to guide and inspire us too; recognizing always that 'Thou hast more truth and light to break Forth from thy Holy Word.'

LAMP 1998 p.32

Despite LAMP's championing of the need for critical expertise in interpreting the Bible, the possibility of an individual insight legitimized by the operation of the other can never be ruled out.

The experience of encountering that which is other is not uncommon, I would argue, and it is not the preserve of the religious mind. It can be detected in the entirely human interactions of crossing cultures, moving between local and centre or indeed any liminal experience. It can be highly creative, but also destructive. A full investigation of this area is unfortunately beyond the scope of this limited thesis, although I will need to return to it regularly, and in more detail in Chapter 9.

Analysis of power relations

System of Differentiations

LAMP offers a number of differentiations. The key one from my point of view is that between the expert and the lay person about which comment has already been made. A further differentiation arises directly from it that has consequences educationally. This is between engagement with the Bible 'in itself', on the one hand, and its 'message' or 'teaching' on the other. By this I mean the engagement with text leaving interpretation
and mediation of any responses to local and individual resources as opposed to the more highly developed attempt to select and provide standards from above that inevitably bear all the marks of selected, controlled, epistemological resource, with its directing meta-narratives. This is clear in LAMP’s own set of seven different approaches to the Bible. Behind these is the context of political debate between the conservative and the liberal approaches, the former being more exclusive in terms of, for example church membership, and more traditional in terms of approach to the Bible, the latter being more inclusive and open on both counts. There is also the highly significant local/central differentiation that has already been noted. Significant too is the question noted in Chapter 3 about the adult as one able to engage with abstract thought.

*Types of Objectives*

LAMP is clearly devoted to achieving equilibrium. The challenge faced with the utopia generating ideologies that are part of church life is to do so without losing a utopian rhetoric. The paradoxical need to both affirm and to neutralize power of Bible is a direct consequence.

*Instrumental Modes*

The chosen mode is the Conference Report, a written document with institutional authority, hence LAMP, and the use of adult Christian education, both formal and informal to promote it. It works from the centre outwards or top downward through the Connexional networks and resources, and with their (presumed) authority. Education is the instrument of the mediation of the document and consequent containment of potential
division generated as a result of the use of the Bible. Adult Christian education thus promotes equilibrium in the face of the threat of individual interpretation or locally generated utopias. It does so at the cost of developing the subject as learner. The subject as learner is no more accessible to control than the Bible, in many ways less so.

Forms of Institutionalization

The document emerges from a clearly institutionalized context, that of the Methodist Connexion. The Connexional ideology is expressed institutionally as a sort of extended family that is mutually inclusive with a strong sense of belonging. There is a strong democratic impulse and a commitment to the process that is robust, if vulnerable to extremist pressure. The Bible is understood as having a central place in the institution, offering a resource of knowledge from which may be developed moral imperatives, cultural norms or ideological givens. The attempt is made to focus discussion and understanding of the Bible strongly at the Book pole rather than the Scripture pole of that polarity, with direct consequences for educational processes. I would argue that the attempt to focus on the Book suggests a conviction that the book can be controlled more easily than Scripture. Book of course creates its own control problems. The institutionalization of the adult Christian education project, as evidenced in the previous chapter, through training and accreditation is implicit in LAMP’s project. While the document aims at the informal and local area of adult Christian education, the informal is under pressure as has been seen, with the Connexional promotion of ‘good practice’ at every level.
Degrees of Rationalization

Throughout LAMP, theology is the language of rationalization. Discussion is set in the ‘quadrilateral’ of reason, scripture, experience and tradition that is offered as providing the parameters of the Methodist theological project. Whether given the incursions of the language of the sciences that is in evidence at a number of points, theology can achieve an effective rationalization is doubtful. Given theology’s own ideologically multifarious nature the task of rationalization is even more difficult. The academic, literary, historical, critical approach that embodies the theological faces being confounded by the local transcending or transgressive other – ‘God’ in the terms of the report. The Connexional ideological rationalization sets out to be inclusive. The understanding of adult Christian education as communal or individual reflective practice means that it offers not just a tool, but a rationalizing process that given the weakness of institutional practice promotes the individual as subject. The result is a move towards the individual authority that links with the authenticity end of my polarity, rather than the central and traditional authority pole.

The Bible used as a knowledge resource. ¹¹

This analysis of LAMP has opened up for me the question of the Bible as an epistemological resource. It would take me beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the

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¹¹ This knowledge resource can be used for a number of purposes: authority, understanding and developing faith, devotion, government, guidance in the power relations of church life – these of course overlap and the list could go on. I am particularly indebted to Biderman 1995 for his exploration in this area. There is an extended essentially theological discussion of the nature of that knowledge, but this area is not my concern in this thesis. So while arguments over the nature of Biblical knowledge as ‘revealed’, ‘inspired’ or ‘classical’ represent competing theological ideologies, and while they obviously impact on the development of my thought at certain points any extended exploration of that particular discourse is beyond the scope of this thesis.
nature of the Bible fully in that way. As far as its use as an epistemological resource in my chosen archaeological layer with its particular context and case studies is concerned, this analysis of LAMP points to three areas of discussion that need noting. I will explore first the use of the Bible as an epistemological resource in the light of the Book/Scripture polarity that I am developing. Secondly, I take note of the way that the Bible is seen as a source of ‘Bible teaching’. Thirdly, I will give some further clarification of what I have termed the ‘Communication Use’. These ways of using the Bible as an epistemological resource have direct consequences for adult Christian education. They clearly have close links with each other and strong similarities, but they represent distinct strands of use that can and do compete. They are not, of course, the only discernible uses as will become clear in my case studies, where the use based on ‘teaching’ drops from view.

The Scripture/Book polarity

To begin to understand the complexity that attaches to Bible use as an epistemological resource, exploration of the Scripture/Book polarity is important. At this point I am particularly indebted to the writings of Graham (1987), Smith (1993) and Biderman (1995). Graham and Smith, both working from a religio-historical and comparativist perspective, champion what they identify as the ‘functional’ approach as a way of understanding the use of sacred documents. Their approach is a product of the human sciences and a religiously plural world. It sees ‘scripture’ as becoming scripture through the movement of human community and culture. ‘A text becomes scripture in active
subjective relationships to persons, and as part of a cumulative communal
tradition.' (Graham 1987 p.5)

According to Graham, Smith and Biderman the 'functional' approach stands in contrast
to a 'textual' approach that is concerned with the search for knowledge, meaning and
understanding from the content of the Bible. It has generated the vast, interpretative,
exegetical and hermeneutical energies that characterize the church's engagement with the
Bible. 12 It inquires after the message of the Bible, whether that message is found in the
text as a whole or in its individual components. It uses techniques of historical,
sociological and literary criticism to explore the meaning of the content. The level of
study vastly increases in scope when the engagement is with the written. Books can pile
up and references multiply. Languages can be learnt and traditions compared in detail.
The history of hermeneutics has been the struggle to allow the Bible to speak clearly in
ever-new situations. In this context Bible use is about how a meaning can emerge that is
relevant and can be justified in terms of the prevailing cultural currents. 13 From a
confessional standpoint, the Bible is seen as significant for understanding of (or
knowledge resources concerning) the divine and the life of faith, and so all techniques
need to be employed to enable that understanding to emerge for each new generation and
context. This textual and hermeneutical story is not my concern. My concern is much

12 There are numerous surveys of hermeneutical developments eg Jeanrond 1991, Frei 1978, and Green
1987

13 See Jeanrond 1991 and others above. The work of the hermeneutical 'giants' such as Schleiermacher,
Barth and Bultmann is relevant here.
more limited. It reflects the view of Wiles in response to Frei’s proposed narrative hermeneutic,

    The main strategy has been to look for some particular form of critical study that will enable scripture to continue to play a virtually unchanged role in the life of the church. But it may be that we would do better to look for a modification of the role expected of scripture in the church than to search for a more congenial style of criticism.

    Green 1987 p. 50

In a similar way, I am seeking to understand how the Bible is *used* in a particular educational case.

This functional approach enables investigation of the roles the Bible can play in shaping both church and society. Of particular significance for me in the context of adult Christian education is the way that the Bible has been used as a knowledge resource to generate ideological discourse and establish or challenge hegemony both through its content and through its roles as book and as scripture. As such the text/function dichotomy of Graham and Smith is not an approach that lends itself to further development in my argument. I will however build on the insights that these writers offer through it and through their subsequent understanding of Scripture and its uses in developing a Book/Scripture polarity.

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14 The issue of ‘anthropomorphizing’ the Bible to give it a sort of autonomous active way of operating needs to be noted. This is a constant feature of the sort of literature I am dealing with especially at the more popular level. A phrase like ‘the Bible says’, beloved of many preachers, is a hortatory trick that is designed to circumvent complex issues of Bible nature and use. The Bible cannot ‘act’ without human agency, unless of course some transcendent dynamic is presumed or imported into the argument. The temptation to do this is a strong as the motives are many and varied.
The term 'scripture' is used interchangeably in LAMP with 'Bible' as it commonly is in other areas of church life. It carries a different significance however from 'Bible'. It is part of an almost tacit discourse of authority and power, ecclesial and otherwise, that reflects the techniques and games of hortatory power. Scripture carries a tacit authority with a resonance and meaning that distinguishes it by definition if not by popular usage from 'Bible'. It qualifies the Bible. In its role as 'Scripture' the Bible finds a distinctive status as a knowledge resource that is different from the Bible as 'Book'.

Smith and Graham both explore the fact that scriptural text in written book form is a relatively small part of humanity's scriptural experience and so of experience of the knowledge resource it affords us. Predominantly, they argue, the human encounter with Scripture is an oral/aural one. Even where, as in Protestant Christianity, it could be argued this is much less the case and that there is 'book' domination and a distinctive 'book' function for the Bible, the oral/aural engagement with the Bible continues. Reading of the Bible aloud is a central feature of all church worship. Liturgies and (usually) their extempore alternatives are shot through with and shaped by Bible idioms, style and content. The telling of Bible stories with greater or less freedom is foundational for much of the education of children. It is worth noting perhaps that story telling as a cultural phenomenon is enjoying a recovery and the presentation of Biblical material visually is popular. The grass-roots, local 'folk culture' context of the current story telling movement suggests its anti-institutional origins.

15 E.g. the publications of BRF/Barnabas Live Project and the Bible Society and Northumbria Community, 'The Telling Place'project.
This raises a number of issues. There is the difference between the engagement with written text as book and engagement with that same text orally and aurally. At an initial level, and a highly significant one, the former engagement can be, perhaps usually is, a solitary educational activity. The latter by definition is communal.

When an oral/aural engagement takes place the same level of detail is not available, however, precisely because of that ‘limitation’ the knowledge gathered can transcend the boundaries of confined written text and operate in an a-historical, a-cultural, a-contextual way. The oral/aural encounter produces different uses, particularly educational ones, from those of the written/reading encounter.

Smith argues from a world-religions perspective for an understanding of language that sees ‘scripture’ distinctively alongside poetry and prose (Smith 1993 p.227-228). As such it engages people on other levels of experience than poetry or prose. This is an important suggestion. It is not Smith’s concern to do so, but it does offer a way of understanding the power of ‘scripture’ as a term in the power games played out around knowledge and its legitimation in the context of Bible use. I will develop it below in the light of a notion of a tacit cultural hauntology.

Graham explores the subtlety of the written-oral/aural relationship in relation to the traditional skills of memorizing text or ‘learning by heart’. The loss of that approach deemed pejoratively ‘by rote’ or ‘parrot fashion’ (in a power game that will be readily
acknowledged as aiming to control a certain sort of Bible use) is a direct consequence of the ready availability of the book that makes such effort redundant. The claim is widely made that it is more important to spend mental energy on understanding what is said rather than just learning to say it. 'Book' that lends itself to detailed hermeneutical study facilitates that understanding. The harsh reality offered by clear and unarguable though anecdotal evidence and observation is that availability of the Bible as a book and its potential use has not increased Bible knowledge. In fact that same anecdotal evidence suggests that the opposite has occurred. In addition, valuable tools of community building and individual reflection, the ability to remember and to recite together have been lost. As such tools decrease in regular use so they decrease in value and diminish further. When, for instance, prayers can no longer be recited together, they no longer bind a community. When Bible verses cannot be remembered without looking them up they no longer feed the senses or the thoughts tacitly.

There are important issues here concerning the purpose of Bible education and the ways it operates. Perhaps they extend more widely to education as a whole. As a tool of ideological construction and reinforcement that may arguably be educational the Bible as Scripture has peculiar power. In such circumstances the loss of the oral/aural approach may be crucial. It may also be crucial to the attempt to control knowledge. It would seem that Scripture used orally/aurally could relate interestingly to the development of local knowledges, where its impact could be both localizing and centralizing.
The understanding of the Bible as Book picks up much of what Graham, Smith and Biderman include in their understanding of the textual approach. It is Book as text that makes possible the hermeneutical, exegetical and expository endeavours of the church to discover the message or teaching of the Bible. My focus is not on that area, but on the way that the book as a technology and as an ideological phenomenon sets a pole in tension with Scripture and represents a different pattern of using the Bible in adult education as a knowledge resource. The Bible as Book stands in contrast to the oral/aural character of Scripture. It compensates for its apparent weaknesses, but it also diminishes its strength. In its turn it creates its own problems with issues of power and control.

The Bible is a book, but only of course with the advent of the printing press has it been accessed as book in modern terms. The bloody history of the printing of the Bible indicates the perceived threat to contemporary hegemonies and power that the process represented. It was the technology of ‘book’ as well as the scholarship of translation and interpretation and the ideologies that emerged around access that made the impact.

It is as a book that the Bible has had a key role in shaping our culture. In The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, Eisenstein (1979) has traced the impact on notions of authority, knowledge and inevitably of education. With its new, technologically generated accessibility it became more ‘local’ and eluded existing controls.
The 'temple' entered the family circle in the form of the printed Bible. Boundaries between priesthood and laity, altar and hearthside, were effectively blurred by placing Bibles and prayer books in the hands of every God-fearing householder.

Eisenstein 1979 p.425

'The new print technology which made food for thought much more abundant and allowed mental energies to be more efficiently used' achieved this effect because a single pair of eyes could now survey a wide range of diverse records and reference guides. It is hard to overestimate the change. While Eisenstein suggests its impact on the Bible was ambiguous, (1979 p.700) the educational consequences of the universally regarded source of ultimate authority 'becoming' a book would play a significant role in the book being the instrument of education, not least self-directed education. 'Truth' could now be found in a book. Knowledge could be organized, assembled and compared by bringing books together. This was a new way of handling knowledge. For reliable knowledge students turned to a book. To learn was to encounter books and gain book skills. The book performs its own hauntology in culture. There are signs of such ghosts in what has been described as 'bibliolatry' (perhaps better 'bibliphilia') or 'book religion' where the self-directed struggle for religious learning, authority and communication with God seeks out the 'book'. The book therefore has authority as an educational tool, but more than that, it can come to possess a mystique as the semi-transcendent repository of truth.

The apologetic strength and the evangelistic appeal of 'truth in a book' are I would argue

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16 Smith 1993 p.7 describes 'book' as 'a word that itself has quietly changed its meaning virtually every century for the past twenty-five'.

17 It would be interesting to explore if the fact that the Bible became the first widely available and popular book, and the generator of book culture, with so many early printed books associated with it, and the fact that it carried the mantle of the sacred repository of transcendent truth and authority means that every book carries something of that original lustre. It would certainly give a perspective on the place of the book in adult educational experience.
extremely persistent, because of its formative influence on culture.\(^{18}\)

At a popular level Farley describes the important movement from religious artifact – a repository of knowledge that is a-temporal, a-cultural and a-contextual, to a repository of knowledge extracted by intellectual effort.

Pictures of the father reading the bible daily with the family, Bible reading and study as a regular exercise of the Christian life, ‘learning the Bible at mother’s knee’ – all sound quaint to the modern ear. What do we have instead... the transformation of the piety of the Book into Bible study in the church. We study in groups the history of the Hebrew religion, the missionary journeys of Paul, and Johannine theology. This means that our basic relation to the Bible is an intellectual one.

Kelsey 1975 p.172

The technology has changed the use of the Bible as an epistemological resource.

An interesting parallel is evoked when Lyotard (1986 p.67) in his ‘Report on Knowledge’, addresses the issue of democratization through access to information technology.

**Scripture/Book Summary**

This polarity will be the focus of further development, but already its potential as an analytical tool and its paradoxical nature can be seen. As the knowledge resource that the Bible represents takes on the character of Book so Scripture is made available, its potential scope extended. Scripture with its tacit ideology of truth gives a legitimation to

\(^{18}\) The symbolic act of bringing the Bible into church to start worship in Methodist churches suggests symbolically its value, status and impact on church life. The persistence of the hymnbook in Methodist worship despite the rejection of a liturgical prayer book may indicate a tacit book culture beyond mere pragmatism. Eisenstein notes that there is at the same time a counter-movement. 1979 p.704
Book and Book provides a context in which so much of the power of Scripture can be controlled, even diminished. This is a process clear in LAMP.

The ‘Bible Teaching’ use

It is arguable that the context from which LAMP sprung, that of moral debate, and therefore the way in which the question it sought to address was posed is responsible for the emphasis on the ‘teaching’ that the Bible provides. The phrase or a very close synonym is found in four of the seven approaches. The Bible’s teaching is there found to be mediated by institutional authority in the shape of skilled and trained interpreters guided by tradition and reason and reflected on in the light of experience. It is shaped in the great meta-narratives of theology and liturgy. The sense of the document is that the Bible cannot be engaged directly, but that its resources of knowledge become available as teaching through the interpretation and educational process. This is a clear and effective attempt at control, and education is the tool, both in the preparation of interpreters and as the process by which the interpreters pass on the knowledge to others. The notion of ‘teaching’ is also indicative of the ideological agenda. The Bible’s teaching and its message have to be constructed in this view out of the raw material provided by the knowledge resource. Such construction is inevitably ideologically shaped.

In such a discourse control issues are at their clearest. It is worth noting that in the data from my case studies, reference to this developed notion of Bible teaching largely disappears. The phrase is used, but its context suggests that it is not, as with the discourse, the content that is important, so much as the notion that the Bible is a resource
that one might turn to or use to provide teaching. The notional availability is what is important to the user.

Communication Use

This is a hugely important area of use that passes often unnoticed. When it becomes obvious it is commonly the recipient of fierce criticism on the grounds of its (disreputable) ‘local’ characteristics and its disruptive potential. Although it is often associated with the ‘teaching’ discourse noted above, it can also appear in direct opposition to it. It operates differently – not so much in terms of the actual content of what may be communicated, but in terms of the authority it gives to the process of engagement with the other as ‘God’. It is strongly modeled on Biblical patterns of communication with God, hence my designation as ‘Communication Use’. It occurs at a number of points in LAMP with dramatic consequences.

Quoting Question 52 of the Methodist Catechism LAMP states that Christians have ‘heard the Word of God’ in the Bible, that ‘the Holy Spirit speaks through the Scriptures’ and that the principle of incarnation shows that God accepts ‘the limitations of time, place and culture...’. Psalm 119:105, ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path’, is discussed. The verse has particular added significance because it is the one from which the Report’s title is taken. Of immediate relevance is the rhetorical question raised with regard to ‘Your word’ – ‘Or may we say that God speaks a ‘word’ to us in many
ways – sometimes through a passage of Scripture, at other times through a friend, a preacher, or in private prayer? This is the Communication Use in a nutshell.

The presence of the Communication use in LAMP is striking. It appears in three of the suggested approaches. They are intended to stand in contrast to one another, but they all share the vocabulary of the Communication use.

7.9.1 The Bible is the Word of God and is therefore inerrant (free of all error and entirely trustworthy in everything which it records) and has complete authority in all matters of theology and behaviour. It is ‘God breathed’ and its human authors were channels of the divine Word. The Christian’s task is to discern accurately what the Bible teaches and then to believe and obey it. Reason, experience and tradition should be judged in the light of the Bible, not the other way round.

7.9.4 The Bible is one of the main ways in which God speaks to the believer. However, the movement of God’s Spirit is free and unpredictable, and it is what the Spirit is doing that is of greatest importance. The Bible helps to interpret experience, but much stress is placed on spiritual experience itself, which conveys its own compelling authority.

7.9.6 The Bible witnesses to God’s revelation of himself through history and supremely through Jesus Christ. However, the Bible is not itself that revelation, but only witness to it. Christians must therefore discern where and to what extent they perceive the true gospel witness in the various voices of the Bible. Reason, tradition and experience are as important as the biblical witness.

There is a strong sense of the ‘Communication’ Use, which in a similar way to the movement of the Spirit (see below 7.9.4) serves not simply to undermine the centrality of the Bible, but relativizes the hermeneutical endeavour. If education has a role here it would appear to be a sort of aesthetic function, of listening with the skill to recognize the transcendent or immanent ‘voice’ of the divine. An issue that will recur is the possibly gender specific ‘ways of knowing’ in which women tend to use ‘listening’ metaphors and men ‘seeing’ ones. (Belenky et al. 1986)

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20 The notion of experience with its ‘own compelling authority develops and individualizes the previous note. It has clear implications for the process of experiential adult Christian education.
The use of key terms 'word', 'speak', and 'voices' suggests a conversational metaphor for relation to God and to the Bible that is direct, intimate, authentic, and in different ways powerfully authoritative. The close association with 'Spirit' offers the profound suggestions of the deep intimacy of God with the individual believer that in the light of the impact of the Charismatic movement is so strong an ideology in churches today. Such a metaphor springs from the Bible as both Scripture and Book, but transcends and transgresses attempts to limit Bible use, certainly its use to produce the Bible teaching that is such a part of LAMP and of the church educational project.

As a means of communication, perceived as being with 'God', what matters for this use is not in the first instance the content of knowledge, but the process itself. The Bible operates as the normative channel of communication in terms of content and method although it can be disregarded as and when content contradicts experience and the immediacy of communication supersedes it. The Communication Use builds too on the Bible's Scriptural nature with its strong aural/oral emphasis and liturgical use and is enhanced by the accessibility of the book and the ready availability of engagement with the transcending other.

The phrase 'This is the word of the Lord' that is so characteristic of liturgy and more informal Bible use comes from the prophetic literature of the Bible, and the discourse of the charismatic, spirit-filled individual in direct contact with the divine. While its use in liturgy appeals strongly to the authority of tradition, it all too readily reinforces the

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21 This is the implication of much of Graham's argument, where the oral/aural approach affirms that style of functioning.
Communication Use and its discourse. Such a discourse is peculiarly vulnerable to the investigation of religious experience in the human sciences, but that does not seem to diminish its appeal in the contemporary context where the need of or response to spiritual 'immediacy' outweighs other considerations.

Content of course does matter. Shared content seals the sense of belonging and of solidarity and can be used as a resource for establishing cultural paradigms and in building up a shared 'language' of belonging.

What is striking about the Communication Use is its freedom from and resistance to control. It has the potential to by-pass the hermeneutical process and often does, although it can and does live with it, even making use of it. It explains considerable use of the Bible in worship where it operates symbolically and perhaps 'sacramentally' (Smith 1993 p.240). Above all it operates at the personal devotional level offering a legitimization or authentication of authority. In its deliberate overriding of control mechanisms, it democratizes the Bible by restoring direct access to individual readers in a way that complements the Book pole and generates a controlling response that seeks to use education to restore teaching and doctrinal norms.

In my data, this is the dominant use of the Bible. It appears in both case studies. It operates at an intuitive level, springing from cultural echoes, shared 'languages' of stories, characters and proverbs that confer legitimacy. In this area the Bible is not a resource of knowledge in any organized and ideologically shaped, coherent sense. It is
rather a repository of 'information' that can be used to sustain and stimulate the Communication Use.

Reflections on the Polarities

Individual/Institutional
In a document like LAMP, the institutional pole is naturally very strong. There is the clear use in its interests of an institutionally acceptable education programme for the Bible with properly developed teaching content. However the strong individual emphasis of the Communication Use is ubiquitous. The polarity illustrates the dilemma of the need to motivate individuals by individual nurturing and response in order to enlist them in an institutional project, a process that at the same time presents a real risk of losing the institutional focus.

Equilibrium/Utopia
At the heart of LAMP is an attempt to strive for equilibrium with utopian rationalization. The attempt to encourage individual utopias of engagement with the Bible, and so with God, the Spirit, the spiritual other, as part of this process works against the intended desire for institutional equilibrium. The emerging Communication Use carries a sense that equilibrium is not as worthy a goal as those generated by utopian dreams. The confusion in this polarity as a result is striking and points to a key problem in the exercise of hortatory power that will be explored later.
Inspiration/Training

There are signs of both poles at work in LAMP. The training of the expert accesses the epistemological resource, and training through education enables others to do so. The irresistible awareness of the activity of the other and the presence of the Communication Use mean that inspiration is very strong.

Authenticity/Authority

Institutional authority faces difficulty in LAMP. The deconstructive approach used to exercise control shifts authority away from the Bible itself to its skilled and qualified interpreters and to the church. However, with an ideologically failing institution beset by so many epistemological pressures, this can only increase problems that further question the institution’s authority. The Communication Use resists this in the interests of the individual, and moves towards an individual authority that is almost synonymous with authenticity.

Book/Scripture

This polarity has been explored in detail above. Its significance for my question is considerable. The ambiguities that it presents for both knowledge and education are important.

The polarities focus strongly in the area of ‘individual utopia’ influences. As such it will be an area to which I need to return in the light of further research to explore its use of the Bible in adult Christian education. It is a powerful and widespread use that has its own
discourse or narrative of religious or spiritual experience, which as I have already hinted, uses the Bible as a model of process but can easily leave it behind. Using the Bible, however, not only accesses a particular knowledge resource, but also sustains community links. I suspect this function is always part of the way the Bible is used, and it has considerable significance for the use of the Bible as an educational resource.

Conclusion

In my examination of LAMP, both its origins and the nature of its content provide evidence of the current significance of the Bible. The highly reductionist tone of parts of it can be understood as tactics in the power patterns that are present in the Methodist Church. The significant persistence of the Bible is endorsed. The Bible matters. It still has power.

LAMP illustrates the urgency with which issues of control of the potential power of the Bible have been addressed. While the Bible offers effective resources, methods and models for use, it also contains ‘viruses of disintegration’ that impact on the institutional church. The Communication Use is a major one. The Bible is not an innocent tool. LAMP summarizes an attempt to use it in ways for which it was not designed – as in the effort to force to provide answers to contemporary questions. Not that it was necessarily designed for any discrete use. There is of course a venerable tradition of using the Bible in the ways that LAMP reflects, although it has to be ‘forced’ to do this and at the heart of my thesis is the exploration of limited aspects of contemporary practice in this area.
The problem is that its potential uses and complex content resist manipulation and easy control and undermine hegemonies as well as sustain or initiate them.

I demonstrated in Chapter 3 that the educational project still bears evidence of Bible presence despite its decline in the latest document. The perceived successes of ‘The Word at Whitby’ and the Disciple course as well as anecdotal information show evidence of a response to the Bible in the church that accords with the sense of its strong and problematic significance in LAMP. This is not surprising given its dominant presence in Sunday worship and other devotional patterns.
CHAPTER 5

THE BIBLE IN A CONTEXT OF EPSITEMOLOGICAL CRISIS

In this chapter I will:

• Reflect on aspects of the cultural context of the Methodist Church in Britain and their implications for epistemology
• Examine the persistence of the Bible in adult Christian education through the notion of a ‘hauntology’
• Explore the hauntology and its links with the Communication Use
• Explore the hauntology as it relates to legitimating narrative
• Identify key issues to engage with in the analysis of my case study data.

I have raised the possibility of understanding the adult Christian education project and especially its use of the Bible as a response to decline. This is the case for institution and for individual. The suggestion is reinforced by the documents I have examined and in addition they indicate an institutional crisis that is to be understood as essentially epistemological.

Sociologists of religion such as Davie, Beckford, and Aldridge\(^1\) have charted the decline of religious institutions. Davie speaks of ‘believing without belonging’ (a widely used phrase to which I will return), and Beckford of religion as a ‘cultural resource’. What is

in evidence therefore is a move away from a hegemonically dominant religious ideology to the religious as an increasingly marginal cultural arbitrary. This is a familiar story. Amongst the implications for religious institutions such as the mainstream denominations is a major swing to the individual pole. It features a consumer approach, which Aldridge suggests as a non-negative feature over against for example Hervieu-Leger.²

This threat to the institution is perceived eventually by the institution itself but often only as a response to pain that is poorly understood. It becomes defensive in a range of possible ways. One such is educational policy and vision. The problem for the institution is that while it (the institutionally conscious part of it that is) sees itself as existing, no one else does – an aspect of the cultural blindness problem. For the individual what has taken its place is a culture. The culture functions in less assertively hegemonic ways than the institution, although not ultimately less powerfully hegemonically I suspect. Within the culture individuals perceive themselves as being able to flourish. They can make choices and do. This is clearly evident in the context I have been examining in the case studies.

Courtney quoting Bourdieu and others (Courtney 1992 p.51) makes the observation that participatory adult education is an expression of a certain sort of middle class culture and therefore a way of servicing and maintaining it. Education is one way of participating in

² Aldridge, 2000 p.16 quoting Hervieu-Leger, D. 2000 p.215-8. The list is a key feature of this culture and I have noted the way that lists, such as that in LAMP, and Craig, function deconstructively. I note too that consumerism is close to democracy and the choice from a list is not negatively exclusive.
a participatory culture. There are significant consequences for church and education if this view can be sustained.

The introduction of Bourdieu into the discussion also introduces the theme of ‘habitus’ and thus reinforces the significance of culture (Bourdieu 2000 p.63f). I would argue that with the flourishing of an institution ‘habitus’ is created that sustains members. With institutional decline the ‘habitus’ of that particular institutional micro-culture fades and in the present case, unless the wider ‘secular’ culture provides a suitable alternative, which in the post-modern context it does not, the result is a hegemonic crisis or vacuum. However, the ‘habitus’ is tough and may linger on when the structures that have promoted and used it are fading. This tacit hauntology may serve to increase the sense of present and impending loss. In the face of it the institution attempts to defend and sustain its ‘habitus’ by adult education in particular. It is among adults that the loss of ‘habitus’ first bites. Much of the approach to adult Christian education articulated in the documents reviewed can be read as responses to Courtney or Bourdieu - to make good the lost ‘habitus’. Such responses are institutionally ambiguous.

As I am focusing on the epistemological aspect of the crisis, which on the basis of my argument in this Chapter I believe to be the central issue, and since as I understand Bourdieu that is only a part of what he means by ‘habitus’, I will rather use the terminology of hegemony and its legitimating discourses, ideologies or narratives.
Hervieu-Leger argues that religion can be understood in terms of a ‘chain of memory’, and as quoted by Aldridge (2000 p.14-18), this suggests that religious education has a place as an appropriate response to crisis. If education is about the reconstitution of collective memory in the face of its loss, what constitutes this loss? Meta-narratives may have disappeared. Many bemoan their passing. However, the disciple as reflective practitioner may well be equipped with individual narrative identification and selection skills that are not just about discerning of the salvation/faith/religious narrative of choice, but about engagement with other narratives creative of self and community in ways that are not destructive in terms of hegemony, colonization, imperialism, or hortatory expression.

If this is the case, the institution as it appears in the documents is at the same time defensive in the face of a culture where the individual can flourish religiously without the traditional allegiance to church, and also promoting the skills needed to do just that.

Having taken a brief look at the institutional aspect of the context, what can be said about the individual? Loss of the institution does not mean a sovereign freedom. Identity is still found in community. Courtney suggests that something very like peer pressure is at work in a culture that produces participatory adult education (Courtney 1992 p.121). The culture or cultures we are dealing with still produce groupings, as individuals exercise their freedom to opt into such expressions of micro-cultures. Adult education is one of the ways of establishing a belonging, a possible rite of passage. It bears the marks of
enculturation voluntarily undertaken. The individual has the power to make such a choice.

There is a question too that Courtney again raises concerning whether and how the adult individual is a learning being, or better, since such a term can be defined so widely as to be meaningless, an educational being (Courtney 1992 p.156)

The Christian discourse as represented by the Methodist documents takes such a proposal as read. On the basis of his research, Courtney would seem to recommend caution. The language of discipleship as used in the documents clearly implies education. However it is important not to presume that such an ancient term has always meant what it is taken to mean today. There is a significant theological debate about the nature of humanity that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Somehow we have to explain and allow for the resistance of many Christians to the learning process. It may of course be enough to say that adults are resistant to pedagogy and open to the appropriate sort of andragogy, and that the sorts of exercise of power at the hands of institutions or other individuals implied by these terms are spotted and resisted or accepted at an intuitive and voluntary level by adults.

In the light of such arguments a key feature of the context for individuals is the tacit, intuitive, unconscious need to establish equilibrium as the utopia, but not to admit it. The secular culture of consumerism and individualism enables the religious adult to do that. There may be struggles with the fundamentalist utopias, but such struggles are
evidence of the way that culture has succeeded in coping with the destructive side of utopianism through its diminishing of institutions and its promotion of tolerance, democracy and choice.

The collapse of epistemological hegemony in the church, and indeed more widely, characterized by the loss of meta-narratives and the emergence of the postmodern condition creates epistemological 'space' and consequent uncertainty. Opting in to adult Christian education and the use of the Bible in courses such as Disciple and Whitby are a key part of the individual response to this issue as well as indicators or symptoms of the problem. Keeping them together makes possible exploration into the way that people cope with and use creatively the hegemonic and epistemological crisis.

An ideology or discourse becomes hegemonically dominant at the point where its patterns fade into the background and become the norm. They become tacit or unconscious. No alternative is conceivable. They cannot be argued with. The hegemony is triumphant. This is similar obviously to Argyris and Schon's 'theory-in-use'. Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' is also particularly useful and enlightening in this area with its suggestion of 'unarticulated background'. It is 'a form of understanding, a making sense of things and actions, but at the same time it is entirely unarticulated, and ... be the basis of fresh articulation' (Taylor, C. in Shusterman 1999 p.31, 37). Bourdieu himself enriches the idea of the tacit when he describes how 'all the arbitrary content (of a field of knowledge) tends to be disguised as timeless, universal self-evidence' and therefore I would suggest, drops into the tacit (Bourdieu, 2000 p.29). The question that
remains is to what degree such an area of tacit knowledge can really become productive of fresh articulations or understandings.

The outline of the hegemony reappears when it comes under threat. Bourdieu's suggestion reminds us that the process of culture is iterative. It always needs to make sense of and respond to new things. However points do come when the issue is particularly acute. Maintenance becomes defence. The individuals and institutions of the hegemonically dominated and created context then have an interest in maintaining the hegemony. They sense that they cannot thrive without it. Considerable energies and power play are devoted to such defence. Since hitherto much maintenance has been unconscious or easy, panic can set in. Maintenance skills cannot quickly become defensive.  

The immediate conscious response to the threat to hegemony is likely to be negatively defensive. Because the hegemony has been invisible, the consequent blindness to issues means that the defences have only limited effectiveness. It results in a resort to areas where the defenders feel they are most comfortable. So, for instance, theology (the chosen discourse of the churches) in its pastoral or secure-speculative mode cannot quickly offer effective theodicy or apologetics. A theological response can be effective for 'insiders', but wasted on those who do not share or recognize the language of that

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2 Examples can be provided from the role and character of 'apologetic', where the church has arguably struggled to come to terms with the contexts of a multi-faith society, the impact of the media with their world-wide and instant focus on the experience of human suffering, or on the impact of the social sciences on notions of religious experience. At the local level the burgeoning popularity of 'Introductory courses' suggest the attempt to reassert some level of defence at the most basic level.
hegemony. It is of limited help too to those feeling the threat of encroaching ideologies and while they may be part of the church community nevertheless they struggle to make sense of and to value theology.

Much of the fundamentalist tendency can be seen as desperate resistance to encroaching hegemonies involving both blindness to aspects of the perceived threat as well as the attempt to eliminate it. A world is created or reinforced around an hegemony so as to ensure, in the case of Christian fundamentalism, a particular context for accessing and using Bible knowledge is sustained.

Whether the responses on offer turn out to be sites of potential belonging and liberation or ‘come to seem more like orphanages, prisons or mad houses’ remains to be seen. Such an issue is crucial for adult education and church alike.

The evidence of the documents I examined in the last chapter can convincingly be read in terms of a hegemonic vacuum that requires an epistemological response. An exploration of just how this situation has arisen is tempting but again beyond the scope of this thesis. Enough to say that the rise of modernism, the scientific method, and the postmodern loss of meta-narratives and their consequent hegemonic formations gives some explanation. As part of that scenario, I would also argue that Methodism in common with all British churches has failed to face the epistemological challenge of the human sciences. There has been a failure to come to terms with emerging understandings of the notion of

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4 Cohen quoted in Bauman 1999, p.193
religious experience and as one of my initial sketches suggests, the impact of religious plurality. As a result churches have been unable to respond effectively epistemologically or in consequence, educationally. There was an additional early epistemological and educational failure to make the most of engaging with children when Sunday schools were flourishing or even when as today small numbers of well-motivated children still attend. Now all that is left are the adults and the adult Christian educational project.

Those suggestions point to the danger of considering the crisis to be of a fairly simple dichotomous pattern of cultural or hegemonic encounter, such as an encounter of faith with the scientific worldview. The reality is nothing like so simple as indeed Bauman recognizes (Bauman 1999 p.161)\(^5\). The context for the Methodist Church is not one of a single imperilled hegemony, but of a number, imperilled by their competition as well as by their intrinsic weakness. Hegemonies, ideologies, discourses overlap, compete, complement or even find ways of coexisting so long as they do not become too aggressive. Even within the fairly clearly definable entity of the Methodist Church, while there may be a discernible dominant hegemony, others are at work significantly. This is inevitable because people do not live in one simple world but in many that consistently overlap. The point will be made very clear by the problems presented by

\(^5\) Bauman quotes Gellner in exploring the notion of modularization as 'a kind of fragmentation which leaves each activity unsustained by others, cold and calculated by its own clearly formulated end, rather than part of a warm, integrated, total culture.'
aspects of my case study interview material.

Methodism’s context is one of hegemonic and epistemological space, crisis and confusion. In so far as this is a condition shared with society at large a number of analyses and metaphors have been used to describe this state. The end of modernism, disenchantment, the postmodern condition, the loss of meta-narratives all produce a sense of threat. Modularity, homelessness, crowdedness, give a more personal but no more comforting feel to the context (Bauman 1999 p. 159). There is plurality, there is searching, the quest for epistemological answers. Adult Christian education offers some attempt to address this, at individual and at institutional levels. Whether the project is adequate to the task remains to be seen.

Such issues are reflected to some extent in perhaps the most widely received analysis of the church context in the postmodern situation, that of Davie, and are characterized by the phrase ‘believing without belonging’7. There is a strong sense of that behind the concerns in L&D for the valuing of the individual and its ambiguity towards the institution. The difficulty I have with the phrase is that it suggests an

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6 A range of voices or discourses is at work ‘under the surface’ of Christian motivation and they lend weight to hortatory techniques. For instance I have often encountered the power of the ‘suffering servant’ image in faith discourse with its implications of unrewarded self-sacrifice and the ‘mantra’ that ‘we are called to be faithful not successful’ (where usually success is defined numerically). Overlapping is the discourse about the importance of human fulfillment through measurable success in terms of wealth or following, and in terms of church community, numbers. This generates a tormented search for techniques to achieving that success – whatever it is. There is a strong suggestion that these may be found in a managerial discourse where efficiency produces results and can offer numbers, but is at odds in its notions of human development with ‘suffering service’. As noted hortatory language seems particularly adept at handling such multi-layered polyphony.

7 Davie 1994: the phrase is used in the book’s title and explored in chapter 6, p. 93ff
organizational/managerial problem. Churches then spend energy addressing matters of welcoming policy and attractiveness of worship in the hope of making belonging more congenial. While I agree with Davie that there is indeed residual belief in British society, and the factors that have hit church-going are accurate, I am convinced the problem and the context is epistemological not organizational. The people we find in the churches, Methodists included, are those who have chosen to belong rather than not. Their belief, set in context of the prevailing liberal scientific humanist hegemony, is I would judge little different from those who do not belong. The issue is epistemological therefore. What we face is 'belonging but not believing'. There are profound consequences for the 'habitus'. The instincts of those who produced WWA and L&D are correct. Adult education is the key area of engagement because the hegemonic problem is epistemological.

In fact of course that lesson could and has been learnt from wider society where a similar epistemological crisis at many levels has been addressed by the movement towards a learning and knowledge society. The causes have been rather different, but the threat of hegemonic collapse takes much the same epistemological shape.

The persistence of the Bible in the adult educational response to the epistemological crisis.

Of the documents examined in the Chapter 2, were it not for (chronologically earlier) WWA it might well be asked why a special effort should be made to hold together in my
question both the Bible and adult Christian education. After all, for L&D and OC the Bible appears marginal. For LAMP the Bible is central, the language of teaching is strong, and adult education is important as a technique, but essentially in the background. This is not surprising. As has already become clear, both the Bible and adult Christian education are highly problematic subjects. They are strongly contested areas of interest. Each raises enough issues to sustain research in their own right. Keeping them together in the way I propose increases the complexity of my argument significantly.

However there are a number of considerations that lead me to persist with the task. They are essentially epistemological.

The first arises from my concern about knowledge and context. As I have shown in chapter 1, the question as it emerged held Bible and adult education together. They give context to one another. Although the question becomes so much harder, (such is the nature of the case study approach) this way will enable me to avoid the danger of generalization that is not rooted in careful research, and abstract speculation that issues in untested theory.

The use of the Bible by adult Christian education epitomizes the issue of how a body of knowledge resources contained in a text engages with a particular context, that of contemporary Methodism.
The Bible has been used as a knowledge resource in the wider church context from which I write for almost two millennia. It has shaped and been shaped by its contextual functioning. Its knowledge echoes, reechoes and haunts our thought. Adult Christian education in its various forms in the Methodist Church seeks to use that knowledge in its teaching and learning projects. By exploring the processes involved in such a case study I will gain a clearer picture of the way that knowledge accessed in this particular textual form and then handled educationally is actually used.

A second area of consideration is also epistemological. At least it becomes that, starting from the adult Christian education perspective in its broadest sense. It reflects Foucault’s suggestion of the significance of local knowledges and raises the question of why there should be such local popularity. Locally the Bible persists in adult Christian educational projects. The ubiquity of ‘Disciple’, ‘Alpha’ and ‘Emmaus’ courses makes that persistence clear. The fact that they are not official denominational products reinforces the point and raises a question about the persistence of the denominations in the post-modern context. L&D locates the place of the Bible locally. The local epistemological quest for knowledge resources descends quickly on the Bible. Its intrinsic problems for such use and the hermeneutical endeavour to address them are sidelined or ignored by the appeal of what I have identified and begun to describe as the Communication Use. If I am to give due weight to Foucault’s insight then understanding the nature of this Bible use is crucial.
A third issue is immediately raised. What are the roots of the persistence of this particular knowledge resource? An epistemological question will develop about whether the Bible represents a convenient source of knowledge that accompanies a local spiritual experience of a certain sort. That would point to issues of psycho-epistemology – is the Bible relevant simply and only to the religious disposition? However, the Bible has also played a major role in the cultural shaping of knowledge and the expectations of knowledge. The question of ‘hauntology’ is raised.

To open up this area of discussion which is essentially an exploration of an aspect of culture and how it works – again a sort of Foucauldian archaeology, though one of broader scale and less detail than the others – I am indebted to the understanding of ‘hauntology’ that Derrida develops in ‘Spectres of Marx’ (Derrida 1994).

Derrida’s concern is with the lingering impact of Marx and the heritage he has left for contemporary culture. He points to an understanding of how cultures are shaped, how they develop and are renewed. At almost every point his analysis helps in understanding the persistence of the Bible.

Derrida suggests in his opening reflections on the impact on Hamlet of his father’s ghost that the spectral haunting both provokes and shapes thought and action (Derrida 1994 p.4ff). He links such a phenomenon with the spectral character of communism with which Marx opens ‘The Communist Manifesto’. Given Marx’s love of Shakespeare and Derrida’s characteristic analytical methods the link is insightful and fruitful.
The spectre of communism is a present and future one. Like Hamlet’s father it is a ghost engendered by injustice—a voice of the violated or the ‘clamour of grieved ghosts’. It disturbs the present, demonstrating that the ‘times are out of joint’ (Derrida 1994 p.20). It holds out hope for the future, of revolution, renewal and restitution. In this way, argues Derrida, Marx himself has left a legacy to culture that has to be dealt with. It cannot simply be ignored. It has the quality of a masterpiece. It can be relativised by the tactics of academic analysis (Derrida 1994 p.45) but it will still remain lurking ghostlike within culture always ready to seize the moment to disturb. At the root of the hegemonic instinct is the need to deal with such spectres.

What the notion of ‘spectre’ offers is a way of understanding that within culture which persists and is heterogeneous. The persistence is there because the originary insight has shaped the ideology that has encountered it. Hamlet cannot be the same after meeting the ghost. Moreover the claims of the vengeance culture to which he belongs strengthen the impact of the encounter. Contemporary history and culture cannot live as if Marx had not.

Because what Hamlet met was at once familiar and at the same time profoundly other his experience was doubly disturbing. The continuing ‘otherness’ of Marx will always disturb. I would argue that that is true of any historical particularity, but that some

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8 This phrase is quoted in Song 1984 p.101 from the Korean poet Kim Chi Ha. It is used to present and explore the Korean notion of ‘han’, the term used for the accumulation through the generations of untold and unresolved undeserved suffering and injustice. It provides a strong parallel within contemporary Christian theology to Derrida’s ‘hauntology’, although it is developed differently by Song.
emerge through the weight of genius or the making and shaping of community that are stronger and more significant than others.\footnote{There is an interesting and vital discussion beyond the scope of this thesis about the nature of notions such as masterpiece and genius. Does the knowledge discerned, expressed or communicated in the context of such terms 'speak for itself' timelessly - what might be conveyed by the notion of 'truth'? Or is such knowledge awarded this sort of status as it shapes and haunts culture producing and challenging norms and values?}

In this context we can understand more of the impact of the Bible on church and on wider culture.

The Bible offers the same combination of familiarity and heterogeneity. It has fed, nurtured and shaped culture because in content and form it has been a key building block of thought and behaviour. The Church no doubt in some sense 'created' the Bible, and has since shaped it as 'Scripture'. However the Church cannot escape the shaping impact of the Bible in turn – particularly of course if it has been accorded the authority of 'Scripture'.

The sheer otherness of the Bible eludes hegemonic control – again because both of content – the sheer diversity of Biblical content, origin and vision – and the form – both the uncontrollable oral/aurality of the narrative forms, and in more recent centuries the ubiquitous printed book. It always has the heterogeneous quality. It always has the potential for otherness.\footnote{‘This huge, sprawling, tactless book sit[s] there inscrutably in the middle of our cultural heritage, frustrating all our efforts to walk round it.’ Frye quoted in Barton 1993 p.68} Of course the results of this can often be profoundly negative for human community, shaping exclusive cultures that are ferocious in their rejection of
alternatives. Even so, this same otherness can be the recipient of the human energies of longing, dream and aspiration. As a vehicle of such it can transform or direct them. Perhaps a culture which has successfully resisted its own hauntology (the natural response to haunting is exorcism) is most vulnerable to the loss of education and the emergence of the indoctrination that is its distortion.

The Bible is a cultural resource with enormous power to shape and to haunt. I suspect that it is because of this cultural familiarity that the Bible is still so powerful educationally. The links are growing more distant now, but they are still there. Experience is shaped by the patterns of power in which we operate and the ways we have been used to thinking. When such experience is echoed, when as a result ‘things make sense’, a haunting is eased and a lesson is learnt.

Examples of the echoes of the Bible in contemporary culture are many. At the most obvious level proverbs, quotations and religious language linger on. At deeper levels the issues of ‘spirituality’ (however that is defined) return constantly to the ancient spiritual resources as human beings respond to a sense of the ‘other’, whether this be positively or negatively generated. It may be appropriate to use the language of transcendence at this point, but it would be equally justified I think to return to the notion of hauntology.

At potentially more significant levels still, a contemporary philosophical issue such as the

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11 The decline of the church inevitably leads to the decline of the Bible, but there is always likely to be a "time lag" which can give the hauntology access to contemporary society. Kelsey 1975 p. 176 suggests such a link.

12 Generated that is by the longing for a greater fulfillment or sense of creativity perhaps on the one hand, or the experience of communal or personal crisis on the other.
exploration of narrative forms reflects the impact of Biblical patterns of thought and expression. I am not arguing for a Bible origin necessarily. That again would be to move beyond the scope of this thesis. There are though echoes of what narrative means in the shaping of our culture and engaging with contemporary philosophy which will not be unfamiliar territory.¹³ There will be recognition and learning.

Like the writings of Marx, the ‘masterpiece’ that the Bible is, and that it has taught us to understand that it is, because of its capacity to haunt – both disturbing life and shaping dreams - exercises its own ‘diffuse hegemony’ at the heart of our culture, ideologies, discourses and education. It is not a gift to be accepted or rejected, but an inheritance constantly to be dealt with.

An intrinsic and vital part of this Bible hauntology is the nature of narrative and its epistemological significance. At the heart of the Bible is narrative.¹⁴ As a literary form narrative predominates. Other forms find their context in narrative. The relation between the experiential methods of adult Christian education and the learning achieved when experience is embedded narratively in an interpretative framework will be an issue that occupies me later in this thesis.

¹³ Note the role of story as the vehicle for Biblical material, and the widespread recognition of this and the impact it has had throughout church history. Renewed interest in story telling as noted above is but one recent symptom.

¹⁴ ...and of course metaphor, the origin of narrative. The nature and implications of this relationship will be explored in Chapter 9 where I will rely heavily on the approach of Ricoeur 1981.
In this territory, though naturally beyond the scope of this thesis, the possibility opens up that given the significance of Bible and narrative for each other, and of narrative for knowledge, a major part of human cultural knowledge may be ‘Bible-shaped’. There would be room for speculation in that area. For my purposes it offers an additional and again epistemological reason why the Bible persists in the context, locally perceived, of hegemonic crisis or space.

The question arises, if it is so worthwhile to keep the two themes together, why is the Bible so problematic for adult Christian education? The answers reflect the uses that I have identified. With each one there is a profound ambiguity given the nature of the adult educational task.

**The hauntological foundations of the Communication Use**

As a knowledge resource, the Bible is accepted and revered. That is part of the meaning of designating it as ‘Scripture’. However, the knowledge is locked away in the text. It has been the task of hermeneutics to unlock it for contemporary use. Adult education then in order to make the Bible accessible is faced with the prior task of teaching hermeneutical skills. These are neither simple nor easily learnt. They keep developing as the inadequacy or inappropriateness of a particular hermeneutic approach is encountered as context changes. They promise much but can fail to deliver. The place where they can be most fully learnt for the task of adult Christian education in its broadest sense is in ministerial training. The problem as many of the newly ordained have discovered is that
they do not translate easily to pulpit or study group, where power and knowledge play their local games.

The enthusiastic lay adult in search of Christian education is looking for more accessible approaches than the ones on offer, and the problem is, the more accessible approach is ready to hand. The Bible in book technology form is instantly available. It carries with it the lingering sense (for adults in our context) that knowledge and truth are to be found in books.

At this point the Communication Use identified above surges in. There is no doubt that there are difficulties in understanding the Bible given that it is a text (or collection of texts) from other cultures. However there are links with our own culture. It has after all helped form it and as has been argued, continues to haunt it. The case for adult Christian education has not yet been made in the church, certainly not the case for hermeneutical skills. There are likely to be as many people in the church as in any other part of society alienated by the childhood and adolescent experience of the power structures of schooling. The attraction of the sense of direct communication or engagement with a source of knowledge is very seductive, particularly when supported by apparently simple a-temporal narratives of ‘spiritual communication’ or ‘the living Word of God’ or that ‘human nature does not change’. One of the triumphs of fundamentalism is that it

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15 These terms occur a number of times in the interview material. They are shown to be staples of the way the church approaches the Bible. Their vagueness and sheer error indicate their use in the hortatory approach.
appears to offer just such direct access while containing any potentially disruptive results within well hidden epistemological and ideological power structures.

Whether it is possible to develop an adult educational project on the basis of the Communication Use is open to question. It will obviously struggle with the Institutional and Equilibrium poles. There are likely to be issues of control around the Individual and Utopia poles and to have a strong tendency towards the Inspiration pole. These will have to do with the nature of individualism and community, and the relation of content to utopian vision. How any controls can be effected is inevitably part of any educational programme. How far and in what ways the Communication Use is part of current adult Christian education, how it is controlled and by whom and what are the epistemological implications will form a key part of Chapter 9.

The issue becomes still more problematic when the nature of text and its place in the Communication Use is considered. Pending a more careful analysis of the Communication Use, for now I note the issue, its links with the hauntological and narrative character of the Bible, and the problems it creates for adult Christian education.

As I have suggested, the Bible is not an ‘innocent tool’. Many well-intentioned educators, pastors and leaders have seen the goal of achieving a Bible cultural paradigm at the heart of church life as a worthy one. This can never be done successfully, because the Bible can only serve that use with the severest of controls. As hinted in my discussion of LAMP in the last chapter, this is usually done by establishing a
'Procrustean bed' of projected Bible 'teaching' or 'message' into which all Bible content can be fitted (at one extreme) or (at another) significant bits can be discarded if they do not. Huge ingenuity and patient toil are given to such an exercise. It requires enormous commitment.\textsuperscript{16} This is one of its costs. Others relate to the mis-shaping of content. When the adult learner/reader encounters such problems, the controls on thought and questioning are likely to be experienced as the most painful. Since adults, by definition, are in a position to resist such perceived enforcement more than children it is likely that at this point the project comes most under threat. They can simply walk away. This can happen however apparently benign the Procrustean frame.

**Hauntology and legitimating narrative**

The background ideologies that have been used to sustain such cultural paradigms or hegemonies are also highly vulnerable in a world where scientific method, pluralism and the postmodern spirit ensure that alternatives abound. Meta-narratives that overplayed their hand have become subject to the liberation perspective.

Lytotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) raises the issue of the key relation that narrative can have to knowledge. There is clear concurrence in broad terms from a number of contemporary writers.\textsuperscript{17} It can perform a legitimating function. As an alternative Lyotard also offers performativity as legitimating. It is a fine

\textsuperscript{16} They range from Puritan works like Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, that perhaps stands at the roots of the tradition and includes popular level works such as in *Understanding Be Men: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine*, Hammond, T. C. 1968, 6\textsuperscript{th} edition. There is also a vast literature that uses similar methods but does not set out to be so exhaustive as those two examples, such as the spin off material from the Alpha Course.

\textsuperscript{17} Ricoeur 1981 and others noted in Hall 1993 p.39f.
point of course, but the notion of performativity might well be seen as part of a narrative of efficiency and good stewardship in turn part of the wide narratives of citizenship and/or capitalism. Even science as Lyotard notes struggles to resist the narrative imperative. He describes how in its endeavours to communicate its knowledge and achievements science turns to narrative. He quotes Medawar (Lyotard 1986 p.60) to the effect that science inevitably uses stories in epistemological discourse, but of course, ‘stories that have to be verified’. In the contemporary context, of course, we are awash with the unverifiable in the sense of self-verifying narratives. They are in evidence in the fundamentalisms of New Age movements and the structures of sectarian groups.

In so far as narrative springs from metaphor and represents its development, then it can carry as effectively the same open quality that facilitates thought and with it the development of learning and knowledge.

The relation of a legitimating narrative to an epistemological hegemony is an important one for the issues with which I am dealing. The Bible models and provides content for narratives. In so far as education is about sustaining cultural integrity and enabling the development of epistemological and cultural capital it is working towards establishing a particular ideology as a hegemony. It does this by producing narratives and developing them to cope with changing contexts. Given that no hegemony is unchallenged, but surrounded in our postmodern condition by competing ideologies, the notion of developing dynamic narrative is invaluable because of its iterative quality.
The issue of 'cultural blindness' that I have noted above is particularly significant here and raises inevitable and urgent questions for education. For instance in the critique of other narratives by church educators, the educators' own unobserved and therefore uncriticised narrative forms the content of teaching. In that sense the educator is teaching blindness. Perhaps this metaphor offers an insight into processes of indoctrination. The effort to recognize and relativize one's own and others' narratives is not impossible. But then a deconstructive/pluralist/tolerance narrative is moving in to hegemonic position. This brings its own problems to the teaching project. It may well represent the 'reductio ad absurdum' of the Individual/Utopia poles.

The questions raised here about how narrative relates to knowledge and to learning, and the implications for the Bible in terms of its use in adult Christian education will occupy Chapter 8. Whether the context in which I am exploring these issues inevitably brings a slide into relativism, and if it does what response the Christian adult educator can make are issues that will need to be faced there in the light of further research.

Adult Christian education that sees itself in any of the transformative, radical, liberative or even liberal traditions will have been working to encourage plural engagement in its adult participants. Such approaches make the narrative and hegemonic uses even more problematic. This is especially so when the problems are unnoticed by the educators.

There is a final problem to note at this stage in this area. If the Bible offers a narrative model of understanding, it does so by telling the story of a human community or
communities. Its emergence as Scripture enables others to relate their own stories/narratives to it. The Bible narrative, because of its primordial quality can become normative. As I have noted it is neither an innocent tool nor therefore an innocent narrative. Its content gives it certain shape and value. It does so in a way that is hidden and when not hidden, that is when it is revealed or discovered as part of the norm, it is thereby placed beyond criticism. As a result the fierce tribal ideologies of most Biblical content can find their way into knowledge through supporting and legitimating narratives. Where the group being educated perceives itself as culturally marginal this has a serious impact. Where on the other hand, as my example from Palestinian liberation theology suggests, the group being educated has a relatively dominant cultural position this can be disastrous.

Given such real and potential problems for adult Christian education, given too the persistence of Bible use, it is important to explore something of the nature of the context of epistemological crisis in which the Bible is being used. The way it is being used, given that many of them are intuitive or tacit rather than explicitly defined, inevitably has consequences for the way the Bible can function as a knowledge resource.

Conclusion: Issues to explore with the Case Study material

The discussion so far shows that the Bible is clearly a major (if not actually in practical terms, the only) epistemological resource of choice of adult Christian education, especially locally. The initial process of understanding why that is and how it is done has
opened up a series of insights about the use of knowledge in the educational process, certainly in my chosen context, and possibly more generally. The questions that have been raised by my documentary analysis, reading and reflections will now need to be set in the perspective of the data from my research interviews and further reading. From that perspective I will be able to test my arguments around the following issues:

1. As I have indicated above, following Foucault’s suggestions around **power analysis** and the importance of ‘local knowledges’, I will be particularly concerned to discern the local power games and patterns at work shaping the learning and the knowledge in the cases I am investigating. It is in this area that I will need to be ready to challenge normative interpretations of Bible use that emerge from entirely theological perspectives. This will involve investigating ‘**hortatory patterns**’. I expect there to be significant points to contribute to the wider debate around adult Christian education from this area.

2. An important part of my argument concerns the persistence of the Bible as a **knowledge resource**. I will be working carefully to test the arguments I have adduced to support those conclusions.

3. I will be looking for evidence of the context of **epistemological and hegemonic crisis** that I have described. I suspect that the term ‘crisis’ is likely to be too strong for the levels of awareness that I am likely to encounter. Certainly most of the interviewees would be unlikely to express it in the way I have done. Nor would they
feel the sense of urgency that I do. I will need to pay attention to the levels of confusion or uncertainty expressed or implied as I assess their motivation in learning and Bible use, and exercise caution in interpreting them.

4. The use of **narrative** in the educational process and its significance in the integrative ideological function proposed by Ricoeur will be a key area of investigation. Given that many of the writers whose arguments I have described are working with notions of narrative as legitimizing knowledge in the current epistemological crisis, it will be invaluable to test the suggestion in research.

5. The value of the **polarity approach** as a way of exploring these issues. While the approach has served me well so far, I need to continue to test its usefulness in my analysis. It will be particularly important given the level of complexity with which I will be engaging. It is not just the matter of language, where key phrases can mean different things and often represent short cuts to avoid or mask difficult or unresolvable arguments. For instance when attempting to perceive the uses I have identified actually in operation, they are likely to appear in an overlapping mixture. Finding a way of handling such complexity, even at a local level, will present a key challenge to my research.

I am aware of the potential richness of the material I have gathered. The danger of enumerating such a list of issues to address is that the task will become unmanageable.
However, my question has emerged from a complex situation. It is only in the attempt to handle such complexity that adequate answers can be found.
CHAPTER SIX

THE WORD AT WHITBY (Whitby)

Introduction

'The Word at Whitby — Methodists making sense of the Bible today'\(^1\) was the title of the conference in May 2004 that forms my first case study. The terms of the title are interesting. Methodists are the subject, active in their investigation of the Bible, the object. The ‘today’ gives a sense of immediacy to the process and points to the domination of the Communication Use.

The advertising leaflet provides other clues about the way the Bible was used. The opening statement recalls Methodist tradition 'The Methodist Church acknowledges the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and practice.'\(^2\) Ambiguity in the description and status of the Bible is evident between this accorded status and the purpose of the Conference. The problematic character of the Methodist attitude to the Bible and its contested nature — whether that be the result of argument or uncertainty — becomes still more obvious in the words that follow:

Yet many Methodists today may be vague about the Bible, unfamiliar with it, and unsure about how to interpret it. How have we managed to make the Bible — that complex, challenging, problematic, passionate set of texts — actually boring? How does it become the Word of God for the Church of today?

Whitby Advertising Leaflet, 2004 (Appendix 2)

\(^1\) Whitby Leaflet (Appendix 4)

\(^2\) Whitby Leaflet (Appendix 4)
An educational purpose was clear from the inception of the discussion process that led to the event. The word ‘empowerment’ used twice in quick succession in the brochure indicates the educational goal. Ordinary readers are to be empowered, and new skills are offered to ‘take home’ to empower local congregations and readers. To the question ‘empowered for what?’ there is no obvious answer. That did become clear in the conference however – it was to ‘make meaning’.3

Another emphasis listed offers a crucial comment on what might be termed a hegemonic perspective. The Conference offered ‘approaches’ ‘that bring the Bible alongside today’s culture without compromising the integrity of either’4. Here is an acceptance of the cultural marginality of the Bible, and by implication the faith, church and theological discourses that go along with it. The Bible is not therefore in a position to compete with or to challenge other cultures. It is rather one amongst others. Its discourse becomes intra-cultural. There is a resignation to an isolation that is in itself problematic given the difficulty of drawing even notional boundaries in the fluid context that is cultural relations. It could be seen as an attempt to contain the discussion of the Bible within Methodism and to avoid the potentially still more discomforting encounters of a wider context.5 Education is in danger of becoming an exercise in reinforcing boundaries by ignoring them. The epistemological challenges of relativism are sidestepped by the one

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3 Whitby Leaflet (Appendix 4)
4 Whitby Leaflet (Appendix 4)
5 Note the exclusion of those from other cultures, inter-faith concerns and even the more evangelical perspectives from the event.
move of accepting the integrity of other cultures and moving on – a technique at the heart of ‘hortatory’ power and its methods that immediately arouses (often tacit) suspicions.

A final introductory note is necessary in order to recognize a key difference in the data from the Whitby case study from that of the Disciple study. At Whitby the interviewees were those who in the local church setting would be in the teaching role, whereas by and large the Disciple equivalents were in the learning role. The result seems to be that Disciple issues proved to be much easier to identify, the Whitby ones more complex.

Outline of the Chapter

In this chapter I provide an analysis of the data gathered for the Whitby case study and reflections on it.

- I explore the conference context that revealed key aspects of Bible use and pointed to contested areas.
- Two dominant themes of Bible use, ‘the making of meaning’, and the Communication Use are investigated. The data from the conference demonstrates their links and their differences.
- Major contested areas will then be identified and discussed in order to facilitate an analysis of power relations.
- Finally I will locate the key features that emerge in relation to the polarities.

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6 Whitby data and their sources are detailed in Appendix 2
The context of Bible use – the conference.

The initial conversations that led to Whitby were between those within the Methodist Connexional Team involved in adult Christian educational concerns for Bible teaching and learning. The decision to hold a conference on the Bible was one of the possibilities that arose. It was seen as an educational project. A conference is arguably one of the few ways the Connexion has of bringing change educationally, although participants would not necessarily endorse such a motive.  

The conference method itself has particular educational and epistemological implications. These have to do with the actual priorities in organization, despite the stated aims, and the motivations of the participants in attending.

Two priorities ran strongly with the organizers – financial viability and good fellowship.

Financial pressures meant that those already involved in the planning or closely associated with the Connexional Team should pick up as many sessions as possible. With such constraints there was a rather ‘serendipitous’ result. Speakers were selected on grounds of availability and general acceptability. There was no attempt to define closely the content of their input. It was enough to feel that their ‘approach’ was right.

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7 For many participants it was clear that the Conference served as a ‘retreat’, a gathering of the like-minded away from the dynamics of the local, on-going situation where there was freedom to explore ideas. For others it was a type of ‘market-place’ where new ideas or insights could be found.
The conference was keen to emphasize social elements. The strong need to create and sustain the social well-being of 'good fellowship' produced anxiety about the avoidance of conflict. It was this that led to the ambiguities over the inclusion of 'evangelical' input. The concern for equilibrium militates against the utopian ideal of developed Bible education at such a point. The irony is that in the fellowship discourse, equilibrium is the utopia. There are implications for education too in that the skills of fellowship, having learnt the lessons of the divisiveness that authority can bring tend toward 'authenticity' for the individual as a more satisfactory or comfortable way of handling knowledge. Such a position echoes the easy, unexamined acceptance of cultural relativism noted in the introduction above.

The fact that there was no final report⁸ (although not an intention of the organizers, it was not a priority either) shows that the intention was focussed on the 'fellowship-moment' of event. Longer-term results were envisaged as being essentially in the hands of participants to build on what they had experienced.

This 'take-back' method placed considerable burdens on participants. There was a strong sense of resolve, but a fairly gloomy perception of what would be possible. Such a style of conference emphasizes the educational moment. It is characteristic of many church

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⁸ The minutes suggest that the question of a Conference Report was not raised until the September 2003 meeting of the planning group, and then tentatively in the context of a range of possible follow-up options. Neither a report in the Methodist Recorder nor the publication of papers in the Epworth Review came to fruition, and a final proposal to prepare a publication through MPH (that also failed to develop) had moved well beyond the report form. The possibility of a report was hampered by the variety of presentations, a significant number of which because of their practical nature would not transfer to the traditional conference report format, and the lack of financial and time resources available to the committee to pursue the matter.
conferences where the experience is what counts. As an educational tactic for creating intentional change it can be effective over time only if it is regularly reinforced.\textsuperscript{9} It has close links with the fellowship methods of local church life and other aspects of Methodism that create a species of environment that have particular consequences for education and epistemology.\textsuperscript{10}

Concerns of this sort were far from being the exclusive preserve of the organizers. The participants themselves came with highly developed fellowship skills and similar expectations. They would have driven the conference in that direction irrespective of the organizers’ intentions.\textsuperscript{11} That was the case at a number of points where consumers took what they wanted from the sessions, irrespective of the speakers’ aspirations.

Amongst the most regularly expressed feelings about the conference was the pleasure of being amongst people of like mind who both valued the Bible but approached it in an open, non-conservative, non-fundamentalist way. This appeared to reflect painful experiences in the local church where the use of the Bible is experienced as a powerful part of the power games played. Ownership of the Bible appears to be a key tactic in

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Easter People} and \textit{Spring Harvest}, current residential Christian conferences, give an experience that is regular each year, and therefore essentially gradualist. The problem of course is that it may not do anything to make an immediate and accessible impact on the local church, as participants enjoy the moment and struggle with take-back. However, the regular impact of such events can have a cumulative effect locally. By contrast, for instance, the Reports of Methodist Conference sent for local discussion aim to have an immediate, definable and lasting one-off impact.

\textsuperscript{10} The Disciple course chooses an alternative model of education for change, albeit using the same fellowship skills in a different context.

\textsuperscript{11} My Journal records the sense that people already knew each other from similar events, and that I felt a sense of ‘outside looking in’ almost as soon as participants arrived.
marginalizing others, or making them feel marginalized. There was a concern that the experience of the conference would give the endorsement of the Connexion to those seeking to claim a more liberal approach. How far this power game has educational aspects is open to question. However participants at Whitby clearly believed that education of the sort they experienced at the conference would be a valuable resource in the game. Power and knowledge issues were profoundly inter-connected in their minds.

Participants in the conference were therefore motivated to attend by the potential of using their conference experience to respond to the use of the Bible in locally contested areas of church life such as worship, education, decision-making and policy setting. Facility in the use of the Bible seems to provide an unquestionable access to authoritative ‘high ground’ in church life. It was clear that most participants who provided data were concerned to establish a position other than the one that they variously described as fundamentalist or conservative and which many perceived to be dominating their local context. They wanted to claim the Bible for themselves, not just leave it to those groups. Participation in the conference and a resulting increase in knowledge of the Bible seemed to promise a way to do so.\(^\text{12}\) The Bible’s value as a resource of power was clear. Increased educational engagement with the Bible by virtue of attending the conference appeared to be considered a powerful resource in the power games facing participants on their return to their home church. Unfortunately the local issues were likely focus around

\(^{12}\) The irony is of course that they appear to be seeking a sort of authority from the Connexion that they would be reluctant to accept themselves. They appeared to be seeking authenticity not authority, and that of the individual not the institution.
use of the Bible not the knowledge of it and the approaches to it on offer at Whitby. This theme will be developed in the discussion of the Book/Scripture polarity below.

Participants and organizers alike saw the Conference as providing resources for a way of recovering ownership of the Bible from two other groups than simply conservatives and fundamentalists in the local church - the academics and the preachers. In fact, given that many participants in the conference were preachers\(^\text{13}\) a further dynamic was also evident, the need to find better ways than traditional preaching methods of communicating with the congregation. This resulted in the twofold approach of the longer-term attempt to engage with the conference theme, and the short term plundering of the material for 'nuggets of inspiration'.\(^\text{14}\) So far as the academics were concerned, the conference dynamic was highly successful in drawing them into the fellowship context. Because there was, as a result, a greater sense of mutual belonging, academic ownership of knowledge was no longer perceived as alienating.

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\(^{13}\) Numbers (not all the participants provided details): Local Preachers: 53; Ministers: 46; Class or House Group Leaders: 16; Lay Workers: 3; Children's Workers: 4; others inc. Connexional Team members: 9.

\(^{14}\) My journal records my disappointment after a concerted attempt to encourage reflection on use of the Bible in my workshop session 'Postcards from the Heart', that it was the illustrative material people picked up on and neglected the questions I really attempted to address. The search for short-term rewards and the pressures for immediately accessible material work against the longer-term development of resources. This is an issue returned to in the various discussions below of the Inspiration/Training polarity.
Dominant use (1) ‘...the making of meanings for the moment’\(^{15}\)

The ‘making of meanings’ was a key phrase in the data, both with ‘meaning’ in the singular and the plural. To develop this way of using the Bible was the clear aspiration of the organizers. Timetabled sessions and resources were dedicated to that task. It is striking that there was no mention of the notion of the theme of ‘discovering the truth’ of the Bible in the sense that it contains some sort of ‘given’, to be quarried from the source and interpreted in the light of careful study.\(^{16}\) Instead the onus was on the equipping of the Bible user to make meaning from the resource and, in terms of the conference aims, to provide the skills\(^{17}\) for the preacher, study group leader or simply the interested church member to make that possible.

Three features of the use of the Bible in making meanings were clear from the data.

1. Democracy — the preacher as teacher.

The opening evening’s keynote address that explored a ‘congregational hermeneutic’ set a tone for the conference that at one and the same time accurately reflected the context

\(^{15}\) The key phrase ‘making of meanings’ was a focus of discussion at the very first meeting of the planning group (25.07.02). The minutes record that [the group needed to] ‘recognize that ‘making meaning/making meanings’ is a huge shift of understanding in church life re. What is happening when the Bible is read/interpreted. ... Acknowledge that ‘making meanings’ (plural) will inevitably be a disputed area in its own right, for it raises the question of the potential limits of the inevitable plurality of interpretation.’ [Quoted with permission]. My Journal includes reflections that this did not appear to be an issue for the vast majority of participants. This may have been because of the low representation of those from the ‘evangelical’ wing, or more likely because of the dominance of the Communication Use.

\(^{16}\) Such a position immediately precludes any sort of dialogue leading to understanding with the perceived opponents of conservatism or fundamentalism. Their concern is with Bible truth. Bible meaning, especially that which can be made, does not provide grounds for dialogue, only confrontation.

\(^{17}\) To ‘inspire’... the limits of the conference in terms of training and its inevitable reinforcement of the Inspiration pole are clear.
and aspirations of the participants. It appeared to enable members of the congregation to share in the interpretive process of Bible texts in a way that was highly attractive because it was so democratic. The lay members of congregations were likely to feel empowered, with the learner somehow taking control.

The attraction to the preachers was not so immediately obvious. The approach could be seen as the clear rejection of the intermediary role of the preacher as interpreter of the Bible. However, the preaching role is changed, becoming that of teaching, providing expert knowledge to set the boundaries of possible meanings and to equip, encourage and facilitate their hearers in exploring them.

Given the struggles of so many with preaching as a method of communication within the church, and yet of course its persistence, it is hardly surprising that this more educational role was welcomed. It was something of a surprise that it was heard as new. It appears to reduce the contested nature of preaching in the power games of church life. In reality it only moves them to the different territory and engages a further range of complexities and problems. Learning, teaching and knowledge are still subject to the hortatory culture of the institution, of which the preaching techniques are a key dynamic.

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18 People have negative experiences of education as they do of preaching. What is recognized here though is the possible emergence of the notion of the 'subject as learner'.

19 See below Chapter 10
2. Creativity and Control

The opening up to the Bible reader and listener, as well as to the preacher, teacher or facilitator, the possibility of ‘making meanings’ can be seen as highly subversive. It suggests a move of power away from institutional or any other form of control by shifting control of the meaning and application of Biblical material from the expert or institution to the individual. The individual subject appears to have the cherished creative power to make meaning.\textsuperscript{20}

There are some interesting epistemological implications here. Knowledge as information is assumed to operate as a sort of value-free raw material that can be shaped, within its required constraints, to any desirable form. Certain constraints within church culture limit those forms so that nothing ‘outlandish’ is permitted.\textsuperscript{21} Knowledge appears as the resource for an ‘artistic’ approach that having identified a set of raw materials can use them to create something ‘meaningful’ (although of course meaning is somehow implicit in the material) rather than for a ‘scientific’ approach that sets out with the tools of the academic expert to analyze knowledge in order to find its possible meaning for any given context.

\textsuperscript{20} There is a persisting theological question here about the nature of human participation in terms of the way such creativity contributes to the traditional notions of the ‘searching’ — are Christians engaged in the search for God, how does that relate to the search by God for them, and how does it relate to the ‘making of God’?

\textsuperscript{21} The actual methods of limitation are interesting. Despite an occasional mention in my data of ‘heresy’ and the ideologically shaped discourse that implies, it was ‘fellowship’ (as suggested by the conference method below) that appeared to be the strongest method. It was often supported in an innate/tacit unexamined way by acceptance (without necessarily any developed understanding of the notions involved) of beliefs such as the Trinity.
This contrast is behind the struggle with the academic approach that makes knowledge and the learning process inaccessible - and therefore dull, alienating and boring. When the academics were met on a personal level and found not to be ‘boring’ and to have the resources to facilitate the making of meaning the problem was to some extent resolved. They were co-opted through fellowship and the discipline they brought could be respected and accepted as a control on irresponsible use rather than a brake on creativity.

It was clear that the ‘making of meanings’ was closely allied to what was identified above as the Communication Use. The democratic impulse and the sense of immediacy are strongly echoed. The problem is that those who use a dominant Communication method can end up with an incoherent congeries of intuited thoughts, which is something much less than the protagonists of the ‘making of meanings’ aspire to.

As will be seen below, it appears that it was sometimes enough for the Whitby Bible users to experience the thrill of what I will describe in Chapter 8 as a moment ‘micronarrative’ insight that is characteristic of the Communication Use. There did not appear to be the felt need for it to develop into the sustained making of meaning that was the intention of the conference planners. As a result any meaning or narrative that did develop was unlikely to become effective or sustained and so long as it was no more than a momentary utopian insight no threat was posed to local or general institution or equilibrium.²² A certain attitude to education and knowledge is implicit that suggests it does not matter what the learner learns as long as it is accessible and unthreatening.

²² Part of the potentially sinister aspect of hortatory power is that it can mask this problem and even use it as part of its power tactics.
Such an approach has parted company with anything genuinely educational and become part of a manipulative power game.

3. Authenticity and Subject

As noted above, the use of the notion of ‘Bible truth’ that might be a commonplace of certain sorts of gathering with similar concerns to the ‘Word At Whitby’ was notable by its absence from the data. The goal of ‘making meanings’ that set and reflected the tone of the conference moved discussion into relativist territory that made traditional assertions of truth, and particularly ‘divine truth’, more difficult.

The sort of discourse emerging from the ‘making of meanings’ is strongly at variance with the doctrinal preaching tradition where belief expressed and measured through credal statements is what matters. There is, I would argue, a body of such credal material that is important for the Bible reader, but it is largely tacit. The increasingly dominant experiential and narrative approaches to epistemology produce content and patterns that overshadow the abstract and cognitive. Scripture can be seen to dominate credal approaches.

These factors reflect the loss of hegemony even in the minds of the faithful for credal statements and for the place of the Bible in contemporary culture. The Bible both has and does not have ‘authority’. It has authority, but only within the church. It has authority within the church, but of a reduced sort that as the Communication Use suggests lends weight to individual insight or intuition, rather than prescribing patterns of
behaviour or belief. This reduced authority that both needs and thrives on some measure of authentication from the Bible for use by the subject in a circumscribed, individual life-narrative is close to what I mean by 'authenticity'. It inhabits the same territory as authority, but as a highly individualized cultural form. It allows a measure of individual authentication or the legitimizing of individual knowledge without the risks and the greater rigor of the authority power game. The individual subject uses the Bible to make meaning in an increasingly unconstrained way – the only constraints within the church context where the process is operating are those of fellowship.

Dominant use (2) ‘What has been the Word of the Lord for you?’ – the Communication Use.

‘What has been the Word of the Lord for you?’ was the evaluation question put to participants in the final session. It further suggests what the data confirm, that the Communication Use of the Bible was dominant at the conference. The data offer the opportunity to provide a working description of the Communication Use, especially in its contrasts with the ‘making of meanings’. This is to be found in the difference between an intuitive ‘micro-narrative’ moment and the attempt at achieving a more coherent narrative that extends beyond individual territory to offer the possibility of a shared narrative. The ‘making of meanings’ as presented at Whitby was a corporate experience with obvious links, because envisaged congregationally, into fellowship locally and in the wider institution. What the Communication use appears to offer by contrast is a process of individual life-narrative building that works by collecting an assortment of insights
from a variety of sources and tacitly sorting them as required by the moment. The very variety of Biblical literature means that insights can be gathered from poetry, narrative, prescription, preaching, proverb and so on, each one bringing their different characteristics and therefore points at which they register in the accumulating complex narrative of the individual subject. How far the Biblical model has shaped this sort of complex narrative process or whether the process is of the nature of what it means to be human would prove an interesting area of speculation beyond the scope of this thesis.

*The ‘Word’*

The data confirm the description of the Communication Use. It is clear that communication from God is closely associated with the Bible. The individual can use the Bible to receive a message from God. The experience is often intimate and strongly authoritative. Traditional Christian teaching has commonly described the Bible as the ‘Word of God’ and despite and because of the theological ambiguity, the power of the metaphor is enormous.

To deal with the Word of God in this context the data suggests, was not for the participants about reading so much as hearing or listening. The regular use of the singular first and second personal pronouns indicate that it is rarely a shared experience. The Bible may be a text, but the encounter with God that it is used to facilitate is an essentially aural and individual experience. Bible stories or passages ‘speak’ or ‘tell’, offering evidence to develop the aural emphasis that Graham identifies in his approach to

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23 It would rarely be recognized that the Bible was being so used by an individual. The sense always is that ‘God’ uses the Bible in that way — to speak.
There were many references to ‘echoes’ and ‘resonance’ when people spoke about the significance of the Bible and its impact on people. Furthermore the listening is not constrained by the text. Book text is to be read, but Scripture text can as well be heard or recited or paraphrased in the telling. The Bible is used to launch a listening use that can soon extend beyond the sense limits of the words printed or written. Behind the metaphor of ‘the word of God’ lies the metaphor of friendship, of a personal relationship with the divine that requires little or no mediation.24

In this context what is communicated is something more than simply the content of the Bible. The Bible offers a model of communication with the divine. Perceived as ‘Word’ it merges with the person of Jesus who is seen to offer the same intimate friendship that he did to the disciples of the New Testament. The relationship counts. It is more important than slavish commitment to checking Biblical coherence or scholarship that would somehow undermine trust. Those study disciplines can help and in certain contexts are important, but not if they diminish the intimacy and immediacy of the personal relationship. The sheer diversity of Bible content and literary style endorse the perception that each one can be spoken to uniquely, a major part of the attraction of the Communication Use.

There are significant consequences for education in Communication Use. When each one can be her own teacher, or in devotional terms ‘have immediate access to the master of the disciples’, the task of adult Christian education becomes distinctive. The learner is

24 The complex psychological issues involved in the notion of personal relationship with the invisible are highly significant with regard to this issue, but beyond the scope of the current thesis.
the subject and needs the teacher in particular ways. The content of teaching is primarily not about knowledge but techniques of learning and facilitating a relationship. There are few however on whom the perils of an unbridled Communication Use are lost. The Bible itself can still offer some measure of control or guidance through scholarship or teaching at the same time that it renews the possibility and vision of communication.

We are in the territory of the intuitive personality where the data from individuals show evidence of occasions when such ‘words’ ‘gave permission’, and confirmed or challenged a course of action. The Bible was clearly believed to be a source of such ‘words’. In some church and personal contexts they were seen as a support, but they can easily become problematic. The inspiring or moving story that might be a significant part of the fellowship discourse, or the intimately felt imperative can be as authentic and therefore as authoritative as the Biblically facilitated insight. The challenge at this point is the issue of distinguishing between the largely intuitive possibilities of an imperative ‘word’ and the more Bible based notion of ‘a word from the Lord’. The Bible may offer some measure of help, but even so, the possibility of control, however benevolent, is perceived as threat.

*The friendship metaphor*

The characteristic friendship metaphor of Christian devotion thrives on the sense of closeness to or awareness of the presence of God, and complements reading with prayer that is envisaged as conversation and listening. While the cerebral knowledge of theology and doctrine are important, faith needs the heart to heart encounter that
provokes feelings of reassurance and, alongside it, challenge. The Communication Use that engages both 'head and heart' is fully effective at this point.

The values of friendship are evidenced by the sense that in this relationship boredom is overcome and entertainment and fun are on offer. A real sense of intimacy is claimed with the suggestion that the Lord/Word 'really touched me'. This strongly intuitive sense with appeal to the emotions can suggest that the Bible (tangibly accessible in a way Jesus is not) serves as a friend and can like a friendship developed 'come alive in a new way'. Like a friendship to which individuals can set their own boundaries, the Bible can be accepted in part, as a whole, or not.

In this use there is a sense of immediacy. Communication is not only available; it is relevant, for today. There is inevitably a hint of implicit criticism of a Bible use that does not offer such immediacy - again the inspirational pole is seen as exerting its powerful influence against training.

In the intimate and immediate world of this style of Christian devotion the Bible can exercise a crucial function that lies behind the devotional reading characteristic of certain sorts of Christian piety. The Bible provides a way of getting close to Jesus or to God - the other that defines the subject - and arguably the most accessible and reliable one because as a book it can be individually accessed at will. As Scripture, of course, it is understood to guarantee the process.

25 Noted at a number of points in the data.
The personal relationship skills that are an advantage in such Bible use are characteristic as pointed out above of Methodist culture. Its tradition offers a strong family/friendship feel and this is exemplified and sustained by the conference format. For instance, the academics who have seemed to take the Bible away from the people by making the simplicities of the communication function problematic through criticism were redeemed when they were met as people, became friends, entered the territory of fellowship and the friendship metaphor.

Summary

The Bible is vital to Christian discipleship, but it has been kept from the people of the churches and made boring by academics and by preachers. Hands-on, experiential approaches to study and exploration can empower people to use it. To engage with the Bible is to engage with the God who speaks through it.

(Interview 6: Whitby data)

Those words are typical of the advocates of the Communication Use and indicate the passion that can attach to it. They demonstrate the widespread suspicion of hortatory techniques. They promote particular educational techniques as the way in which perceived problems of contemporary discipleship can be overcome. Notions of access, immediacy and power struggle are very clear.

Such a highly personal and individualistic use gives confirmation for thought, feeling and action to the individual expressed in terms of 'challenge' and 'insight'. For the more institutional role of the preacher it gives potentially an ever-renewable supply of sermon

26 In my Journal, as noted above, the skills of fellowship, and the feeling that, 'these people all know each other', was very strong.
material. Its emotional/intuitive nature makes it ideal fuel for the exercise and attempt at maintenance of hortatory power.

The Communication Use takes inspirationally ‘cherry-picked’ resources to reinforce its concerns with the immediacy of communication with ‘God’. God’s word is accessible even to the unskilled listener. Too much skill may inhibit listening by making the process boring. The Word is immediate, unmediated except by the human processes of listening and learning to listen. Immediacy brings with it a sense of powerful authority—it brooks no argument. It is about today and there is no claim that it may not change for tomorrow. This dominant imperative inevitably imports a degree of instability that the Equilibrium or Institutional poles, for instance, find uncongenial. It is highly democratic, utopian and hard to control.

Communication and the making of meaning

The Communication Use can be seen as a sort of diminutive of the process of the making of meaning—highly individual rather than democratic, suspicious of any sort of authority but its own. It is heavily reliant on the ‘inspirational’ pole and a weak resource for any organized doctrinal or cognitive content or thought. Furthermore, in contrast to the narrative use that emerges from the data of the Disciple case study, the bigger picture context of individual life-narrative is lost in favour of the isolated insight. Individual life-narrative may be being built, but it is in danger of being an unreflective highly fractured

Amongst the terms used to describe the ‘communications’ received were ‘insights’, ‘nuggets’ or ‘sermon ideas’. This reflected the concern of personal devotional practice for a regular sense of novelty that suggests progress, creativity or contact. It also reflected the needs of preachers to bring a similar sense of novelty to their sermons.

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and unstable one. It is a situation of high potential energy and utopian insights but one
that is of limited equilibrium and sustainability.

The ‘making of meanings’ approach seeks to have the best of both worlds. It endorses
the Communication Use and gathers some of its appeal and energy. It attempts to
reassert the institutional control of scholarship, at the same time that it avoids the more
obvious institutional constraint that preaching suggests. Teaching replaces preaching.
Having recognized the potential for chaos of the Communication Use, and yet its virtue
in responding to values of individual subjectivity, and its strong roots in Christian
devotional tradition, it has sought to respond by attempting to open up a larger and more
authoritative/authentic narrative canvas. Its problem is that it has not moved far enough
from the Communication Use to remove the pitfalls that are inevitable. Disciple with its
commitment to a more traditional and credal epistemological position provides a more
stable and authentic narrative but threatens individual subjectivity. The narratives and
micro-narratives of the making of meanings and the Communication Use are
irredeemably fragile. It is in the subjectivity of the learner that these latter find their
strength. In the end the issue for the making of meanings is that it is an attempt at an
educational use of the Bible in contrast to the essentially non-educational, non-taught
approach of the Communication Use.
Contested areas

From the Whitby data, four contested areas stand out. They are closely related. Such close relation is a hallmark of contested areas – they cannot be tightly defined because it is of the nature of contest to ‘invade’ or to impact on other areas, and are all aspects of the central contested area of Bible use that is the focus of my thesis. By investigating them in turn I am able to provide material for a Foucault style power analysis.

Fellowship

Concern to handle power games in the life of the local church was significant in motivating participants to attend the conference. The Bible was being seen as a tool in power games that excluded some and left power over the fellowship and its life in the hands of others. The control of input into worship life and church discussion whether at an educational or policy making level, or in the assertion of moral standards, could be effected by the claim to appropriate use of the Bible.

For Methodism, maintenance and development of fellowship is an imperative of its culture.28 The concern of the Whitby planners both to engage an evangelical voice and not to alienate the Methodist constituency by content or speakers that might disturb the fellowship is evidence of that. The fact that speakers and workshop leaders were chosen for availability and given no clear restrictions over content indicates an habitual trust in fellowship processes.

28 The origins of this feature, interesting as they are, are beyond the scope of this current thesis. However the concern to maintain fellowship is likely to be a feature of wider society and an arena for contest of power, knowledge and education there. In that sense the issues dealt with in the case study are potentially highly generalizable.
The Whitby approaches to Bible use impact on this area of contest by shifting control of knowledge to the learning subject. Communication Use, the extreme manifestation of this may also intensify its confusion as it moves so much power from the institution. The ‘making of meanings’ and Communication Use alike are far towards the Individual pole. While ideally this can create a fellowship comfortable with diverse interpretation it will only do so if the Bible and agreement about it is brought to matter less in that fellowship. In the institutional context these pressures are strongly reductionist so far as Bible use is concerned.

**Individual subjectivity and fellowship**

The strong use of the first and second personal pronouns in the data suggested deep concern for the individual agenda in Bible use. That would, of course, be affirmed as a priority by the documentary evidence surveyed on adult Christian education in the Methodist Church. Education is a key way of building identity and a sense of individual value. Its problematic nature appears when, as in this case, the skills or knowledge that it generates are not accepted more widely. The situation is exacerbated when the Bible is at issue, where the hauntological complexity of its function in the church significantly raises the stakes. According to the data the claim to or demonstration of Biblical rectitude this would involve acceptance of views, agreement to change, access to and approval of the leadership of worship and of preaching. The lack of such acceptance meant that there was a sense of doomed weariness about how the insights and experience of the conference could be taken back and implemented at local

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29 See Chapter 3 above.
church level. Implicit here is an area of individual subjectivity. Facility with the Communication Use does strongly affirm the individual, but there also appears to be the need to secure further recognition by the local and wider fellowship.

The issue of personal vocation was regularly to be observed in the data. The Bible is significant in this context because the Communication Use provides the channel through which a call may be heard, and the stories that shape it may be explored. The paradox presents itself, that individual identity needs the institutional affirmation for its realization.

*Preaching and Worship*

The data gave clear evidence of the perception of the negative impact of preaching, and its failures to deliver what preachers themselves hope for. This I would see as a strong illustration of the rejection of ‘hortatory’ power and its techniques and a direct result of the tacit suspicion that is current in church life and has roots in and encouragement from the church-rejection and loss of religious hegemony current in contemporary culture.

A clear illustration of the way the Bible then becomes important was given by the preacher and Conference planner who claimed that his approach was to tell people ‘don’t just believe me, read it for yourself.’

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30 Interview 6, Whitby - might this be paraphrased: ‘become a learner and discover the area of subject as learner’?
It was also clear from the data that not just preaching, but worship as a whole was at issue. Again there is arguably a shift here from a focus on the methods and content of preaching, essentially a concern of the individuals in their institutional role as preachers, to a sense that worship is about facilitating the individual encounter with the divine and an extension of the friendship metaphor. Such a move would be well illustrated by the focus on ‘congregational hermeneutics’ in the opening session of the conference that argued for the congregation as the appropriate interpreter of the Bible. The failure to distinguish between preaching and teaching in the argument was significant. The preacher by slight of hand becomes the teacher. Education is the new preaching. It is not clear however that congregations respond positively to worship as the new context for learning and being taught.

The suggestion that ‘in worship (i.e. not in preaching alone)…we re-enact the [Biblical] story and how that inspires us to live...’\(^{31}\) also indicates the significance of the whole experience of worship.\(^{32}\) Potentially in such worship all the senses are engaged, not just the hearing. At Whitby there was an invitation to the exploration of possibilities of living and the acquisition of knowledge that is characteristic of educational process rather than preaching. A life affirming and enhancing process that does not do what preaching did and ‘put people down’ was the clear goal.\(^{33}\) The popularity of the ‘Godly Play’

\(^{31}\) Interview 6, Whitby.

\(^{32}\) There is an echo here of the mimetic style of education that will appear more strongly in the Disciple data, Chapter 7 below.

\(^{33}\) Interview 2, Whitby
workshops was an indication of this. The appearance of a sense of ‘play’ in the context of power games under examination is ironical.

Unfortunately education cannot so easily shed the mantle of preaching in a church context where preacher and people often collude to maintain a hortatory culture. In the face of such collusion education becomes problematic.  

Accessibility

This area of contest is ambiguous. It was perceived as between the ‘people’ and the ‘expert’. The latter was recognized as essential, but too academic an approach and the Bible was distanced or obscured. When the expert proved to be ‘inspiring’ it was because the process of listening to the Bible had been facilitated. It is hard when interpreting the data not to feel the presence of the Communication Use. The listeners had acquired new and interesting insights. But apparent theological sophistication was always suspected. Immediacy was everything and any attempt to introduce a process that did not give quick returns, however much such a process might be deemed necessary undermined confidence in the expert.  

A question begins to arise at this point about the nature of accessibility. The relation between education and entertainment is beyond the scope of this thesis and yet the issues

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34 This point emerged with some force as my Journal notes suggest in the discussion responses to the first keynote address at Whitby by Rev. David Rhymor.

35 Again the fascinating work of the late John Dobson, noted above, bears witness to an appetite amongst some lay people to acquire the expert skills of Greek and Hebrew in an immediate way.
it engenders are significant here. The dominance, in this corner of the voluntary adult education market, of the entertainment imperative is evidence again of the dominance of the Inspiration pole and raises questions about how education and knowledge alike are affected by it.

**Location of Contested points**

It is a point of some significance in the light of comments about Biblical hegemony noted earlier in this chapter, that these areas of contest are all located *within* the life of the church. It is possible to envisage areas of contest such as those about certain moral or ethical issues that might reflect the engagement of church and Bible with the wider culture in which it is set. In the data from this case study that issue does not appear.

**An analysis of power relations**

In this section I approach the data from the perspective of Foucault’s analysis of power relations. It allows me to investigate the discursive practices at work and provides a perspective that can contribute to an understanding of the working of the polarities.

**System of differentiations**

The differentiations are what permit one to act upon the actions of others, that ‘puts into operation differences’ (Foucault 2002 p.344). A number of differentiations have emerged, amongst them the epistemological differentiation between credal and narrative knowledge that is in evidence at significant points expressing the tension between institution and individual in a variety of ways, in particular the cognitive and prescriptive
that is under threat from the ‘making of meanings’ movement. A struggle for control is evident in a ‘provider – user’ differentiation and is an aspect of the democratic or expert ownership distinction that was at work in the data. The question of ownership was acute, and the area of the ‘expert’ could include not only the academic, and indeed the authorized Local Preacher or minister, but in certain situations the fundamentalist or even simply conservative presence in the local church. The differentiation is made more acute when the learners relocate themselves as subject over against a location as those whose identity is found in being taught or led.

Types of Objectives
These are the objectives pursued through the discursive practices under investigation whether they be used for maintenance, accumulation, exercise or any other objective. A dominant objective as the contested areas demonstrate was the defence of the church as an open fellowship both locally and Connexionally, but particularly the former. Such an objective serves two others. The first is the accessibility of the Bible, to ensure the recognized epistemological resource is not ‘cornered’ by any particular party. It indicates the perceived and persisting value of the Bible. The second objective echoes the differentiations with its sense that open fellowship and access to the Bible makes possible the fulfilment of the self and the relocation of the subject. Perhaps following Foucault this might be seen as an aspect of ‘the care or ‘cultivation’ of the self’ (Foucault 1998 p.43f).
Instrumental Modes

This is where the power is exercised, the points at which the power games are most obvious, and the 'playground' in which they can be observed. The points of 'fellowship', whether that be the conference or the groupings of the local church, are the key areas and that is why the battle for ownership is so contentious. It was highly significant for me that the Bible had an instrumental role in this situation. Somehow it is needed to give permission to an instrumental mode, legitimizing its instrumentality. The loss of Biblical hegemony in wider society means of course that such instrumentality is only ever an intra-church concern and that can disappoint those who would hope to see it still speak to the world. Making the Bible widely available is therefore futile except within the church. The instrumentality of worship and the events of Sunday morning are of course crucial, as this is the instrumental point that is likely to engage the most participants and have the greatest impact. The battle over control is still fiercely fought.

Forms of Institutionalization

From what has been said the nature of the institutions generated by this set of power relationships is obvious. The ongoing pattern of one-off conferences, the open fellowships in the local church and the attempts at control of Sunday mornings through training courses and accreditation for those leading are the focus. The production of learning materials that embody these values offer a notion of an idealised institution that

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26 The ambiguity over the nature of 'evangelical' participation in planning and at the conference was symptomatic of this issue. My observation throughout the planning process and the conference was that the evangelical input appeared both welcome and unwelcome by turns.

27 The emergence of the 'Worship Leader' in British Methodism as an 'office' with training attached and the threat this is seen to pose to the Local Preacher is one example of this. For an exploration of education and worship see Astley 1996 p.244ff.
only intermittently finds successful embodiment. There is a problem however in the light of the Whitby data. The dominant Communication Use with its attempt at engagement of the other does not lend itself readily to the institutional that it is always ready to deconstruct or to ignore. The individual subject as learner is very dominant and perhaps that is the central form of institutionalization, if it is appropriate to call it such.

 Degrees of Rationalization

The rationalization of the patterns of power relationships in the data focuses on the friendship metaphor that finds strong support from Biblical materials. The use of Biblical materials is crucial but it is inevitably subjective. It has opted apparently and unsurprisingly for the notion of God as the benevolent other, whose ‘Spirit’ can and does speak to all. The other is there to be engaged simply by listening. As suggested at a number of points this approach is of a piece with the charismatic/pentecostal style not only of much contemporary church life but of wider society as well. It is acceptable so long as it does not make any hegemonic claims. At that point of course it parts company with proponents of the charismatic/pentecostal movement who adopt a more assertive and exclusive theology and rationale. It is a constant that the Bible is used to legitimize the rationale.

 The Polarities

In the light of this brief analysis of power relations the polarities can be examined in greater depth.
Individual/Institution

The prevalence of the Communication Use indicates clearly that the Individual pole is dominant in the data. The problematic status of preaching and the accompanying resistance to what is seen as institutional authority confirms this. The empowerment of the individual was a paramount aim of the conference and the participants appeared to be dealing with their own individual concerns. The institutional aspect of the conference represented by the invitation of the President and Vice-President carried no weight in motivating people to attend.

However that is not the whole story. The complexities of individual relationship to the community in terms of individual identity and vocation have been noted. The contested area of fellowship represents a strong aspect of institution albeit in a highly localized form. Individuals participated in an institutionally provided educational resource, which was clearly valued, even though it was used for individual ends. Even so, the areas of contest that all lie within the institution indicate that there are areas of power within the institution deemed worth struggling for. The educational and epistemological tools that were offered by the conference, although used strongly for individuals’ own ends, nevertheless were seen to equip them for participation in the institution, particularly at local level, and particularly in the highly institutional activity of worship. As will be suggested again below, the priority for participants was acquisition of knowledge as learners rather than desire for education that involved being taught or trained.
People appeared to want the knowledge but not to follow the institutional path to learning that produces the subject as taught. For them learning was about affectively or cognitively collecting knowledge rather than about the wider challenge of developing education and its behavioural impact particularly where that involved institutional commitment.

Equilibrium/Utopia

The utopian rhetoric of glimpsing visions and dreams of the Kingdom of God, or of a renewed church and a fully identified individual was a constant feature of Whitby as an analysis of the worship sessions and the use of such terms as the ‘word of God’ and ‘empowerment’ makes clear. As noted above the search for authenticity, the response to the resonance and echoes of a hauntology, the very learning act itself can be seen as part of the utopian impulse.

However the whole conference structure of Whitby, despite its utopian moments, was a testimony to the desire for equilibrium expressed in terms of successful fellowship. Perhaps, that provides the best learning environment where the agenda of the learning subject can flourish, as the evidence from Disciple might suggest.

For me of course, the question is about how such gravitational forces affect the educational and epistemological dynamics in the overall case study. In the end, on the

38 I did not attempt to do this. My journal simply notes the persistence of these patterns.
39 Utopianism is shaped by cultural norms. The story of utopian origins is as complex and assertive as the origins of any other cultural feature.
basis of the data analysed to this point, it would seem that whatever the virtues of education and knowledge, they lose out at the point where their impact on equilibrium is judged to be too great or where the utopia of the learning subject is compromised.

At Whitby, perversely, it appeared that the utopian impulse was controlled by the techniques associated with the Inspiration pole. Inspiration’s spasmodic, highly individualistic impact made it ideal for such a purpose as the dominant Communication Use of the Bible so clearly demonstrates. Once more we draw close to the territory of hortatory power, and to the awful paradox that the uses of the Bible that most seem to foster the learning subject are ones that offer a limited sort of learning that resists knowledge in its more organized forms. These organized forms advocated by WWA and L&D appear to be tarnished by association with institution and authority, of the subject as knower of taught information or of the subject as simply taught or trained.

**Inspiration/Training**

Facilitating the ‘making of meaning’ in terms of what Whitby offered was an eclectic collection of insights and techniques that had proved successful and/or popular from church life and Biblical scholarship. Participants measured its value in different ways. The style of the presenter had considerable significance. Where there was therefore a limited attempt at organized teaching, it was received as a collection of inspirational offerings.  

\[\text{\footnotesize{In my own workshops as noted above, I deliberately attempted to offer reflective material that needed individual and corporate discussion and development, aiming for the ‘Training’ pole. The way the sessions ran and the evaluation that resulted showed that participants used the material for inspirational ends. This was reflected in the evaluations of the conference as a whole.}}\]
This is not surprising. This sort of conference format lends itself to Inspiration rather than Training. Time constraints made organized and developed teaching difficult and favour Communication Use and inspirational methods. These constraints are of course a feature of contemporary church life. As will be seen below one of the features of the Disciple course is its attempt to engage this issue and make concerted demands on participants’ time.

Representatives of the Training pole, such as the academics were treated circumspectly until they proved to be inspirational. The suspicion persists that the inspirational was picked up and the tougher, longer term training implications of their session were neglected.

The burden of taking back the inspirational aspects of the conference is a consequence of the nebulous, short-term character of the Inspiration pole. The fact that there was no Conference report suggests a priority in terms of Inspiration rather than strategy/organization.

A final issue is raised by the role of inspiration in the Christian education of adults. The Bible has for many current members of the church, certainly those represented at Whitby, first and most deeply been encountered in childhood. To bring the sort of knowledge that it gave then through to adulthood in a way that can be sustained is not a simple process. The use of the Bible in the teaching of children and the impact it had on their knowledge and the way it is ‘reclassified’ for instance in terms of practical knowledge
fostering the equilibrium of life as opposed perhaps to the utopian dreams of childhood is beyond the scope of this thesis. The original powerful Bible encounter explains the power of the Bible to haunt. As earlier documentary evidence indicated the moving on into adulthood requires some measure of disciplined learning and tends to the Training pole. Lingering with the inspirational may be a way of hanging on to the utopianism of childhood and adolescence. If that is the case, the threat to adult Christian education of the Inspiration pole is considerable. It is part of the menace of hortatory power that it depends so heavily on the techniques of inspiration to avoid the sort of rigorous thought that adult faith might need.

**Authenticity/Authority**

Given the power of the individual pole and the persistence of the Communication Use it is not surprising that the Authority pole was extremely weak. Evidence of the suspicion of preaching and the academic is plentiful in the data, even amongst preachers themselves. The sense of the movement towards a new subjectivity is acute, if unarticulated.

The ‘making of meaning’ and Communication Use are clearly resistant to authority of an institutional nature. The location of contested areas within the church indicates that loss of hegemony leads to the loss of any authority that can speak credibly beyond the church. It is also characteristic of the Authenticity pole that individuals are suspicious of such authority. Authenticity becomes the safer, less painful option for a church that has in actuality accepted relativism. The consequent retreat from the challenges of relativism
that this represents has interesting consequences in the Book/Scripture polarity. Book can handle the authenticity pole in a way that Scripture struggles to.

While the intention of the conference to empower participants has a notion of institutional authority about it, the way that the latter exercised their power as subjects as both learners and consumers meant a diminution of both institution and authority.\(^4\)

The notion that authority is counter-educational in that it ‘lets you off thinking’ was expressed, and serves as a good summary of the prevailing attitude. Authenticity sounds at this point as if it represents a definition of being adult, which would mean something like ‘being able to operate without authority’ in the sense of authority as something institutionally or externally (divinely?) imposed. The adult is the one liberated from the authorities of childhood. Ironically, as noted above, such authorities include the Bible that echoes, resonates and has the power to haunt, with all the consequences I have noted for adult Christian education.

Finally, Authenticity appeared as a way of achieving equilibrium by providing the subject an alternative to authority and its threat of domination. To argue the point slightly differently, authenticity is authority for the individual that is not transferable, unless another individual finds their authenticity embodied there and voluntarily makes it part of the complex life narrative they are learning. Unfortunately such independent mutuality is

\(^4\) There is a detailed discussion to be developed here about local power and its authority patterns engaging with psychological and sociological perspectives. Unfortunately, given the focus of this thesis there is not space to deal with them.
easier to imagine than to find in practice. Local power games played within fellowships and between individuals find a constant pull between the poles with authenticity always in danger of becoming authority.

A description of authenticity is emerging. It arises from a hauntology. It is authenticated by fellowship, which somehow has to ‘give permission’. It affirms individual utopia in a way that does not threaten institutional or even individual equilibrium.

**Book/Scripture**

Both poles, the Bible as Book and the Bible as Scripture, are represented strongly in the data. Both provide in their different ways a popular and powerful knowledge resource, both explain the capacity of the Bible to haunt church culture. A particularly interesting feature of the data is the way that users move with facility between the two poles.

Scripture can give authentic narrative space. It offers a timeless, context free possibility of ‘giving roots’, it is filled with echoes and resonance that bear hints of its aural usage. The sense that ‘our story’ is part of the wider current of God’s engagement with God’s people is a highly valued part of biblical engagement. It belongs strongly to the Narrative Use that the Communication Use has such strong links with. Yet church history that might accurately link Biblical times with the contemporary experience is not needed nor wanted. Academic approaches of higher and other criticism that presses such need upon the user can be resisted as reducing access.

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42 Interview 3: Whitby

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The use of 'holy' as an associated term reflects this dynamic. It is acceptable in so far as it emphasizes the distinctive, timeless, Scriptural, set apart quality. It is less acceptable when the 'set apart' quality emphasizes the need for a high level of expertise or of moral standing and so reduces access to the morally uncertain and inexpert reader who has an awareness of their own ignorance of the Bible.\footnote{Interview 9: Whitby}

Scripture can offer authenticity, but shadows of authority mean it is profoundly threatened by relativism. It not only loses unique status it drops to the level of folk tale, (somewhat below book), both in terms of the culturally perceived value of its knowledge and the way it is used. We are dealing with a more ephemeral type of knowledge as a result – 'popular', hard to classify and beyond the rationality of any positivist style. Nevertheless, in spite of all and tantalizing its enthusiasts the capacity of the Bible to haunt lingers on.

Book can handle relativism in a way Scripture cannot because it is not constrained by the same authority discourse. In addition Book use provides 'narrative space' in which the Communication use can flourish unrestricted by authority and open to further development through the insights of expositors. The accessibility of Book and the cultural valuing of book knowledge can both produce that. However as just noted, academic engagement with book can easily be judged distancing and 'boring'. Book, with its ready availability gives power to resist hortatory techniques. However, study of
the book can be found to distance in a way that is alien to the Communication Use, for study of the book can undermine faith. The Communication Use therefore favours the Scripture pole, but uses it to offer authenticity rather than authority.

Whether the Scripture or the Book pole is favoured, what these reflections suggest is that once again the Inspiration pole (and with it the Individual pole) with its easy access to vital knowledge is preferred over the Training pole (and its provider, the Institution) with its threat of inaccessibility. This outweighs the capacity of Training to open up new areas of narrative space.

Finally, the loss of the hegemony of the Bible in culture impacts on this polarity. The language of the need to ‘restore’ the Bible to some position of significance in church and cultural life was very strong at the conference. Just why this was so did not become clear. The apparent success of evangelical and fundamentalist churches where there is clearly a central role for the Bible may be a major reason. However what is not at all clear, and beyond the scope of my data, is whether that success is because of an awareness and implementation of Bible knowledge on the one hand, or, on the other, the Bible being used in the power games of a ‘local’ group for differentiating cultures and effectively ‘othering’ the subject. The Disciple case study that comes from a rather more evangelical point on the theological and ecclesiological spectrum may give some clues. Unfortunately for its organizers, in this area Whitby was in danger of losing out doubly. It adopted a pattern of Bible use (Communication) that shifts unpredictably along the
Scripture/Book pole, and does so in response to motives tacitly and explicitly located at
different points on the polarities from those with whom dialogue was sought.
CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCIPLE

Introduction

‘Disciple assumes that the Bible is the key to renewal in the church’. ‘Underlying the development of Disciple is the assumption that people are hungry for the word of God…’ as well as ‘…for fellowship in prayer and study, and a sense of appropriate ministry.’ ‘Disciple aims at transformation not just information…’.

This set of assumptions and aims together with the values implicit in the name ‘Disciple’ is at the heart of the Disciple project. Some things are therefore immediately obvious. The Bible is of major significance, as is the group experience of fellowship. They are means to an end of individual and institutional transformation or renewal. There is an implicit critique of adult Christian education that points to a key contested area. People are ‘hungry’, information is not enough, study with the group experience and contact with the divine through prayer is what is needed for transformation. The notion of transformation points to a further contested area of ‘subjectivity’, whether the transformation be of the individual or the institution.

1 'An Introduction to Disciple' (leaflet) 1996, Peterborough: The Foundery Press & BRF

2 It is no part of this thesis to explore the educational potential of contact with the divine, except in the important way in which the divine functions as ‘other’ in the individual struggle for subjectivity. I will touch on this area only in so far as the terms are used within the power games under investigation. Or in the way in which the shared activity of prayer, for instance, facilitates a level of intimacy within the group process that impacts on the learning process. The task of theological reflection on the Bible and its use in adult Christian education will, I hope be facilitated by my research.
After a brief survey of the data to identify the context and patterns of Bible use, I will identify and explore the contested areas in order to facilitate an examination of the power games being played. Reflection on these findings in the light of the polarities and further refinement of the polarities will enable me to reach conclusions that resource the discussions of the second part of the thesis.

Context and Patterns of Bible use.

Disciple is a major success story in the life of the Methodist Church. In contrast to Whitby it is a programme that has not had formal backing from the Connexion. It is a year long course of 34 weekly sessions with preparation work making considerable demands on participants' commitment. Launched in 1996 by the Methodist Publishing House (MPH) it had by 2002 seen 7000 'graduates' from Disciple 1 and 590 from Disciple 2.3

Disciple is subject to very strong controls from its centre. The centralizing force is not from the Connexion as institution but from MPH, which has developed the materials under license from the American originators and controls the content and distribution of materials.4 The course is only available through MPH and only to those who have

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3 Figures provided during Interview 2: Disciple

4 "The [Disciple] dream began in March 1986 when a group of 18 gathered in Flower Mound, Texas, USA, committed to a dream of describing and developing a Bible study for training Christian disciples." The publicity material produced by the Foundery Press, "the ecumenical arm of Methodist Publishing House", with the Bible Reading Fellowship, indicates that by 1996 'approaching one million people around the world' have undertaken it, including by that time 5,000 people in the UK. A 'bird's eye view' survey of Circuits in the London Region of the Methodist Church in 2000, estimated that 45% of Circuits had made some use of it.
undertaken the residential leaders' course. Significant financial outlay is involved.\(^5\)

There are Certificates provided for graduates of the course. It is important to note that
the ongoing context is also shaped by the expectations generated by the success of the
course in its goal of nurturing vocations. The claim was made for a real impact on
candidating process that produces candidates for ordination.\(^6\)

With its wide use, less official nature and its different methods and aims it offers some
important contrasts with Whitby, although there is much in common.\(^7\)

Despite its centralized origins, Disciple finds its context in the local church. As a result,
one aspect that was clear from the data was the sense of less theological sophistication in
the interviews than in the Whitby equivalents. In the predominantly lay context
theological language can be both intimidating and alienating. For the researcher there is
the added frustration of not being able to press for clarification of terms used. A cliché

\[^5\] The fact that the course has commercial constraints is part of its context. It has to be shown to produce
results and to pay its way. The advertising and marketing creates a sense of expectation that is an
important part of motivation. There is however a certain tension with the value world of the church that is
never fully at ease with such language.

\[^6\] Interview 2: Disciple. Figures are not available, but soundly based anecdotal evidence gives a strong
suggestion that 'a very significant proportion' of candidates for ministerial training have had some
involvement with Disciple.

\[^7\] Details of the data gathering process for the Disciple Case Study can be found in Appendix 2.
covers a range of unthought through meaning. This is the sort of territory where hortatory power games can flourish.

*Context: The Group*

The overwhelming feature of the data was the impact of the group experience. The group, as the introductory literature had suggested, proved to be effective in motivating participants, ensuring their commitment to the process and providing ongoing support beyond the end of the course.

The group exercises power to ‘discipline’ its members and through a range of formal and informal processes holds them to account even as it supports them. There was reassurance and security in the group experience as in the content of the material.

There are those who joined Disciple to learn and those who joined because they were

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8 The term ‘the Word of God’ in particular is highly problematic, offering a range of possible meanings. To read ‘Disciple’s’ self-presentation through its publicity material is to face a collection of loosely connected sound bites that are designed to grab attention. Brevity and the world of advertising is all too often the enemy of clarity. Therefore I am not trying to offer a critical analysis at this point. By examining this material I am trying to understand the particular discourse of Bible teaching and learning which it presents. A key to understanding this discourse is precisely to recognize one that has chosen to present itself in this way. This is not the world of the scholar but of popular church culture. It may be easy to pick holes in the sales pitch, but this is a sales pitch that has engaged a million church members and claims to have ‘transformed’ the lives of significant numbers of them.

9 This would be in line with the commitment of the course to the group learning model: DISCIPLE groups are modeled on Jesus and his disciples. In session 33 group members ‘...will talk together...will counsel one another ...and will decide together,’ and for the course as a while ‘...should covenant together in terms of commitment of time, daily and weekly presentation, and attendance at all weekly sessions’ (Disciple 1996 p.17).

10 This evidence was consistent from the 8 different groups with which I had contact.

11 I have not set out to provide an extensive analysis of the content of the Disciple course. While there would be undoubted value in that and it would provide additional material for reflection that would bear on the context of its use, it would be marginal to the focus of my current investigation. It would be useful to investigate in the light of my findings.
lonely – the evidence suggests that both groups were caught up in the shared learning project. In certain instances the need to sustain the group process inhibited sharing of views and questions, which indicates the potential for control of which the power games of group dynamics are capable.\textsuperscript{12}

The impact of the group on educational and epistemological processes was obviously profound. It often appeared to be the case that learning and engaging with new knowledge served mainly as a vehicle for the group experience. These processes offered a shared language and purposeful activity to facilitate the group’s working. The question is raised whether gaining knowledge and learning activities are simply the currency to the greater priority of ending personal isolation and so of redefining individual subjectivity.

The issue of the social motivation of adult learning is raised.\textsuperscript{13} The group as a purposeful, long term institution constitutes the context of Disciple and the learning it offers. As I will argue below, it does this in an important way by embodying in some measure the experience of belonging to a narrative. The presentation of this complex narrative is the distinctive way in which Disciple uses the Bible epistemologically. The educational engagement that facilitates learning is in considerable measure supported by the group.

\textsuperscript{12} Interviews 5, 6, & 9: Disciple

\textsuperscript{13} The social motivation of adult learning noted above (Courtney 1992 p.51) The power is strong because usually and necessarily membership of the group is voluntarily undertaken, and the dynamic of a purposeful group breeds commitment.
For all the attractions of the group, the major stated reason for participating in the group was the study of the Bible in a disciplined and organized way. The Bible has a unique quality to attract church people to education. Its power to legitimize such activity is likewise unique.¹⁴

_Dominant use (1) - Communication...again: ‘a book that reads me..._¹⁵

The highly aural terms from which I developed a description of the Communication Use from the Whitby data appear regularly in the Disciple data.

A phrase like ‘a book that reads me...’ is characteristic of the sense that the initiative is not with the listener to hear the message, but with the book, and behind it the divine, the ‘other’, to deliver messages of insight or instruction and to initiate dialogue, challenge or interrogate the reader. The Bible then becomes the subject, the accessible ‘other’ because it is the initiative taking other.¹⁶

In this context, the Whitby data suggested the root metaphor is of friendship, here there is a more assertive partner. The metaphor has, not surprisingly, moved towards discipleship, with its teacher/pupil, master/servant images supplementing those of

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¹⁴ The reasons for this I would argue lie in the twin hauntology of the ‘Book/Scripture’ polarity that will be explored at a number of points below and that has already been introduced in Chapter 5.

¹⁵ Interview 10: Disciple. This phrase and the one noted at 18 below take on significance given that this interview was with one of the national trainers for Disciple.

¹⁶ The exploration of the role of the ‘other’ in developing subjectivity as a feature of the power games that are the adult educational project is highly significant as the work of Ricoeur demonstrates. There is an interesting discussion to be developed about the functioning of thought and talk about ‘God’ and its relation to the necessary other for the subject. There will be some engagement with this theme in Chapters 8 and 9.
friendship. Given the New Testament context of an understanding of discipleship, the data show a stronger emphasis on Jesus, on his teaching and in a particular visual image of him ‘shining through’. As a result, and paradoxically, despite the suggestion that the notion of discipleship carries with it about instruction, the prevailing sense is of encounter, with Jesus, once again perhaps glimpsed as the ‘other’.

As at Whitby the Bible is used as a sort of resource from which materials can be drawn that provide opportunities for experiment and for exploration, what I have called above ‘narrative space’, for the making of meanings. Narrative however develops differently in the Disciple data, where it is used as a wider story in which the ‘disciple’ finds inclusion. In such a process of course meaning is made, but the fundamental momentum is about belonging – another aspect of the discipleship discourse.

**Dominant use (2) – Narrative: ‘The Bible helps us to know who we are, whose we are and what God wants us to do...’**

A major feature of the data from Disciple was the constant welcome and valuing of the OT and of (Biblical) history. The terms in which they were expressed consistently emphasized the sense of shared humanity. The sense of solidarity in imperfection was

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17 That the Bible ‘speaks’, ‘gives messages’, ‘guides’ demonstrates a strong sense of the anthropomorphizing of the Bible and a clear relation to the Communication Use.

18 Interview 10: Disciple

19 Old Testament appears in the data to be a particularly valued part of the course, even to the detriment of the New. (Interview notes: p.6, 8,14, 27, 29, 32, 46.) Reasons given include extended context, characters very human, ‘bring comfort’, no one perfect (p.8). The dealing with imperfection, love and forgiveness (p.16), characters of people, exploring their lives (p.17). ‘Abraham fell by the wayside but you don’t learn that as a child...’ ‘same things happening today, culturally relevant, human mentality, ethical questions ... relationships, what it’s all about...’ (p.30, 33) ‘...deeply sad same things are still happening.’ (p.47) [References to handwritten scripts of interviews]
consoling and liberating, giving Disciple participants a sense of permission to belong.

Affirmation of the range and resources of human emotion and encounter with God, often through struggle with personal circumstances and doubt, were made accessible to them. The accessibility appears to have been made more effective by the structure of the course that enables reiteration, the weekly reading and the group discussion that ensures reflection and encourages application in an ongoing way. The strong individual sense of being part of a wider community that developed as a result appeared to open up a wider vision of being part of God’s purpose. The characters of the Bible story, in their perceived heroism and especially their weakness are understood to be ‘on your side’. A strong sense of solidarity and of continuity of experience is developed.

The narrative that is being engaged with is not just individual. It is that of course, and the data suggest intensely so, but the significant feature is that the narrative is about the individual as part of God’s people. This narrative retains the timelessness of the ‘primordial’ scriptural narrative. The Old Testament is used to offer the human face of this possibility. Its prescriptive side is not emphasized in the data. As noted above, the

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20 The sense of continuity with ‘Jewish race’ in their struggles (p.27, 65), the popularity of the Psalms and Job suggest a complex form of narrative that is able to include reflection, proverb, and poetry. (p.29, 32) [References to handwritten scripts of interviews]

21 Interview 10: Disciple. The ‘greater story’ – “God brings good out of chaos’ – this is about reassurance not imperative. ‘We are part of that story...’ (p.59) One big picture...(p.60) ‘It fits in...’ (p.61) ‘a story that helps tie things together...’ (p.61, 67) [All references to pages of handwritten transcripts of interviews]

22 Such a suggestion cannot I would argue be sustained except insofar as the narrative is in the mind of the reader not hermeneutically revealed from the pages of the book – we are territory of the Book/Scripture polarity, with the timeless, primordial quality of Scripture dominant. Furthermore, for all the interest in Biblical history that the data shows, there is little exploration of church history, the ongoing story of ‘God’s people’ that makes links with the contemporary context.

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space that this narrative can provide for imaginative empathy and exploration is
significant, however, its strength is not there, but in the inclusion that it makes possible.

In order to access this inclusion it becomes essential for the participant to develop as
clear an understanding as possible of the scope and content of the narrative. Disciple is
designed to offer this. As a result, learning with its cognitive rewards is usually seen to
be the way forward.23

There is a problem of course. While the scriptural quality can generate a powerful sense
of belonging, the Old Testament remains, eventually and unarguably, irredeemably
other.24 There is recognition of this in the data, and it appears not to present a major
problem. In fact the dynamic of belonging and distancing opens up the possibility of
interpreting the data in terms of the approach that Ricoeur offers in his investigation of
sameness and identity and the role that narrative plays in the process. Narrative of the
other affirms the individual’s identity by difference. Narrative that can be adopted as

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23 The fact that the Training pole is strongly emphasized, while the Inspiration pole remains important for
the data suggests that when the material evokes a sense of belonging it is understood as inspirational. As
will have been clear at a number of points, the notion of the ‘inspirational’ is a very fluid one. It is beyond
the scope of this thesis to offer a full investigation of the complex term and its use. I am using it in this
context as a polar opposite in the educational discussion to training. It has to do with the non-systematic,
intuitive approach, designed to appeal to the audience, almost counting as entertainment as opposed to the
rigors of Training. The contrast is necessary and the wide use of the term makes my use of it, I would
argue, justifiable, but my use is far from exhaustive, and caution is necessary. Inspiration as a method is
particularly a tool of hortatory power, and I will explore it further again in Chapter 10.

24 The chronological and cultural shifts since its writing, the complexity of its origins all make this
inevitable and any engagement with it dependent on the popular argument ‘human nature doesn’t change’ -
which is highly doubtful.
one's own affirms and develops identity by the building of confidence through a sense of belonging.\textsuperscript{25}

The data show not only the using of narrative, but also the distinctively complex nature of that narrative. It is not just plot but a rich and variegated territory that the imagination has scope to explore. In tune exactly with the Bible narrative itself it is not bare story, but gives space for the inclusion of teaching, commandment, historical memory and prophecy, and further and more significantly, for poetry, proverb and meditative reflection. This complex inclusive narrative reflects the many styles of Biblical literature. The Bible models the whole narrative possibility. As the Disciple participants begin to engage with this narrative they gain a sense not of the possibility of prescriptive authority, which in the data is at every point rejected, but of authenticity that provides the ground for the individual's authority.\textsuperscript{26}

This complex narrative is seen in the data to be at odds with the received sense of what Bible and previously experienced forms of Christian (not only adult) education have been

\textsuperscript{25} Ricoeur in Valdes 1991 p.99ff. Ricoeur's exploration of time and narrative is of course apposite at this point. In chapter 8 below I will explore this point more fully. At this point I note the 'timeless' quality of the narrative the Bible is used to provide, where its characters and places become 'contemporaneous' and 'real' to users.

\textsuperscript{26} Such a suggestion opens up the possibility, which will be explored further below, that the model of narrative Scripture may shape the narratives that form the ways information is processed, learnt and becomes knowledge. Disciple suggests too that the knowledge found in the resource that Scripture constitutes is effectively accessed and developed by techniques of investigation and interpretation associated with the Bible understood as Book.
about.\textsuperscript{27} The narrative is participative. It resists prescription and proposition to offer an inclusive model of church.\textsuperscript{28} Inevitably there are epistemological consequences. This sort of narrative is not immediately comfortable with a dominating scientific worldview and to secular and humanist meta-narratives.

It can bring change as the affirmation experienced in group relationships is matched by the narrative which in its own distinctive way brings confidence to act. The process of Bible use in providing narrative matches the group experience of the learning context and learning is reinforced.\textsuperscript{29} The question of the relation of such narrative processes to ideologies and to cultures is inevitably raised and with it of course the nature of the learning and educational processes.

The narrative operates on an essentially personal or local scale dominated by concern for individual or local authenticity rather than a more universal authority. The sense that the Bible legitimizes such authenticity provides enough universality.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} An interesting comment in Interview 11: Disciple 'the prime interaction between us and God over time and gives a history of what people have thought and done in relation to God ... doesn't tell us what to think ... doesn't tell us what to do ... but does tell us what sort of person to be'. There appears to be a clear move in favour of Bible use as story rather than prescription.

\textsuperscript{28} For instance the preference for the Gospels over against epistles and the suggestion that the church as the church of Paul Interview 4: Disciple again suggests the move from the prescriptive to the narrative and a move away from the control of the church. There was also an indication of gender issues in other interviews, with the move away from a perceived anti-feminist Paul to the pro-feminist Jesus?

\textsuperscript{29} The narrative teaches through its stories the possibility of acceptance, valuing, forgiveness or love that the learner can incorporate into their life, behaviour and 'habitus'.

\textsuperscript{30} There are close parallels with the 'making of meanings' use. The distinctions appear to be in the reality of the group context, the more concerted sense of narrative and a different, less individualistic relation to the institution.
It could be further argued that the enthusiasm for the development of this authentic individual and local narrative is symptomatic of the decline and marginalization of the churches. This has been accompanied by an inevitable demise of the meta-narratives and ideologies of faith communities that no longer command respect beyond their boundaries. It offers a way of recovering from the consequent isolation and lack of direction of faith institutions by local and individual reinforcement of the narrative bulwarks.\textsuperscript{31}

Disciple succeeds in its goals of transformation and church leadership and enabling transformation, identifying gifts, generating confidence and enthusiasm by making it possible for its students to become caught up in the complex inclusive narrative the Bible is used to provide. That is only part of the dynamic. As has been suggested, the students are active too, using Bible and course for their own, more local, narrative ends. But crucially, these are shared narratives, and despite all individualist impulses, the group ensures a measure of institutional focus\textsuperscript{32}. At that point, despite its many similarities, it contrasts with the Communication Use and to the ‘making of meanings’ use, as observed at Whitby, which remain resolutely individual.

\textsuperscript{31} Reflecting the process of drawing more strongly the differential boundaries between church and society that characterizes such groups as the Jehovah’s Witnesses (Aldridge 2000 p.117). There is no such conscious institutional agenda with Disciple, it would almost certainly be firmly rejected, but the issue of how such a process of using narrative in the identifying of the ‘other’ points up once again the question of subjectivity.

\textsuperscript{32} The Bible has been used in a way facilitated by group process to educate its users in an understanding of and (through the group experience) a taste of the experience of a shared narrative. The interweaving of power and knowledge in the group enables such a process. The use of the expert through the videos - beyond the local power games therefore - is a significant part of the reassurance of the existence of the wider shared narrative.
Disciple’s biblically mined and forged narrative gives a sense of identity and relationship. It offers a sense of liberation that comes through the reassurance of belonging and a consequent sense of individual authenticity. The data suggest that liberation may be from the hortatory power games within the church. The positive learning experience generated for many participants by the almost ‘programmed’ ‘Training’ style of Disciple offers a liberation from bad learning experiences earlier in life and the lack of identity and self esteem that can be the result. Once again the issue appears to involve questions of subjectivity. Liberation has to do therefore with a redefinition of the subject, as a result of engagement with adult Christian education and the Bible.

Contested Areas

With this data, as before, identifying the contested areas enables me to move my focus from the instrumental modes that my research question has focussed on, to matters of ‘differentiations’ that will help me to follow Foucault’s suggestions for analyzing the power relations at work.

Areas of contest can be identified in two ways: where there is clear debate, and where there is vagueness or confusion that serves to mask the contest. Examples of both will be clear in this section.

One of the opening quotations for this chapter from the Disciple literature identifies the key area of contest - ‘Disciple aims at transformation not just information’. This is
clearly the case both for the individual and eventually for the church. The Bible, the

group and the study materials are the tools the course uses to achieve transformation.

The issue is about education and the use of knowledge. The ‘transformation’ emphasis
gives a clear indication of educational approach and praxis agenda. The implied critique
of ‘just information’ is presumably aimed at something like Freire’s ‘banking’ approach
to education. There is no doubt that this is felt to be a real target, but just where exactly it
occurs is not so clear. It would appear to be wherever any attempt at dealing with
knowledge is found to be uncongenial, and so my data suggests that sermons and
‘academics’ may both become targets. Are these approaches simply difficult and
demanding and so therefore uncongenial? Or are questions of power games and of the
nature of subjectivity involved?

I will explore three areas of contest. Not all of them present an immediately
confrontational profile. The church is experienced at disguising confrontation with
vagueness. It is one of the features of hortatory power. However in each area there is
evidence of contest.

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33The sermon theme suggests a discomfort with the current pattern of communication of knowledge in
curch life. Some of these issues will be explored in a discussion of the suspicion of the receivers towards
the exercise of ‘hortatory power’ in Chapter 10. There appears (unsurprisingly) to be a move from
communication/exhortation ‘from above’ towards a shared, mutual, group experience. It is this that affirms
the individual’s educational labours and self-esteem.
1. Subjectivity: Disciple or Member?

As the title of the course, the term ‘Disciple’ raises a number of issues. It has been made clear above that the use of discipleship language is a key issue for adult Christian education raising epistemological and pedagogical questions. The data show that discipleship is preferred to ‘membership’ that offers a different more institutional metaphor of belonging and a term that was not used at all by the students or leaders.

The data suggest a strong vocational sense to discipleship, in that it offers a sense of value for each individual, that membership is apparently not perceived to have.

Membership may be associated with a sort of belonging that gives responsibility and puts the individual under some measure of institutional control. Disciple can be seen therefore to be engaged with the movement towards a new subjectivity.

Discipleship is a ‘discourse’ current in adult Christian education, shaped by New Testament concepts with strong implications of the subject as learner, but in the data it was its association with ‘discipline’ that came through most strongly. The discipline required is the discipline to learn. The ability to handle knowledge is at the heart of a

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34 ‘Disciple’ is part of a discourse that uses it as a team word, a belonging word, reinforced as noted above by the group method. In the data it was used, together with its variants to describe participants’ self-understanding. It involves a twofold loyalty, to Jesus and to the immediate group. In contrast the terminology of membership with its strong message of institutional belonging to a local congregation and beyond to a Connexional church, was not heard at all. The membership issue is interesting in that it appears that the single greatest positive experience of students is ‘membership’ of their Disciple group - but not a long term or institutionalised form of membership. Commitment of a high level was expected by the Disciple course and was achieved, but in my research it was not the long term active membership sought by the church.

35 ‘Membership’ has a strong history of use in Methodism, being ‘institutionalized’ through the use of a membership card. It has a strong Biblical background. Its non-use is therefore particularly striking.

36 Reinforced particularly by the emphasis on distinctive individual gifting in the pivotal Session 33 of the Disciple course. The questions were heard as being ‘what do I distinctively bring to the church?’ not ‘what does the church need from me?’
new subjectivity, but it is the group that sustains individual self-discipline. Any wider authority relation appears to be with Jesus who is identified in the metaphor as the one who called the first disciples and calls disciples today. The Bible functions in some measure as his ‘voice’ today.

Discipleship is seen as a vocation. Such is the nature of the metaphor. The course sets out deliberately to identify and nurture individual refinements of that primary vocation. These find their location in the life of the local church. This is the express intention. The extent to which local churches are open to the aspirations of those who feel themselves called and how far they are able to endorse the vocational discernment of the course is open to question. Vocational discernment is already a highly contested area, with strong evidence provided by the extent of the ‘safeguards’ in selection and training for the central institutional callings of Local Preacher or Minister.

However there was little evidence in the data of tension in the wider church arising from this process. While the weight of discernment in so far as it was talked about in the data tended to address individual’s gifts it was done with the sense that the church would be the ultimate beneficiary, the church is to be transformed too.

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37 I would argue that this is a further reflection of the resistance to institution, and that authority is located in the group and with the individual and the individual interpretation of notions of Bible and Jesus.

38 There was no evidence of confrontation over discernment of the preaching and ministerial gifts, which is partly the result of such gifts being in such urgent demand, partly the way in which local leadership from minister or others is already embedded in the local institution, and partly the culture of Methodism that has always been open to developing senses of vocation. In other words so long as the local church is affirmed institutionally there is not an issue. The current discussions around the status of ‘Worship Leaders’ indicate the limits of such welcome however. There was strong evidence noted above that Disciple has been significant in nurturing vocations to Local preaching and Ordination in ways that support established processes of selection and training.
At this point it is possible to note a relationship between educational method, epistemological resource and the individual search for a new subjectivity. The group creates, tacitly but intentionally, a simulation of the perceived experience of New Testament disciples with their teacher. This mimetic approach offers a powerful learning opportunity. The Bible has a key role. It is used to provide the narrative that sets the scene, charts patterns of discipleship, the vocabulary, and from the New Testament view of church delineate the vocations thereby providing a perceived legitimization of the process. Disciple provides new knowledge of the content and context of Biblical material, enabling coherent, acceptable and reliable narratives to emerge, tacitly reinforcing the legitimization. Much knowledge as described in the data has the feel of information that reinforces the narratives. The narratives are felt by participants to be from a territory of narrative that has been inhibited and blocked by previous use in a hortatory context. The hauntological quality of Biblical material gives a positive sense of discovering more fully what is already known. The narratives become something to which people can belong.

In this way a new subjectivity is shaped. The individual can see and feel their worth in the vocation offered by the complex narrative and in the recognition accorded by the group and eventually by the wider church. In the inclusive experience of belonging to a shared narrative individual, and group, transformation (which is essentially a transformation of subjectivity) can take place.\(^{39}\) The contested nature of such a process

\(^{39}\) 'A fallacy that people left to their own devices find their own ministries' ... 'people identify their gifts and want to use them in the church.' Interviews 2 &10: Disciple. There is strong anecdotal evidence, albeit of sources from within the Disciple stable of the impact of groups and individuals on the life of the churches to which they belong.
did not appear in the data to be acute, probably for reasons concerned with institutional decline discussed elsewhere. However it raises significant issues for adult Christian education and for leadership and control in the church.

Belonging to the Disciple narrative sets its participants over against other narratives, whether these are the narratives of other individuals within the church, the prevailing institutional narrative of membership or the narratives of wider society. As such it can be highly contesting. Where does the new subjectivity of belonging actually belong? What are the roots of the subjectivity? How do they relate to the church, to Jesus, to the Bible or to the group in which they have been nurtured?

The group process in the context of the local church can also become contested. When the institution and its ideology is weak the individual has the mental, physical and cultural power to walk away. The group structure can constrain this and nurture a sense of commitment. However, assertive groups in the church can add to the threat, whether they are committed to the congregational project or not. There was evidence pointing both ways at this point. Some found in the Disciple project a movement towards a new subjectivity that could only be fully realized in the context of the institution of church be

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40 Had the opportunity been available to interview church members who had not participated in Disciple there might have been such evidence. Unfortunately that aspect of research was beyond the scope of this thesis.
it local or Connexional. For others the group experience provided a sufficient new subjectivity in itself.41

2. Adult Christian Education

The data make clear the significance of the educational experience offered by the course as a source of individual identity and esteem and so of the movement to a new subjectivity. Furthermore there is powerful evidence of the confidence developed by those who have discovered they are capable learners in the face of negative childhood and adolescent school experiences. There is very clear evidence that the opportunity to learn was welcomed.42 Learning becomes an attractive prospect for such people where it is seen by them to be a manageable task, where there are clear directions and recognition involved.43 Where it responds to the ‘itch’ of a hauntology produced by the Bible so much the better.

The control issue that emerged in Chapter One around the question of programmed learning is directly addressed here. There is evidence in the data that those who have had bad educational experiences in childhood, adolescence or at some earlier point in adult life, or those who have felt marginalized in church life by the expertise of the theological expert44 can successfully find their way back into learning through Disciple as

41 The skills of fellowship within Methodist culture have already been noted. There is a strong ecclesiology of groups active in the church, and so long as there is the appearance of unity in worship they are not generally counted as a threat.
42 E.g. Interview 13: Disciple
43 E.g. Interview 3 &13: Disciple
44 As suggested by the antipathy to the academic, Interviews 3, 4, 5 &12: Disciple
Disciple provides a set of clear guidelines and simple instructions and tasks that with the group discipline breed effective learning habits. As a result participants find a new confidence in their ability to learn. This is supported by a learning context that is able to give space for questions. It does so by encouraging questions with the pastoral sensitivity of 'never making (participants) feel inadequate', and by being strong enough organizationally so that the disruptive potential from questions and ideas can be heard and contained.

These patterns are reinforced with the presentation of certificates and the language of graduation that affirms the sense of the subject's learning achievement. The video resources that are used as part of the course material, featuring figures from national church leadership and academia offer a level of scholarship that commands respect. Such material worked both to reassure those who did not participate in the course and to shift power away from local sources. Because such weighty and respected material is shared in the intimacy of the group context it generates a sense of ownership. In this way confidence both in the credibility of the learning process and the individual's ability to participate in it are built up.

Disciple, like Alpha and other ostensibly educational courses that aim for transformative results for the institution as well as the individual has strong prescriptive controls attached to it. The course is only available to those leaders who have undertaken the

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45 Even a brief look at the introductory booklet indicates that pages 9-24 are devoted to issues about the running of the course, how it should be set up, what sort of refreshments are recommended at the session, the importance of sorting out the video recorder, what sort of people should be invited and who should not.
residential training course. The thinking behind the control is significant and opens an area of clear contestation. The producers have suffered at the hands of those who simply want a bit of study material to pass a pleasant evening, or who from a more liberal pedagogical approach see the material as useful for reflection but in no way prescriptive. They do everything they can to develop a much more purposeful project with clear controls. Leader training, teachers’ handbook and cost are all rigorously detailed - hence the attempt to safeguard the process by tight controls on educational method.

When, however, does control become manipulation? Special concerns surround adult Christian education as part of the whole spiritual endeavour that has displayed such an array of potentially powerful methods for the control of people’s ideas and actions. The positive ‘adult’ aspect of the education Disciple offers is to be seen in the motivation to study, especially if opportunities have been missed. However, the adult’s resources of experience are significant not in being used as for reflection in itself but in enabling an understanding of the relevance of the content. The contested area here is methodology. In what sense is it genuinely adult? Or to couch the question in other terms, what does the success of Disciple’s methodology show about the relation between training and learning for adults?

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46 Interview 1: Disciple. An experienced group leader and Local Preacher was alone in my data in suggesting a possible manipulation dynamic in the course. It is likely that it could be there but for various reasons, not least gathering data from enthusiasts, it may not appear so strongly as in other courses people had participated in.

47 Foucault’s ‘pastoral power’, my proposed ‘hortatory power’, and charismatic and fundamentalist ideologies.
The Bible has a highly significant role. With its accessibility, its familiarity produced by its hauntology, its status in the area of the spiritual, its purposefulness within the context and its narrative resources it is used by individuals and institutions as a gateway to this learning experience and of legitimation of that experience and the knowledge encountered. It gives the knowledge authenticity.  

There is of course an adult educational problem for the Bible. The data suggest that the ageing individual as part of a maturing process has rejected the Bible. As has been argued, the way it is used in sermons, liturgy, at Sunday school and as a resource for children’s stories is at the root of rejection. The adult educational impact of such practices is highly contested. Their rejection by the maturing individual has resulted in the diminution of the complex narrative and all its potential for adult subjectivity. Disciple appears to provide a way to recover that resource.

There is something of an irony, and one that the evidence would suggest the leaders of the Disciple project would be happy with, the programmed control clearly succeeded in providing greater access to the Bible for participants. There was more enthusiasm for reading it, a greater awareness of its complexities and a strong sense of its potential for providing a sustaining and creative life narrative. The controlled educational process

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48 Crucially, the Bible has Scriptural status in a faith community and Book status in a culture that values learning at the same time that it is suspicious of it.

49 For example, the move from a literalist approach to miracles to a different understanding with maturity (Interview 4: Disciple), reflecting the impact of the scientific worldview of contemporary education. The inability of the church at a number of levels to respond to the scientific world-view and other cultural changes results in the failure to open up narrative possibilities for the adult. The interviewees made it clear that the sermon was not considered to be a teaching form (Interviews 10 & 11: Disciple).
resulted in a release of the understanding of the Bible’s epistemological resources and the liberation of the subject as learner. So, Disciple makes possible not only the recovery of the Bible but of the learning for a new subjectivity.

When the stated goal of such culturally powerful resources as education and Bible includes terms like ‘transformation’ with its implied impact on the individual, and ‘renewal’ with its implications for shifts of power within the institution of the church control can become a highly contested area. As noted, Disciple, at the overtly ‘political’ points appears to avoid this. However that does not mean there is no contest. Bible and educational process alike, both contested areas in their own ways, are part of a project that enables adults to affirm or to find a new subjectivity. Yet where is this subjectivity ultimately to be found, in the group experience of belonging or in the knowing the Bible makes possible? Is subjectivity a question of ‘fellowship’ or of epistemology?

The question is hard to answer, because processes of knowing – about a particular complex narrative – contribute to belonging, and of course the social experience of group powerfully facilitates learning. In Disciple, the Bible contributes to both, through providing a common motivation for group learning activity and in providing knowledge resources for a narrative of belonging.

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30 The Bible ‘a book we have been denied by the church’, it offers ‘God rather than church doctrine... and is likely to be especially attractive to the Missing Generation....’ (Interview 11:Disciple)
3. Leadership: Learning and Renewal

The Biblical and the adult Christian educational exercise that is Disciple aims to provide leaders for the church, and this is a direction significant numbers of participants in the course have taken. Their distinctive new or renewed knowledge and the group experience that reinforces it are powerful aspects of the adult educational dynamic that is seen by the course designers as a way to renew the church. Education and the knowledge it brings are not ends in themselves, but can be understood as a strategy to resource leadership and so bring transformation. There is concern, as in the data for the Whitby, over how the new knowledge might best be taken into the setting of the local church.

Disciple sees learning of the Bible as the path to leadership. This can command respect from a congregation and a current leadership often sensitive about their own shortcomings in that area. There may be considerable shortcomings in other areas of leadership skills, but Disciple does not appear to address those. The scene could be set for confrontation but there is no real evidence of it either in my data or in the general experience of the church. Leadership in the local church would be a contested area. The coming into existence of groups with a strong life of their own and an agenda that bears directly on renewal and change can be seen as a threat to the equilibrium. The fact that such groups can often attract those attempting to move beyond the status quo is an
additional threat. In part this has to do with factors already noted. It also signals the weakness of the institution where a leadership and ideological crisis appears to offer no alternative to the particular Biblical learning resource and no quarrel with its legitimacy.

That the leadership of Biblical learning that Disciple aims to provide is not contested in the church, and feeds apparently seamlessly into institutional leadership patterns is not the end of the story. There are contested issues that arise from Disciple’s intention and methods. It reflects the intention of the course’s purveyors and the engagement with its participants over the issue of leadership. Disciple operates a two-stage strategy. It sets out to facilitate the local educational leadership to enable the learning resources of the Bible to produce new leaders in a way that can then directly impact on the wider leadership of the church.

The problem arises because the data suggest that while leaders/facilitators work with the group as a means to an end (of transformation and discernment of vocation for the local church) many of the participants value the group process in its own right, and seem unaware of and unconcerned with a wider agenda. They are clearly moved on by the group process in areas of individual subjectivity. This is facilitated by the development of relationships of friendship and trust that enable them to discuss and reflect on their

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31 The data I gathered showed some evidence of that problem. Had there been time to interview members of congregations who had not participated in Disciple, more might have been produced. However, the leadership given by ministers, the sensitivity exercised by Disciple group members, the emphases within the course content, and the acute need in a declining church for leadership from whatever source worked to reduce the strength of contest in this area. At the national level the situation is more complex. For Disciple the leadership of MPH has provided the course for the Methodist Church. There was clear initial difficulty with the Connexional Team. The reasons appear to relate to approaches to adult education and the relatively highly programmed nature of the course and consequent control of the material. The details of the relation between MPH and the Connexion are beyond the scope of this thesis.
views and to reflect on and widen their life experience. They are not necessarily moved on into institutional leadership. Some are and this is to be valued, but even where they are the data suggest, is it fundamentally a way of locating subjectivity in an extended group setting. This can be seen in contrast to the genuine acceptance of the need for institutional renewal and its wider agenda of God’s mission for which the originators of Disciple are so clearly aiming.

The individual subjects, driven by the sense that learning facilitates subjectivity, are using a learning resource for their own ends. These can coincide at some points with the intentions of the course, and this can provide evidence for the success of the project. However my data suggest the Bible and adult Christian education as embodied in Disciple are being used fundamentally neither for leadership nor renewal in the institution but for the location of new individual subjectivities. Despite the determined attempt to produce a programmed training resource the overwhelming needs of the search for subjectivity triumph.

Analysis of power relations:
As with the data of the Word at Whitby, a brief look through the lens of Foucault’s suggested pattern for analyzing power relations will serve to focus the material and facilitate an examination of the polarities.
System of Differentiations

At root the system of differentiation identifies those who are part of the group from those who are not. The high mimetic style reinforces this approach. While it is differential, it is not a contested area as there was little evidence of Disciple groups appearing exclusive to the rest of the local church. The vocational impetus meant a differential of responsibility was operating. Again the evidence suggests that this was welcomed in a church all too short of leadership resources. The distinction between participant and non-participant had some significance and the participants felt a before and after differential within themselves, that no doubt could be projected on to other church members that had to do with greater understanding. Above all, the differential was about the level of awareness belonging to the greater narrative of God’s engagement with a chosen and called people. The implicit differential that was nowhere explicit in the data is between faithful and less faithful in the church and between disciples and the ‘world’. In epistemological terms, as with Whitby, narrative is dominant, but in a different way. It becomes a sort of loosely prescriptive creed, and the traditional knowledge belonging to the church is morecomfortably accepted as a result.

Types of Objectives

The strong sense of belonging points towards the subject as one who belongs. There is plenty of evidence of the strong affirmation of the individual. Challenge to change takes second place to the development of individual potential. The objective of making the Bible available to legitimize this development is at the heart of the course. The strong sense of the creation of a community that imitates a Biblical paradigm and generates that
experience is an objective on the way to the transformation of the institutional church, particularly at local level.

**Instrumental Modes**

Small group membership; the organized, programmed, training course; the added authority of national church leaders accessed through the video material and the strong central control through leaders' training and limiting access to materials are the ways that Disciple operates. Creating the sense of belonging is achieved in no small measure by the demand for commitment to a high level of time and work.

**Forms of institutionalization**

The small group of the Disciple course with its strong sense of mutual discipline has echoes of the Methodist heritage of the 'class system' that was a great strength of the denomination and reflected what Foucault describes as 'disciplinary power'. The ecclesial practice that developed from such a pattern remains in many of the church structures and is therefore echoed and reinforced by Disciple. From an entirely different direction, but again with echoes of traditional Methodist valuing of academic achievement is the language of accreditation and graduation that is part of the course and finds expression in the presentation and honoring of certificates in the local church. The organizational structure associated with MPH brings with it a sense of educational integrity and denominational or institutional approval. A common challenge that comes with institutional territory is the repetition of the course and learning experience that has produced 'Disciple 2'. It may even count as a failure of the course that a major result of
its activity is not the transformation of individuals and church leadership, but the creation of a cadre of learners.

**Degrees of Rationalization**

The Discipleship discourse as noted elsewhere in this thesis offers a powerful and popular rationale legitimating learning activity and pointing it towards leadership. The model springs from the heart of the Gospels and Jesus’ most intimate relationships. There is a strong sense that the course sets out to recreate that experience for its participants. As such the Bible again offers powerful legitimation. The Bible not only offers a rationalization of the relationship, it does the same for teaching method and for the content of that teaching. The disciplined training aspect of discipleship is at the heart of the discourse. The ‘transformed for leadership’ aspect is more in the aspiration of the course originators, and it may be that while the subject locates as learner, the notion of trainee is less powerful. Except, as has been noted above when the vocational rationalization is offered and the individual finds identity in church leadership roles. The rationalization that goes with the course therefore has a high estimate of the role of the institutional church. The church is seen as the instrument of the mission of God and this reflects directly the rationalization current in a church struggling to assert purpose in the face of decline.

**The Polarities**

Some reflection on this analysis in the light of the polarities concludes the chapter.
Individual/Institution

‘...the purpose of DISCIPLE is to develop strong Christian leaders ...’ and the statement continues to remind us of the chosen method, ‘...through regular in-depth study of Scripture.’ Disciple aims for institutional impact and is committed to the project of the church. The course is about transforming members for the service of God and church, but especially church, and it is provided on behalf of the church. However as has been shown the social pleasure and therefore motivation of learning and learning as a bonding exercise is strongly evidenced by the interviews. While there are clear institutional benefits, the data suggest that the central thrust of the Disciple project is a learning concerned with the identification of a new individual subjectivity. The individual pole, after all, is dominant. The individual uses the institutionally provided resource. There is some payback in terms of increased and potentially renewed leadership resources. Fundamentally however, the momentum is with the participant as subject and seeking further subjectivity through learning.

Equilibrium/Utopia

To an institution in decline, equilibrium may be its utopia. In the face of irresistible change and subjective challenge equilibrium is the desired utopian outcome. The sort of individual utopian impulse that issues in participation in the institution through such established and controlled channels as Local Preaching and ordained ministry is welcomed because it sustains equilibrium, even if features of the individual utopia are

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\[52\] An Introduction to Disciple: p.4. See note 1 above.
undesirable. Disciple’s utopian acceptance of current institutional structures makes it non-contentious. So, the utopia/equilibrium pole is interestingly engaged. The search for individual utopia is clear in the enthusiasm to learn and to change. The ‘Gifts’ session in week 33 has a strong utopian element, though its intention is institutional.

Learning is a tool of the utopian impulse to search for equilibrium. Establishing the group and giving it such power and continuity is about a search for equilibrium. The Bible content – the timeless teaching of Jesus and the ‘people like us’ approach to the OT both indicate equilibrium at the cost of what is perceived in the data as the institutional utopianism of Paul.

Despite its programmed style, Disciple recognizes openness as part of the utopian aspiration of its aims. This might potentially constitute a threat to contemporary Methodism, except that within its culture, openness is equilibrium. Given the strength of Disciple’s commitment to the institution and the way that is compromised by such a liberal style of openness there may be a suggestion of how one liberal utopian impulse compromises another more conservative approach. Assertion of institution in the way that Disciple’s literature suggests may well be described as utopian; what was found in the groups was an individual equilibrium containing (and rejecting) institutional utopianism. Again, the equilibrium pole is dominant. Except of course that what appears from the analysis to be truly dominant is the pole of the individual utopia of a new subjectivity.
**Inspiration/Training**

In order to access the possibility of inclusion in complex narrative, it is essential to develop as clear an understanding as possible of the scope and content of the narrative. Disciple makes Bible and narrative accessible to participants through a dedicated training approach to learning. Learning with its cognitive rewards is the way forward and the discipline of the group supports it. Disciple aims at the long-term habits of training and by its attempts at control appears to encourage a resistance to the short-term character of inspiration. The Training pole is strongly dominant although the Inspiration pole remains evident and important. The data show that the material is judged to have inspirational quality and this is of profound importance in a learning culture where the inspirational motivation is tacitly imperative.

The learning issues opened up by this polarity are interestingly engaged over the issue of where the distinctive mimetic style of Disciple is located. It would appear to be an essential component of the discipline of Training yet the importance of its appeal to emotions and relationships argue for the Inspirational pole.

**Authority/Authenticity**

Narrative in the way it works in the Disciple data at the Book pole generates authenticity not authority. There is a clear sense of ownership of the learning process by students. The programmed style of the material encourages that and works against the emergence of a strong group leader offering an authority model.
The retreat from authority to authenticity can be seen in the way that Bible as ‘rule book’ or as controlling authority has been rejected.53

Subjectivity is found in authenticity provided by narrative not by institutional structures. Where any subjectivity is offered by an institutionally vocational role, the subject is still the focus and the coincidence a happy one for the institution.

Again, lurking in the background of this polarity is the tension between the course itself that appears to aim for a restoration of a measure of Biblical authority and the way the material is used by participants to provide materials for an authentic individual life-narrative.

**Book/Scripture**

As canon the Bible was ‘formed as it is in order for God to speak to us.’ Group members are called on to ‘submit to examination by Scripture, to put themselves under God’s word and to be changed by that word’ (Disciple 1996 p.6). At this point in a sort of concession to a more experiential style of adult education, it is stated that Disciple invites people to ‘bring their experiences and struggles to Scripture…’ In its intention, the Scriptural pole is dominant for Disciple. Once again however if we look at what the users do with the course a different picture emerges. Scripture offers ‘authority’, but this is interpreted by users as authenticity, and moves towards the Book pole with its less strident authority style. Given that in the contemporary context Scripture’s ideological

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53 For example the dislike of Paul who is perceived as institutionally focused to Jesus perceived as friend and ‘master’. See above note 28.
Territory has shrunk to worship where hortatory styles have been experienced as most powerful and alienating, and does not extend to other areas of church life – Book represents the key resource for epistemological defence and apologetic. The Bible approached as Book enables the exploration of what has not survived in the hortatory or oral/aural contexts of Scripture. There is however significant cost. As Book it now stands together with other books and allows of no special exemption from investigation. Curiously it appears with the success of Disciple that the project is pulling itself up by its own ideological bootstraps by a blurring of the polarity. It cannot last. The tension between Scripture and Book and the implicit pedagogical methods will prove too hard to sustain.

The success is the result of an aspect of the haunting quality of the Bible. The fact that there has been so little coherence between child and adult in Christian education has left a chasm that has to be crossed. Disciple uses the Book pole to do so. As Scripture, the Bible would not be picked up at all but for the ‘hauntology’.

Conclusions
There are potentially some key epistemological and educational issues here. In the current context knowledge needs to be authentic rather than authoritative if it is to respond to the individual search for a new subjectivity. This search is a feature of the data emerging from Disciple. It is too soon to generalize it beyond the church context.
However, within the church there is considerable significance for my question about the use of the Bible. There is a distinctive impact on educational methods and motives.

Essentially it appears that in the case of weak institutional ideology the individual has more power. The individual has to be persuaded to volunteer to support the institution. A key sales point has obviously been ‘learning’. Another has been the Bible. The group experience has been a hidden bonus. Education is the institutional response to the weakness of its culture/ideology and the only way to engage individuals. Of course education undermines hortatory power. The form of ‘book-piety’ that lies behind the proposed methods of Disciple is highly conservative with an essentially ‘defensive’ epistemology. In the hands of the participants however, Book study undermines Scripture. Utopia and Equilibrium are confused. When poles are confused the tensions that should be creative collapse and the projects become illusory.

The ubiquity of evidence about the importance of the group raises the question of the mimetic as a key educational technique in the course. It can have positive results, but for an institution that is failing it may also have dangers. Imitation may establish the habits that in turn establish the culture, but it may stay locked in the small world of the group, to the further detriment of the institution, and the further frustration of the educators as the learners turn the resource to their own subjective ends.
CHAPTER EIGHT

NARRATIVE AND BELONGING

The Disciple case study shows people using the Bible in a way that I have described as Narrative Use. The term suggested itself on the basis of the engagement with biblical stories and characters that was in evidence, and it was recognized that the narrative was complex and therefore included other literary elements than simply narrative. Teachers and especially learners were alike in their expression of preference for this method of use as one that they found accessible and effective in meeting their needs.

It is hardly surprising that such a use should emerge. It reflects what has been argued to be the nature of the Bible itself and the continuing Christian tradition. Weinrich writes,

"The most important texts, the ones most relevant to religion are stories... We too became part of an unbroken tradition of storytelling. Christianity is a community of storytellers." ¹

Quoted in Ricoeur 1995 p.241

Such an insight reflects the concerns of this chapter. Weinrich is writing in the context of an exploration of narrative theology. That is not my area of concern. I need to focus more on the use of the ‘tradition of storytelling’ that the narrative nature of Biblical stories has generated, and explore its operation in the adult Christian education context.²

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¹ Frei too sees narrative as dominant in Biblical literature and in the early shaping of its interpretation.

² Such a note of caution is essential. Using my term ‘Narrative Use’ risks a blurring of definition. It is tempting to simply gather references to narrative and assume that meaning is consistent. Given the different ‘fields’ from which I will be drawing insight, the danger of confusion is one to which I must be alert.
Narrative Use lends itself particularly to, and is therefore highly significant for, the development and support of ‘local’ knowledge. In such circumstances, as my data suggest, there is no coherent theoretical basis to be found, although the ‘hortatory trick’ of giving glimpses and hints of theory is in evidence. In this chapter I aim to explore aspects of the theoretical basis that is available for an understanding of the local features of this use and raise questions about its educational use.

To do so I will rely heavily on the writings of Ricoeur who has uniquely explored the issues I wish to address from both a critical philosophical and theological point of view. He has not addressed the issues educationally, although as I will argue, his exploration of interpretation of text offers a clear parallel to an educational approach to the Bible.

In this chapter I will examine:

- Narrative Context
- Narrative: Interpretation and Education (Figuration, Reflection and the Learning Cycle)
- History Fiction and the Creative Imagination
- Narrative Experience and the ‘Christian Pattern’
- Can the Narrative Use approach be sustained in terms of adult education?
- Can the Narrative Use approach be sustained in terms of ‘Christian’ education?
- Narrative and Belonging
- Local Knowledge
Narrative Context

Writers such as Taylor (1989 p.50ff.) and MacIntyre (1984 p.192) make clear the significance of narrative activity for understanding and shaping human life. The power of the emplotment process that lies at the heart of the art of narrative as a way of understanding, making sense and legitimizing knowledge is evident from my data. It works at different intellectual levels, although it has to be recognized that the epistemological legitimacy of story raises many questions amongst its users. Narrative and story can be powerful within the church and through hauntology beyond. However, in terms of apologetic, narrative has not yet been effective engaging ideologically with the scientific worldview, not least because of the strong association of story with fiction, an issue that will be discussed below. Such issues are beyond the scope of this thesis, although they obviously bear heavily upon my themes not least as has been noted above in the work of Lyotard.

As I raise the educational question, it is Ricoeur who sets the scene, quoting Benjamin who points out that ‘the art of storytelling is the art of exchanging experiences’. It is narrative, argues Ricoeur, that makes possible the exchange of experiences and their processing in the development and revision through time of the individual. ‘The identity
of the story makes the identity of the character', and does so through a process of engagement, of imaginative variations, to which narrative submits identity. For Ricoeur this is the case through the engagement of a reader with the narrative text. So in Bible study of the sort I have investigated, each individual through reading and through the various engagements provided by study methods, is drawn into the community of storytelling and involved in the possibility of emplotment, building their own narration to make sense of themselves and their world. In this context narrative offers concordant (reassuring) and discordant (challenging) opportunities, including and excluding possibilities and the creative variation of retelling in order to include or exclude, to offer approval or disapproval, praise or blame that is such a value to the Bible student. Ricoeur notes that the experiences being dealt with in this way are 'not scientific observation, but the popular exercise of practical wisdom' (Ricoeur 1992 p.148, 164)

A range of issues opens up that need clarification.

Narrative: Interpretation and Education – Figuration, Reflection and the Learning Cycle.

Given such a presence, nature and role for narrative I need to explore its use educationally. My argument is that the processes of interpretation employed in the engagement with narrative texts by the reader and as interpreted from their different perspectives by Frei and Ricoeur are closely parallel to those of the educational project. In his introduction to Ricoeur's literary critical work, Valdes explores the notion of
'interpretive reading' and explains that 'the term 'interpretation' may be applied, not to a particular case of understanding, that of the written expression of life, but to the whole process that encompasses explanation and understanding' (Valdes 1991 p.10).

In his investigation of the 'eclipse of Biblical narrative', Frei establishes his argument with an important description of the figuration method that emerged early in the interpretive history of Biblical narrative. The literal reading of the Bible meant that the events referred to and described were understood as actual historical occurrences. A narrative impulse was at work in understanding such material. 'If the real world described by several Bible stories is one world of one temporal sequence, there must be one cumulative story to depict it' (Frei 1978 p.3). The process at once literary and historical by which this was achieved was a means of weaving the stories together into 'a common narrative referring to a single history and its patterns of meaning' (Frei 1978 p.3). Frei calls this process figuration. The world 'truly rendered by combining Biblical narratives into one was indeed the one and only real world'. So, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader.

Not only was it possible for him, it was also his duty to fit himself into that world in which he was in any case a member, and he did so in part by figural interpretation and in part of course by his mode of life.

Frei 1978 p.3

Power issues around the shaping and asserting of ideology are clearly raised.

Frei continues,

Figuration made sense of the general extra-biblical structure of human experience, of one's own experience, as well as of general concepts of good and evil drawn from experience. The point is that such experiences, events, concepts were all ranged figurally into the smaller as well as the overarching story. Biblical interpretation became an imperative need, but
its direction was that of incorporating extra-biblical thought, experience and reality into the one real world detailed and made accessible by the Biblical story – not the reverse... In the process of interpretation the story itself, constantly adapted to new situations and ways of thinking, underwent constant revision; but in steadily revised form it still remained the adequate depiction of the common and inclusive world until the coming of modernity.

Frei 1978 p.3

I have quoted Frei at length because it seems to me that he entirely accurately describes the process that lies behind my Narrative Use. However there are some distinctions to be made. The coming of modernity shifted the hegemonic prevailing paradigm away from the Biblical one described by Frei to the rational-scientific. The ‘real’ world was located in a different place. As Frei himself makes clear, the narrative paradigm was eclipsed. Its stories now had to be interpreted for meaning as one means of fitting them into the real world of science and reason. Hence the emergence of historical critical hermeneutics. To maintain any measure of credibility in the new hegemony, to be able to speak to the new worldview, such hermeneutic process offered the only way forward. Narrative may have been eclipsed, but not always, I would argue, locally, where the figurative method lingered powerfully on in many biblically shaped Christian ideologies and in the ways that Bible readers and students still handle biblical narratives.3

It is not the original primitive figurative process that can be detected in use today. Once again, locally, the playground metaphor is apt. A type of figuration is in use as a method of interpretation and education, but it is operating in the modernist hegemony and is

3 For instance the way that Scholes and Kellogg 1968 p165-6 explore the notion of the distinctiveness of the flawed and developing Biblical hero. They suggest that the concept of the character who changes inwardly is quite a late arrival in literature. ‘That allows an opaqueness in characterization that functions for the modern reader as a kind of understatement, producing an ironic tension between the cool narrative tone and the violence which the reader imagines within the mind of the character.’
necessarily different. For instance, the attempt to ‘make meaning’, so clear in my Whitby data, is a symptom of that situation. The meaning attempted is one that is acceptable to the individual, their values and experience in a way that can somehow straddle or embrace the world of narrative faith and the world of scientific liberal humanism to make sense of the material studied.

The emergence of biblical narrative from its eclipse that reflects the postmodern paradigm and the rise of the human sciences offers opportunities for the effective use of narrative educationally. It would be tempting to suggest that is what can be seen in the Disciple data, although I would be reluctant to go that far. What is to be seen I would argue is rather the intuition of a possible return to a narrative paradigm in epistemology that will have its consequences educationally. In the Narrative Use that I have suggested, there is as much of the local harking back to ghosts of a lost world as of moving forward to a fuller understanding of the possibilities of narrative epistemology.

Ricoeur suggests its possibilities and legitimacy. It is helpful to discuss his approach for two reasons. Firstly because his analysis of the reading and interpreting process is so close to education, a part of the learning process, that reflects a pattern that Bible users have been following at an intuitive level. Secondly because his analysis helps to raise issues about the legitimacy of the process in terms eventually of education and epistemology.
Ricoeur has special significance for my argument because he explores the processes of engagement with text and the links between those processes and narrative processes. He also explores the application of such processes to the Bible, although I find his argument less convincing at that point.

For Ricoeur an understanding of the text is arrived at by the interpretive process achieved by the reader. It has a threefold basis, expressed slightly differently at different points in his writings. Building on the notion of figuration, he traces the process of a préfiguration that provides a basis for the configurating activity of the reader or interpreter and the resulting refiguration or transfiguration (Valdes 1991 p.137ff.). Such a process is based on the way Ricoeur develops insights into the notion of mimesis from Auerbach and Aristotle in a threefold way that exactly parallels the figuration process. In his discussion of the links between the activity of emplotment and the imitation of an action (that for my purposes makes the link between narrative and the imitative exploration of praxis that was evident in my data) Ricoeur suggests that his ‘pivot term’ mimesis2 ‘opens up the world of fiction’ and in engagement with the text, transfigures the one side into the other by its configurating power. This mimesis2 consists in the process of ‘comprehending of narrative configurations’, and Ricoeur notes three aspects of this ordering comprehension that draw out its narrative power.

Firstly it draws an intelligible story from various events and incidents and makes them into a story that organizes them into an intelligible whole. Secondly, ‘emplotment brings together such heterogeneous factors as circumstances, agents, interactions, ends, means,
and unintended results' to produce a 'synthetic comprehension' by which 'human beings make their history in circumstances they themselves have not made... and with results they had not intended.' Thirdly, emplotment brings together the interminable succession of the story’s incidents, and, in an act of 'narrative configuration' the integration, culmination and closure of these incidents. Such configurating act demonstrates a process of 'creative imitation' that should be ascribed to the productive imagination.  

Ricoeur writes, 'The art of narrating as well as the corresponding art of following a story, therefore require that we are able to extract a configuration from a succession.' In this configurational operation, narrative combines sequences and configurations.

"Every narrative can be conceived in terms of the competition between its episodic dimension and its configurational dimension, between sequence and figure. This configurational dimension ‘paves the way for investigation of meaningful totalities.

Ricoeur 1981 p.278

At this point we begin to see two things. The role of narrative in the educational process is becoming clear, certainly in so far as that process is seen as transformative and liberative. There is a strongly individual feel about a process that is focussed on the reader in action. However, ideological production may well rest in some significant degree, both in process and in legitimation, on narrative resources. This is clearly the case in terms of the church culture with which I am engaged, and arguably less so in terms of the scientific worldview although Lyotard suggests that there are narrative foundations there too. Secondly there are links with the Communication Use that I will

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4 'By means of the plot, goals, causes and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action' (Ricoeur in Valdes 1991 p.138). 'The semantic innovation of narrative lies in the invention of synthesis,' (Ricoeur 1984 p.ix)
explore in the next chapter. That Use has clear links with the narrative process that I am investigating here. It is based in it, but has moved on under the impact of various ideological movements that will need to be discussed below.

The notion of préfiguration is important at this point, founded on the link with the symbolic communication that makes culture and tradition and that in turn shape the present of the reader or interpreter. Ricoeur himself in this context explores the notion of tradition in terms of a dialectic of sedimentation and innovation making creative development possible and appropriate through configuration processes. The notion of hauntology that I have borrowed from Derrida recognizes the sedimentation within tradition that has, perhaps like narrative, suffered eclipse, but nonetheless retains a dynamism, particularly locally. It is what happens to tradition when it has dropped from consciousness, but still persists tacitly, offering unacknowledged innovative resources as well as unrecognized cultural inhibitors to the configuring process. The consequences of certain aspects of such a prefiguring process will be developed in the next chapter in terms of what the learner meets as 'other' in the educational process. The notion of the 'other' encountered as the haunting of sedimented tradition will be explored.

It is the act of reading that enables the process of figuration. The reader is both interpreter and learner, and the process is part of the narrative encounter epistemologically. In terms of the Bible reader and learner, given the accessibility to the text and the ferocity of potential power games, the epistemological and educational consequences are considerable.
It is helpful to note what Ricoeur understands of the nature of reading and the way that narrative keys into the process of the reading act. Such insights give a clear theoretical basis for the Narrative Use although as I have noted they are not articulated so much as intuitive. Ricoeur's understanding of the process can help us to see the dynamics of the Bible use, although they are essentially tacit for the students. The identity of the reading, interpretive and learning acts will also be able to be investigated.

Ricoeur states that:

> It is the reader – or rather the act of reading – that in the final analysis is the unique operator of the unceasing passage...from a prefigured world to a transfigured world through the mediation of a configured world. The fulfillment of writing in reading is understandable only if we articulate the act of reading on the basis of the structuring act of emplotment....

Ricoeur in Valdes 1991 p.131

The significance of such an approach cannot be underestimated when the text at issue is the Bible, with its complexity of origin and use and its ideological history power and potential.

Ricoeur argues for the dynamic of 'distanciation-appropriation' in understanding the operation of any text.

In my view, the text is much more than a particular case of intersubjective communication: it is the paradigm of distanciation in communication. As such, it develops a fundamental characteristic of the very historicity of human experience, namely that it is communication in and through distance.

Ricoeur 1981 p.131
Valdes makes the link with appropriation.

The initial dialectic between text and reader is the one of the conflict between the distance and difference proper to another’s text and the appropriation – the need to make sense - belonging to the reader.

Valdes 1991 p.17-18

The issue of distanciation raises an interesting issue. There is a strong sense in my data that ‘appropriation’ is not an issue. That (or something very like it) is after all the purpose of engagement with the Bible. The problem with the Narrative Use as seen in action may lay in the failure to properly engage with the nature of the distanciation in the nature of text. That is a key part of Ricoeur’s argument, particularly in what follows below. To fail to recognize the distanciating impact of text is to return to something like the figurating process that Frei describes as suffering eclipse. If that is the case, the reasons for eclipse are not being engaged with so much as ignored. The consequence and danger is that the Narrative Use is essentially and perhaps willfully anachronistic. While it may offer a path forward for adult Christian education in a postmodern culture, it may as easily represent a retreat from contemporary culture determined by the local exercise of hortatory power.

The nature of the configurational process that is in the hands of the reader raises the question of the relation between the empirical and the fictional and their uses. This is of special concern to me because though nowhere articulated as such in my data, there was the clear impression that the problem with engaging narratively in a way that was legitimate was raised by the ‘only stories’ and therefore essentially fictional nature of the Biblical material.
History, Fiction and the Creative Imagination

Configuration takes narrative beyond the mere recitation of plot, and raises questions for Ricoeur about the relation of empirical narrative and fictional narrative and the place of creative imagination. The question arises too for adult Christian education, whether such engagement with the fictional can be acknowledged and sustained epistemologically? The question is not straightforward. Ricoeur himself points out, 'it is an indisputable trait of the basic stories of the Bible that they are history-like... '(Ricoeur 1995 p.244). In that particular context he seems to suggest that they are in danger of being treated as neither properly fictional nor historical. This is a problem that ignores the distinction he has carefully developed to differentiate fiction from empirical history. As I will suggest below, the context in which he develops this argument makes difficulties in agreeing with his point, except in so far as it is a critique of what he perceives to be unjustifiable Christian use of the Bible. If that is the case then he offers a helpful reminder that the danger with the Narrative Use and indeed any narrative approach that seeks not only to use the Bible but also to engage with contemporary culture certainly focuses around the status of fiction and its epistemological legitimacy as 'truth'.

Ricoeur argues strongly for the legitimacy of such knowledge as is found in fiction as part of the configuring process. He writes, 'despite the break it introduces, fiction would never be understandable if it did not configure what is already figured in human action' (Valdes 1991 p.142-3) and continues, '...it appears that a break concerning truth claims separates 'empirical narratives' (or history) from 'fictional narratives'...(Ricoeur 1981 p.288). Therefore it must be shown that all narratives make, in a certain sense, a
referential claim. There are three steps in his argument. Firstly, there is more fiction in history than a positivist definition would allow. ‘History is both a literary artifact (and in this sense a fiction) and a representation of reality’. Secondly, fictional narrative is more mimetic than the same positivist epistemology would admit - ‘fictions reorganize the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world’. Thirdly, ‘the references of true history’ and ‘fictional history’ cross upon the basic historicity of human experience’. He continues, ‘...the historicity of human experience can be brought to language only as narrativity, and moreover that narrativity itself can be articulated only by the crossed interplay of the two narrative modes’. A clear case can thus be argued for the epistemological legitimacy of ‘the fictional representation of reality’ (Ricoeur 1981 p.290). Thus ‘the world of fiction leads us to the heart of the real world of action’ (Ricoeur 1981 p.296).

In a differently developed argument in Oneself as Another, (1992) Ricoeur helpfully clarifies the value of this double narrative experience, firstly as affording the space for reflection, and secondly in the uncertain nature of the context of ‘real’ life. He is worth quoting at length.

The double fact that it is in literary fiction that the connection between action and its agent is easiest to perceive and that literature proves to be an immense laboratory for thought experiments in which this connection is submitted to an endless number of imaginative variations...as to the notion of the narrative unity of a life, it must be seen as an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience. It is precisely because of the elusive character of real life that we need the help of fiction to organize life retrospectively, after the fact, prepared to take as provisional and open to revision any figure of emplotment borrowed from fiction or from history.5... Literature is a vast laboratory in which we experiment with.

5 It is very much this provisionality that, as will become clear, opens the way for the experiments of the Communication use. Ricoeur 1992 p.159,162.
estimations, evaluations, and judgements of approval and condemnation through which narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics.

Ricoeur 1992 p.115

The narrative engaged with by the reader in this way offers particular resources at three points that are significant for my investigation:

- The epistemological status of the ‘intelligibility’ points, Ricoeur argues, to ‘practical wisdom’ rather than theory. This point is further developed when he engages with Biblical material and describes the interplay of wisdom literature with narrative. (Ricoeur 1995 p.239)

- The ‘intensification impact’ of narrative develops belonging through the encompassing narrative, the ‘metastory’. I would argue that part of the process of intensification is the deployment of narrative for the production and shaping of discourse and ideology towards hegemony. In fact it may well be seen as an integrative aspect of ideology (Ricoeur 1995 p.241).

- In his enquiry into what animates historical research as part of his discussion of fictional and historical knowledge, Ricoeur offers a further insight into the relation of the question of narrative and the practical issue of belonging, in this case through the notion of communication.

  The historian’s interest in facts seems to be coupled with a more deeply anchored interest which could be called, following Habermas, an interest in communication. Our ultimate interest in doing history is to enlarge our sphere of communication.

Ricoeur 1981 p.295
Narrative Experience and the ‘Christian Pattern’

There is an interesting caveat in Ricoeur concerning the collapse of the capacity for telling and listening to stories resulting in the ‘increase of forgetfulness’ as a result of the post-Enlightenment de- and under-valuing of narrative (Ricoeur 1995 p.238). There are severe consequences for human community, and at that point I agree strongly with Ricoeur. However, my analysis would be different – this is not the whole story. What we face is also ‘narrative exhaustion’. This can be seen as the result of two factors. Narrative is devalued not only by the dominant scientific world view but also by the sheer numbers of stories available in popular culture and the lack of means to process them. This will be a feature of the Communication Use – there are so many possibilities of ‘words’ that speak to the individual that any hegemonic ideology within which they can be processed has been lost. There is of course a way of processing narratives into scientific discourse through the critical process, but it is too exhausting and beyond the scope of many learners. Such are the reasons narrative has lost its authority, so the stories do not command attention as imperatives, and educationally they are regarded as simply illustrative and therefore carry no prescriptive weight. A second factor in evidence is the attempt at control and manipulation of stories in the hortatory and educational activity of the church that has resulted in the increased exercise of suspicion. An example of this would be what Ricoeur describes as the ‘Christian pattern’.

The consequences for Bible use are that, despite the enthusiasm for the Gospel stories and the attempt to challenge the loss of narrative perspectives and to develop narrative
insights exegetically and theologically, the mixture of weariness and wariness that surrounds stories makes the attempt profoundly difficult.

Ricoeur offers some further distinctions in the nature of the narrative in this context that I need to note before developing further discussion. He is critical of the ‘Christian pattern’ that has come to be assumed as narrative in certain church circles. This does not reflect the nature of narrative, but of narrative under control, where ‘the Bible Teaching’ dominates and ‘concordance’ has replaced ‘discordance’, in the face of the evident complex nature particularly of Biblical narrative. The corollary of this last point is the multiplex nature of narrative, that includes points and passages of reflection and other literary styles – a point that has already been noted and to which I will need to return below.

Can the Narrative Use approach be sustained in terms of adult education?
The studies of adult education that emphasize a reflective process based around a learning cycle exhibit features that are closely parallel to the figurative pattern of interpretation used by Ricoeur with text and narrative.

For Ricoeur the interpretive task undertaken by hermeneutics is:

To reconstruct the set of operations by means of which a work arises from the opaque depths of living, acting and suffering to be given by an author to readers who receive it and thereby change their own actions.

Ricoeur in Valdes 1991 p.139-40
Valdes describes how ‘this interpretive process begins with the analytic power of explanation and is then challenged by the unitary force of understanding’ (Valdes 1991 p.11). While Boud and Walker may go too far in suggesting that ‘in any activity there is always reflective activity in which what is perceived is processed by learners and becomes the basis of new knowledge and further action’, the analysis of reflection they provide, of returning to the experience, attending to feelings, and a fourfold process of reevaluation culminating in appropriation, exactly parallels the processes of the reading act (Boud & Walker 1991 p.19). Within the learning cycles proposed by Kolb and developed by Jarvis, the same processes are to be found (Kolb 1984 p.42, Jarvis 1995 p.69ff.)

The question arises again at this point whether knowledge from a narrative source that includes fictional material, and presents as Ricoeur has suggested as only ‘history like’ can be legitimized by and for adults. While the resolution of this tension within narrative has a foundation laid by Ricoeur, and while the use made of the Bible by adults whose belief gives them a tolerance of the tension enables them to learn, a question persists for me, and at points in the data, about whether the knowledge learnt carries the weight to be life changing, or whether the sort of learning and indeed reflection taking place is merely a ‘leisure pursuit’. Perhaps it is asking too much to find a resolution to this question. In theory the answers are there. In the world of practical wisdom that Ricoeur points us to, where wisdom is so much shaped by the dominant cultural hegemony – the more hidden the better – the conclusion is that legitimation has to be sought where it can be found. Therefore the performativity of belonging becomes crucial and the knowledge
and learning is a passport to that. Secondly, the local power games become more intense as the attempt to assert legitimacy is imposed. The configurative element is faced with a scientific and secular world view or culture that resists fiction in the interests of ‘truth’ and the power games are acute, but only of course where they can still be played. The narrative approach can resolve this and offer legitimization to non-scientific knowledge. Narrative knowledge can be legitimate, but the case has to be made against the weight and tacit norms of contemporary culture. Nor is the issue simply black and white, there is an argument from Ricoeur and from the cyclical nature of reflective adult learning i.e. adults do learn this way. However, with adults who have a weight of culturally shaped experience and the practical wisdom that springs from it, the educational and reflective task when faced with the Bible is distinctly harder than it may for instance be with children and young people.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore more of the way that the cultural shaping of society is antipathetic to narrative knowledge or to detect ways in which that may be changing. I simply note at this stage that the Communication Use moves away from the question by offering the legitimation of the learner’s experience and feelings, of the learner as subject. Of course faced with a church agenda, the question is bedeviled by the power games of previous generations and of our own, particularly, no doubt, the patterns of debate over areas of sexual morality.

In this context a concern develops about the place of the sapiential tradition of practical wisdom and its place in adult learning. It could be argued that the skills of belonging are
part of such knowledge. The processes of configuration and reflection would seem to emphasize the importance of that area for the adult learner. Furthermore the distinctively complex narrative of the Bible, as indeed Ricoeur himself notes, is a dialectic between episodic narrative and the reflective material of the wisdom and prophetic literatures. Such a pattern is reflected in the ideals of the disciple as both the 'mature adult in Christ' (where maturity has the sense of developed practical wisdom) and the 'reflective practitioner'. It is hard to resist the conclusion that a genuinely adult education needs to take profoundly seriously the epistemological value of such reflective, practical wisdom emerging from a narrative context. The fact that this may well be the case for the adult Christian learner is indicative of the problem narrative has in contemporary culture though that is changing, and of the suspicion that surrounds the power games associated with adult Christian education in its many forms.

To move beyond such a point and yet still to engage fully with the epistemological values of contemporary society in any engagement with the Bible would be to reach the position of a 'second naivete' (or post-critical naivete) described by Mudge, following Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1980 p.23). In such a 'naivete' the Bible could be used on a new basis of confidence in narrative and the figuring processes, having taken account of the critical and hermeneutical debates. A legitimizing epistemology would be shaped around the insights of the human sciences, philosophy, education and literary criticism. The power games surrounding truth claims are likely to persist, and for many I would argue the inescapably relativist position of the second naivete would be entirely uncongenial. Furthermore, while a legitimation in the terms described might make such a second
naivete possible, note has to be taken of the constant presence still of the persisting first
naivete. It is active locally, not least in the power games being played, as a way of
circumventing the scientific and historical critical discussion using arguments
approximating to those of Ricoeur to do so. In fact such essentially local knowledge
activity looks more like an anachronistic return to figuration and the rejection of the
hermeneutical/critical because of the complexity and difficulty of the project, and
because it all too easily paves the way for what Ricoeur calls the ‘rule of the theologians’.

Can the Narrative Use approach be sustained in terms of ‘Christian’ education?
It is clear that Ricoeur sees a close link between narrative and the theological project it
‘foments’ (Ricoeur 1995 p.182). Does this suggest that Christianity has a distinctive claim
on narrative in the epistemological and educational processes as far as the biblical text is
concerned? Or, to enter into discussion with Ricoeur over this point, are there areas of
investigation of narrative texts that reach their limits when faced with the Bible?

In his article, Toward a Narrative Theology (Ricoeur 1995 p.236ff.) Ricoeur suggests
some limits. They are helpful because they bear on the impact, character and use of the
(often local) knowledge that I am analyzing. They also demonstrate the difficulty facing
the Christian apologist in trying to sustain the distinctiveness of biblical material.
However, there are points at which I would argue that he overstates his case.
Unsurprisingly the first limit he identifies is the scriptural one. The Biblical text is qualitatively changed by the weight of tradition and authority it carries. The liturgical use to which it is put both reflects and endorses that weight. In my terms the Scripture pole is emphasized, and Ricoeur's remarks helpfully clarify the nature of scripture. However it is important to recognize the Book pole, which offers a different set of characteristics. These are more amenable to and of a piece with the hermeneutic method and its attempt to bring the Bible into an engagement with scientific worldview makes possible the wider epistemological dialogue that is essential for effective apologetics. As such it has the possibility of engaging with the wider educational project. To maintain the distinctiveness of scripture too strongly is to reinforce exclusiveness. As has been shown the category of 'scripture' clearly has differences from other literature and narratives, but the Book pole reminds us that these can be overplayed, as arguably Ricoeur does at this point. At a number of points the Bible as Book is more accessible, and this accessibility is a feature that facilitates the Communication Use as will become clear in the next chapter.

The second limit Ricoeur suggests picks up his notion of a distinct 'history-like' character of Biblical narrative apart from the fiction/empirical, story/history patterns that he offers elsewhere. I have noted above the difficulty with this view, and I am not convinced that he makes his case. It all too easily sounds like special pleading to sustain the distinctiveness of the Bible and to preserve it in some measure from the challenge of secular literary analysis, even his own. Of course it has unique features, but again, as Book, it also has much in common with other texts. Moreover the pre-figurative
hauntology it exercises in today's culture, though inevitably much diminished and more
hidden than hitherto, means that it must be as open to critical investigation as any other
text.

This brings us to the third suggested limit, that ‘no Biblical narrative works merely as
narrative’. It is distinctive because it receives its theological meaning from its
composition that includes other modes of literature. The typological use of stories for the
sake of projection into the future, and the ‘transfiguration of narratives through wisdom’
he argues ‘put biblical narratives outside of the stream of popular story telling’. It all
depends of course on definitions and on whether what Ricoeur offers as ‘popular story
telling’ exhausts all the possibilities of other literature. Again I am unconvinced by his
attempt to sustain Biblical distinctiveness. For my position that does mean possible
epistemological loss, but the power games based on such distinctiveness have been
overplayed to such an extent that they are no longer sustainable. The risks of sustaining
such distinctiveness are also high. The doors to sectarianism and fundamentalism are
further opened. Power games can proliferate, especially locally. While these latter
concerns do not prove the case wrong, just dangerous, they are another feature of the
patterns of use that I am attempting to discern.

His fourth limit is the key one in which in a sense the others are encompassed. It is
distinctive because it enables, uniquely presumably, the transition from narrative to
explicit theological discourse. There is some weight in this case. In terms of a
description of the emergence of theological and religious intelligence from the Biblical text it is hard to argue. The issue is in the end confessional, and reason does not allow a step open only to faith. To a person of faith the narrative conveys a paradigmatic image that is all-encompassing,

it is nothing else than the task of making the past intelligible, of interpreting our present according to the analogy of the life and death of Christ, and of discovering the potentialities of our future. In other words, revelation “furnishes the practical reason with a starting point for the interpretation of past, present and future history.”

Ricoeur 1995 p.247

A significant difficulty appears here. What is the impact in terms of the power games being played of the claim of distinctive revelation? How different is the result of such a claim from distinctiveness based on cultural and ideological processes of education, training or habituation? Once the distinctiveness of the theological project becomes an issue, the extent of that distinctiveness needs to be made clear. Otherwise, either dialogue is at an end, or an exploration of the operation of the power games, local and otherwise, is needed to clarify their impact on knowledge and education. Ricoeur is in danger (as theology often is) of overstating its claim to distinctiveness and the freedom that confers. A result of such ‘imperialism’ is ironically the demise of theology when power games using epistemological resources are suspected. The complexity of the issue is that the imposition of the Christian pattern can be both enriching – insofar as it can develop fresh epistemological perspectives and resources – and also alienating, because of the suspicion of the power games involved, and because the imperialising and colonizing Christian pattern is perceived as doing violence to individual lives and to the nature of narrativity that shapes them and is shaped by them. This thesis has set out to
discern processes of use through the lens of the human sciences. The distinctiveness of the Bible is my concern only in terms of the categorization of literary texts as adopted by Smith and others. However the approach of Ricoeur illustrates how the question of revelation as at the heart of the Bible and as a reason for its distinctiveness makes necessary a Foucauldian approach to analyzing power games.

At the root of these issues is a tradition and/or hauntology that sets a cultural context and is more accessible for empirical examination through the Book pole than through the Scripture pole. Making the Bible and its narrative as distinct as he has done is I find, hard to justify. The Book pole is the battleground between local and non-local knowledges – the irony is that its accessibility makes it appeal to the local and lend itself to local use. On the other hand its written textual nature makes it the arena of scholarship, and gives it the opportunity to become more than local – to provide the double hauntology that I have argued is characteristic. This hauntology offers the possibility of wider engagement with other narratives and ideologies, but only so long as the theological is considered epistemologically and educationally relevant in a culture and capable of legitimizing knowledge.

Otherwise the only legitimizing possibility epistemologically is narrative itself – and that while cogently argued not least by Lyotard has some way to go before it reaches (or recovers) cultural recognition.
Because Ricoeur overstates the case for Biblical narrative distinctiveness, the narrative/theology issues are exacerbated. By attempting to argue too great a degree of distinction there results a diminution of theology because it is culturally marginalized, the preserve simply of a small community. It is a local knowledge that finds it hard to become more than that and the pressure of greater knowledges means that the territory and the power of theology is reduced. In the end the attempt to reflect theologically becomes nothing more than a question about when you feel God is present. Here we are moving into the territory of the Communication Use.

**Narrative and Belonging**

My argument that narrative facilitates belonging and therefore justifies the Narrative Use is implicit in the Weinrich quote above\(^6\). Narrative processes engage with issues of relating and belonging. Ideological production and development facilitates belonging. Bible use is determined by what the Bible can actually offer. In the context of my case study, narrative with its stories of origins and distinctiveness is a powerful epistemological resource for ideological construction. This can be seen in three ways that are evident in the data and have already been noted:

- **Character identification:**
  
  The Bible as used particularly by Disciple frequently provides characters with whose history and experiences learners can identify. It offers stories or

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\(^6\) Note 1 above.
histories with patterns in which to participate. Narratives are provided that can offer entry points to an epistemological and educational process.

- **Common epistemological reserves:**
  Disciple provides a resource of knowledge and a vocabulary that creates a resource of 'shared interest' and services belonging in an everyday way by providing the currency or communication channels for fellowship. In fact this begins to constitute an integrative ideology.

- **Integrative ideology:**
  Ricoeur argues,

  To a large extent, in fact, the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, in which the person or the community recognizes itself. Recognizing oneself in contributes to recognizing oneself by.

  Ricoeur 1992 p.121

The experience of belonging created in such a way has a legitimating, performative quality, especially locally, and that makes sense of much of the evidence about the power and attraction of the group experience in my Disciple data. It suggests that for many, knowledge that does not generate belonging may not be legitimate.

The attempt that Ricoeur made and that was discussed above to establish the distinctiveness of the biblical narrative resource demonstrates further variety in the ways that belonging and excluding can operate and be made to work. A major educational question is raised when education is used to establish belonging by the process of identifying exclusion markers. Education is then necessarily a process of discrimination as part of reflective activity. Power games of a particularly negative and ideologically
hegemonic sort come to the fore when such discrimination is developed in order to make more effective the belonging and inclusion process.

**Local Knowledge**

The limits of applying Ricoeur’s insights to my data are clear at two points, not only in his own preference for the attempt to establish a degree of Christian theological distinctiveness, but also in the persistence of local knowledge.

Since I have chosen local foci for my field research my data inevitably concentrate here. The playground metaphor is once more pertinent, particularly in the light of the variety of ways the ‘Christian pattern’ can be adopted and resisted by turns, for local purposes. As a result, snatches of non-local mix with traditional local knowledge. Anachronistic traditional knowledge often proves to be preserved or recovered locally. Frei’s use of ‘eclipse’ is a helpful metaphor for describing the way figuring processes have lingered locally and can re-emerge without the constraints applied in a more general context (Frei 1978 p.6).

A further feature of local knowledge is the resistance to the non-local represented by the academy, theologians and church leaders. In terms of Biblical engagement the accessibility offered by the Book pole facilitates this, ironically, at the same time as providing a resource for the academic and the theological attempt to establish general principles.
There are also in this context complex questions around the relation between the Bible narratives and wider narratives. What encompasses what? Ricoeur's ultimately confessional stance means that in his view the Christian does the 'encompassing' as any narrative of ultimacy by definition must. Local knowledge can be so easily comfortable with being incomplete, intermittent, unreflected and therefore often dangerously self-serving. This is part of what is implied in the definition. In its power games therefore the claim to encompassing can be made without it actually being the case, and because of the dominant players it may go unchallenged.

Control of Narrative

Before leaving this theme of narrative, it is important for my thesis to raise the question of control. Given the world or ideology changing potential of interpretive reading or education, the sense of the need for control is intense and urgent. Narrative and even story, because it requires some measure of coherence, is open to control more easily than the conversations of the Communication Use. However because of the force that belonging can bring to ideology the need to exercise control is greater. It can be explored briefly by identifying contested areas and reflecting on my polarities.

Contested Areas

Clear contested areas can be seen where:
- Narratives clash and classically, the ‘Christian pattern’ and ‘the rule of the theologians’ meet local resistance.

- The Bible is used as self-legitimizing. This gives significant power to narratives that have the claim to biblical sanction. There was evidence of this in the Whitby data of the need felt to produce a competing narrative from within biblical resources. As has been seen, narrative can serve to legitimize the knowledge that gives belonging and excludes others. At different levels in the power games, expert academic legitimation of the Bible may not extend to the knowledge subsequently derived from it. The local and partial use of narrative that is characteristically at work here can be facilitated by the practice of a ‘community of story tellers’. Once again the battle of encompassing narratives is joined.

- Levels of performativity are differently judged. Again, the inclusion-exclusion dynamic producing winners and losers has its impact in the sense of belonging. Narratives retain credibility only so long as they are performative.

- Finally, of course, the issue of inclusiveness that is behind LAMP is inevitably engaged when any narrative or story threatens exclusion.

**Analysis of Power Relations**

From these points a brief analysis of power relations can be offered.

The *system of differentiations* has been noted a number of times in terms of the ways that the Narrative Use enables belonging and excluding. The power game of belonging is to
establish a sense of corporate, almost institutional fellowship as its objective. That after all is what the narrative credal statements that find their origins for theology in the biblical material focuses on. However, the often noted accessibility of the Bible and the intermittent way in which narrative is used together with the sheer looseness of the notion of storytelling, leads to a non-institutional style of belonging where the initiative is seized by the individual search for identity. The instrumental mode of belonging is of course the small group. The Bible is used as an instrumental source of possible stories and of patterns. The imperialistic needs of the assertive and encompassing narrative explain the way these power games seem to focus institutionally on the local church. The documentary studies suggest concern with power games around narratives of belonging in the wider church, including the Connexion, albeit with the individual caveat just noted. Degrees of rationalization are particularly interesting. Battle is joined and rejoined by competing biblically resourced narratives of inclusion or exclusion, with the performativity provided by a sense of belonging offering confirmation of the rationality of the narrative. That the Bible can be as effectively used for stories of exclusion as inclusion that exhibit considerable strength logically and intuitively goes a long way to explain the sheer contentiousness of the games at this point.

Turning briefly then to the polarities, it is clear that the Individual/Institution pole is particularly keenly contested where the Narrative Use is concerned. Narrative, with its encompassing possibilities is a major resource of the assertive institution. What is clear from the Whitby and Disciple evidence is its use for and by individuals, not only for
purposes of individual identity, but for extending that identity into some measure of
control of the institutional.

The Equilibrium/Utopia pole is also keenly contested. The battles for belonging, either
by inclusion or exclusion can present utopia as equilibrium and vice versa. The possible
narratives in biblical resources feed both.

Inspiration dominates Training through the power of stories to persuade, advocate,
interpret and witness. However, the need to enable narratives to develop or reinforce
ideological positions means that the Narrative Use does have a place for the faithful
learning of the story that can become an articulated creed. Through such habituation a
narrative that bears the marks of authenticity develops authority. An effective
narrative can legitimize knowledge, particularly locally, although such a position remains
only authentic unless the narrative in question is able to encompass others.

The Book/Scripture pole provides resources for the Narrative Use from the timelessness
of Scripture. However, in the games that develop around narrative and story, the critical
examination of the ever-available Book provides resources for the revision and
deconstruction. In that sense the Bible can be seen both as resourcing and alienating and
in the end as unreliable in terms of use.
Conclusions

While the power games around Narrative Use within the church are highly energetic, there is no discernible move in my evidence of a real attempt to extend this use of the Bible to engage with wider narratives outside the church. There is an assumption that biblical narratives encompass all, but it is assumed not tested, even against the essentially secular humanist narrative of the self, that is so strongly present within the church and such a heavy motivation in the power games that are in evidence. Within the church the modernist project of meta-narrative has not entirely disappeared and it lurks as more than the occasional ghost that hortatory power tactics are happy to summon.

The Bible used in this way raises a question around the culturally formative impact of Scripture that is essentially narrative. The Bible is a primordial source of narrative. Is it going too far to suggest once again a Biblical shape to the nature of narrative knowledge and so to the way that narrative shapes and legitimizes knowledge and identity? There has clearly been a significant and powerful contribution to the way we know as well as to the more familiar territories of faith and belief. How far can Scripture contribute towards all knowledge, as well as to the aesthetics of liturgy and the stories of faith at a popular level? What Ricoeur offers and makes legitimate through the exploration of narrative usage, is an epistemological and educational use that can legitimately engage with the problematic fiction-like material that can be found in the Bible.

An important part of the argument of this chapter has been concerned with Ricoeur’s investigation of the nature of fiction and its epistemological significance. The
educational and epistemological currents of contemporary culture have reduced the significance of fiction, fiction-like and history-like material. No doubt there is virtue in this in resisting the power struggles and hortatory unscrupulousness around such ambiguous and malleable resources. However, the Narrative Use does go some way to enabling the recovery of epistemological resources in such marginal material by building on the apparent human valuing of emplotment for identity and belonging.

Finally, the reflections and arguments of this chapter lead to the need for some clarification of the way that narrative is being used. That all-encompassing meta-narratives are fading from view is clear. At the level of popular wisdom and performativity at which I have been working there is an ambiguity around the usage of story and narrative. The former seems to imply something more provisional, the latter a resource reaching towards ideological realization. However, what my evidence suggests is in use appears on occasions to become so attenuated that narrative is barely merited as a description and story fares not much better. Perhaps the phrase ‘narrative moments’ best describes what I see happening in my data where the usage relates to the metaphor, proverb, character sketch, incident - all of which are essentially micro-narratives that share some of the uses of meta-narratives, but not the encompassing ones. At this point the more highly individualized Communication Use is beginning to emerge, and with it the loss of narrative that will lead to the loss of a sense of belonging and to the potential of no belonging at all.
CHAPTER NINE

THE COMMUNICATION USE AND THE OTHER

Perhaps the philosopher as philosopher has to admit that one does not know and cannot say whether this Other, the source of the injunction, is another person whom I can look in the face or who can stare at me, or my ancestors for whom there is no representation, to so great an extent does my debt to them constitute my very self, or God – living God, absent God – or an empty place. With this *aporia* of the Other, philosophical discourse comes to an end.

Ricoeur 1992 p.355

In his conclusion to *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur reminds us of the problematic nature of ‘the other’. Of course, that status is shared by my term ‘Communication Use’.

I use ‘Communication Use’ in a particular descriptive sense arising from my data. It has no deliberate association with the way ‘communication’ is used for instance by Habermas as a way of expressing the human engagement with community. In my Christian context it has rather to do with the individual engaging with what is perceived to be divine.

As I have suggested earlier, the appropriate metaphor is that of the conversation. The ‘single channel’ communication that is characteristic of this use is so intense that I have had some hesitation in using the term. The learning that appears to be associated with it and the epistemological issues raised are fundamentally an activity of the individual.

My problem has been to find a term that expresses the immediacy, dynamism and impact of the use as accurately as ‘communication’ does, and one that enables me to move on to investigate the use. As a result I have kept the term despite its problems.
Given this root metaphor of conversation I am faced with questions like ‘With whom is the conversation taking place?’ or ‘With what or who is the individual communicating?’ and ‘Where does the ‘Word’ come from?’ Arising from these as I attempt to ground such enquiry educationally and epistemologically is, ‘How is the knowledge learnt from the Bible in the Communication Use legitimized?’

Of course the initial set of answers is offered by theology and by popular Christian devotion and within their context they are ideologically strong. Their understanding is that the conversation is with God or more easily in the Christian imagination with Jesus, or even, less definitively and more openly with the Holy Spirit. Sophisticated theological ideologies can and have been constructed around such basic suggestions. Epistemological legitimation is provided by coherence with tradition that from its resources is able to embrace and affirm even the unpredictability and immediacy associated with the Holy Spirit.

When I attempt to formulate and address these issues from an educational and epistemological perspective my task becomes more difficult. I am dealing with the perceived dynamics of a relationship that is sensed as being transcendent and intensely individual although there is inevitably a communal possibility since ‘God’ in the same way as Ricoeur makes clear about ‘other’, can be described in a variety of ways. It is at this point that the use of the term ‘other’ is especially helpful. While the term is nowhere explicit in my data, it is implicit in the language used, and makes an appropriate and necessary alternative to the ‘God’ discourses that the data reflects. Using it means
that writings that engage with alternative notions of the other can be accessed. In fact they can be seen to correlate helpfully at significant points with theological discourses where the term ‘God’ is used as a sort of compendium of otherness. The term ‘other’ enables me to move away from the theological and devotional, while still retaining links with the necessary insights, to analyze the dynamics of what is taking place educationally and epistemologically. I will however be rather more reluctant than Ricoeur in the quote that opens this chapter to allow the possibility of irreducible mystery at one end of the spectrum of otherness to be too easily identified with God.

Two further comments may be helpful at this point. Inevitably, much of what I argue here about the nature and impact of the Communication Use on adult Christian education needs to be tested by further research. My approach in research as I have made clear has been to chart an area of possible answers to my central question, recognizing that it would open up and help formulate further questions. These in turn will remain hypothetical given the scope of this thesis until tested by further research.

The second point follows from that caution, and that is the way that the question of legitimization will be seen as a constant issue for this use.

The chapter will deal with the following issues:

• Communication Use and the Bible
• The nature of the Other
• The Other and education
Communication Use and the Bible

In the Communication Use the Bible is used in a number of ways.

It is as a resource for patterns for such use. The Biblical text is used to provide a pattern for this ‘conversation’ that given its scriptural status is immediately legitimizing.

Examples are drawn from the Old Testament narrative, prophetic or wisdom literature with its stories of God in intimate conversation with individuals. More democratic patterns are drawn from the New Testament, supremely with the model of Jesus and his disciples, extended beyond the physical and made contemporary by the Holy Spirit engaging every believer and drawing them into immediate relationship with God. The effect is the same. The Bible gives authority to the expectation and the reality of this immediate and intimate engagement. It is endorsed by a sense of authenticity deriving from the experience and its intensifying ideological context. The pattern legitimizes the knowledge and the learning it conveys.
The Bible is a source of knowledge and information for the processes of this use. It offers narratives of conversations that provide models. It also offers the 'configurational practical wisdom' found in the proverbs and reflections of the wisdom literature that models precisely the character of the knowledge offered by the Communication Use and the implied educational processes by which it is learnt. In this way the Bible provides the resources for culture and ideology against which the Communication Use can be operated and the background against which the echoes of the perceived other resonate for the listener engaged in conversation.

Given its nature as text, the Bible is also used as a model in itself. The metaphor for this use being the conversation the appropriate activity of the learner is listening, hearing and responding. This means that although the written text of the Bible is still being engaged, the emphasis shifts towards the text as an oral/aural phenomenon. I would argue that insofar as Ricoeur's distanciation-appropriation process is concerned this emphasis intensifies the experience. The reading act that was so significant in the previous chapter is diminished, but only by the emergence of the conversational act that engages the intuition and creative imagination even more fully. The intervention of the oral/aural means not that the reading act has disappeared, but that the user stands in a different relation to it. The engagement is a conversation beyond the already distanced content of the text and distanciation therefore further facilitates conversation by freeing engagement from the constraints of text. Appropriation, which is the key to the
listening/hearing phase of the use, still needs the read or heard text to facilitate it.¹

In an important passage that focuses my argument Ricoeur ties together a concern for communication (which is not the same as my Communication Use but offers close parallels), with the historical and the fictional that springs from and is used by the creative imagination in the development of knowledge. He writes,

> Our ultimate interest in doing history is to enlarge our sphere of communication. This interest expresses the situation of the historian as a member belonging to the field which he studies. Consequently, any procedure of objectification, distanciation, doubt, suspicion – in sum, everything which makes history a form of research and inquiry – is abstracted from the interest in communication.

Ricoeur 1981 p.294-5

Such a process of objectification appeals to the Communication User because it means that the material being engaged with can be selected and used according to the intention, even the unconscious or ideologically tacit intention of the user and can be seen to offer acceptable legitimation. If the use is to be fully justified or legitimized, this self-serving use must of course be clarified and become part of consciousness as part of a discourse of apologetics. It is an interesting possibility that I will touch on in the conclusions to this chapter and that might strengthen the links between my two identified uses if the method of narrative and emplotment could serve such a function.

In this same passage, Ricoeur continues,

¹'The dominant problematic is that of the text, which reintroduces a positive and ... productive notion of distanciation. In my view, the text is much more than a particular case of intersubjective communication: it is the paradigm of distanciation in communication. As such it displays a fundamental characteristic of the very historicity of human experience, namely, that it is communication in and through distance.' (Ricoeur 1981 p.131)
It is the interest in communication which secures the link between the intentionality of historical knowledge and the intentionality of fiction. ... a particular historian retains from the past only what in his estimation should not be forgotten ... Now what is most worthy of being retained in our memories if not the values which governed the actions of individuals, the life of institutions, the struggles of the past? ... this way of resurrecting the forgotten requires as its counterpart the capacity to suspend our own prejudices, our own convictions, our own point of view, ultimately to put into parentheses our own desires.

Ricoeur 1981 p.295-6

The Communication User, I believe, both does and fails to do this – the extent of the parentheses is not a detached and academic exercise, there must be an interest and that interest controls communication. However, the curiosity evoked by the Biblical text with its strong Scriptural emphasis and its haunting moral imperatives as for example in a document like the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) Lent course and Christian Aid materials with their challenges to social justice, makes some element of parentheses possible\(^2\). Ricoeur continues:

In virtue of this ‘epoche’ the otherness of the other is preserved in its difference and history can be ... the ‘inventory of differences’. Whence the dialectic between the alien and the familiar, the far and the near, at the very heart of the interest in communication. ... This dialectic is what places history in the neighbourhood of fiction. For to recognize the values of the past in their differences with respect to our values is already to open up the real towards the possible. The ‘true’ histories of the past uncover the buried potentialities of the present. ... History in this sense explores the field of ‘imaginative’ variations which surround the present and the real that we take for granted in everyday life. Such is the way in which history, precisely because it seeks to be objective, partakes of fiction. ... But the reverse is no less true: fictional narrative also shares something of the realist intention of history. Everything we have said about the mimetic dimension of fiction enables us to conclude that, by its mimetic intention, the world of fiction leads us to the heart of the real world of action.

Ricoeur 1981 p.296


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For such reasons the Bible and its study is engaged with the enthusiasm characteristic of those involved in Disciple and Whitby. The exploration of Biblical resources is a crucial starting point for the Communication use. While as will be suggested the complexities and the disciplines attaching to the use of Biblical resources can get left behind, the Bible as has been seen provides a tacit cultural background resource that in some measure legitimates the Communication Use through the sense of authenticity it provides for experience. It is from that same background that the echoes are heard and as a result the memories recovered from forgetfulness to provide the articulated communication from the other. These echoes are encountered in the creative imagination process that uses the mimetic dimension of fiction.  

The nature of the Other

I have chosen the term ‘other’ to allow me to move beyond the confessional perspective that dominates my data where it signifies ‘simply’ God, or one of the divine synonyms, in order to investigate the dynamics of the Communication Use educationally. It is possible to recognize that the ‘other’ may refer to the sense of irreducible mystery to be detected at the heart or on the margins of life, whether or not it is appropriate to express it in transcendent or divine terms. However, I would argue that most of what is encountered as ‘other’ in my context can be described adequately in more mundane terms.

As Ricoeur suggests, “The dialectic of distanciation and appropriation is the last word in the absence of absolute knowledge” (Valdes 1991 p.44)
That is not surprising. There is a willingness amongst Christians to recognize that the ‘other’ may be met in other people, in music, art and literature, or in and through the experience of awe generated by encounter with the culturally different or the beauty and terror of the natural world. From such starting points it can be further understood as a product of the creative imagination developed or appropriated by intuition. These qualities in turn are rooted in the complexities of cultural experience, where the sedimented tradition can offer resonance with contemporary experience in a species of hauntology.  

The Bible as a fundamental part of cultural hauntology, can therefore help develop the sense of the other with which user and learner are in communication. It provides difference married with sameness. While because of the loss of hegemony it may not any longer offer imperatives and norms, it still offers a sense of authenticity to an imaginative configuration of experience, a making of meaning. Ricoeur’s description of permanence and change, so important a part of the identity dynamic of oneself as another, makes the same move towards understanding and authenticity of experience in the development of self.

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4 ‘If the reference of a text is the project of a world, then it is not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself.’ (Valdes 1991 p.12)
The Other and the self

Otherness is not added on to selfhood from outside, as though to prevent its solipsistic drift, but ... belong(s) instead to the tenor of meaning and to the ontological constitution of selfhood...

Ricoeur 1992 p.317

In Modernity and Self-Identity, Giddens explores the other in relation to the self. While this is clearly not entirely the same as the other in relation to education there are helpful suggestions, particularly given that in adult Christian education issues of self and identity are of considerable significance and never far from the learning agenda. Giddens writes,

Learning the qualities of others is connected in an immediate way with the earliest explorations of the object world and with the first stirrings of what later become established feelings of self-identity.

Giddens 1991 p.51

Discovering, or in my terms ‘communicating with’, the other is not something sudden but develops with the capacity of the individual.

The individual is not a being who at some sudden point encounters others; ‘discovering the other’, in an emotional-cognitive way, is of key importance in the initial development of self-awareness as such. The subsequent acquisition of language would not be possible were not those early development processes well in train by that time.

Giddens 1991 p.51

He continues, emphasizing the concurrent and engaged nature of self and other, ‘Self-consciousness has no primacy over the awareness of others, since language – which is intrinsically public – is the means of access to both.’ The process of development that he depicts is one in which trust is built through the routines of everyday life and tradition, through processes of identification and projection as the self, with the result that the self realizes identity as it becomes ‘part of the other’, that is to say builds up a gradual
understanding of absence and what 'the other' is as a separate person (Giddens 1991 p.46).

This process is what Giddens argues in the epistemological complexity of modernity,

creates a sense of ontological security that will carry the individual through the transitions, crises and circumstances of high risk, ... by the maintaining of habits and routines [as] a crucial bulwark against threatening anxieties, yet by that same token [such maintenance] is a tensionful phenomenon in and of itself.

Giddens 1991 p.38-9

The care of the self is a strong motive expressed by Giddens in other than Foucauldian terms. In this care for the self, the subject exercises great power, using knowledge resources available rather than submitting to the process of knowing the self. Thus meanings can be made for the purposes of that care that are then dispensable when they no longer appear to serve the purpose. They are walked away from, even when they appear to be endorsed communally for instance in the church community. Of course the nature of contemporary society is such that other endorsed community meanings are readily accessible, even if the individual needs them because of the multiplication (or reemergence) of local knowledges. Such a context has created anxiety (and in many places considerable hostility) as Giddens suggests.

The Communication Use can be seen to be operating in this area of ontological anxiety, where trust is central and 'the world is as it is because it is as it should be'. It builds on a 'conversation' of trust with a 'familiar beyond', 'a care of self', where there may be 'surprises' but where they will never be unanticipated. A world where in the terms of
Christian devotion and theology, God is trustworthy, and the adult Christian educational project about learning to trust and obey as the path to happiness.

The Familiarity of the Other

The first point that emerges is the familiarity of the other. There is much about the other that is familiar, and of course there has to be in order for any communication to take place. There is inevitably some measure of qualitative difference that the term other seeks to express, but as I have already hinted, this can be over-estimated. Essentially an ideology or culture shapes its own other. The other may be that within an ideology or culture that is forgotten. It may also be that which needs to exist to make the ideology possible—a species of ‘ideological dark matter’. The suggestion opens up a number of educational and epistemological issues.

The other is a useful category, but the sense has to be limited. The term carries with it the suggestion of radical break, the sort of ‘irruption of the beyond’ that theology and popular devotion encourages. Through popular usage of the idea, if not necessarily the terminology, of the other in interpreting Biblical episodes like the conversion of Saul/Paul, authority is conferred on experience and the knowledge that comes from it. Engagement with the other becomes a defining and legitimizing characteristic.

However, I would argue that in so far as the actual process of learning through adult Christian education engages the apparently ‘other’ in ‘new’ material or experience, there is that about the content that is inevitably familiar to the individual. The learning experience therefore is about building on the known, extrapolation from the familiar, and
recalling the forgotten, rather than facilitating the irruption of the divine as entirely other. This is necessarily the case in an education process where the experience and reflective quality of adult learning is in evidence. Ricoeur’s exploration of the other through his three categories of the other as one’s body or flesh, as other people and as conscience all emphasize the essential intimacy of the notion and, recognizing of course the ‘polysemy’ of the other, endorse this sense of familiarity. A particularly useful insight of Ricoeur’s in this context is the notion of genetic otherness, where the ancestors, so widely recognized as a potent force of familiar otherness in many religious traditions, not least the Christian, provide once again that possibility of tacit familiarity that is such a potent aspect of otherness for education.

The consequence for knowledge and for education is that engagement with the other is through the epistemological encounters of history, tradition and culture. Their otherness can reside in the tacit or forgotten quality of such knowledge that is located in self and in culture.

The Conservatism of the Other

The result of such familiarity is that there can be a profound conservatism inherent in the knowledge and education of the Communication Use. Were we to follow Foucault and others the immediate association with the other would be the transcendent, transgressive or transfiguring. However, it is more nearly the case that such disturbing and revolutionary qualities are only a small part of the spectrum of otherness.
Giddens was quoted above to suggest the importance of routine and tradition in the maintenance of the self. That alone indicates the possibility of an essentially negative, conserving rather than exploring, dynamic. This character of the other is reflected in my data where the knowledge involved in Communication Use ‘conversations’ is essentially conservative. (I readily recognize that more research, focussed more tightly than my general approach allowed, would be needed to substantiate this suggestion.)

It is forgotten learning or knowledge therefore that constitutes a considerable proportion of the resources of the other. Habit, culture and tradition are resources that are ‘re-recognized’ in the Communication Use. The conversation is as much with echoes as a different voice. The otherness is in the novelty of newly fractured and reflected echoes rather than as something uniquely different. It has to be, otherwise how would knowledge be recognizable and communicable? This might be a point so obvious as to be barely worth the making, were it not for the power games that notion of the other, when enlisted as God, can generate.

It is clear I would argue, although again I would not be confident in making such a claim too strongly without further research, that the Communication Use power game is one that combines the transcendent/familiar character of the experience of otherness to legitimize the knowledge it promulgates. Because of the elusive, polysemic nature of the other, such an attempt is easy and powerful within contemporary, charismatically influenced Christian ideologies. This results in legitimation of knowledge through the spectrum from resolute conservatism to revolutionary radicalism. The problem is in
their irresistibility and their extreme localism. Such legitimation cannot be debated or discussed. It can only be accepted or rejected.

**The Other and education**

A major characteristic of the impact of the other on education and learning processes is that it works by the challenge of the apparently new or transcendent, which is sufficiently familiar to be engaged with. If it were too different engagement would not be possible. The Bible is again effective in providing the sense of difference and sameness that makes learning possible. Increased learning develops the familiar through encounter with the other and makes new learning possible. The fluid dynamism of the Communication Use is especially well suited to the extension of learning in this way. The danger is that locally and without the concerted training pole discipline it remains content with the sensation of the intuitive moment. Learning needs are felt to be satisfied and therefore pressed no further, not necessarily even to meet the needs of coherence traditional within the theological discipline. Ricoeur describes,

> The set of acquired identifications by which the other enters into the composition of the same. To a large extent, in fact, the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, in which the person or the community recognizes itself. Recognizing oneself in contributes to recognizing oneself by. The identification with heroic figures clearly displays this otherness assumed as one’s own, but this is already latent in the identification with values which make us place a “cause” above our own survival.

Ricoeur 1992 p.121

This passage noted in the previous chapter picks up Ricoeur’s theme of the role of the other in identity and in the establishing of the self. The other has a significant role in facilitating belonging. In this chapter however the other being encountered as a basis for
the Communication Use clearly works differently. Here it is used to legitimate the authority and authenticity of the individual — a sort of belonging to self resulting in only an occasional and serendipitous engagement with belonging to or with others. Without the engaging power of narrative mediated by education, the other produces epistemological and ontological isolation. ‘God’ becomes not the identification of a shared cause that shapes a community, but a legitimization of a resolute individualism — the embodiment of protest against community experienced as oppressive ideology at an immediate or tacit level.

**Communication Use and learning**

Another factor to be noted is the charismatic context of the Communication Use. It focuses on Inspiration rather than Training, and can take on local and limited approaches to such an extent that intuition and perceived engagement with the other replaces learning. A form of what might be described as ‘spirituality’ prevails and educational activity can be inhibited. The sorts of explorative temperaments with attitudes of openness that find this use attractive usually prevent that happening, but education can disappear to be replaced by a more subjective spirituality with a strong individual sense of legitimacy and a different pattern of power games. We are here moving into the territory of learning styles and personality types, which again emphasizes how highly idiosyncratic and local the Communication Use can become.
The Training pole need not disappear entirely into the Inspirational. Insights from the critical hermeneutical tradition, as well as a range of other disciplines that may appeal to the individual learner can enhance the range of learning and develop the ‘making of meanings’ possibilities. In the same way strong links can be forged with narrative approaches. As has already been suggested, stories that model the Communication Use are easily adopted. The use is non-systematic but not consciously anti-systematic, and therefore a system such as the ‘Christian pattern’ Ricoeur refers to can be adopted, studied and learnt, but in the face of the power of the other, dropped, amended or not treated as seriously authoritative. A key feature is how much such possible systems might be seen by the individual as contributing to the making of meanings. However even such a contribution is not conclusive for inclusion in learning. The Communication Use is so fully in the tradition of practical wisdom that legitimation is essentially through performativity judged by the intuition, rather than by any sort of system and its reasoning.

**The educational spectrum of the Other**

When the familiarity of the other produces an encounter with the tacit facilitated apparently intuitively - an echo heard distantly, a lost memory recovered - the result can be conservative, though not invariably so, nor necessarily in a negative sense. There must be some common language otherwise there would be no communication. It is the combination of openness to the other and the familiarity of the other that makes education possible in this context. Ricoeur in his engagement with Levinas’ emphasis on the separation expressed in the exteriority and elevation of the other makes this point strongly.
If interiority were indeed determined solely by the desire for retreat and closure, how could it ever hear a word addressed to it, which would seem so foreign that this word would be as nothing for an isolated existence?
Ricoeur 1992 p.339

The need for a process of reception, discernment and recognition is clear. It is provided by the dimension of familiarity. It is required in each element because of the need that Ricoeur recognizes for the ability to distinguish ‘the master who calls for a disciple from the master who requires a slave.’ This last point reemphasizes the appeal and the threat of the Communication Use. It gives access to a master, but its immediacy can mask the nature of that master and leave it unreflected unless education intervenes in an ideologically critical and self-critical way.

Moving as it were to the other end of the spectrum from the ‘familiar other’, the foreignness of the more completely other can be seen to produce an encounter (extrapolating from the cross-cultural) in which learning is about reducing the foreignness by understanding. Learning of another language, the process of interpretation, and the hermeneutical endeavour produce a sense of common ground and ideological belonging that can challenge knowledge. There is a strong sense of meeting and conversation that matches the root metaphor. Intuition may be a source of access here, but the hard work of learning begins to appear to be necessary.

However the foreign can also be encountered as disturbing, providing no echoes of common ground. This can be negative, but it can also be positive educationally. It can point the way towards a liminal territory where there is space for the creative imagination. Here art and the inspirational can allow the educational to flourish.
are high risks attached. In the context of the church these are the risks of what might in contexts where consciousness of orthodoxy lingers be called heresy or heterodoxy — terms that immediately indicate that power games are imminent.

The challenge for the Communication Use if it is to be considered genuinely educational and to build on the rich resource of engagement with the other that it offers, is to recognize the range of such a spectrum, the risks of the power games implied by it in order to exploit its resources effectively.

The Making of Meanings

The 'making of meanings' was a significant part of the Whitby project and there was a commonality with the Communication Use. There is a way in which the making of meanings represents the attempt of biblical and theological expertise to come to terms with the Communication Use in its powerful and pervasive popularity. It suggests that the use has been accepted as irresistible, but that the 'making of meanings' approach can demonstrate as necessary the role of the expert as arbiter.

Although it is clear that this would not always be accepted by the protagonists of each approach, given the close association between the making of meanings and the Communication Use examination of it will open up some of the perils that the making of meanings faces educationally and epistemologically.
Valdes was quoted as in the previous chapter as suggesting that 'the driving force behind the desire to know is to make the world over in terms that are meaningful.' This sounds much like the 'making of meanings', but if the Communication Use as I have described it is dominating then the making of meanings runs the risk of being simply license to create knowledge imaginatively and out only of the tacitly derived intuition. In that sense the Communication Use offers an anti-epistemology. It is the enemy of knowledge and so of education.

A significant result of such games is inevitably the death of education, or at least its negation. The irony of such energy at the Inspirational pole is that it fulfills a Training pole role in reinforcing the bulwarks of ideology, albeit unintentionally, by simply being unaware of them. But that is not all. More sinister still is the way that such a power game, with its emphasis on immediacy and contemporaneity, undervalues and even negates the training discipline, academic expertise and coherent learning. It is used to marginalize these approaches. It can short-circuit any argument. There is irony here. It does indeed resist the rule of the theologian, and represents a possible fruit of suspicion, albeit a cheap one, in the battle against the bullying of hortatory power. It is a first effective line of response. Yet, within its own 'ideological family' of course it can provide legitimation for its own species of bullying. The greatest irony is the risk it runs of resisting the 'other', by its innately conservative instincts. It reflects the behaviour of the soul tortured by the possibility of knowledge without certainty. It is a failed short cut to legitimization. It is no less powerful or common as a result of its failure.
The consequences for adult Christian education are significant. It depends of course to some degree on how the project is conceived. The adult as ‘mature person in Christ’ with a strong sense of the coherence of the Christian story and lifestyle is seriously threatened. However, the ‘disciple as reflective practitioner’, with its emphasis on skills rather than knowledge can all too easily play into the hands of the worst excesses of the Communication Use, by lending it practical skills and the appearance of accredited authority.

The nature of the Bible and otherness – the Other encountered in reading
The spectrum that I have offered correlates interestingly with the range of educational possibilities offered by the Bible. It has clear cultural and historical complexity. It has contributed to the shaping of contemporary cultures. Some of its values have continued, others have become unconscious, others offer faint echoes that may still register given the right listening frequency. However that does not exhaust its potential and complexity. It makes foreignness available because its content is so different and so varied. While that may lead to cultural novelty rather than to ontological otherness, it does in the light of the spectrum grant access to degrees of otherness. Those degrees are increased by the range of critical, academic and hermeneutical endeavours. The making of meaning is facilitated. The hard work of communication with the other that is the Bible through hermeneutics, learning the languages and translation and the serendipities of reading further develops the scope of encounter. And yet, the availability of the Bible to the individual through the simple process of reading means that such training skills remain
problematic to the Communication user. Reading rather than hermeneutics is the fundamental educational skill. As Ricoeur says,

Reading, as the milieu in which the transfer between the world of the narrative — and hence the world of the literary characters as well — and the world of the reader takes place, constitutes a privileged place and bond for the affection of the reading subject ... the reception of works of fiction contributes to the imaginary and symbolic constitution of the actual exchanges of words and actions.

Ricoeur 1992 p.329-30

Sources of Legitimation

It is within essentially local cultures that the Communication Use thrives, and so long as it carries sufficient familiarity to be non-alienating, the other has great legitimating impact. When the other is described as God in the confessional power game, the impact is greatest. The need for emphasizing coherence is reduced.

The intensity of experience that can emerge as an intuited sense of conviction is very powerful. So powerful for the individual that contra-indications whatever the power of their origin are unlikely to be tolerated. Intuitive conviction carries its own performative legitimation. The Authenticity pole is consuming the Authority pole at this point.

The power game can be so individual that it ceases to be a game at all, except within the individual’s mind. Such games find sources of legitimation in ‘God discourses’ that make them ‘sui generis’ authoritative. The result of such legitimated individualism is isolation. Using the language of the other suggests that such conviction occurs in this context through cultural rather than transcendent causes. The concurrence of experience
with sedimented tradition is immensely powerful. The data I have gathered suggest that to provide warrant and resource for the sedimented tradition the Bible can be and is frequently used to legitimize intuitively or culturally adopted positions. Of course the movement is not all one way. A degree of Biblical knowledge and understanding is required to make the case or to provide the base for the ingenuity to develop new perspectives. And in the process of justification or innovation genuinely new insights may be developed and new transforming or liberative actions undertaken.

It is a feature of the Communication Use that it needs flexibility in interpreting the Bible. At this point the critical hermeneutic disciplines can easily fall prey to plunder – like a decaying empire, or ancient edifice whose stones are taken to build more local dwellings. To achieve such plunder, a degree of expertise in handling material is required. Here we move once again into the territory of the games played by the exponents of hortatory power that will be explored in Chapter 10.

*The power of the Other*

The sheer intensity of the experience of the moment of communication is one aspect of the Communication Use that has been noted regularly and that has significant impact for the power games in this use. It reflects the power of the dimension of self-hood and what Ricoeur describes as conscience in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992 p.341). It can emerge, albeit possibly illegitimately, as the statement redolent with significance for Christian history and learning, ‘Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.’ It is when the
engagement with a sense of the other produces such resolution that its power in the Communication Use becomes clear.

*Communication Use and contemporaneity*

Part of the power of the Communication Use is its capacity to transcend the barriers of time, culture and of course otherness itself. Through its apparently simple conversation mechanism it makes all things present. Ancestors are no longer distant. Bible characters, supremely Jesus, are ‘met’ and ‘talked with’. There are no barriers to understanding. The internal struggles of the biblical heroes are the same as we face today – we meet them there. The risks to epistemological and educational legitimacy with such a non-historical, supra-cultural approach are high. Once again we are in the territory of a Ricoeur-style ‘second naivete’. The same, perhaps even greater, risks exist as with the narrative equivalent. In the popular pursuit of adult Christian education the risks of this naivete becoming a means of avoiding the strictures of, for instance, the human sciences are very great. Given the propensity already noted within the Communication Use for the avoidance of rigour in its learning, the simplicity conveyed by the conversational method greatly increases the attendant risks. However as noted above when discussing the making of meanings in this chapter and the second naivete in the previous one, while there is a place for the insights of criticism and hermeneutic, the tendency is to use them as a resource not of coherent knowledge but for scattered and occasional items of information that can stimulate and inform the ‘conversation and the listening’ of the Communication Use. Such knowledge betrays epistemology and becomes an ad hoc aid all too easily the fevered creative imagination and the untutored, unreflected intuition.
Again as noted above there is the danger that too easy an emphasis in adult education on experience and reflection can appear to give legitimation to this misuse of knowledge.

The nature of knowledge.
The epistemology of the Communication Use is based on a ‘practical wisdom’ tradition. Such wisdom is accessed intuitively and tested in practice, to be performatively legitimized. The phrase ‘accessed intuitively’ could well be analyzed to include configurative and reflective processes, although these would take on more of the sense of the creative and inventive imagination of art and poetry rather than the disciplines of learning. Such knowledge is pragmatic and inevitably relative as what is ‘true for’ becomes truth itself.

This is one of the great attractions of the use. Knowledge is at once made highly democratic, accessible and apparently authoritative. The rule of the theologian, preacher and teacher is undermined. In these power games strength is in the hands of the independent learner. Perhaps the development of such independence is a feature of adulthood – if so then the Communication Use is the most accessible and effective style of adult education, certainly of adult Christian education, if only (and it is a huge ‘if only’) it can be controlled without destroying it. Such is the task and the challenge taken up by hortatory power techniques, and perhaps the source of their genesis.
The subject as learner

Such implicit rejection by the Communication Use of the didactic and the pedagogic, is characteristic, and sets the boundaries for what is learnt and how it is learnt. This is part of the fundamental process in contemporary culture where under the negative impact of schooling and training, the post-modern culture that has deconstructed and discredited the church teaching project, and the charismatic spiritual culture that has endorsed the democratic epistemological possibilities, the learners have taken control. The learner has become the subject.

Well or badly in this context it is the learner who configures learning into a system — usually tacit, often unconsciously shaped by cultural norm and ideology — that is essentially understood to be their own. Despite the strenuous efforts to encourage training and to give it legitimacy beyond the self, despite the tricks of hortatory power, the learner is in control of the epistemology. Learning in the church at least is motivated by the desire of the volunteer. That is the privilege of the adult, and of course in a different way (because they cannot withhold their physical presence so easily) of children as well.

The subject as learner receives the information desired or capable of reception and configures it to take account of what is perceived to be the new and its relation to context. The teacher can exhort or encourage and cajole, but power although not perhaps freedom is with the adult learner. In the world of the Communication Use, while the other

\[5\text{The complexity of notions of freedom and the power of determinism and cultural shaping make me hesitant in using the term freedom too easily.}\]
provides a key dynamic, naming the other as God takes great risks with belief. Even the believing learner keeps the power to reshape the other as God into a suitable new shape or no shape at all.

**Contested Areas**

This profoundly individual use may issue in many potential points of contest, but by its nature and its democratic ideology, where the potential contest might be acute it can also be non-existent. ‘Potential points’ rarely develop into effective contest. One intuition pitted against another does not carry the significance or ferocity of ideological or institutional engagement. Faced with challenge, the Communication Use can just walk away. It is hard to pick a fight and impossible to argue a case that might prove another wrong. However, there will inevitably be some contest wherever a form of the ‘Christian pattern’ asserts itself, together with its traditional or hermeneutical and critical undergirding.

However, perhaps this is the point to raise again an important educational issue about the Communication Use. Despite its discourse of conversation and the skill of some of its exponents, the paradox of its fundamental inarticulacy presents a threat of disintegration to the educational process, not just like its enemy, fundamentalism, to liberal approaches, but to education in general. It exploits education in so far as it uses the resources it has produced. It can add elements of spontaneity and creativity when the training pole becomes dominant and educational experience is barren, but I suspect that ultimately its
non-systematic, unreflected nature erodes the educational endeavour to the point of disintegration. The power games of equilibrium are desperately needed to contain such undefined utopianism. The intuitive suspicion of the control games of ideologies and the educational processes that sustain and impose them may by its nature be deeply inarticulate. In Communication Use we see aspects of the inarticulate becoming articulate even as it displays its rational incoherence.

Habermas is certainly thinking more generally, but his strictures are pertinent at this point:

These religious systems (or the validity claims they raise) are too undifferentiated to be accessible to rational critique; the ideological message, in other words, is wrapped up in a mishmash of sacred and profane beliefs.

Outhwaite 1994 p.93

The Communication Use can also be a response to the estrangement produced by 'expert cultures' represented in the Bible's case by the hermeneutical tradition, and reflected in the antipathy towards the academic, from broader cultural traditions. Outhwaite again quotes Habermas to this effect,

Late capitalist modernity is stabilized by the fragmentation of everyday consciousness, in which “everyday knowledge ... remains diffuse, [a clear characteristic of the epistemological consequence of the Communication Use] or at least never attains that level of articulation at which alone knowledge can be accepted as valid according to the standards of cultural modernity ... It is only with this that conditions for a colonization of the

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6 'There is a gap between the intuitively felt meanings that individuals construct as they go about their own lives and the more generalized expressions of these meanings that are possible in language. Subjective understandings may not be conscious, but they will surface as part of individuals’ utterances and actions. Individual utterances therefore serve as ‘an indication of how seriously something is meant, whether the communicating subject is deceiving itself or others, to what degree it wants to or may identify itself with an actual expression of its own life, and how broad is the spectrum of connotation concealment or contrary intentions.’ Outhwaite 1994 p.195
lifeworld are met ... [in which the] scattered perspectives of local culture
cannot comprehend the intrusion of systems imperatives

Outhwaite 1994 p.99

Outhwaite remarks that ‘everyday life-worlds are becoming increasingly precarious – it is
imperative to Habermas therefore that individuals’ capacities to rationally communicate
about their life-worlds be examined’ (Outhwaite 1994 p.202). There are significant
aspects of the Communication Use and its result that will not bear the challenge of such
scrutiny. However that should not blind us to the motivation of the protest or the power
of its case against the power games of hortatory power in the adult Christian educational
field, nor for many individuals its limited but adequate pragmatic value.

A level of inarticulate protest gathers round the Bible and is facilitated through the
Communication Use. As a protest movement it does not offer an alternative
rationalization or necessarily any coherent rationalization at all. There is an ideological
base of pentecostal/charismatic theology, but despite the enthusiasm in my data to engage
in an educational project such as Whitby or Disciple, it is the enthusiasm of a style of
jackdaw theft and it is hard to resist the suspicion of its ultimately disintegrative effect on
education.

Analysis of power relations

System of Differentiations

At an emotional level a type of engaged, mystical faith emerges that is distinct from other
more traditional or orthodox expressions of faith. It is often characterized by its

7 There is no doubt that as these comments indicate a further engagement with the writings of Habermas
would be an appropriate next step in the exploration of the issues raised by this thesis.
proponents as ‘living’ rather than traditional. It can speak of the individual Christian relationship with Christ rather than loyalty to the church, locally or Connexionally, as institution.

**Types of Objectives**

The objective is immediacy of access to a source of authority. The Bible appears to offer that, but as its unavoidable obscurity becomes obvious, education is explored, which so long as it is inspirational, serves to ameliorate the Bible’s worst features. The skills of awareness associated with spiritual disciplines of meditation may be sought and that involves some measure of training.

**Instrumental Modes**

The inspirational conference, tape or book is a staple of the Communication Use and my data suggest strong use of such resources amongst Whitby delegates. Worship is of considerable significance as an arena of significant encounter and ‘sense of the presence of God’. Power games are thus inevitably generated around the quality, style and leadership of worship.

**Forms of Institutionalization**

I would argue that the Communication Use is fundamentally non-institutional despite its

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8 The British Church Life Survey is instructive in suggesting that Methodism as a denomination has the lowest ‘sense of the presence of God’, in worship. In such a context, the Communication Use and its power games may well prove more tendentious. Full details are available on the website: www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/methodist_denominational_report
possible and necessary foundations in some sort of theological ideology and some institutional context. In that sense it is fundamentally parasitic. There is the complementary sense of discipleship rather than membership, which again emphasizes the gulf between the Christian and the church-going, the living and the traditional. Of course in my data it is clear that the conference with its suggestions of a network or movement structure is an important aspect of institutionalization.

 Degrees of Rationalization

There is a strongly biblical orientation to the Communication Use that uses the mystical engagement with the other to rationalize and legitimize itself. For instance, as my data indicate at many points there is the sense that just as Jesus kept company with his first disciples, guiding and leading, so he does with disciples today. The interesting paradox here with Disciple and its rather more strongly Narrative Use is noteworthy. The dynamics of contemporary human relationships become the lens through which biblical encounters are interpreted, offering an interesting legitimation from the area of contemporary human resources experience.

 The Polarities:

 Individual/Institution

As suggested above in this essentially parasitic use, any priority of the institution disappears. It is concerned fundamentally with the individual. Although such
individualism may flourish within institutionally provided fellowship, and may even need it, the individual is the focus and the driving force.

Equilibrium/Utopia

It would appear that such non- and even anti-institutionalism might be irreversibly utopian in momentum. The data gives strong endorsement to such a view. The sense of the other reinforces and legitimizes it. However, the discussion of the other suggested that within the spectrum of otherness might be found that which was not so much ontologically other as counter-cultural. In such a sense, the Communication Use could make traditional values its utopia and at certain points, as is the paradox of this polarity and appears elsewhere in my analysis, equilibrium becomes the utopia.

Inspiration/Training

The Inspiration pole dominates and displays both its strengths and weaknesses. It is vulnerable to local and individual idiosyncrasy and to the exercise of hortatory power. However, there is some attraction from the Training pole in terms of skills for spiritual disciplines, and there might well be energy for limited training exercises that could evoke as sense of the inspirational.

Authenticity/Authority

The Authenticity implicit in the conversation metaphor and experience appears to consume Authority in the sense of critically articulated knowledge of the ‘Christian pattern’. However the fascination of this polarity in this chapter is that Authenticity
becomes Authority. The imperatives of the Communication Use are impossible to challenge on any other grounds but their own.

**Book/Scripture**

It is with the sense of the other, the 'aporia', that the Communication Use distinctively engages this polarity. The Book pole provides resources for access to knowledge that is subsequently built on and used to explore possible patterns of engagement with the other. The Scripture pole with its distinctive narrative and sapiential mix of material and its use in worship contexts that evoke the numinous stimulates the creative imagination and heightens sensitivity to the mysterious. Such a sense of engagement with the other makes the authentic authoritative. Book and Scripture can build each other up in this way, but further use of the Bible as Book can raise critical and hermeneutical questions that serve to undermine the Communication Use. It is the non-credal, tacit richness of Scripture that provides the foundation for the Communication Use and its conversations with the other.

**Conclusions**

As has been seen, the Communication Use reflects a type of ontological perspective, in so far as it is concerned with the sense of the mysterious and indefinable other that is variously described in the language of divinity as God, the Lord, Jesus, or the Spirit. This stands in contrast to the Narrative Use of the previous chapter with its narrative and historical orientation. It is the irresistible attraction of engagement with the other, the endless possibilities and dreams that such experience can open up that makes it such an
attractive option. It provides both reassurance in the face of the loss of meta-narratives and alternative non-systematic ways of engaging the other that undermines them.

Contemporary theological approaches at the popular level and in the face of decline finds it hard to defend against the erosions of the Communication Use, precisely because as was seen with LAMP, it is hard to resist the possibility and the hope of the intervening other. It is of course this very virtue that operates to open up the irresistible and yet strangely ineffectual power games that are such a feature of this use.

Finally, it is interesting to note how the two dominant uses reflect key traditions in the Bible literature itself. The Narrative Use clearly reflects the patterns of the dominant narrative style, while the Communication Use reflects the path of the non-emploted, timeless sapiential literature, with elements of the prophetic for good measure.9 Again, these latter once more leave open the possibility of the intervention of the other. That possibility may be a mark of profound faith, it may also be the last desperate gasp of hope for faith and institution.

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9 The relation of learning styles, personality type and culture to each other and these distinct apparatus to learning are difficult to disentangle, but of significance for this area as for others. At present this consideration is beyond the scope of this thesis.
CHAPTER TEN

TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND HORTATORY POWER

In this chapter I set out to explore in more detail two concepts that have recurred in my discussion thus far—tacit knowledge and hortatory power. They have come to share a close relationship in my thinking, and clarification of their nature and role will enable me to move towards my final reflections.

A major part of the adult educational process as I have already indicated involves engagement with tacit knowledge, and in the Christian context there are important links to the Bible. When the Bible is considered in this context, as will be clear from earlier chapters, some discussion of the nature and impact of what I have described as hortatory power needs to be investigated. I have already noted the seminal work of Polanyi on tacit knowledge. While my scope is different from and more limited than his, as indicated above, his insights are interestingly developed in ways of immediate relevance to my thesis by Baumard writing from an organizational perspective in *Tacit Knowledge and Organizations* (1999). He argues that the importance of tacit knowledge increases markedly in times of crisis. The techniques of accessing tacit knowledge, individual articulation and the subsequent organizational internalizing of that knowledge are a major part of his concern and of course they are found in methods of adult Christian education. At this point therefore, the key issues of my thesis, epistemology and the use of power, are once more demonstrated to be irrevocably linked in the adult Christian educational
In addition, the major uses of the Bible that I have identified, the Narrative and the Communication are further clarified in their operations by this discussion. Hortatory power techniques are regularly at work in this context and I will take the opportunity to reflect on them more fully.

In this chapter therefore I will explore:

- The nature of the notion of tacit knowledge with which I am working
- Local knowledges
- Tacit and local knowledge and the crisis of decline faced by Methodism
- Processes of tacit knowledge: articulation and internalization/socialization
- Tacit knowledge and education: experience and reflection
- Tacit knowledge and the Bible
- Hortatory power and tacit knowledge
- Hortatory power: freedom and resistance
- Hortatory power and the Bible
- Key methods and characteristics of hortatory power techniques

The Nature of Tacit Knowledge

My research has produced a number of pointers to the existence and the nature of tacit knowledge. It is possible that an approach that uses the ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ and aims at deconstruction could hardly fail to do so. The discussion of the hauntology of contemporary culture by the Bible has been especially important in this respect.
have been other indications as well of a body of knowledge that might be described as culturally gathered information that has not been interpreted into an ideological framework and given meaning that can be articulated. Or again, more classically ideological, of discourses that have achieved such a degree of internalization that they no longer reach articulation and discussion, although this does not necessarily mean they have reached a point of ideological hegemony. There is also that category that more nearly approaches the hauntological of the simply forgotten, or the information and ideas representing the detritus and decay of previously dominant cultural discourses and ideologies and the information that fed and established them. The notion of local knowledge that Foucault aims to identify and investigate finds a place in this territory, not least because of the nature of its subjugation.

Inevitably perhaps, the exploration of the tacit is fraught with dangers. It can all too easily become a hypothesis that is shaped in ways convenient to my argument. I need to recognize that and proceed with caution. It is clear that to different writers what I am calling the ‘tacit’ can mean different things, from pre-cognitive learning, to a basic collection of habitual, unexpressed information or practices, to the unspoken and unconsidered in the ideologies by which knowledge is interpreted and organized. While from a management perspective Baumard, and perhaps Wenger in his writings on communities of practice, can be considered in the second category. Habermas as noted in Chapter 2 opens up the third from a philosophical perspective.

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1 Baumard 1999; Wenger et al. 2002
King, quoting Gadamer, clarifies the possibilities of the tacit with the introduction of tradition and prejudice. Noting that Enlightenment thought placed reason in opposition to them, they are nevertheless ‘inevitable features of act of interpretation since they reflect the historical and cultural situatedness of human beings’ (King 1999 p.73). I would argue strongly that though tradition and prejudice need not be confined to the tacit, that is where they can both be located and exercise greatest effect.

It is the way that Baumard explores the use of the tacit that provides an important starting point for me. He offers a summary of his notion of tacit knowledge and points to the impact it may have on explicit knowledge,

Not only do we know more than we really want to express, we know more than we can express, and this body of unspoken knowledge complements that which is made explicit in our relations with those around us, even to the point of supplanting it....

Baumard 1999 p.78

We know far more than we are prepared to believe. Human beings acquire knowledge through their engagement in the creation and organization of their own experiences and most of it is acquired in the course of socialization and remains unarticulated. It belongs to communities of practice in the very loosest sense, and so to the wider and less measurable processes of culture and habituation.

Baumard maintains that tacit knowledge proved profoundly helpful in the crisis situations that he investigated, and is especially concerned to understand such potential. The trusted and familiar forms of knowledge that Baumard follows Detienne and Vernant (Baumard 1999 p.101) in identifying through the Greek philosophical heritage as
‘episteme’ and ‘techne’ prove inadequate in the rupture of a known stable world. In the unsettling and disconcerting new territory ‘metis’ based on ‘phronesis’ provides the knowledge resource that is turned to. ‘Metis’ is ‘a dense type of knowledge, wily and cunning, full of inventive ploys’ (Baumard 1999 p.68). ‘Individuals gifted with ‘metis’ use their underlying and tacit knowledge of a puzzling situation to impose their decisions and clear themselves a path’ (Baumard 1999 p.75). This is a ‘thick knowledge’: ‘that which is born of ‘a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of which are superimposed or bound together, and which are simultaneously strange, irregular and inexplicable’” (Geertz quoted in Baumard 1999 p.205). It is also ‘soft’ knowledge, ‘a rich and tacit understanding of the functioning of an organization’ acquired through socialization (Riveline quoted in Baumard 1999 p.61).

As a result, Baumard is unsurprisingly optimistic about the potential of such knowledge and its problem solving abilities to respond to crisis, although there is a caveat. He speaks of tacit knowledge as a source of ‘wisdom and ruse’. The suggestion opens up the possibility of both creativity and negativity and paves the way for the techniques of hortatory power that depend so much on resources of tacit knowledge for their operation.

I am less convinced than Baumard of the potential of such information and skills in the crisis provoked by fresh contextual questions. I can agree that where knowledge has apparently fewer ideological and interpretative constraints there is less detail, more space, more creativity and imagination, more elusiveness to the codification and control that can
paralyze organizations in the face of crisis. I have argued above that such a capacity saves what might be described as the 'other' from determinism.

There is much scope for eccentricity and wildness as well as constructive exploration in the tacit since it is freed from the constraints that create and necessarily accompany explicit knowledge. It has areas of untamed territory. This may be useful. It can also be dangerous. Some of the suggested insights from my data, and the anecdotal evidence and experience of church life and the examples of Narrative and Communication use of the Bible would indicate as much. This leads to a point not engaged with by Baumard. Tacit knowledge given its origins is not ideologically neutral. Even the imagination works within an ideological context. The scope of crisis response is therefore limited. The tacit, influenced as it is by its own masked ideologies can be confused and tormented and unreliable for management. This adds to the difficulties for the Methodist Church, faced by crisis and struggling to find resources to respond. The Bible and education may constitute such a resource. However, it is one that is ideologically tormented, and to deal with that more than a management perspective is needed.

Baumard's analysis of tacit knowledge is inevitably limited by his narrow organizational agenda. When tacit knowledge is approached from a cultural perspective, it is clear that it is not simply 'metis' type knowledge that is tacit, but many other types as well albeit in unarticulated, highly unorganized forms with complex historical roots and the accretions that shape tradition and prejudice as well. Tacit knowledge is a huge part of what provides cultural, ideological, symbolic capital or resources.
The difficulty of giving definition and shape to such an area does not mean that there are no major ideological components to be considered. Socialization and enculturation are not neutral processes. Even where their colonization is not complete, perhaps in some forms of 'local' tacit knowledge, ideologies and discourses serve to shape action, reaction and stereotypes. The existence of such an ideologically sensitive resource serves to explain the way that narratives can be so readily accepted, as for instance, in my data, by some Disciple students. In this case the echoes of information and ideological strands offer an authenticating source and a consequent sense of legitimisation for narratives. It is to its advantage that its inevitable vagueness and lack of detail contribute to its effectiveness at this point. The strong links necessary for genuine legitimisation can be skipped over. Furthermore, if as I began to suggest above, the tacit simultaneously strange and familiar can serve to embody the other, that 'other' is different and challenging but also friendly, accessible, approachable, comfortable and even domesticated.

The seriousness of these issues and their complexity is evident in that the games played around the changing modes of knowledge are intense, acute and painful as Baumard himself recognises. When he discusses the articulation and organizational internalization of tacit knowledge such issues are further elucidated.

As for the transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (articulation) and the transformation of the explicit into the tacit (internalization), these are the two engines of organizational learning; although the articulation of tacit knowledge has been somewhat neglected by theories of organizational learning.

Baumard 1999 p.78
It is clear that for the reasons suggested above we find difficulty in expressing this knowledge, but as Baumard sees clearly, we also defend it. Power games with their range of motivations and tactics can be and are played in this territory. They will be considered below when hortatory power is discussed.

Finally, despite his recognition that in organizations 'tacit knowledge can act either to liberate or work mischief...' (Baumard 1999 p.205) Baumard tends towards a positive and uncritical approach towards the nature of tacit knowledge. He does not face the negative prejudice, ultra-conservative attitudes and ideologies springing unconsciously from tacit knowledge that are familiar in the experience of local church life, and likely to be harder to deal with and more destructive in impact because they are hidden. In the context of voluntary organizations with their looser structure, boundaries and aims, such possibilities are even more potent. Their sheer local oddness may give the holder further reason to fear instinctively both the centralizing challenge and the resulting local attempts at articulation and the unacceptability they might demonstrate. The question of local knowledges is raised again.

Local Knowledges

Baumard makes it clear that,

Knowledge and cognition are very often territorialized in organisations, partly by the actors bounded rationality but equally by their determination to protect their knowledge, which they associate with power and authority'.

Baumard 1999 p.14
As noted above, the concern that I share with Foucault is the exploration of local knowledges, that insofar as they can be described as ‘unheard, crushed or denied validity in the dominant systems of power’, (Foucault in Carrette 2000 p.29) have much in common with tacit knowledge. There is of course no reason why all local knowledge should be tacit, although much of it clearly is, and in those circumstances the tacit local is particularly intractable.

Quoting the writings of Daft and Weick, Baumard describes how organisations are so shaped by their history that stimuli from ‘outside’ are ‘captured, deformed and filtered’ in a local ‘misinterpretation system’. This system shapes self-understanding and the goals associated with them, and as a result ‘organisations very often act on projections of themselves’ (Baumard 1999 p.9). The local is dominant, and ‘a local coherence is sought often without taking into account the global’ (Baumard 1999 p13). In a Connexional church like Methodism the tension between the local and the Connexional is a constant and dominant feature of life. Again such local knowledge is not necessarily tacit, although the pattern would appear to be that it is only articulated when it is forced to do so. The ‘fuzzy zones’ that protect the local in the organisations Baumard has investigated are equally apparent in Methodist church life and again contribute towards the silence that surrounds much local knowledge, and the stubbornness with which it is defended. As will become clear below, the use of the ‘fuzzy boundary’ is a technique of hortatory power that both builds on and can undermine local knowledges by turn.

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2 In the face of globalization there may well be by direct consequence a rediscovery of the local – if so then the local may become more articulated and of course less tacit. However, the local may remain tacit, but its impact becomes more powerful.
Local knowledge is shaped within a community of practice, such as the local church and as such, in common with all knowledge ‘its sense is derived from its application and is lost once it is removed from the context of its utility’ (Baumard 1999 p.16). This major threat is acute for local knowledge. Local tradition gives a momentum and roots to knowledge in that context. It shapes narrative and as such secures belonging. Examples would be the ways that it can be initially and at times temporarily generated by a charismatic minister or lay leader who commands personal affection, loyalty or affiliation or who dominates the church by force of personality. It may also and more determinedly be the product of a theological tradition – in the Methodist context, Wesleyan, Primitive, evangelical, otherwise conservative, liberal, intellectual or as in one of the early sketches, rural Brethren.

Such illustrations point to other qualities that make the power games in this area so intractable. The local can build on any antagonism to the general, and to hold to local knowledge, which can be in the first instance simply a negative riposte, might proceed to find resources for rationalising that position. I would argue that my opening sketch of the rural Brethren congregation showed clear evidence of this.

The church has a number of particular problems with such local knowledge. There is a strong sense that the Methodist Church in general is a cultural arbitrary, with a body of tacit knowledge that is unarticulated and possibly unarticulable generally. There is a strong discourse of ‘creativity on the margins’ within church life, that from its very
origins is faced with the prospect both renewing and destructive of local energies and the knowledges that sustain and interpret them. Where such knowledge can be articulated in a way that makes it accessible to organisational internalisation and resulting exploration and reflection its positive potential can be engaged. However, for the reasons indicated, much of its power resides in its tacit, unarticulated quality that is thereby unaccountable to the general and difficult to control. An insurrection of local knowledges may be desirable in some measure. It may have the promise of a resource that together with wider resources of more general expression of tacit knowledge can sustain the struggle for the sort of renewed subjectivity that Foucault seeks to provide the ground for in his analysis of pastoral power. Local knowledge, particularly in its tacit state is not though without complexity or menace.

Tacit and local knowledge and the crisis of decline in Methodism

Baumard explores tacit knowledge using case studies of four companies at points of crisis and explores a theory of tacit knowledge in that context. His conclusion is that such knowledge is a crucial resource for an organization in crisis. While his insights are not easily transferable from business organizations to the even more complex world of a voluntary organization with a long and complex history, deep cultural roots and idiosyncratic local territorial expressions, they are relevant and can open up further analytical horizons.
The crisis of decline facing Methodism has been clearly charted numerically. It has been beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse that decline in any sort of detail, but a key feature that links the engagement of tacit knowledge, education and the Bible is worth noting. Bourdieu recognizes that the educational system and the mass media are ‘effective enough to destroy marginal traditional cultures’ (Bourdieu 2000 p.76). The Methodist Church is clearly the victim of the loss of educational and cultural capital. It is ironical that the church, which has done so much to promote educational activity, should have fallen victim to its processes, and then to turn to education to respond to the crisis. In doing so however it finds itself faced with the increasing secularization of the tacit knowledge and values that shape education. The crisis deepens.

Both aspects of the patterns of power that reflect Foucault’s sovereignty pattern, the authoritative and the ethical have to face this danger. It is no doubt exacerbated for the latter in particular by the increasing individualization of society. It is instructive to note that LAMP arose out of the search for authority in the face of an ethical dilemma, which may support such an analysis. The sense of belonging that reflects a regulative pattern of power can likewise be seen in crisis in the light of the search for narratives and the making of meanings that might serve to sustain it.

If Baumard is correct in perceiving that organizations find resources in their tacit knowledge to respond to crisis, then it is likely that they also intuitively turn there in hope. As the Methodist Church and others turn intuitively to the Bible, a significant relationship between the Bible and tacit knowledge is possible. People sense they might
find there resources for what Bourdieu describes as a ‘symbolic reactivation’ of their declining culture (Bourdieu 1977 p.36). A correlation between the Bible and tacit knowledge is hinted at and needs further exploration.

A similar point can be made from another perspective. It has strong resonance with the record of religious communities in crisis. Bourdieu makes clear how the prophetic leadership so characteristically sought in times of crisis depends on tacit knowledge.

The successful prophet is the one who formulates for the groups or classes he addresses a message which the objective conditions determining the material and symbolic interests of those groups have predisposed them to attend to and take in...the religious or political prophet always preaches to the converted and follows his disciples at least as much as they follow him...they have objectively mandated him to give them lessons’.

Bourdieu 1977 p.25

It is the resource of tacit knowledge that is activated by effective crisis leadership.

Before looking more closely at the consequences of linking the tacit with education and the Bible, it is important for understanding the nature of the power games being played to note something of the processes involved in engagement with tacit knowledge resources. Again Baumard proves helpful.

**Processes of Tacit knowledge**

Baumard offers a pattern of how tacit knowledge is accessed for the benefit of the organization in crisis. In brief, articulation of the tacit is followed by a process of organizational internalization of the newly articulated resource for the benefit of the
organization. Such a process is not without pain. Articulation is often simply very hard work. The skills of articulation are those of the already articulate, the more highly educated and educationally alert. Thus it can create an acute sense of inferiority and vulnerability particularly in a voluntary organization like the church, where people have chosen to belong on the basis and experience of a discourse of acceptance that does not involve such sophisticated articulation. Tacit knowledge can feel so intimate and once articulated sound so banal that the demand for its exposure to the public gaze may be felt as deeply invasive. There is pain and resistance attached to articulation. The early Methodist practice of testimony in the public arena of church worship is no longer a typical feature of church life and that indicates a deep sense of individual privacy attaching to personal belief. The less articulated belief is, the more tacit it becomes. The potential for offending that sort of sensitivity can also be provoked in my context by the assessment, examination or competency requirements of contemporary adult education. Hence the great value of the sense of safe belonging in the Disciple group for learning and articulation, or the anonymity of Whitby for testing out and exploring possibilities of articulation from a safe distance.

A further aspect of this question can be seen in the way that the Methodist Church has attempted to access these engines that produce organizational knowledge, articulation and internalization, through a process of codification such as Our Calling. Attempts to develop vision or mission statements can be experienced as individually invasive. Resistance takes the form less as explicit opposition and rather more as apathy, neglect or non-use. Codification of knowledge resources in ‘mission language’ reflects an
organizational need to help people through the ambiguities of crisis to respond to decline. OC and the Priorities offer themselves as a clarification of tacit values and discourses that command loyalty and offer hope. Where they have succeeded in presenting themselves as essentially defensive of individual sensitivities they have been accepted at some level, where the attempt to move articulation into organizational internalization has trespassed into areas of pain, they have been resisted. It is the same with adult education projects, which is unsurprising given the close links of the latter with tacit knowledge. The process of articulation is very close to the reflective practice at the heart of adult education. Those who find it easy naturally respond the best. The less articulate may reject everything.

However, while knowledge is unarticulated it remains both unexplored and unauthenticated or legitimized. These two movements both carry promise and hope, but also threat - the one of engaging with the different and the adjustment necessary, the other about the facing of judgement. Both can be caught up in the pain of counter-articulation presented by a collision of the tacit and an alternative articulation. The personalization of knowledge that is a form of avoidance and common in the face of such challenges bears and uncanny resemblance to the Communication Use.

The irony is that in this light educational approaches adopted can through processes of codification work towards reducing articulation thereby shutting off the tacit knowledge resource as easily as releasing such knowledge through properly fostered processes of articulation. The question of tacit knowledge and education is raised.
Tacit Knowledge and Education

There are elements in this description of tacit knowledge that suggest that much education, especially adult education is fundamentally the facilitation of articulation. Clearly that is not the whole story. The acquisition of new knowledge through formal pedagogical and schooling methods cannot be ruled out. However the challenges of reflective practice models - double loop learning; the exploration of theory in use and the challenge from espoused theory; the experiential cycle - are concerned with the teasing out and articulation of the tacit, both its information and its interpretive discourses and ideologies. This is crucial because when tacit knowledge retreats and is allowed to continue not only unarticulated but also unexamined and indeed unknown, it can lie hidden more deeply and feed the roots of prejudice.

The question is being raised for adult education in this context, ‘How far can anything genuinely new be learned?’ There will of course be different answers with different sorts of knowledge and skill. Any new knowledge will be processed through interpretive filters and so there is an inevitably conservative impetus. At the same time when new insights are generated, where do they come from? Presumably, for adults, it emerges from the imposing of new contextual factors on tacit knowledge. As Polanyi suggests,

[So the act of discovery, of learning] 'appears personal and unspecified. It begins with a solitary familiarity with a problem, through scraps picked up here and there which seem to offer signs of something hidden. We look at the fragments of something unknown, yet coherent. This attempt at vision has to transform itself into a personal obsession, because a problem that does not worry us is not a problem.'

Polanyi 1967 p.76
Any authentic educational project therefore needs to help the learner access the tacit territories of their knowledge otherwise the risk of knowledge without wisdom becomes acute. How much is adult learning an interpretation of tacit resources in the light of new questions? On any estimate, an adult educational project that is insensitive to or unaware of the tacit is doomed.

Moving to the more tightly adult Christian education focus, a further set of insights emerges.

An explanation is available for the reaction when adult Christian education is perceived, rightly or wrongly, as an attempt to impose orthodoxy and dogmatism regardless of tacit resources. When adult Christian education is perceived correctly as such, the vulnerable tacit knowledge around and upon which identity has been constructed can face exposure and humiliation. Such a perception of the learning or educational experience is arguably even more acute for adults whose investment in their tacit knowledge is deeper and of longer standing than that of children or younger people. Education can be seen and no doubt sometimes is, intentionally or unintentionally, an assault on or a colonizing exploitation of tacit knowledge. The Christian discourse of stewardship of God-given gifts stemming from, for example the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) can be seen as a narrative technique providing a rationale for insisting on the articulation of tacit knowledge. This is a weapon that may well be considered part of the hortatory armoury.
As noted above, it may be that the Bible, certainly as used in Disciple and at Whitby, somehow provides a safe route through such processes. It may do so not only by offering a (selective) discourse derived from it to legitimize possible pain, but also because as a tool it gives information for creative interpretation, with the freedom through its narrative spaces⁴ and the possibility of authenticity it provides in the Communication Use. In addition, as reservoir of potential tacit knowledge, albeit in the characteristically disorganized form that such knowledge takes, it provides opportunity for encountering what can appear as authentically other.

Tacit Knowledge and the Bible

As a book the Bible offers an accessible ‘storing’ place for tacit knowledge, although whether the degree of ‘management’ involved precludes such a suggestion is open to question. As Scripture its potential as an oral/aural resource reflects Baumard’s suggestion that organizations manage the codifications of knowledge, ‘the uncodified is left to mythology’ (Baumard 1999 p.21).

The fact is that the knowledge the Bible appears to offer is not in the details of Bible information, (where so much of what had been acquired through school and Sunday school, and liturgy in terms of detailed knowledge has simply been forgotten) but in the forgotten narratives, patterns, images, principles, bits of stories or sayings and in the

⁴ ‘Constructing histories about how our subjectivities are formed (making the agendas and categories of the subject problematic) can provide a potential space for alternative acts and alternative intentions that are not articulated through the available commonsenses.’ Popkewitz & Brennan 1998 p.25
ideological themes that sustain them.\(^4\) These latter have a quality that is both elusive to codification and yet intuitively authenticating. Narrative Use can shape some of these bits up and articulate them when required and this in turn gives a sense of the rediscovery of knowledge and a ring of scriptural authority to such processes. The Communication Use does the same thing more immediately.

The Bible therefore offers an accessible explicit authoritative resource that emerges from the tacit and can handle ambiguity as Baumard suggests in a way that enables it to speak with apparently unequivocal power in crisis situations. Such a dynamic demonstrates the way in which an ideology or culture makes the ‘tacit’ possible and functional. It gives it a role and a territory in relation to a distinctive culture. The Bible and its use in the church are clear example of this.

At a number of other points the Bible offers clear parallels to tacit knowledge in its use.

The interpretation processes echo the articulation of tacit knowledge – and that offers another aspect of the tacit definition, knowledge that persists but has fallen out of use because the occasion of its use no longer exists. The Bible represents tacit knowledge in the sense that it is information open to reinterpretation, that in turn indicates a facet of tacit knowledge open to ideological reshaping through interpretation, possibly, if not predominantly in action.

\(^4\) My research has not been a test of Bible knowledge, existing or acquired, and so my argument must necessarily remain speculative and anecdotal in certain aspects.
It is a tacit resource of knowledge that echoes a community of practice that has largely passed away. The community can in some measure be revived by educational methods that are enhanced by the knowledge that the Bible holds tacitly. The belonging of the Disciple groups provide an example.

A significant development of this use is picked up by Baumard when he describes how ‘organisations often interpret past successes as evidencing their competence and the adequacy of their procedures, so they try to lock their behaviours into existing patterns’ (Baumard 1999 p.38). The long traditional memory of the church explores its history for the secrets of success and comes up with aspects of the use of the Bible, and possibly particular theological approaches. Such things at least are replicable and do not depend on the shifting sands of levels of commitment or enthusiasm or historical context. The Bible is much more easily accessed than theological tradition, not least because it is more diverse, less specific, expressed in story, proverb and used as Scripture in the liturgy. As a result it becomes the knowledge resource of preference, given the democratising power games it permits and promotes. Perhaps it is the only option. Its hauntology with its sense of threat and familiarity as tacit knowledge make it highly acceptable. Its perceived record would appear to promise a success that is impossible to resist.

A use is thus suggested – the replication of success – but how does that operate? The case for its reinstatement at the centre of church life is a presumed solution that may not address the problem. Nevertheless the case has to be made, a rationale provided, and uses located. And of course uses have been found – the making of meanings, the
creation of narrative space, the opening up of aspects of the other that works towards the identity of the subject – all despite the fact that these may well not address the original problem.

Tacit knowledge and the Bible again correlate when issues are faced about the articulation and attempts at codification of Biblical information that closely reflect the processes of tacit knowledge. There is pain and resistance at the articulation and codification. The power of Scripture can introduce a power game that engages the politics of the eternal. The implicit discourses of trusting obedience can provoke suspicion in the individual at the power games afoot. The discipline style of more biblically fundamentalist churches arouses resentment and resistance. The tacitly sensed ideologies, values and discourses have been tacitly rejected in favour of the tacit values and ideologies of the human sciences and cannot be restored easily however hard education tries. New contextual factors that have invested and begun to reshape tacit knowledge (as in my Glastonbury sketch) mean that the Bible does not necessarily answer the questions people are asking in the manner they require – hence it struggles to present itself as relevant. A response is to change the question and to find a rationale for doing so.

By the very nature of its content the Bible resists codification and the threat of ‘over-interpretation’ in the development of ‘Bible teaching’. Internalization as I have suggested provokes the spectre of the moral weight of the ‘politics of eternity’ with its questions and processes of judgement and repentance. These are only likely to be
engaged with if the tacit knowledge is deeply empathetic. Internalisation in the Christian discourse is initially a predominantly individual response and consequently, as repentance and commitment, profoundly challenging and disturbing.

A final point of correlation between the Bible and tacit knowledge is the pattern of a limited resource of information that lends itself to unlimited interpretation, which is re-energized every time new contextual questions make demands or the process of apologetics or counter-articulation is required. The danger lurking here is of 'over-interpretation' at which point a loss of meaning can discredit the interpreted information, the more so if it is 'soft' and tacit rather than 'hard' and explicit. Over-interpretation such as might easily result from the 'making of meanings' can have the effect of trivializing the resource on which it is built.

The identification of such correlations between the Bible and tacit knowledge points to the highly problematic nature of both. To 'articulate the Bible', to attempt to codify it in educational processes in ways such as defining its teachings is as likely to provoke resistance as interest. Because of the sheer complexity of the issues involved, the ferocity and often blatant nature of the power games or a deeply felt need to preserve the tacit as tacit, there are as many signs of resistance to Bible use as of its attraction. This may be by dissimulation or simply ignoring it. The lingering potential of the Bible therefore owes a great deal to its location in the territory of tacit knowledge. The decline of 'by rote' learning in school and Sunday School means the location is ever smaller and more distant. The very fact of the domination of the Narrative and Communication Uses
which are so strongly dominated by the subject as learner, confirms the marginal nature of engagement with the Bible in the context of contemporary culture.

In my data it is by the processes of Narrative and Communication Uses that the major tacit knowledge resource that is the Bible is used to engage with changing context. It provides resources for change as new questions are asked and new insights develop. Of course tacit knowledge can be used to resist change as well as for effective change and problem solving. In the playground the powerful and painful games that featured in educational processes again take place, and with added edge, because of the politics of eternity.

Hortatory power and tacit knowledge

It is part of the Foucauldian challenge to make the patterns or rules of the power games that purport to be ‘telling the truth’ visible and open to critique. At a number of points I have raised the question of ‘hortatory power’. In the light of the discussion of tacit knowledge I am now in a position to clarify that term.

My thinking about hortatory power has developed in the light of Foucault’s notion of pastoral power. There have been points at which I had thought it might prove to be an alternative source of understanding the nature and workings of power. The reality seems to be that hortatory power is an aspect of Foucault’s pastoral power and finds its

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5 'Make the rules for telling the truth visible and open to critique' Popkevitz &Brennan 1998 p.29
distinction, which I believe is worth retaining, in the way that it provides a refinement of the methodology or tone of the techniques of pastoral power.

As recognized above, Foucault found the roots of pastoral power in the model provided by the Christian pastor. The medieval confessional offered the way in which the knowledge of the inside of people's minds, the truth of the individual, provided in turn a knowledge of the conscience and the ability to direct it (Foucault 2002 p.333). Foucault argued that with the cessation of ecclesiastical institutionalization and its consequent loss of vitality since the eighteenth century the function of pastoral power has spread and multiplied outside the church. A transmutation has taken place. From an orientation concerned with the 'simple' aim of eternal salvation, it has become concerned with a multiplicity of more 'worldly' aims. This multiplication of aims was matched by a multiplication of agents who 'focused the development of knowledge of man' around two roles: 'one globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population; the other, analytical, concerning the individual'. There is a key space for the hortatory both in the 'mass appeal' that engages populations as peer groups, memberships or congregations, and of course in the generalized knowledge of the soul, built on the experience of the confession and other Christian practices of self-examination. Such power is totalizing and individualizing, and the hortatory method a powerful technique. So far as the limited scope of my argument is concerned, while the eighteenth century saw a clear loss of vitality in certain aspects of the institutional church, it witnessed the burgeoning of marginal and often local revival movements, not least as Foucault himself recognizes, Methodism (Foucault 1979 p.116). While he correctly identifies the persistence of the
concern for knowledge of the soul and the attempt to control the conscience that was a feature of the early Methodist ‘classes’, the huge dominance of preaching as a feature of the technology of power and knowledge provides a different perspective on the operation of pastoral power in the church from one focused on the confessional. Its heritage can still be seen beyond the church, not least in education, and indeed anywhere that control is sought over the actions of others by the manifold techniques of persuasion.

Foucault explores how an analysis of techniques of domination needs to be balanced by techniques of the self in order to understand the modern subject. This is not a question that has escaped the church or its adult Christian education. The multiplicity of emerging or rediscovered discourses on spirituality with their strong individual emphasis is evidence of this. The echoes with the Communication Use and the making of meanings are clear. One of the features of the current realignment of church life as it moves on from historic denomination.alism is the way in which hortatory power is being rejected as a technique of domination.

McNay quotes Foucault:

It (pastoral power) is a form of power which makes individuals subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.’ [She goes on to comment] ‘... what renders the modern state so powerful is its annexation of such techniques of subjectivization.’

McNay 1994 p.123

The hortatory is one of these techniques. In the church the retention of preaching and the sermon has let it linger on in a relatively crude form that has been widely rejected (hence
one of the reasons for decline). Its characteristic features can however be found in the
generic world of persuasion and encouragement that has built on and extended far beyond
preaching origins. Within the church its continuation still looms large despite the
attempts embodied in adult Christian education to move beyond it.

In Foucault’s view our societies proved to be really demonic since they happened to
combine two games – the city-citizen game and the shepherd-flock game – in what we
call modern states. The historical relationship of the church to the emergence of the
modern state is complex and there is a point at which the weight of momentum passes
from church to the state actually aided by the church or at least components of religious
ideologies. There is an area of exploration here to be developed. The two games
overlap. As the scale and complexity of the games changes so the balance shifts as well.
The universal church disappears and is replaced by fractured national churches and
voluntarist independent groups. They learn their lessons from the city-citizen game. The
hortatory technique is one of those lessons encouraged by the sheer power and resilience
of the preaching approach. Foucault glimpses something of this in his examination of the
early historical role of the ‘police’, where controlling communication supplied
individuals ‘with a little extra life - and …the state with a little extra strength’. While
suggesting that it was done he does not describe the actual methods by which it was done.
I would argue both that the one key method was the hortatory, and that the church
continued that method and its techniques. The church’s preaching and its games came to
be hallowed by tradition. The state’s techniques became ever more sophisticated, and the
techniques of education, business and other organizations learnt the lessons well (Foucault 2002 p.319).

Pastoral power builds on the way that individuals can be ‘tied to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge’ and hortatory power is a tactic of that dynamic. The hortatory power techniques are characterized by the distinction between confession and preaching. Preaching is less labour intensive and, by a generalization of the principles of operation of the human soul, seeks through the pulpit to shape the patterns in that general direction well enough to exert control. It adds the dimension of the crowd and the resulting pressure of peers. It also achieves the goal of freedom from the power of the confessional and the aspiration of liberty of conscience. Of course the firm expectation is that such liberty will lead to the practice of faith, and so the ironies of hortatory power take shape. Hortatory power recognizes that the limits of resources prevent detailed operation at the individual level and with the model of preaching at its heart sets out to control through a generalized knowledge, typically of the Christian narrative of sin and salvation. Through its techniques of exhortation, encouragement and persuasion, a species of freedom is offered to the individual, but characteristically in terms of a pattern of ‘trust and obey’, service to God, even going so far with Biblical precedents and legitimation, to use the language of sacrifice and slavery - an ironical extinction of self freely offered in the struggle for subjectivity.

By hortatory power I envisage the advocacy, implementation and persuasive techniques applied to the project of establishing a normalizing discourse. Because ideologies and
discourses are most powerful when internalized and therefore unconscious, the hortatory techniques given to implanting and reinforcing them are most effective when done surreptitiously. It proceeds by building on knowledge that is or has become tacit. Like the prophet noted above it follows as much as leads, and consistently builds on the possible to achieve its goals. It does so by, for instance, tactics such as partial articulation that echoes strongly enough to catch the attention, entertain, inspire, motivate and train. It is not above the characteristic ‘metis’ skills that adopt ruse and cunning in the creativity of the games it plays.

The close links of hortatory power with tacit knowledge and its working are obvious given the nature of the techniques of subjectivization that have been alluded to, and its links with culture, habitus and ideology, that are truly effective when rooted into the tacit and its deep powers of engagement of the individual subject.

Hortatory power operates best when a tacit ideology is unchallenged, as arguably in the medieval church. It is not entirely lost although it takes on a different and weaker aura of power when the ideological foundations are exposed and questioned. They have to be effectively argued and established by persuasion. At that point the considerable strengths and experience evident in the techniques I have listed come to the fore. The problem is twofold. In themselves they are increasingly obvious and open to suspicion. More serious is the reality that the cause they seek to serve, for the reasons discussed above, is so problematic. As Bourdieu might put it, while hortatory techniques seek to sustain a
habitus, that habitus is now tormented, caught between traditional pedagogical actions and a declining pedagogical authority.

**Hortatory power and freedom**

Hortatory power and freedom have already been touched on and need further brief consideration. Foucault, in search of freedom, is concerned to analyze pastoral power in its refusal to liberate us from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. Hortatory power is motivated by its need to control, and at the same time by elements in its ideological roots that champion reflection, critique and facilitating freedom. Contemporary adult Christian education is also caught up in that dilemma. It is committed (more in some strands than others) to individual liberation and transformation, but the temptation is always there to use its successful methods to revert to ideological control. The pressure of the institution and the need for equilibrium can move it strongly in that direction. The Inspiration/Training polarity expresses this dilemma with the danger of the threat to freedom at both poles.

There is a sense in which education is both the refinement and possibly the ‘redemption’ of hortatory power, but it has not finally achieved liberation. The tormented dilemma at its heart is still evident in its uncertainties and techniques in the adult Christian education of the church. There is an ugly collision between the ancient, increasingly unsophisticated, but crudely effective techniques when the knowledge, tacit and explicit, empowered by tradition leads to a generalized interpretation of the human condition that
enable triggers of guilt, attraction, inspiration and domination to be pressed in order to impose ideology. This is set agonizingly over against the attempt at apologetic wrestling refining ideological resources in the face of contextual challenges particularly from the liberal, humanist hegemony.

Hortatory power and the Bible

Hortatory power has strong associations with the Bible. It cannot escape them. The methods and techniques of hortatory power and the tricks in its power games and the ways these are facilitated by and have serious impact on both education and the Bible. The Bible has provided the stuff and the models of preaching. Through its close and muddled relations with notions of the ‘Word’ and so of preaching, they are not merely archaeological but genealogical and continue to shape the ways that the Bible is used. The slippage between Book and Scripture provides a fascinating indication of the methods of hortatory power, calling at one point upon history or the hermeneutic tradition and associations with Book, and at another on the aural echoes that belong to the tacit authority of Scripture. Bible and the hortatory have fed and built on one another from their beginnings. That will become clear in a brief examination of some of the more pertinent and obvious methods of hortatory power.
Methods and characteristics of hortatory power

Given that my question concerns the 'use' of the Bible as an epistemological and educational resource, this survey of significant features of the tactics of hortatory power is particularly important. The methods comprise many of the tricks of the trade of persuasion, but gain added if not sinister significance when explored in relation to such a culturally powerful resource as the Bible. The arena in which hortatory power operates has been explored, and the tricks it uses therefore can be seen to engage the roots of human subjectivity. The fact that the hortatory project in its more traditional preaching format is a failing one gives its significance a somewhat plaintive quality. The impact of these techniques on the use of the Bible in adult Christian education are not entirely anachronistic however, and may well at significant points be generalizable more widely than in the church.

Their overall impact is an attempt at endorsing and thereby reinforcing the cultural arbitrary by handling complexity with 'fuzziness' and oversimplification. It would be at least arguable that mass communication dealing in short time spans with little opportunity and motivation for more sophisticated reflection always leads to this result.

Hortatory power operates with a number of key techniques.

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6 It is important to recognize however the continued power of preaching in other cultures, including some of the migrant Christian cultures represented in London Methodism.
1. **Oversimplification — the educational risk**

As already suggested fuzziness (a quality of tacit knowledge) and oversimplification are the main techniques. Examples are legion, although the one noted above and mentioned at other points in the thesis concerning the use of the various ‘Word’ discourses in the Bible makes the point very clearly. Oversimplification sets out to mystify and thrives on allusion and echo. Bourdieu refers to this area when he comments on ‘prophetic quasi-systematization, with its allusions and ellipses conducive to pseudo-understanding and mis-understanding’ (Bourdieu 1977 p.26). Baumard states that the reduction of complexity is ‘anti-learning’ (Bourdieu 1977 p.17). It makes much easier and thereby more painful the issue of including and excluding that is so significant a part of the politics of identity and belonging.\(^7\) The use of Bible stories or texts in a vague referential way particularly one that ignores context or takes no account of the weight of different discourses in the Bible succeeds in evoking the echoes of tacit knowledge. Such practices are widely condemned in some circles, but it is far from easy for any preacher or teacher to avoid and even the most resolute critic can fall prey to them. The demands of hortatory tactics probably leave no choice. Which raises the important question in response to Baumard, whether complexity itself is in fact also anti-educational? Complexity can be as mystifying as oversimplification when it produces poor communication and ‘too much detail’.

\(^7\) See the comments noted above on Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons in Aldridge 2000 p.107ff.
2. Diminishing difference and distance - the epistemological risk

Oversimplification works with boundaries in a particularly characteristic way. The raiding of academic insight or of the insights of the human sciences for the sermon illustration can produce the notion that there are no boundaries between disciplines and approaches. Such a strategy is designed to give knowledge authority or authenticity by the appeal to the academic or rational, but if it is not thought through it is hard to sustain and likely to be self-defeating.

Perhaps no hortatory technique is more sinister than the reduction of distance between the reader and the author in the use of the Bible. A discourse that emphasizes the commonality of human experience regardless of time, context and intention runs great risks as it diminishes difference and distance. Usually such epistemological risks are simply disregarded given the strength of the hortatory motive of producing and sustaining a particular discourse, ideology or habitus.

3. Idealism and the evocation of utopia

In a helpful reflection on the debate around the learning society, Rikowski offers a critique and analysis of the idealist language used. He quotes Harris on educational idealism: ‘it denies, ignores, misconceptualizes and renders unproblematic certain important factors about the real world of daily experience and practice’. He argues that it conflates social institutions with abstract ideals and gives schools as an example, although churches would as easily serve as an example in my context. He continues, such theory ‘relies on a-historic accounts of human nature and social development in
‘attempting to justify its observations and conclusions’ (Ranson 1998 p.222). Olsen is quoted on utopianism, which he describes as ‘the process of rendering fictional, idealized worlds into finished forms or ‘blueprints’ within text or other forms of discourse’ as ‘the search for the good pattern of life in an a-historical cosmos’ (Ranson 1998 p.224). The clear and intentional use of the language of preaching in such a way is entirely characteristic of the church. The way that discourses around ‘mission’ or the Kingdom of God, those twin utopias - one of method the other of goal, have been so used are clear examples and they both deserve careful critique.

4. Communication skills

The church is an oral/aural culture, certainly in its origins, and arguably has remained so in important aspects despite the devotion to books that can be observed, most obviously of course the Bible. This has placed a huge premium on the display of effective communication skills. There are points at which the exhilaration of communication becomes an end in itself. Rhetorical skills are taught, cultivated and celebrated. They can outweigh any educational or epistemological consideration. Entertainment and inspiration are often the key qualities in any event, be it for purposes of worship or of education. Passion and enthusiasm cover a multitude of sins. An effective use of local knowledge, explicit or tacit can also be a highly effective technique for engaging attention, interest and motivation. These characteristics are welcomed by participants and students to such a degree that their production becomes a primary concern of the preacher, teacher or leader. A full investigation of such techniques is beyond the scope of this thesis but needs further investigation, perhaps as a part of the reflective practice of
the preaching training project. The fact is of course that the need to focus on communication skills and success in that area can be every bit as anti-epistemological and anti-educational as the other features of hortatory power.

5. Other hortatory techniques

There are a number of other hortatory techniques that demonstrate a problematic nature in relation to education and to knowledge. The appeal to common sense in the face of complex expertise; the generalizing of the significance of the individual to the universal; the eschatological urgency of the present moment; the call of the individual to empathize with and be faithful to the outcast Christ; the identity of the poor and marginal with the individual and the special; the notion of the way that inclusion within the Christian community and the Christian narrative means acceptance and freedom from being despised; the way being despised by the ‘world’ can become a badge of honour, and implicit here the drawing of distinctions to exclude – all these devices common from the sermon have their impact as in the power games around knowledge and adult Christian education. Of particular interest is the game that co-opts entirely foreign discourses by the simple device of mentioning them. The listener or student is offered some sense of the authority or authenticity of the discourse by referenced knowledge that has been plundered not learnt. Perhaps the most pervasive and powerful technique has to do with the shaping of the question that is to be addressed. The technique is to conjure a question that fits the answer available.
6. Motivation

The direct motives behind the use of hortatory power are sometimes far from easy to identify. The hortatory discourse is so ancient and so deeply lodged in the tacit, that its use is instinctive rather than consciously motivated. The result is that reflection on its practice is difficult. It has passed into church life as ‘the way things are done’ to such and extent that it can be beyond question. The place of the sermon, its clearest vehicle, in church life, remains relatively unchallenged. Proposals and experiments around the style of sermon presentation may emerge, but not around the form itself. Given such a situation, the power games are masked within church life at least, and the attempt at reflection is inevitably deconstructive.

When the intention is overt – power and control games dedicated either to maintaining or defending the status quo, or promoting change through conversion for instance – hortatory techniques most clearly come into play. They justify such motives under discourses of pastoral care or mission for example, and the nature of the power dynamic is thereby masked by the catch phrase that registers deep in the local ideological hegemony. The evoking of utopia for the disruption or establishment of equilibrium would be an example of this. Such methods of hortatory power serve to hide the power games from the individuals and even the users themselves. That they so often do so under the guise of theological discourses does not justify the techniques, nor obviate their anti-educational impact. When the same techniques invest adult Christian education, however high the ostensible motives, they can produce a similar anti-educational impact. The method endangers the message and erodes the motives.
Explicit or tacit, the use of hortatory techniques involves a process of 'mis-recognition' or masking. The current crisis of decline and the threat to identity that it generates for the church combines with the sense of inadequacy that arises in the face of traditional narratives of triumph. The accuracy is clear and understandable in the suggestion that 'self deception helps to maintain self respect'.

The temptation to a resolutely puritanical deconstruction is great at this point. However, masking and mis-recognition are negatively loaded terms, and there is a sense in which the creativity of hortatory power also deserves recognition for more positive reasons. Its ability to tell stories and develop wider narratives, though of course fraught with danger, is as has been argued a source of identity, meaning and understanding. The challenge is the exhaustingly stringent one of constant reflection. It is never surprising when it becomes too demanding, the task is neglected and hortatory games allowed to flourish in their most negative ways.

7. The hortatory and the tacit

It is clear that tacit knowledge constitutes a major resource for hortatory techniques. They secure great success feeding off the echoes from the tacit and its hauntological aspects. It saves the efforts of argument and debate. Echoes can authenticate, inspire and motivate. In particular in my context, the use of Bible stories and texts in a vague referential way precisely serves to evoke the echoes of tacit knowledge. To associate such passages loosely with an academic or rational reference or fashionable appeal to the

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8 Fingarette quoted in Baumard 1999 p.205
human sciences can give then an immediate sense of credibility that in a process of reflection can prove hard to sustain. The epistemological and educational consequences are that the hortatory has to be resisted. It can be utterly destructive of knowledge and learning. The problem is the deep roots of the hortatory in the historical process of the evolution of modern institutions – both church and secular, and the transition of the techniques of the preacher into the hidden persuaders of popular culture.

Conclusion

My concern with hortatory power is that the way it engages my question and what that suggests for the adult Christian Bible teaching project points to the damage that can be done to education. I have no doubt that such concerns could extend to educational projects beyond the church. Hortatory power uses its techniques to advocate that which it cannot deliver. The notions of Biblical faith that my data suggest hortatory power aspires to promote are undeliverable. For a start because they are unidentifiable without unwarranted arbitrariness in the selection and simplification of material. Secondly the discourses they have produced have proved to be constantly usable to promote a subservient individualization that maintains the power patterns of equilibrium or serve the exploitative potential of visionary utopianism. The temptation of using Biblical resources to sustain local cultural arbitraries and succeed in maintaining equilibrium or setting in motion the precarious power games of utopian vision is hard to resist.
Because of its history of easy domination in such areas, and also of its continued local successes, hortatory power has established a hegemony of a particular habit of thought and pedagogic style. As a result, it has lost the opportunities and never developed the skills necessary for apologetics that values contextual questions and their complexities. It prefers rather an apologetics that values traditional (often partly tacit) knowledge with its oversimplifications and fuzziness that does not handle or find ways of engaging complexity, but avoids it.

This is the root of its tragedy and its danger. The ideologies that sustained and permitted such interpretations to be coherent and to work, in my case the Biblical and theological, have now lost their hold on the ideological territory of knowledge. Compared with more recent more scientific discourses that are dominant there, they are no longer credible. They linger ghost-like in the tacit, and find their partial victories in moments of spiritual revival of the new age or in fundamentalism, but in the ideological heritage of contemporary culture the day of their simplifications is gone. A part of the challenge for my question has been to identify and analyze the places in adult Christian education and knowledge where hortatory power techniques still linger destructively. My attempts to address the issue of hortatory power needs to reflect those of Foucault in relation to the pastoral power of which it is an aspect, ‘to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state’ (McNay 1994 p.124).

There is an educational ethical question lurking here, as there is wherever power issues are encountered. It manifests itself in the sleight of hand that takes place in the
reductionism that is a key hortatory tactic in LAMP where affirmation of the Bible is accompanied by subtle deconstruction. Such manipulation runs the risk of being unethical. By the same token, is hortatory power unethical when it is exercised and accepted unconsciously, because both parties collude? It must surely be unethical where one party is consciously exercising its tactics, although the judgement call at such a point is likely to be a difficult matter of degree. It is likely too that given its deep roots in tacit practice, hortatory power may even have a claim to innocence of motive on grounds of its exercise being unconscious. Such ‘innocence’ however, does not stop it being dangerous to the preaching and educational project.

For the individual and the organization struggling with such hortatory power issues, whether as protagonist or victim, King, once again following Gadamer suggests some hope. In his discussion of the handling of the danger of projecting one’s own interests on to the text he recommends a style of reflective awareness that is tantamount to ‘a form of methodological agnosticism’ (King 1999 p.75).

Perhaps the final and persisting question that is raised by hortatory power and the impact of its techniques on education, is whether inevitably and however well disguised, what it offers is a pedagogy of answers rather than an approach that resources adults to identify and wrestle with questions?
CHAPTER ELEVEN

REVIEWING THE POLARITIES AND POWER ANALYSIS

In this chapter I set out to reflect on the answers to my question that have been emerging through this thesis. To explore the question of Bible use through an analysis of the power games I have used two sets of analytical tools, the polarities that I developed from reflection on my own experience, and the power analysis offered by Foucault that is based on an identification of contested areas.¹

I will therefore:

- Examine each of the polarities
- Identify the significant contested areas.
- Summarize the results of the power analysis.
- Reflect on the consequences for the Narrative and Communication Uses.

The Polarities

The polarities have served to give shape to my discussion and its process of reflective analysis, and have proved an exceptionally useful tool. Each polarity has provoked considerable reflection on education and epistemology not only in the church but also

¹ As Apple suggests, 'culture — the way of life of a people, the constant and complex process by which meanings are made and shared — does not grow out of the pre-given unity of society. Rather in many ways it grows out of its divisions.' Apple 1993 p.45
more widely. They can of course bear further refinement and doing so would extend the possibilities of future research.

**The Individual/Institution Polarity**

The Methodist Church is an institution in decline as an individual denomination and as part of the process of marginalization experienced by Christianity in contemporary society. The accompanying loss of ideological and cultural hegemony has produced an institutionally defensive response that uses adult Christian education to shore up its epistemological resources as well as its organization and management.

Educationally, the increasing concern with accreditation, certification and competency in a more developed training project can be seen as a response to the challenges of the learning and knowledge society. The more concerted attempt to engage with secular learning recognition processes in L&D compared with WWA can be seen to indicate a lack of confidence as an institution that is not able to engage with other institutions or wider society unless it uses the same ‘language’. The sense of ideological marginalization and hegemonic loss is clear. Education is a path that appears to respond to the situation. The Disciple course, despite its cultural origins in America and semi-official institutional status provides in its language of ‘graduation’ a further clear example of such a response.

Epistemologically, the implicit acceptance of plurality, the consequent relativity of institutional knowledge resources and the implications for the church’s sense of and
claim to unique or ultimate hegemony can be seen in the shift from a truth discourse to the 'making of meanings' noted in the Whitby data. Again therefore, beyond the institution of the church is the dominating institution of the learning society. The wider liberal/humanist ideology is the pervasive cultural hegemony against which the church plays out its institutional role and it is inevitably constrained by it.

Institutional codification of knowledge and its expression is clear in such documents as OC and ‘The Priorities’ that attempt to provide a base for adult Christian education. This can be understood as a somewhat limited attempt to manage knowledge resources or in Baumard’s management perspective, to articulate tacit knowledge for syllabus determination and institutional control.

The institutional situation becomes more complex when the question is raised about the nature of the church as an institution requiring or expecting education of and knowledge in its members. It is essentially a voluntary organization although that is hard for the church to accept. It has attempted to provide and control resources for education and of knowledge but these are almost unenforceable in a volunteer culture where the individual subject is dominant.\(^2\) The competency approach that increasingly dominates adult Christian education with its focus on equipping for service and management roles within the church needs to enthuse in order to motivate. This is why hortatory power techniques to persuade, advocate or cajole in order to motivate are particularly important. A strong

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\(^2\) The resistance of church leaders and members to the notion of the church as a voluntary organization rather than a ‘vocational organization’ is one that as a trainer in the church I constantly encounter.
narrative of purpose is required if the institution is to sustain individual commitment to institutional ends.

This is the goal and the strength of the Disciple course, but as the evidence suggests, it is easy for individuals to hijack this intention in an institutionally weak situation for their own ends. Institutions like the churches offer themselves as a resource with a set of narrative possibilities that individuals recognize they can use or exploit to establish a sense of their own identity. The Disciple data highlighted the way its resources are used to fulfil a sense of belonging. There are within the churches, let alone the totality of society, multiple ways of belonging and different institutions and their different processes of inclusion offer ranges of choices. This institutional competition with its consumer-driven momentum provides the context and the generator of hortatory power and its attempt at an individualizing and totalizing dynamic. It is also the point at which individual resistance of assertive institutional power is indicated by the Communication Use of the Bible.

The momentum within the polarity is not all towards the individual because the individual appears to need the institution. The individual is facing the challenges and questions brought by new contexts. Where the questions arise then learning provided by the institution can thrive, unless the demand on time or intellectual resources is too great and results in alienation from the labour of education. For instance, the institutional attempt to control or to teach the Bible can reach a point where its demands on the student are judged overwhelming or irrelevant. This is indicated by the suspicion of the
expert. Even so, the individual still needs the institution to provide resources to engage with the Bible, not only because they may be the only ones available, but also in virtue of the way that institutional recognition can lend weight to the perceived quality of learning. This was evident in the power games that emerged from the Whitby data.

The voluntary institution in decline recognizes its need to focus on individuals, hence, in its educational approach, the concern to identify learning styles and acquired prior learning as a part of recruitment processes. This has to be weighed against the sheer accessibility of the Bible that leaves the key epistemological resource in the control of the individual. Such accessibility strengthens the individual pole, but appears to need an institutional context to support it and to provide authentication of exploration and learning.

Three themes that have emerged in my thinking around the identity of the individual subject also become significant in the dynamic of this polarity.

First is the role of the other (with its various definitions) that was explored in Chapter 9. The question in my essentially educational context is how far the dynamics of engagement with the other need the institutional setting of the church in order to define the shape of, approve, provide boundaries for and establish points of resistance against which individual exploration can take place. All my data naturally comes from within the context of this polarity, so while no conclusion can be reached, the question can justifiably be raised.
Secondly, Chapter 8 explored the notion of belonging, and the ways that individuals used educational and epistemological resources to establish it for themselves. In such a light an irony of Methodism may be that both a major cause and the symptom of decline are reflected in its strength. ‘Belonging’ has become the central narrative of the institution. It has become such because it is so valued but what seems to have happened is that an aspect of the ‘journey’ has been substituted for the institutional goal. Method has become purpose. As such it fails as an effective institutional narrative, but still provides resources and possibilities (albeit temporary ones) for the individual narrative.

Thirdly, a question emerges about the ‘local’ nature of institution as in the Brethren sketch in Chapter 1. Local belonging can be and arguably needs to be highly exclusive in order to work. A local institution such as an exclusive congregation needs to give considerable energy to maintaining its boundaries. In my sketch a limited number of individual choices sustained a local institution. Its survival depended on persuading other individuals to make the same choice. In the end its educational processes for maintaining and recruiting could not cope with the challenge of the wider society and other institutions.

Other sketches from Chapter 1 offer a variety of insights into the dynamics of the polarity. The lay training experience of the Carlisle Diocese was driven by the institutional need for survival but met the resistance of individuals and the tacit culture of the local church congregations. Those individuals who opted into training often did so
for motives around individual identity, either offered by the institution in terms of ministerial recognition or for more personal ends. The Shepherd sketch with its programmed learning suggests how in a certain cultural context, the institution that also gives strong individual affirmation can be highly effective where it coheres with a dominant ideology or narrative. The Palestinian Liberation Theology reflections were set in the context of institutional collision. In such a situation it was significant how educational and epistemological resources were mustered to develop or refine a renewed institutional narrative in a process of counter-articulation from the tacit.

It is clear that in this polarity education serves both as a tool of the institution in its search for survival and of the individual serving the need for establishing a sense of identity or of belonging. In this latter case the need may be met as much by process as by content. The resources of the institution can be exploited to that end, and its educational aspirations frustrated. Epistemologically, the institution of the church aims to use its knowledge resource for producing narratives coherent and robust enough to ensure institutional survival. For the individual that knowledge resource, particularly in the shape of the highly accessible Bible, provides a well of tacit knowledge from which spring the institutionally resistant possibilities of the Communication Use.

It is interesting just how applicable Baumard’s writing has proved to be. He identifies the turn to tacit knowledge in the face of crisis that I have argued is part of the reason for the turn to (or at least the persistence of) the Bible. It provides a ready made epistemological resource with the mantle of traditional authority that has already
apparently proved its credibility in the face of crises at earlier points in church history. The epistemological challenge for the institution is the ability of it as a church to control knowledge by providing legitimacy, and that depends on the quality of its own ideological resources and legitimizing narratives. The problem as has been shown in the data is that for its members the institution has become an end in itself. What appear to matter are not the institutionally stated goals of purpose (OC and ‘The Priorities’) but simply belonging and the sense of identity that provides. In theological terms we are faced with the familiar dilemma of the priority of the identity of the chosen people and the mission of the chosen people. The surprising and somewhat depressing usefulness of Baumard points to the degree to which such issues have become management questions served by education and epistemology.

The Equilibrium/Utopia Polarity

There is an interesting and dynamic relationship between this polarity and the last. It is easy to cast it as an individual utopia over against an institutional equilibrium. In this sense the individual desire to explore the Bible has to cope with and resist the complexity and demands of the institutional educational process. However, with its hortatory approach the institution can often be building or purporting to build utopian vision, and unrealistic utopia at that, around ‘the Kingdom of God’ and other examples of mission or vision language. In such cases, as was perhaps clear in my reflections on lay training in the Carlisle Diocese, the resolute individual or local congregational commitment to equilibrium – a feature of folk religion – can easily outweigh it.
The educational operation of this polarity holds particular interest. There is clearly a place in critical reflection for engaging with utopian notions such as the Kingdom of God as a way of gaining perspective on the present and challenging its equilibria. It raises again the issue of the place of the mimetic in education and reflection, not least when the utopia explored is a community of learning and belonging. Examples are provided in a Disciple group that models to itself an idealized New Testament experience, or the community that gathered around the making of meanings, temporarily, at Whitby. The heavy concern with ‘take back’ that featured in the Whitby data indicated intensity of the utopian, dream-like quality of that experience and the concern to resist equilibrium by holding on to it.

In this perspective, the possibility has to be explored that the utopia pole can be a way of evoking the other and is a vital component therefore of the context for the ‘Communication Use’. However the ‘sapiential’ style that usually characterizes examples of the ‘Communication Use’ is traditionally and certainly in terms of biblical material more reflective of the need to maintain equilibrium. Equilibrium masquerades as utopia.

In terms of my Narrative Use, there is a great deal of evidence in the data to suggest that apparently utopian processes of identification with Biblical characters also arrive not at utopia but at equilibrium. They do so by identifying as part of a story that says ‘we are no different, just the same as, and you are not alone or unique, there are models to interpret your experience’. As a result the utopia pole is in danger of sacrificing ongoing
transformation or continuing growth for the achievement of equilibrium in a narrative that offers security and ... equilibrium.

This sort ‘contained utopianism’ by which envisioning offers utopia as equilibrium is a feature of the impact of hortatory power techniques on this polarity. It is part of the central paradox of this polarity that utopia can be equilibrium and vice versa. The perspective runs back and forth between poles in the games that are played. Utopia has the power to inspire and to motivate, to bring change in the face of decline. Yet the equilibrium impulses as demonstrated by the surreptitious deconstruction of Bible use in LAMP are very powerful in an organization that is so vulnerable it dare not take risks and so fragile that it struggles to handle conflict. In the end despite its utopian moments and rhetoric Whitby essentially and at points quite deliberately aimed at equilibrium. Disciple, with its different, more marginal institutional origin and local perspective aims at a utopianism shaped by the New Testament dream, but its goal is the equilibrium of an initially local institution sustained, albeit in some measure reformed.

Educationally and epistemologically there are perils at both poles. Utopia with its invitation to dream can leave education marooned and epistemology at the service of unreality. With its challenge to change it can make education an imperializing power. Education and the use of knowledge to retain equilibrium, implicitly or particularly explicitly, are open to the hermeneutic of suspicion.
Of the sketches in Chapter 1, a number demonstrate clear instances of this polarity. In the Palestinian Liberation Theology and on the Shepherd sketches there are strong and clear utopian impulses. The Folk Religion reflections emphasize equilibrium. Others are more ambiguous. The Africa reflections offer a process of offering culturally limited utopian possibilities as a resource, with an openness to their being tempered by the equilibrium of local cultural constraints. The Brethren sketch offers a notion of the Bible used as a resource for a dynamic that attempts to conserve an equilibrium of moral patterns that possibly never existed motivated by a quest for a deeply conservative utopia.

The Inspiration/Training Polarity

I will begin this section with some reflections on training before moving to the complex area of inspiration.

Training:

Training has a strongly institutional association and finds meaning there, where it can serve to enculturate individuals and to enable them to function more effectively in the support and management of the institution. In many institutional contexts it is clearly a requirement desirable and beyond dispute in its value for both individual and institution, particularly given the wider cultural constraints of the knowledge and learning societies. In the Methodist Church it is another matter. At a certain level, of training for professional ministry or for the voluntary role of Local Preacher there is a tradition of highly resourced training. Both these cases produce contested issues, particularly in an increasingly diverse church. There is an element of suspicion that the training process
destroys something of the creativity and flair that once commended the individual's gifts to the role.

It is recognised, though not without question, that contemporary society exercises constraints on the churches that makes training appropriate and desirable.\(^3\) In many adult Christian education contexts, particularly when it is perceived as institutional imposition on or exploitation of the volunteer, training is treated with suspicion, and the hostility around the term has already come to notice. It is likely that it is the close association of training with institution and the perceived hortatory overplaying of the case for training that appears uncongenial to the individual so that it excites suspicion in a volunteer culture. Training exhaustion can be noted amongst younger people who have received high levels of training at work and have no wish to engage further with it in their leisure, which is where they locate the activities of church life. Life-long learning may be embodied in a training course such as Disciple in the church context, but even the life-long learner may balk at training that under-values already acquired learning or life skills. There is an ongoing suspicion of 'technologies that subjugate by developing competencies' (Sawicki in Popkevitz & Brennan 1998 p.10). However, training or habituation in certain skills, that of critical reflection or suspicion for instance, may refine instinctive responses to create just the sort of questioning that produces such attitudes.

Educationally, as has been seen, there is a constant polar tension between the needs of the individual and the transformative aspirations of the educator on the one hand and the
expectations and needs of the institution on the other. Where the institutional vision is perceived as the context for individual fulfillment training in certain church circles it can be closely associated with discipline in the faith formation process. In other church contexts, the trend towards ‘spiritual direction’, ‘formation’ of the individual or forms of accompanying or mentoring can be understood as part of a training for life, and have some appeal. The problem with this family of discourses is that definitions and expectations are far from clear. Spiritual direction itself can range from the extended quasi-monastic Ignatian retreat to the occasional relaxed pastoral chat that can be understood as easily to be a pattern of reassurance as of transformation.

A further challenge to the training offered by church as institution is that of the individual who seeks out training and having got it abandons the institution. This may be in favour of other developing interests, or because the experience has provoked suspicion, possibly through the commitment discourse that is silently implied or assumed in church training programmes. There is a clear distinction to be found here between the subject as learner and the subject as candidate for training. It is a struggle reflected in the commonly occurring example of the trained minister who prefers to project her or his role as a maverick rather than a professional of the organization.

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3 The ‘Safeguarding of Children and Young People’ programme and its training needs have been largely accepted, while Appraisal processes and their training is more problematic.

4 Green & Chandu 1998 would be an example of accompanying literature. Issues of formation are explored in Astley 1996. This literature deserves a discussion in its own right.
Inspiration:

I have chosen the term 'inspiration', strongly current in Methodist culture to denote the other pole in this polarity. It describes learning that is intermittent and that engages the individual intuitively, unconsciously evoking the tacit and affirming the individual even by challenge, rather than the education that appears to subjugate. It is a term that leaves power with the learner. In a volunteer culture it reflects the need for motivational enthusiasm.

There are strong associations etymologically with the understanding of the Spirit in biblical and theological discourses. The Spirit is regularly characterized as unexpected and creative, making unforeseen and surprising revelations of links between discrete pieces of knowledge or experiences. As such a discourse develops educationally the result can be an intermittent and unstructured definition that relies heavily on the emotions of a moment and the thrill of new insight. It can even move in certain traditional and some more charismatic or new age circles to become a discipline (that might indeed require skills training) of openness to the Spirit where meditation and the insight and accessing of knowledge no longer depends on the training of rational epistemological disciplines. It is obvious that the Inspiration pole has an appeal for certain individuals who would find disciplined intellectual training unattractive. Its vulnerability is also obvious. The domination of the Inspiration pole means that learning

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5 In the many discussions of the issues raised for the church by diversity that are regularly part of my work, the word 'inspiration' is widely used and commonly disregarded. It has considerable significance for cultures that are not traditionally British Methodist.

6 On motivation and enthusiasm see Vineyard 1991.

7 Taylor 1972 would be an example of this approach.
does not have to be coherent, consistent or legitimized, it can feed off tacit, tradition, prejudice and be entirely eclectic, whimsical and arbitrary. It can reduce the possibility of critical reflection and it is vulnerable to hortatory tactics and the charismatic personality. On the other hand, its qualities of resistance are also desirable in the face of highly articulate imperializing knowledge and its educational vehicles.

In my context the exploration of this polarity inevitably raises important questions about worship and its relation to education and to knowledge. The links with the Bible as Scripture have already been noted and will be explored further below. The pressures of contemporary Methodist Church life focus more and more on the potential and need of the ‘Sunday experience’ to bring education into an integral relationship with worship. In such a situation considerable confusion in this polarity is likely and a clear recognition of the poles may well be essential.

Inspiration is a term of worship. The wrestling with questions of the place of worship in training courses and events such as Whitby and in particular its vital and memorable role in Disciple suggest that something of the critical distance between education and worship that may be regarded as an essential component of genuine educational practice is being reduced. Again the issue of mimesis is raised. How far is it indicative of a utopian dream game being played rather than a life being transformed – or does such play facilitate transformation?
The wider impact of worship on the individual is beyond the scope of this thesis. It needs to be noted in this context that while such impact is potentially profoundly different from the impact of education on an individual, it does share some elements. One of these would be conveyed by the notion of inspiration. The dangers of confusion at this point are great because of their potential in the power games at work. As with the slippage noted below between Book and Scripture, the slippage between worship and education is easy and problematic. Educationally worship does not necessarily engage critical reflectivity. The epistemological issues are greater. Worship does not set out to deal with knowledge in any scientific way. The issue for me and for the polarity at this point is that the Inspiration pole can verge on the non-educational and non-epistemological, and yet it remains clear in my data as a significant aspect of adult Christian education. The easy links between inspiration, the Communication Use and hortatory power games are threatening to education and knowledge alike.

Epistemologically, Inspiration leaves knowledge eclectic while Training leaves it organized, listed and limited, providing access to explicit knowledge and skills in using it. Inspiration engages lateral possibilities, opens up other ways to the tacit, other avenues to make learning possible. It can be profoundly creative and in this way makes learning attractive and facilitates the subject as learner. It is of course deceptive in its apparent freedom from discipline. At the same time that it is an act of resistance against training and control agendas and against and education that is uncreative and manipulative, it fails to escape the possibility of collusion with the cunning of the hortatory domination game. It can be easily deceived.
When my central question draws the Bible into consideration it is clear that the issue is more significant still. The Bible is most effectively and institutionally legitimately accessed by training. Therefore, career paths are only unlocked by training. The institution seeks to control the Bible by training. Yet what motivates for the possibility of training is the element of inspiration the Bible has offered, and what makes training palatable at those points where volunteers are particularly engaged is the inspirational.

The Bible, as my data show, can never be distant from any adult Christian education project. Yet the element of the intermittent, unpredictable ‘entertainment’ and novelty that accompanies the Inspiration pole especially in problematic worship contexts can suggest that education is less than a coherent and rigorous undertaking. This is a conclusion that the Communication Use is inevitably in danger of endorsing.

This polarity relates uniquely to my question. However, I would argue that it does raise more generalizable questions of educational methods, motivation and teaching and learning style. In so far as the learner has indeed become subject then the Inspiration pole gains in importance. Inspiration may encounter many perils, but because it represents a pole that challenges the sheer barrenness of training for so many adults, it points to an area of educational and epistemological activity that deserves further reflection.

In my data and in the sketches from Chapter 1, such as the lay training in Carlisle sketch, the Institutional impetus of training is clear. The need to inspire the volunteer is clear as
a constant in the background of all voluntarily undertaken training. The Shepherd offered an interesting affirmation of both poles, with a strong effort to make rigorous training inspirational. The more fundamentalist context of the Brethren retained its commitment to a puritan training discourse and the excluding dynamic of training, where inspiration was always regarded with suspicion. Whitby had its roots firmly in the inspirational. That was reflected in the attitudes to academics whose training was acceptable so long as it was inspiring. In Disciple the training pole is clearly strong, but it is the inspirational moments that provide motivation and positive memories. The relentless challenge is to find power games that motivate adults for training, without falling into the acutely demanding situation of repeated moments of inspiration, when the techniques of entertainment can come to dominate and devalue epistemology and education.

The Authenticity/Authority Polarity

The question of educational and epistemological legitimation is the issue at stake in this polarity. The polar model is valuable because what is being addressed is the degree and type of legitimation that is necessary.

Authority and Authenticity confer legitimation in different ways. Authority relates to dominant ideologies to which assent is instinctively given. There is a strong institutional link. It has to be accepted or rejected or at least argued with. Such a quality explains the potential ferocity of power games and the extent of their casualties. Authenticity does not bring such resolution. It operates in a gentler way with the softer knowledge and at the individual level of encounter with cultural hauntology. This makes Authenticity very
pragmatic tending to say ‘it rings true’, ‘it works’, ‘it can do the job’. A clear example of this is provided by the mimetic dimension of ‘trying out’ a role as a disciple in the group community of the Disciple course. Perceived success legitimizes the programme.

When the hegemonic ideologies of Authority fade into hauntologies Authenticity is the best that can be hoped for. As such, given its huge engagement in the realm of the tacit, it is crucial for the church’s project. The situation is rationalized in the Communication Use. The problem is that Authenticity in its power games becomes the untestable, relativist and elusive tool of hortatory tactics. It thrives on sensed links with tacit knowledge and the aesthetic echoes of tradition.

The challenge for the power games in this polarity is to take the authentic and make it authoritative, and to do so by increasing the degree of legitimation that it can offer.

My data suggests that this polarity becomes particularly significant at the local level where the individual and the group develop a highly localized ‘sense’ of authority that is essentially authenticity because it cannot extend beyond its immediate territory. Power games in the local church can be seen as about local hegemonic imperializing. They can both accept and reject more general resources of authority in their tactics. There is clear evidence in my data that this was taking place to motivate people to take part both in Disciple and Whitby, although they would not usually express it such ways.
Because, as ever, of its local accessibility the Bible easily becomes a force in these power games. For instance, at the local level the critical hermeneutical approach cannot be easily accessed. Despite its huge impact at the general level, for instance on ministerial and Local Preacher training its impact locally is limited because of the educational and epistemological demands it makes. Effort expended on it appears to be wasted because of its lack of immediate relevance. As a result, it can be locally alienating. In fact a strengthening of the local by the rejection of the general can be achieved. The point is that the mainly unarticulated softer knowledge of the Bible is more available than the disciplined academic knowledge acquired by training. Increasingly therefore without the apologetic ideological rationalization that gives it currency the Bible can only offer to its users the legitimation of Authenticity, however locally powerful the assertion of Authority. The fact noted throughout that for this sort of power game the Bible is an unreliable tool means that any authority asserted is only ever local and temporary.

The pragmatic power of the local and authentic becomes clear from another perspective. As tacit increasingly dominates explicit knowledge as a result of the huge increase in knowledge, it remains unaccessed because of time and energy. The impact of the hortatory power games and the Inspiration pole in the selection, control and use of knowledge becomes ever more common and inevitably Authenticity supplants Authority.

The local retreat into the group or to the like-minded where the relational affirms Authenticity and even Authority was interestingly demonstrated at Whitby. The frequently noted concern for ‘take-back’ was accompanied and no doubt generated by the
sense of despair that a discourse felt to be so authentic and legitimating in that context would be unlikely to survive in a different local context. In addition because the 'academic experts' were accessible, such authority as they had in terms of qualification gained authenticity through local relational factors of intimacy and immediacy. The evidence the Disciple groups and the characteristic need to continue the belonging as group, or in the study of further Disciple resources, once again demonstrates the power of the local at work in this polarity. The authentic is encountered, relationally, educationally and epistemologically. It becomes locally authoritative, if only temporarily, and such authority is nurtured locally. The creation of networks of local interest for the purposes of legitimation of practice can be seen as a response to the authority vacuum or to uncongenial authority at a general level.

Other parts of the data illustrate these issues. L&D shows the apologetic attempt to gain educational authority and legitimation by a careful reflection of aspects of secular educational approaches. WWA attempted to find epistemological legitimacy through a more organized critical approach to the Bible. In the Shepherd sketch the attempt was made to provide training that was at once authoritative and authentic locally. It would appear to have delivered that successfully for the participants in their engagement with the Bible, but only perhaps because of the different place of faith ideologies in that cultural context.
Lay Training in the Carlisle Diocese, on the other hand, struggled for both authority and authenticity in its cultural climate of relativization, and local suspicion of the institutional.

There is a clear ‘love’ for the Bible, but not for reasons that can be articulated alongside a search for authority. Where opportunity to pursue the search is accessible to the individual it can be highly affirming. However there are unsurprising signs in my data that love for the Bible and respect for its authority do not go together easily given high level of rationality and strong individual preoccupation. What emerges I would argue is a love for the Bible’s authenticity and it is this that characterizes not only the Communication Use, but the way that the Narrative Use is handled so intermittently as well.

The Book/Scripture Polarity

The Scripture Use has chronological priority and as has been shown it extends beyond the written into the oral/aural although it retains characteristics of text.

From an epistemological perspective, there are scriptural elements of knowledge like the Ten Commandments or the ‘Golden Rule’ that have been articulated and incorporated in ideological production shaping cultural values, attitudes and behaviour. Its hauntological impact means that other strong traces of its contribution can still be seen. However with the decline of theological hegemony the Scriptural pole increasingly represents ‘soft’ non-articulated tacit knowledge that is accessed by channels of recitation
and repetition, absorbed almost osmotically, and not engaged with critically. It is engaged within worship where its liturgical use has a ‘hallowing’ effect that confers a numinous authority. Because such use is critically unreflective as a knowledge resource it can and does drift in to the tacit.\(^8\)

In that sense it is set over against another strongly liturgical feature, the creed, or credal story, such as the Eucharistic prayer. Such carefully historically formulated hard knowledge represents the determination of the institution of the church to articulate tacit knowledge in ideologically manageable, acceptable and appropriate forms. While such knowledge is already losing ground in contemporary society, liturgy also by its nature continues to have a softening effect on such hard knowledge.

Worship is the context of Scripture and liturgy is its medium. This is an educationally problematic area, and educational activities are traditionally separated off from services, although techniques, not least the hortatory, regularly overlap. Scripture use in such a context generates a sense of the other as mysterious and beyond educational rationality. With it goes a sense of authority that is difficult to articulate and therefore comes close to the notion of an authenticity that can be accessed intuitively. It remains hard to legitimize scientifically or even narratively.

Scripture use in worship and by extension in individual devotion habitually reinforced the Bible as a source of authority and authenticity and in so far as these are expressed

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\(^8\) This no doubt explains why the key ideological elements of Ten Commandments and Creed are
epistemologically, as a knowledge resource. The long tradition of Bible use as Scripture explains the its ubiquity in these areas. In addition, given the relational context of liturgy, it gives weight to the tendency to anthropomorphize Bible use and opens up the possibility of the Communication Use. As scripture the Bible will always have a use in worship and liturgy - maybe we glimpse the remnants of this in the continuing valuing of the King James Version with its evocative archaisms often matched by hymnody and traditional prayers.

At the other pole is the Bible used as Book. With the decline of theological hegemony Scripture use has lost momentum and any attempt to respond therefore has resorted to Book use, with its attendant perils for Scripture.

Epistemologically Bible text as Book is used to facilitate the articulation of knowledge that has always been in danger of slipping into the tacit. Book’s accessibility combines with its ability to resource study and learning to counter this.

The knowledge that Book offers is very rich. There are plenty of examples of Book offering ‘soft’ knowledge in literature, poetry and myth. When combined with the ideological intention of attempting the inculcation of values or beliefs that lie behind the credal approach, it additionally offers a species of hard, articulated knowledge that can be ideologically interpreted and engaged with critically and scientifically. Such hard knowledge can at that point engage with epistemological issues more widely, so long as

articulated in the decoration of many churches.
theology can legitimize it. When theology fails to provide system or narrative to legitimize knowledge, all that remains is scattered elements.

The Book is the tool of education. Text as Book finds its milieu in lecture and classroom and for local churches in the small group, but not least in the hands of the individual student. It may be the Scriptural pole that has through worship use established the habit and the routine of Bible use that extends to individual ‘devotion’, but of course accessibility has at once facilitated and changed the epistemological nature of that engagement. The Book attracts a bibliophile passion and its content finds a new epistemological location – that of historical context and author/reader distance, which inevitably relativizes, and that of storytelling rather than ‘truth-telling’, that offers knowledge within the range of the possible, curious and interesting, rather than the ideologically sustaining.

The epistemological balance shifts. The Bible as Book can articulate the tacit, soft knowledge it stores and resist its loss into the Scriptural tacit. It can articulate and interpret that knowledge for contemporary society. It does so at a price. Book use, which is built around the literary, critical, reflective discourse, stands in stark contrast to Scripture. Scripture finds it hard to be treated as Book and does not lend itself to the scientific humanism of the hermeneutic process. It invites and perhaps requires hermeneutic processes, but finally eludes them. Possibly that is the nature of any text, but it is doubly so for Scripture.
As I have argued, different sorts of knowledge and different educational presuppositions emerge from the two poles of Book and Scripture. In terms of such use, and despite the ‘slippage’ between the two, Book deconstructs Scripture. Such a threat and its essential ambiguity are seen in the use of the Bible in worship and the ways in which pew Bibles get used, or not. Book use does not become Scripture use or vice versa. The historical development of text that produced Scripture is not available to Book.

Power Games

It is clear that the potential for ‘slippage’ between Book and Scripture creates a highly fertile territory for power games where the attempt is made to use the strength of Scripture found in its authority or authenticity and hauntology for ideological construction, defence or advantage. Power games find considerable scope in the relationship offered in this polarity between authority/authenticity and knowledge. They gain strength, urgency and scope as they are played out in the slippage, particularly when the sense of their irrelevance to a wider world breaches consciousness. Games can be conducted inside the world of the church and between the church and a perceived wider world. The two arenas are closely related.

The challenges that provoke the games become acute as theology or the Christian pattern loses influence in contemporary culture. The church may dream of ‘re-hegemonizing’ it by evangelism or apologetics. Such an attempt will work for a few. Where it is effective, and tough ideologies using extensive Biblical resources develop,
fundamentalism may often be the result. Whitby and Disciple may be seen as part of this hegemonizing intention, shoring up a decaying ideology or more positively and hopefully exploring its remaining possibilities. My suggestion that we are in the situation of ‘belonging without believing’ means that the apologetic challenge resides within the church as well, and if so, inevitably more urgently there. It might even be suggested that adult Christian education is itself an intuitive response to this problem. Church members and Christian believers do not live isolated from the cultural currents of thought in contemporary society. Such currents may be more powerful than those of faith. Power games using the Bible and its epistemological resources can and do slip from one context to another. In certain situations such as expectations of membership or moral pronouncements they perpetuate the antipathy of many sections of contemporary society to the church, and tragically within the church itself.

The problem as ever with the Bible in these games is that like any other knowledge tool or resource it has to have its own culture shaped and sustained in order to keep it in use. The text stores the tacit materials, but a living tradition has to be created to search and articulate the tacit in ways that can be accepted as legitimate.

It can only do this effectively through use at the Book pole. Use at the Scripture pole, that may well historically have produced an earlier more congenial culture, can now only

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9 Fundamentalism is a term that I have used a number of times to indicate what I consider to be the consequence of particular directions of my analysis. The area is a fascinating one that has been explored by many writers. I have made no attempt to enter such territory. My evidence does not take me there – I have encountered suggestions of a fundamentalist tendency in my case studies and only one or two of the early sketches have offered direct evidence. I have therefore treated any further discussion as beyond the scope of this thesis.
result from the situation, not produce it. It no longer has the necessary authority at its disposal, so the resort for producing such a culture has to be to the Book pole. Here the critical hermeneutical tools that have shaped it and are embodied in its use provide both authority and authenticity to establish some cultural territory within and beyond the church. If that is the case then it is in the tools of interpretation that hope is being placed, rather than the epistemological content. Given the relativizing nature of such tools, the Scriptural sense of authority is once again threatened with deconstruction by the methods necessary to establish its hegemonic aspirations. Furthermore, while the Book pole enables articulation of the tacit it releases information only at a certain cost. There is inevitable, and not necessarily negative, ideological distortion caused when knowledge is articulated as worlds engage. At the level of adult Christian education that I am investigating, if too much knowledge is made available the complexity of the Bible becomes alienating. Letting knowledge remain in the bank of the Scriptural tacit is one of the ways that complexity is reduced, and of course, as I will note below, the hortatory feeds on it.

While the challenge for ‘mission’ and apologetic is therefore an epistemological ‘imperialist’ one of extending the ideological territory in which the Bible may be legitimately used as a knowledge resource in which it can itself thrive, the methods necessary work against it.

This is so even amongst the faithful. Because of the ideological power of the book discourse for knowledge and because of its technological accessibility Bible use has a
particular strength and appeal to many sections of the church – but also a serious weakness – it becomes one book among many and one narrative style amongst many and not a particularly coherent one. Hence the challenge at Whitby to find ways of making meaning. The Bible in its content offers a narrative world where there are many possibilities of epistemological authenticity. But it has to disentangle this authenticity from its scriptural authority heritage, which ironically gave the book life and sustains it for its enthusiasts. The result of such games is that the use of the Bible returns not only to the sub-culture of institutional church, but its relevance as an epistemological resource for educational engagement is diminished and the predominant use returns to that of Scripture and to a version of the Communication Use.

A penultimate note in this area concerns the suggestion in my data and in the popular conception of the Bible in the church that it has the status of a ‘textbook’. This suggestion that moves the epistemological content in the direction of hard knowledge is one that would be fiercely defended by sections of the wider church, although not by those covered by my data. It opens up the question of definition in the power analysis I have been developing and represents a game attempting cultural hegemony by a different route from the critical hermeneutic one. While I would argue that such a position is entirely unsustainable, the hortatory ‘word-association’ trickery at work here can make this a powerful ploy, as it builds on an authority echo from formative educational experiences.
Finally it needs to be noted that power games using the Bible, however they are configured, face the reality that Apple makes clear in a different context: that ‘books can depower and empower at different moments’. In fact, ‘the very nature of texts themselves – their contradictory and open meanings, their many possible readings and interpretations, etc. – is never a guarantee that hegemonic knowledge is the outcome’ (Apple 1993 p.55, 11).

My research has already suggested that. Reflecting more generally on a life of experience in the church, the argument with reference to the Bible is incontrovertible.

**Hortatory power tactics**

The complexities revealed by this polarity go some way to clarify the problematic nature of the Bible for the church and for adult Christian education. It also clarifies the opportunity and the pragmatic need for hortatory power. As suggested above, hortatory techniques work by slipping between the Book and Scripture poles. At the Scripture pole there is the advantage that the aural/oral inevitably simplifies. Its existence in such form also lends itself to the referred appeal to authenticity that can emerge as authority, to be rejected or not. In hortatory discourses around this polarity ‘Scripture’ is a favoured term. It is not, of course, neutral. It indicates a body of assumptions about power and authority. To move seamlessly from Book and its techniques to Communication Use style language about ‘what Scripture says’, cannot be justified despite its frequent occurrence.
The Other

The Scriptural status of the Bible and its use in liturgy explains the regular encounter it facilitates for the worshipper with an intimation of the other. The Bible takes on the mantle of the other as the mysterious and fascinating presence that invites people to discover more of it for themselves. Moreover, since the Bible is accessible individually as Book, the other it mediates becomes accessible to the individual as well. Scripture conjures the numinous other from its resources, made accessible through poetry, proverb or narrative as an evocative story and then analysis and definition is attempted at the Book pole. The other is in such a process at once evoked and in immediate danger of deconstruction. Once again, the processes of epistemology and education create a situation of the learner as subject.

Conclusions

The devotion to the possibilities educationally and epistemologically offered by the Bible is clear from all my evidence, as I would expect it to be. There is some suspicion of it in terms of content, and at points a recognition of increasingly marginal authority in church and beyond. The Book/Scripture polarity is not one that is recognized by any contributions to my data. Yet it helps to clarify the valuing of the Bible both in the distinctive cultural resource that it can offer as Scripture and in the impact of its accessibility as Book. Both poles contribute towards the passion people have for it. Paradoxically, both in their different ways alienate.
Identifying and exploring the two poles has helped to clarify key issues, not least the dangers in Bible use of slippage between the two. This was very obvious in LAMP. It is clear in a number of the sketches and data where slippage, conscious and unconscious is clearly at work confusing the educational and epistemological issues. This was true in the Brethren, Shepherd and Africa sketches. A common factor would be the strong cultural hegemony of a theological or faith ideology, if only locally. In sketches such as Glastonbury and Folk Religion, that take a broader cultural perspective, the sheer marginality of Scripture is clear and the Book pole may potentially offer more strength, but not in a way that engages authority. The contrast between the polarity in WWA, where it could be argued that the tools of Book were used to build an educational project on Scripture, and L&D where it is entirely marginal except as Book suggests a process of cultural withdrawal in the face of perceived educational and epistemological priorities. The problematic nature of the working of the polarity in Disciple and at Whitby has already been noted. In the face of such uncertainty and confusion of use, the surprising fact is the continuing significance of the Bible in the power games that are played. A surprise rendered less unlikely by the persistence of this polarity into contemporary culture combined with the hauntology, the accessibility and the appeal in the search for identity of moments of narrative potential offered by Bible content and the sense it can generate of the perceived mysterious other.

**Power Analysis**

Having reviewed the polarities I move on to reflect on the process of power analysis I have used and to identify its results.
Key contested areas

A review of the ‘Contested Areas’ sections of previous chapters identifies five broad categories, although clearly there are considerable overlaps that make strict definitions tentative.

The nature of the church as an inclusive fellowship, in terms of belief and lifestyle issues and of the local and the Connexional is a key area. The dynamic of identity and belonging is strongly contested, together with the quality of leadership that is able to clarify and to handle the power games generated.

The notion of adulthood, and in my context, the identities of the individual as mature adult or disciple are part of the discussion associated with identity and the need for belonging. The data is inevitably focused on those who have chosen to belong, or are struggling in their desire to do so, and caution is necessary in suggesting any generalization from it. The thoughts that I have tentatively offered around the subject are relevant here. I am committed to the decentering of the subject as part of deconstruction but now I find myself faced with my suggestion of the recentering of the subject as learner. The issue of how far this is a re-instatement of the subject is an interesting one.

In my context of adult Christian education in Methodism, power has so clearly moved from the institution to the individual and my suggestion of the subject as learner, while far from offering any sort of absolute is a way of suggesting something of that reconfiguration. The subject status of learner is such that no absolutes are offered, no
meta-narratives are built, and always excepting of course the meta-narrative of educational motivation, the result is that control is with the consumer of knowledge. The learner is thus invested with enormous power. Perhaps Foucault is helpful here again in the contrast he draws between the imperatives to ‘know yourself’ and ‘to take care of yourself’. The learner as subject could be understood as an important step in the care of self (Foucault 2000a p.225f.). Epistemological considerations can be drawn out. The lack of confidence in the Bible’s epistemological content has been regularly noted. Therefore resort has to be made to educational method where again there is potential for the learner to become the subject. The consequence for the processes of adult Christian education and the use of knowledge resources, exemplified by the Bible, is of the domination of sporadic, narrative moments or the micro-conversations of the Communication use.

To this more philosophical perspective, the contested area of adulthood is seen in a different way with adult rejection of the Bible. It was recognized above, that the use of the Bible in the education of children makes it problematic as an epistemological resource for adults. Considerable work has to be done to move on from that point, and it is clearly not helped by the non-scientific nature of its tacit knowledge or by its hauntological threat where moral questions are concerned.

The nature of education is contested throughout my data. This happens at many points as the polarities have demonstrated, not least when dialogue brings together adult Christian educators and wider societal educational discourses. There was also a
disturbing note around the use of LAMP, that educational discussion represented a way of sideling a contentious issue.

Epistemologically, there are points of contest over the nature and value of Bible knowledge that has been explored by the Book/Scripture polarity. The Foucauldian questions about local knowledges have enabled me to clarify the contest at that point and its implications for more general approaches. The exploration of the tacit nature of much of the knowledge engaged with has raised the urgent question of reflection on the tactics of hortatory power that shapes the use of knowledge educationally. The notion of the other is one that I have raised at a number of points, and its place in the power games around knowledge make it too a contested area.

From the basis of such contested areas the power analysis that I have attempted following Foucault's suggestion has proved valuable in developing my analysis and can be briefly summarized.

*The System of Differentiations*

Among the key areas to emerge are the often hidden one between church and the secular world. There is evidence of a struggle over the acceptance or rejection of the standards and approaches to education of the learning or knowledge society. However, the differentiations most in evidence, both unsurprisingly and significantly, are essentially those within the church. As has been seen at a number of points, it is the impact of wider society that problematizes Bible use. The attitudes are 'brought into' the church by adult
learners, where they are lost amongst a cluster of locally powerful differentiations of ordained and lay, academic expert, learning enthusiast, as well of course as the more theological and credal ones that proliferate in church power games. Although these latter are not so strong in Methodism, or in my data, as in some other denominational or local church contexts, they are clearly there. The differentiations around the Individual/Institutional polarity are strong and active at many levels between a sort of generic Christian vision, the Connexion, Circuit, local church, group and individual.

The remarks above on the subject as learner find echoes in the differentiation between the provider of educational and epistemological resources and the user. Around the Bible itself the differentiation between its use 'in itself' and as a resource for some form of 'Christian pattern' is most obvious.

*Types of Objectives*

The polarities at work here are the Individual/Institutional and the Equilibrium/Utopia. They are closely associated. Equilibrium is very strong, with its institutional maintenance needs that facilitate a sense of individual belonging in the fellowship. Somewhat paradoxically the utopian vision of an inclusive fellowship is one both facilitated and threatened by Bible use and education. Both these are key in being used to set the boundaries that by turns include or exclude, fulfilling equilibrium or utopian objectives. Given the power of the individual learner’s motives for belonging and identity, noted above, there is clearly an almost irresistible non-institutional, individual interest objective.
**Instrumental Modes**

There is a clear instrumental dynamic through the promotion in L&D of the accreditation and competency methods of the learning and knowledge society. My data suggests that it has not penetrated far into the adult Christian education processes of church life more generally, certainly not where the use of Bible is concerned. The advocacy style associated with motivating volunteers and with the hortatory, that borrows from management styles (and of course may originally have inspired such styles) is a key instrument. In LAMP we see an example of the denominationally sanctioned Report commended for study. Certain of its drawbacks have already been noted, and it inevitably struggles with local power games and raises the educational questions noted above. The production of learning materials is a key instrument, but wherever they come from, Connexional or by private enterprise, they inevitably run the risk of exploitative use by the all-powerful consumer, as indicated by the attempted controls associated with Disciple. Of course, given the huge potential accessibility of the Bible, the small group and individual use are key instrumental modes.

**Forms of Institutionalization**

The Church Year/Lectionary project, while possibly classifiable as an instrumental mode, does, I would argue, represent a form of institutionalization. It attempts to lock Bible and educational use into an institutional discipline, and that guiding vision was clear from WWA. It has been highly successful both financially and in educational terms where it dominates and shapes usage. The Connexion, and in the case of Disciple, MPH are the institutional bodies providing materials. In terms of my data, the continuing institution
of the small group or Methodist class is the predominant place of local institutionalization. Such a configuration interestingly and significantly suggests a loss of role for the local church and Circuit. While they may sponsor and encourage the small group pattern, as ever the power is with the individual or group and with the Connexionally provided resource. There is a sense in which the notion of membership and its training responsibilities are declining, and that education is an individual project for the enthusiastic subject.

**Degrees of Rationalization**

In my data there are two strong rationalizations at work sustaining and shaping adult Christian educational use of the Bible. In Disciple there is its transformative power to create church leadership. In other data what emerges is the imperative of theological and moral inclusiveness. The adult Christian educational use of the Bible has been motivated in large measure by the destructive potential of Bible use in the power games of this latter area. The quest for adult discipleship, whatever definition is offered for that, obviously looms large in the rationalizations of WWA and Disciple. In L&D the values of the learning and knowledge society are profoundly engaged. There is another rationalization at the epistemological level that produces an interesting clause into its particular power game and that is the notion of inevitable incompleteness or provisionality. The flexible notion of the other can be called on for support. This is an unarticulated non-credal affirmation of the possibilities within tacit knowledge resources. Both for the Narrative ‘moment’ Use and especially for the Communication Use this offers a robust rationalized support.
In the light of this analysis, amongst the many questions provoked, two in particular remain for me. The first is the relevance of the Narrative and Communication Uses. There are three aspects to it. The first concerns the issues of adult education and the domination of the individual. The Narrative and Communication Uses, whatever ideological support is provided in the cultural background, give power to the individual to establish a sense of belonging or to enter into the friendship conversation. The belonging provided by the group experience clearly limits individual power, but the use of narrative moments to establish a sense of identity is strongly individual. The second focuses on accessibility and has much to do, in the case of the Bible, with the way that its accessibility shapes the use and the nature of its content. The Christian pattern that would require institutional and training endorsement and commitment to the critical project necessary to sustain it fades into insignificance in the face of the easy possibilities of use provided by Narrative and Communication Uses. Thirdly, the ecclesiological and church management issues and the power games for control they produce at Connexional, District, Circuit or even local church levels, find clear individual resistance from the Communication Use that has great attractions for the individual. While these more general power approaches can produce a range of challenges to the perceived idiosyncratic weaknesses of the Communication Use, its easy possibility of engaging the other so immediately and intimately makes its power hard to resist. The inclusive fellowship works both ways. It is hard to exclude the Communication User if there is a commitment to inclusiveness. It is hard to advocate the training in any sort of sustained ‘Christian pattern’, when such a project can be cast as anti-democratic and the democratic
impulse is fuelled by access to the Bible. In such a context even the enforcement of standards of quality in leadership and worship become hard to uphold generally in the face of local needs and pressures.

The second major question to emerge from the power analysis centres around the fact that 'hard' knowledge that provided commonality and therefore a particular sort of relevance for Bible knowledge is disappearing. The soft and increasingly tacit knowledge is now in Apple's terms the 'official'. The critical attempt to control this Bible knowledge and to suggest that this soft church/denominational knowledge is official creates a fierce struggle. Baumard argues that management in crisis resorts to soft knowledge as a source of hope. That might be seen to be reflected in my data and would reflect the two major Uses. However as Baumard has made clear such 'metis' knowledge is only part of the epistemological resource charted by the Greek philosophy. The result is a partial epistemological vacuum. The Bible does not fill it, being too amorphous despite its obvious power. The attempt to make Bible knowledge 'hard' by establishing a 'Christian pattern' is fraught with difficulties and has to do violence to resource and to learner alike. In a sense therefore the Methodist failure to achieve this is non-imperialist and perhaps to its credit, but it leaves the institution irredeemably weak. It leaves education both with an impossible task and with the field clear to resort to a non-institutional approach to reflective practice, based on liberal humanist values and exemplified by L&D. The hard challenge is to develop knowledge shaped in sufficiently relevant and robust narratives to fill the epistemological void.

10 For an exploration of the democratic in education see Apple 1993 p.5
Finally, there remains Apple’s interesting and crucial question for any attempt at power analysis in this field. He reminds us that,

Power ... can be used to dominate, to impose ideas and practices on people in undemocratic ways. Yet it also signifies the concrete and material ways all of us attempt to build institutions that respond to our democratic needs and hopes.

Apple 1993 p.5

So his important question is raised again, whose knowledge is being taught and learnt? What education is for, what and whose knowledge is considered legitimate, and who has the right to ask these questions? (Apple 1993 p.9). These questions have been explored by the analysis provided by the Polarities and the power analysis. Given the ‘playground’ image with which I have been working, perhaps Apple himself identifies the key issue when he writes, ‘rather than one central logic of power there are multiple ‘centres’, with class, gender, sexuality, race and nationalism amongst the most important...’ (Apple 1993 p.155). Such a statement is not simply transferable to my context. The nature of the centres differs. Some may be the same but hidden in the power games, and there would be others, like the evangelical, liberal, Connexional or Circuit. However, the power of the individual in the church, at a time of acute decline, is such that the multiple centres, many of them highly local even individual, others more general, but still not denominational and like Disciple itself often accessed by individual enthusiasm, exercise dominating power. These more general centres court the individual enthusiast, build on or exploit needs for belonging, and a genuine thirst for knowledge. As a result, given the complex nature of adult Christian education and its prevailing use
of the Bible, the knowledge that it offers is habitually shaped and used by the power
games in which it is irrevocably caught up.
CHAPTER TWELVE

FINAL REFLECTIONS

This thesis began with personal reflections that generated my question about the use of the Bible in adult Christian education. Apple writes 'what begins with the personal should end with the personal, not simply because of symmetry, but because that is where questions of power and knowledge always end' (1993 p.14). In that spirit I set out to draw this thesis to a close by summarizing its implications in the light of some reflections on the experience of the last six years of marrying research with the ongoing challenges of my role as a Training and Development Officer. I will also explore the implications and validity of my research and the way my question continues to develop. I begin with some personal 'discoveries'.

Three 'Discoveries':

1. *Reading the Writings*...

By far the greatest challenge and the most pleasant surprise for me has been reading Foucault and Ricoeur. While increasing familiarity with their works has raised the inevitable questions as this thesis demonstrates, engagement with the level of theory they provide has been deeply formative. In a plural world the sheer exuberance, critical vision and hopefulness of Foucault's analysis is invaluable. I have found myself returning to his writings again and again as I have tried to trace my theoretical and
practical course through my discussion. In the end I think it is not simply the regular reading, but a genuine glimpse into what I have come to sense is the nature of things that makes me want to continue to understand the history of systems of thought.

Ricoeur has proved important for me in terms of insight into text, interpretation and the implications for education. As my work demonstrates there have been few points where his writings have not been at least in the background. I noted above that this would not be surprising given his engagement with theology and the Bible. However it is at those points that I have struggled most with his thought as I have made clear.

The wrestling with theory that has been the major part of my reading poses the tussle that is faced between it and the pressures of the ‘quick fix’ management models suggested in my reading by Baumard. It raises the question for church leadership of the relationship of theory and management.

There have been other key writers too and particularly Apple whose exploration of issues of power and education as this post-script indicates has been profoundly helpful despite the different context in which he is writing.

The challenge has been that none of them address the issues of my question directly and perhaps that is what has made the journey so strenuous and personally stimulating. It has led to many trips along many fascinating but marginal paths. The questions and possible responses multiplied exponentially. The hardest part has been imposing limits in the face
of so many so important and attractive choices. They have not always been possible to resist.

2. Discovering Methodism

As a relative newcomer to Methodism my research has been of real value in giving me a glimpse into its life. The spectre of decline has been a dominating feature, together with the increasing cultural marginalization that it shares with the church as a whole in this country. This is not the whole story, as I will indicate below.

I have been able to understand something of the powerful ‘fellowship’ discourse that is such a ubiquitous feature of Methodist reflection on church life. It has opened up the possibility of my notion of ‘belonging not believing’ as a way of understanding the educational and epistemological challenge facing the churches. It helps to explain the persistent attempts to develop adult Christian educational activity in the churches, but because belonging has priority, it also explains their problematic record.

The use of the Bible has been fascinating. Coming originally from the Anglican Church, where I had been significantly influenced by what today might be described as its evangelical wing, my commitment to the Bible was considerable. Experience of the last few years concurs with what I sensed in the background of my data collection, that commitment to the Bible is less intense within Methodism. More research would be needed to confirm that suspicion and the reasons for it. Perhaps the closeness that can be found between my two Uses indicates a less critical and urgent approach to the Bible.
The Methodist church is about inclusiveness and resists the credal definitions that compromise belonging. The suspicion and rejection of the tactics of hortatory power have been consistently clear. I believe this is profoundly to its credit, but it has its costs in terms of educational and epistemological motivation that might energize a church for survival.

3. Research and Analysis

Theoretical analysis should be there to allow us to “grasp, understand and explain – to produce a more adequate knowledge of - the historical world and its processes; and thereby to inform our practice so that we may transform it.”

Hall, S. in Apple 1993 p.16

To answer my question has been essentially a work of description and analysis. The tools I have developed, (the polarities) and borrowed, (Foucault’s approach to power analysis) have been profoundly useful. In their development and their use, they are both works in progress, but they have enabled me to draw together a variety of complex materials and sustain a disciplined pattern of analysis. I believe they have been effective in helping me to clarify the epistemological and educational issues I have been wrestling with, and in opening up fresh perspectives. They have enabled me to explore the impact of culture and ideological use on knowledge, the complex forces generated by power games on education, and the persistence, attraction and problems of the Bible in the church. It is with the second part of the quote from Hall that I struggle, the challenge to transformative action. I have seen no easy answers to the background issue of the decline of the church. I only see the issue more clearly. Certainly I can see some wrong paths and I have tried to indicate those in the earlier chapters. There is no simple answer to an effective way of using the Bible to renew faith, although there are some glimpses.
The fundamental dilemma remains. The critical approach to the Bible has been alienating and is not central to the uses I have identified. They in turn may well lack any but the most tenuous possibility of engaging with the dominant scientific ideologies of today's society.

Given that this project has taken such a large part of my life over the last few years I feel a weight of expectation from those that have supported and encouraged me that there should be some transforming outcome. It is not enough to suggest that it is simply a matter of patient hard work, although of course it is. Some practical steps for a way ahead need to be charted. This is perhaps the greatest of the challenges awaiting me as I try to make sense in my context of the worlds that engage. It is the inevitable expectation of research and analysis. A number of the key implications can usefully be summarized.

Implications

- **Diversity and the use of the Bible**

I will indicate further below the particular urgency of this issue for the Methodist church, and I suspect for other denominations that have a worldwide constituency. My research opens up important possibilities for understanding the different ways of using the Bible that are emerging in the increasingly culturally diverse world of London Methodism.

- **Book, Scripture and other faiths**

In the religiously plural world in which I work, the Foucauldian approach that I have endeavoured to explore opens up the possibility of analysis, critique, but above all
dialogue that can make a significant contribution to understanding the role of ‘sacred books’ in different faith communities. The important work pioneered by Smith and others needs urgent development as part of a wider ecumenism.

• *The Bible – disappearance, deconstruction and training*

Such contexts mean that the trend that was detected in LAMP and L&D towards deconstruction and marginalization of the Bible in educational and other church use has to be readdressed. The critical hermeneutical approach as I have made clear is a key part of an apologetic engagement with the contemporary scientific ideology. However it cannot stand alone and needs supplementing with something like the literary hermeneutic of Ricoeur, which seems to offer the best chance of making coherent the Narrative and Communication Uses and including other emerging uses.\(^1\) Such a concern needs to be translated into the educational programmes of the institutional church, particularly for Methodism in ordination and Local Preacher training. There are immediate issues for the content of adult Christian education at the more informal level.

• *Education and the adult world*

A number of the implications of my research bear upon the power games associated with the ‘adult’ world of my question. There are issues that need reexamination. The question of adult rejection of the Bible because it is so widely taught to children has already been raised. The attitudes of suspicion generated by the tacitly omnipresent

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\(^1\) See below, ‘WWA sketch’ that concludes this chapter.
scientific worldview, and the use of hortatory techniques are particularly an adult concern. This is so especially where volunteers encounter the Inspiration/Training polarity. The all-age educational argument in the church has not been won, as it has in many cases in the world of work, and this has much to do I would argue with an inadequate notion of the nature of adulthood. It may be that education in the church is still tacitly shaped by the world of its greatest experience, that of the child, and has yet to come to terms with the world of the adult and the power of adult experience, despite the notions of discipleship, maturity in Christ or reflective practice of the faith.

- **Education and the subject as learner**

The notion that I have tentatively explored of the subject as learner expresses the power of the individual in the world of the voluntary organization. The widespread use of hortatory tactics point to the awareness, albeit often unconscious, of the dynamic of institutional education exploited for the individual's own ends. The ever-increasing use of motivational mission statements is unlikely to solve this problem. The experience of learning as the currency of belonging may offer signs of a resolution of the dilemma, although the evidence tends to show this is most effective only locally.

- **The Local**

The notion of small local worlds at work in the power games I have noted has proved increasingly useful in my analysis. It has provided both negative and positive possibilities in terms of adult Christian education. Vigorous local examples of education such as the Disciple groups have been in evidence. Epistemologically,
however, they may involve some suspension from the wider world of knowledge, and I would hesitate to describe this feature as genuinely counter-cultural. The polarities have opened up ways of exploring the local insurrections and resistance to hegemonically intentioned knowledges, but further research in this area needs to be done on a wider canvas than my present one.

- **Hauntology**

The hauntological power offered by both Scripture and Book has been explored. It indicates how certain types of knowledge can operate culturally. It would seem to me to have wider application into the worlds of mythology and the values of popular culture. It might even be suggested that it is a genuinely hopeful, 'all is not lost', scenario for an evangelism that focuses on the Bible. This may be the case and it could be argued that there are clear local examples and that fundamentalism is one. However it is doubtful that the ghosts could sustain their power to haunt in a secular world. After all, the nature of ghosts is that they are dead.

- **The historical and the shaping of knowledge**

My attraction to Foucault's method has been fuelled and sustained by my own training as an historian. One of the implications that has opened up for me is the use of the Bible in shaping knowledge at different points in history. For reasons other than this research I have returned to reading about sixteenth century non-conformity and the Putney debates during the last year or so. Applying the tools I have developed has begun to yield fascinating results when applied to that material. It has enriched the notion of
hauntology. It has also raised critical questions about the place and use of the Bible in those contexts, their power games and the shaping of the worlds they represent—inevitably, I suppose, a question of the history of systems of thought.

- **Education and theology**

A final concern that has been developing is the relation between education and theology. Both disciplines offer epistemological resources and ways of using them that have transformative, and I am tempted to say, salvific, potential. At the popular, pragmatic level of my data gathering, articulate theological expression or reflection was rare and in some of the documents I examined it was often incoherent. The Narrative and Communication Uses have theological discourses in the background, but they rarely reached articulation in ways that could carry apologetic weight. Education on the other hand proved to be one of the few points at which the church is clearly aware of the challenges and opportunities of a wider culture and offers tools of potential engagement at a pragmatic level. The emerging question for me therefore is how far the mission project of liberation and transformation is in the hands of the educators rather than the theologians. Once again an area of fascinating and important further investigation is opened up where insights particularly into epistemological patterns within the processes of theology and education are needed. Such exploration would develop significant consequences for the future of both theology and education in the Methodist church.
• **Further Research**

Each of these areas opens up possibilities of research into different though related worlds. As I will indicate below, my professional commitment leads me at this stage into the world of cultural diversity and the complex questions it raises for adult Christian education and the Bible. I will say more on this below. It is my hope that others within the church can be persuaded and encouraged to take up others of the questions I have raised. However it is clear that none of the areas listed here is distinct, their worlds constantly engage, and research in one will open up insights in others.

**Validity of research**

The return to the personal raises significant issues for the validity of my research. The case study approach that I argued for in Chapter 2 has been very creative in terms of accessing appropriate data. The comparative approach using Disciple and Whitby has been valuable and while the differences might have been greater, the divergence in Bible use has been sufficient to establish a valid argument. The open interview pattern of data collection has allowed me scope to identify areas that might have escaped a more tightly focused way of working. It was at the end of the data gathering process that I was made aware of black Methodists who had taken part in Disciple, otherwise it would perhaps have been valuable to include them. There were problems in that their participation in the course was not within the two-year 'window' that I had set myself. As it is, the data represent a cross section of Methodism in its current manifestation as characteristically white and essentially middle class.
Perhaps the main issue in this area is my own position as a researcher. It might be described as a ‘marginal insider’. To do so would raise a number of issues. Some of them have been addressed in my ‘Personal Statement’ (Appendix 1), particularly the struggle with belief and theological discourses. Given that my data collection and analysis processes were so open ended there has been considerable scope for my personal agenda impinging on them. I have had to attempt to be consistently aware of that danger.

I have already noted the reading of Foucault, Ricoeur and others that has been a constant source of challenge. I have regularly tested my findings informally with colleagues. I have had to recognize my own penchant for deconstruction, and work hard to bring balance to my perspective. This is partly a matter of temperament, partly of my training in historical analysis.

It has interested me to observe the insider as well as the marginal aspect at this personal level. I find myself critically committed to many aspects of the church project. I will attempt to explore these further below, but the adult Christian education project, the exploration of diversity and other faiths continue to engage me as at a different essentially professional level does the well-being of the institution.

In the light of this attempt to be continuously reflectively critical I would argue that the conclusions I have developed can be sustained. Of course they are open to argument, but that is what I would hope for them.
A new question

To return more closely to the personal territory that Apple commands, the challenge I am having to face at this point of completion of my thesis is the question ‘Where am I now as an educator of adult Christians ... and in relation to the Bible?’

As far as the Bible is concerned, at a personal level I am interested to observe that my engagement with it remains as committed as ever — and I puzzle over that. My passion has changed. I am less occupied now with the critical hermeneutical methods traditionally part of ministerial training and church life. While as I have made clear, I have no doubt of their importance, they do not appear to me to be able to convince people of their value. At certain points, as I have been taught by the liberation theologians, it is important to take the people seriously. Questions of how to respond effectively to Narrative and Communication Uses have naturally developed and will shape my work in future. My context will also be vital. So having set out with a series of sketches, it is perhaps appropriate to move towards a conclusion with one that opens up a further horizon and charts the direction of further research.

Final Sketch: Working With Adults

The ‘Working With Adults’\(^2\) course is a joint project between the Methodist Church in London and Birmingham and the Anglican Church in Birmingham, under the auspices of

\(^2\)To be distinguished from the book, WWA 1970. The WWA course is a course for ‘training the trainers’ for adult education within the churches. It is based on three residential events and a series of group tutorials and individual assignments over a six-month period.
the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Training to provide training 'for those helping adults to learn and develop in a Church context'.

As part of my present job I set out to recruit black members from London for this course. Black Methodists in London provide the church with vibrancy and numerical strength. It is the reason that in the London District uniquely the context is one of growth not decline. However, black members are not represented proportionately in leadership and educational. Five students have been recruited to take part in the Working With Adults programme of residential events, evening tutorials and individual course work. There have been some distinctive features that have raised new issues for me.

A point that Apple emphasizes has been endorsed, that the participants come with a range of pressures on their lives that impact on their learning. Apple writes,

> A community, no matter how carefully nurtured and no matter how politically astute and committed its members, does not sit isolated from the contradictory economic, political and cultural dynamics of the institutions in which it resides. Nor does it sit isolated from the race, gender, class and other dynamics of the larger society...

Apple 1993 p.160

Different lifestyles, a distinctive network of highly inter-dependent relationships that is Africa and Atlantic-wide, the acute pressures of finance and work, the valuing of accreditation and documentation, as well as issues of race and culture have become obvious. It is no longer as question as it was in my Africa sketch of offering my cultural blindness for others to sort out in their cultural terms. The cultural context is one in flux. It has to be analysed and engaged at every point.
For instance, a clear claim to be working class was made by these students. This involved a differently focused notion of adult education than the predominantly middle class, leisured one from which I have gathered the bulk of my data. Methods of teaching and learning have had to be investigated. The styles of their Caribbean origins and continuing culture are distinctive, although there are some similarities with Africa. Engaging with them in culturally and class appropriate ways at an adult level, given of course that child and adult have varying cultural definitions, is a profound challenge. The question of ways of knowing and systems of thought is raised subtly but urgently and provoke questions about the extent and power of determining cultural factors. It is clear that they go beyond formal teaching and learning experiences into the interstices of interpersonal relationships and definitions.

It is once again the use of the Bible that offers particular focus. My students’ use stands apart from the uses I have identified, although some of my data was gathered from black members. It is too soon for me to offer a properly analysed description, but certain features are clear. There is a passionate devotion to the Bible, an affirmation of its inspirational qualities, a strong oral and aural use that finds its context in worship. There has been learning of biblical text as children. However, there is very little evidence of a Book style, readily accessed, Bible knowledge. The question of Biblical authority in lifestyle matters is far from clear. There is a sense, particularly in the current context of reflection on slavery, of ambiguity towards authority, but not towards ubiquity. Their use might be described in terms of ‘companionship’, where the Bible represents the tangible aspect of God, Jesus or the Spirit, ‘moving along life’s way’, supporting and
encouraging, with moments of envisioning and full, compassionate allowance for weakness. Given such use, the Bible clearly needs to be engaged with at every point if 'Working With Adults' is to prove a genuinely adult Christian education experience.

The problem is that given the adherence to secular models by which the course is shaped, the Bible is at best 'added on' to the body of knowledge rather than integrated. To continue with that situation is likely in my context to separate adult education from faith, to the detriment of both, and to the alienation of the students.

At the local level of the Methodist Church in London as I have indicated, such members represent the future. Their use of the Bible is distinctive, or at least a distinct variation of others. Their attachment to it is complete and passionate. My challenge is to use the tools I have developed to help describe and understand their Bible use.

Transfiguration

It is a measure of the tantalizing power of the Bible at a personal level that when I come to this point in my reflections, I still find myself exploring a Biblical image to express my adult educational goals - that of transfiguration.

Based around the account of Jesus' transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36 (and parallels), it is for me about understanding education as a process of letting the glory of the individual be revealed and because no individual stands alone, of their community and culture as well. Education and epistemological resources are needed to for the process of liberation and
transformation, but fundamentally it is about individual and corporate self-discovery. I am interested how I have moved over the years from a highly imperialistic institutional training model concerned with the shaping of members or disciples to this point of extreme resistance to any degree of hegemony. Of course there must be challenge to the power games that enslave and create self-imposed limitations, but such challenge has to be open to the constant reflection and revision of its method and content. For educator and learner alike, the priority is the sharing of learning and the maximizing and valuing of experience through reflection. The learner is the subject.

An ethical question cannot be dodged. Given such an individual approach, what value do I have to the institution that employs me? Am I simply surreptitiously hastening its decline? Furthermore, can such an educational approach properly respond to the needs in the background of the uses identified, the need to belong and the need for identity. The church with its fellowship discourse would seem to offer some claim to a unique environment of belonging, although in the multi-racial context in which I now work with its memories of migration and rejection by the churches such a claim must proceed with caution.

To respond to my question by the attempt to reassert institutionally sustaining training, which is certainly the path that some churches would appear to have taken, goes against the grain not only of personal vision but also of contemporary culture. Not to do so though has problems too. Not only the ethical one of responsibility, but one that engages a pragmatic as well a theological concern of the danger of separating individually focused
adult Christian education from Christian participation in the corporate life that the church aspires to lead. We are here in the theological territory of the relationship between grace and works. Or even, in a Methodist context, 'the pursuit of Christian perfection'.

It is significant for me that in the face of such a range of questions the Bible can offer such a narrative moment, and that I find the notion of transfiguration a genuinely useable for reflection and personal critique.

Conclusion
My work has been descriptive and analytical. I have set out to ask key questions of the practice and theory of adult Christian education raised by the human sciences, and the power analysis of Foucault. I have aimed to be consistently reflective and critical in my questioning. There is no doubt that I have been deconstructive. I have raised difficult questions and offered few answers. I take refuge in some words of Apple, who writes that critique,

Is a form of commitment, a means of laying a claim ... In essence it is one of the ultimate forms of citizenship, for it is a profoundly important way of saying that I am not 'just passing through'. I live here.

Apple 1993 p.4-5
APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1

PERSONAL STATEMENT

In the text of my thesis I have described the position from which my research has been conducted as that of a ‘marginal insider’. In this Appendix I set out to attempt to clarify that term and discuss its implications. This is not a simple task because the personal impact of the research itself has inevitably caused the nature of my position to change.

‘Insider’

My insider status is clear. As a Training and Development Officer I am an employee of the Methodist Church Connexional Team with responsibility for a particular geographical area, in my case the ‘London Region’ (until a year ago) and now the London District. My research has been supported financially by the Connexion and has been encouraged by my Management Committee. As noted in my discussion of ethical matters, this has given me privileged and distinctive access to data, both at the personal and documentary level.

My professional commitment has been to help find ways in which today’s church can respond to the acute present challenges it faces to its faith and its life. This has produced the expectation that the work I do is about renewing confidence and resources in the face of the decline that is such a dominant feature of contemporary Methodist and Christian experience in Britain.
As the sketches that helped to shape my question make clear, I am an insider in a profoundly cultural sense as well, in that my life has been spent within a church and faith world. I have never been unaware of alternative worlds and their values, but, given the inevitable impact of cultural socialization, none of them have been immediately formative or dominant. In such a position of commitment I have been aware at points in the research process of the need to respond to internal and external expectations about effective new responses to decline. In the conclusions that I have drawn I have also to guard against the personal anger and disappointment of being part of what can be perceived to be a failing project that can issue as cynicism, or, as a variant, self-justification of my own journey. I cannot escape such pressures, but by recognizing them I hope to guard against them.

'Marginal'

In exploring the 'marginal' aspect of my self-definition, there are three aspects of marginality to take into account. During my lifetime the church has continually become more marginal to wider society. In terms of the mainstream denominations, it has continued to decline numerically and become less confident in itself about its relevance to the contemporary world. My personal faith and vocation have moved increasingly to the margins. Inevitably, it is not easy to separate this last from the other two movements.

This thesis reflects and is shaped by personal and career circumstances. After twenty-five years of Anglican ordained ministry my vocation to an educational and formative
approach to ministry was, I sensed, both personally irresistible and less and less welcome to the church, except in the more evangelical wing where my educational and theological approaches were open to suspicion. As a result I was profoundly grateful to find a home in the Methodism where the skills I have to offer can be used and where there is encouragement to face disturbing questions and an openness to any findings. The work of Training and Development Officer over the last seven years has given me a freedom from pastoral responsibility in church life, and the pressures of career advancement. It has offered a brief to explore questions from the margin and an encouragement to ask the disturbing question and help others to face them. Because the post is relatively new, it has an unofficial pioneering feel about it where exploration and experiment is encouraged, though not of course always welcomed.

'Marginal Insider'
As a result of these factors a number of issues emerged that led me to focus on this research. In different ways the Bible, adult Christian education and the whole faith/religion project to which I had been so committed had become problematic for me. As indicated in the first chapter, the Bible, set in a new plural world of other faiths, of the human sciences, of literary understanding and of the ‘masters of suspicion’ could no longer serve the old certainties. Too many questions clustered around its use for comfort. Yet it persists, and not least in my own passion for it, the understanding of which is inevitably part of my research.
As a practitioner of adult Christian education, a whole range of other questions arose. I was aware that there was a divide between the denominational/bureaucratic discourse of training and the day to day task of adult Christian education in the churches that consisted of nurturing faith and individual vocation in the broadest sense. In pursuit of such objectives I had become aware at least at an intuitive level of issues of power in the educational project and of what in the course of this research I would come to call ‘hortatory power’, with its particular agenda of control. In the face of decline it seemed that such power was becoming increasingly exploitative.

As I take stock in this way it comes as no surprise that such factors have contributed to a crisis of faith and vocation. It has become increasingly clear that the world in which I lived and worked was as ideologically constructed as any other and in addition, I have been unable to find in theology sufficient resources to meet the intellectual challenges of a wider world with integrity. As a result I have became unable to believe in the way that I felt the church world expected since its claims to truth could no longer be sustained by and for me. The choice was stark. I had to pretend the problems did not exist or matter, or that theology and apologetics could after all offer convincing responses, or to attempt to find a way to move on.

Professionally I have found a way to move on thanks to Methodism. As far as belief is concerned I find myself battling theology with a notion of ‘messianic atheism’, a phrase I have come to associate with Derrida.¹ It is certainly a term I could adopt if it can be

¹ Building I think on notions of atheological or apophatic messianism as explored in Caputo 1997 p.135
taken to mean an openness to the possibilities and potential of surprising mystery at the heart of life, so long as that openness maintains a deep hesitation about addressing mystery with a theological discourse, preferring the tools of deconstruction. Since some engagement with that mystery is hopefully life giving, the language of traditional Christian belief and even of theology may be a path to it and may therefore remain potentially usable. Religion may provide a path of deconstruction.

However, such a position is more than simply intellectual and I am aware that alongside it is a strong sense of loyalty and belonging that no doubt reflects aspects of what I have described in my analysis of the condition of ‘belonging but not believing’. In that sense my personal journey may not be unique but share key characteristics with the journeys of others evident in the data.

This is the territory I have started from and have moved into as I have undertaken the task of understanding the Bible and its use in adult Christian education by a faith community that does not understand clearly why it is in decline or how to respond to it.

The major challenge has been to learn what I can of the new worlds of epistemology and adult education – worlds that were hitherto familiar from practice but largely unreflected. I have set out to understand the culture that has shaped me (and in which in many ways I have flourished) in the light of the ‘alien’ culture of the human sciences into which I am moving and to which, in many respects I now belong. Bauman describes the advantages of a firm rooting in one’s own culture in understanding another (1978 p.218). That may
be a strength, it can also be a problem. The task of gaining a perspective on one’s own culture from within is far from easy. There will always be blind spots. They make more intractable the hard labour involved in learning the language of another culture. Yet my experience suggests that an adequate response to the challenge of the postmodern condition requires the crossing of boundaries, the learning of new languages and the overcoming of cultural blindness. Perhaps it is because I have not approached the research from a position of strength in my own culture since I no longer fully belong to the world of theological and ecclesiological discourse that this project has been possible for me. I have become sensitive to the power of culture to blind or inhibit.

The great time consuming challenge has been facing the sheer difficulty of doing justice to another culture. I have had to struggle to enter and learn new discourses in a new world and because the old world of theology is so well defended I am constantly being caught out.

This life journey has a wilderness feel about it. Ironically, in the discourse that particular religious metaphor generates, it is in the wilderness that new thought is possible.
To investigate my question of Bible use I adopted three approaches:

- As a reflective practitioner I set out to describe the emergence of the question.
- I developed the reflective and investigative method with theory from current writing as described in Chapter Two, particularly from Foucault.
- I analysed key documents from the Methodist Church in the areas of Bible use adult Christian education. I also made notes of detailed conversations with five people who have had significant input into the documents and the projects they reflect. Where appropriate they have been noted in the text of the thesis. The nature of my work naturally involves me regularly in conversations that are applicable to my question and I have kept a brief journal of useful material that has emerged over the years.
- The use of two Case Studies to provide data for the clarification of my central issue and the further development of theory.

Using the three approaches and three sources of information does, I would argue, provide a reasonable triangulation. The complex nature of the case study further contributes to that.
Approaching the Case Studies

(All references in this section are from Saunders and Tosey)

The case study approach was chosen because:

- It can support the breadth of the issues I am dealing with
- It is manageable in terms of information sought and the results available for analysis.
- It provides material that is extensive, flexible and robust enough to enable a variety of reflective interpretations.
- The nature of the case studies supports my work as a practitioner of adult Christian education in the Methodist Church, and helps to justify the Church’s support for my research.

Yin (1994: p.13) defines a case study as

An empirical enquiry that:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident...
  [and which:]
- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points.
  [as a result it:]
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.

My work on the case study element of my research has been a process of regularly returning to this definition to let my thinking be challenged by it.

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1 Saunders L. and Tosey P. *The Case study as a Research Approach: Study Guide for MPhil/PhD programme, School of Educational Studies.*
Saunders and Tosey state,

The case study is appropriate for research questions that ask how and why, and which require the researcher to have little control over actual events, and which have a contemporary focus.

Saunders and Tosey: Case Study Guide

This description exactly matches my situation. I have been seeking to understand a set of processes that take place in the context like the one Yin envisages, where there are many variables that cannot be controlled and where the attempt to do so would seriously distort the processes. The case study approach is ideal in so far as it gives me an ongoing flexibility that does not finally tie me in to a particular paradigm and is open to development.

Given my background in history, which both may explain something of the attraction of Foucault’s writings, and the case study approach, I note that Saunders and Tosey point out that the case study uses many of the same techniques as historical research. They go on to quote Yin again to the effect that the case study approach:

adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing... the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews and observations...

It is that ‘unique strength’ which forms the particular attraction for me, and is of course, I would argue both suitable and necessary to my area of research.

Case studies are open to criticism on a number of grounds. Saunders and Tosey suggest three: verification, generalizability, and subjectivism. As I describe the cases I have selected, the approach I will adopt and the purpose I have in mind, I will seek so far as
possible to meet those criticisms. Even so, there will still remain grounds for questioning my conclusions and in the end I can only respond by stating those conclusions with the caution appropriate to the limitations of the method.

I will be exploring two multiple cases. There are broad similarities and significant differences.

**Case One: The Word at Whitby (Chapter Six of the thesis)**

'The Word at Whitby' was an official project of the Connexional Team of the Methodist Church. It was a three-day conference in May 2004. Its aims are fully set out in Chapter Six, and in the text of the flyer at the end of this Appendix. It was part of the official 'discourse' of Bible use in the church, involving the adult education department and the Faith and Order Committee. It represented the more 'liberal' wing of church life and theological approach. I interviewed 12 volunteers among the participants, contributors and organizers, selected on a broadly representative basis (lay/ordained, male/female, age groups, leaders and planners/participants) during the conference itself. I also kept a brief daily journal of personal reflections.

I was a member of the planning group and both a participant and contributor at the conference. This gave me insights to the minutes of meetings and other information not in the public domain. I am aware of the problems of subjectivism, and will need to assess the information with due caution. At a number of points I have discussed my
developing interpretations with colleagues who were not involved and who have helped me to reflect critically upon them.

**Case Two: Disciple (Chapter Seven of the thesis)**

‘Disciple’ is an intensive group-based course of Bible Study for lay people. It is highly structured, and popular within Methodism. Full details are to be found in Chapter Seven of the thesis. It has a sort of semi-official status in the life of the Church. It comes originally from Methodism in the United States and belongs to the more evangelical wing of the church, with a strong emphasis on ‘mission’ and the need for church-members to be learners or disciples. Groups operate countrywide. I approached groups chosen simply on the geographical grounds of travelling and working within the then London Region of the Methodist Church, with a request to meet members and leaders for individual interview, and possibly group observation. I accepted the first responses that met the timing for my research programme. I also interviewed individuals who have been leaders (particularly) or group members of other groups. In addition I met with the person who is responsible for Disciple at MPH and one of the national trainers. I therefore interviewed 15 individuals in the depth described, and had interviews in pairs or small groups with 12 others. I was able therefore to gather evidence from eight different Disciple groups. My work brings me into contact with many people who have done Disciple, and I have been able to use informal conversations with them to check the generalizability of my findings and to help reflect on the material from the individual groups. From these wider discussions it is clear that the groups I studied were characteristic of Disciple groups generally.
I considered taking the opportunity for observation of a group session, but I was doubtful about the quality of the material likely to be obtained. Disciple groups are intentionally tight knit with a long-term commitment. The dynamics of the session would have been significantly affected by the presence of a non-member with the sort of agenda they would be aware that I am brought.

Methods
The data I gathered from the personal interviews each of approximately 45 minutes duration was recorded on tape and I made hand-written transcriptions to work with. I include an example from two (one for each case) in Appendix 3. The complexity and unevenness of the material means that these sections have been selected at random, to indicate my interviewing approach, the nature of the material produced and the challenges faced in working with it. The amount of work in transcribing them all for inclusion was beyond my capacity, and I was uneasy at the thought of including intentionally selected excerpts, as they would not give a clear indication of the interpretive task and method. I had made clear the purpose of the interview and guaranteed anonymity where it was appropriate before the interview. My questions were developed to explore the motivation, experience and perceived results for the individuals of their experience. The interviews were semi-structured, giving participants the opportunity to develop the conversation in a way that best expressed their feelings, opinions and concerns. The basic set of questions that I worked with were the same for each case to ensure that data emerged from the same ‘territory’ in each interview. I adopted the semi-structured approach because this area of investigation is fraught with
problems of terminology, and the simple use of a term (e.g. 'the word of God') was no
guarantee that the same thing is meant each time, even when used by the same
interviewee. I was also aware of the fact that levels of articulacy varied considerably.
Also, even with the best of interviewee intentions there was the tendency for them on the
one hand to express defensiveness in support of their experience or on the other to
attempt to fulfil perceived expectations of the interviewer.

Summary
The two cases offer interestingly different styles and agendas. They are, as I have
suggested, 'points on a continuum of thought and practice'. They are owned as such by
the participants. They show clear elements of contrast and style despite all that the have
in common. As Yin points out, case studies are not about generalizing to populations so
much as to making theoretical generalizations. That matches precisely the style of my
research. Saunders and Tosey quote Jankowicz to identify the strength of case study,
which is seen as its comprehensiveness, involving the description and analysis of the full
richness and variety of events:

Richness and variety, however, will involve you in the full messiness and
complications which arise in the real situation which you're describing.

I am an enthusiast for the case study approach. No other method offers the
comprehensiveness, flexibility and potential that I am after in this thesis so Jankowicz's
warning is important. It identifies once again my overall most pressing problem, that of
limiting my work within manageable and justifiable proportions.
APPENDIX THREE

INTERVIEW MATERIAL: EXAMPLES

Whitby: Transcript of interview sample: Interviewee (I) was a member of the Connexional Team and of the organising group of the Word At Whitby.

PK: Thanks so much for agreeing to talk about the Conference. How did you come to be involved?

I: I was working on ‘Called by Name’ [Connexional Publication on membership of the Methodist Church], and getting involved in some high-flying conversations, but the question kept coming back ‘what about the ordinary Methodist?’, not the academic. For me the Bible is a book for the average Methodist.

PK: Go on...

I: the average Methodist has such a high view of the Bible, it is treated reverently as holy text that it has become distanced from them. I want to see a playful engagement that can open doors, a variety of approaches.

PK: Could you expand on that a bit?
I: For the average Methodist the Bible is a serious text, it's read out reverentially, and I want to point out the humour. It's a living word rather than just a holy word [pause] people can interact with it [pause] like a friendship, it's about advice and criticism and being with and spending time with.

PK: So how is that different from other texts?

I: at one level, no different. At another it is. I did English at college and got into reader response stuff. The Bible's about discerning the thoughts and meaning of God, but don't lose the value of reader response. The Bible is vital to Christian discipleship, but it has been kept from the people of the churches and made boring by academics and preachers – some not all – ‘hands on’ experiential approaches can bring it to life, empower readers to use it. That's why the reader's response is important. To engage with the Bible is to engage with the God who speaks through it.

PK: But we often hear the term ‘unread best-seller’...

I: The holiness of it becomes a barrier. The problem is that people wouldn't read it like a best-selling novel. They don't read it to relax, enjoy [pause] they feel they can't read well enough, you know, not a good enough person...OK?

PK: What were your impressions of the Conference itself?
I: The buzz! Lots of energy and enthusiasm and life. The event had a momentum in itself. People played around, doing lots of things with the Bible. I think a lot of it was down to David’s [David Rhymer: opening speaker] first address – it gave people permission to play around, doing different things with the Bible. [pause] What disturbed me though was the way people were asking ‘how can I take this back home?’ They couldn’t find a way [pause] that was the pressure of the question from the event, the problem of sharing excitement, wanting other people to taste the flavour.

PK: So what can be done about that?

I: They need permission to fail.

PK: Permission to fail?

I: The local church has a tradition of Bible *study*. We need Bible ‘engagement’, freeing up. The ideology of holiness stops *engaging*. They’re afraid of treading on someone else’s toes. They say ‘but I’m not an expert’. [pause] The future is at local level – getting the message across, getting information to people in shorter simpler ways. There’s a loss of food for thought [pause] we need a discussion document for church groups, we need a facilitator [in local churches] rather than a speaker. We’ve got to overcome the fear of not knowing the answer. I suppose that was one of the special things about the Conference. People were a community for all of that time, we’ve got to
find ways of taking that back to the local church and that’s the problem. Without a
community there [shrugs]. Another question!

PK: Tell me a bit about your own ‘pattern of engagement’ with the Bible...

I: [pause] Well ... as a Local Preacher, I suppose most of it comes with preparation of the
service. I’m forced to grapple with something – to make decisions how to pick up the
Bible, not just in the sermon, but choosing hymns [pause] trying to get to people at more
emotional rather than just head level. In worship it’s not just a matter of preaching, we
re-enact the story and how that inspires us to live [pause] we need to link through to other
things, other things, events, what’s in the news, stuff you’ve read, on the telly [pause]
playing with my daughter, even though she’s so small [pause] it all casts light on the
Bible...

PK: Just a hint there in the way you said that, that engaging with the Bible is not so
simple...?

I: That’s right. Doing an English course for my degree at college [pause] there’s a sort of
question [pause] this is what the author meant, this is what God meant. When I first
began doing English I realised the way I read the Bible bore no relation to the way I read
other texts [pause] I keep working at it!

PK: So what excites you?
I: still so much, it’s a model for life, if you can feel the emotions of the people [in the Bible] it’s something very oral, very direct. It can so easily be distanced by all that I’ve said. For me I guess the Bible should be ‘performed’ – not acted, not as such but sort of lived as its read, presented. [pause] OK.

Disciple: Transcript from Interview sample: Interviewee (I) had been a participant and trained as a leader for Disciple courses.

PK: Tell me about your participation in Disciple...

I: I’ve been a participant. I’ve ‘graduated’. I’ve co-led Disciple One and Two that the Circuit had promoted within a ‘certain group of people’ and now they’re queuing up for Disciple Three.

PK: A certain group of people?

I: Well not everybody is interested, and it puts the backs up of some if they feel pressured to take part in Bible matters. They just don’t feel comfortable. Nothing hidden about it in the Circuit. Horses for courses!
PK: How have you found Disciple?

I: Wonderful. Well thought out and planned. Different learning styles are catered for. It’s serious. It’s committed. You are sitting at the feet of Bible scholars [with the video resources]. And the paraphrasing [one of the teaching techniques] – it’s amazing what comes out. The leader is not the expert, you’re a facilitator, a co-learner. [pause]
Disciple takes seriously people’s experience – you will have insights to contribute – the process affirmed everybody’s life experience. There are different value systems and attitudes to the Word – accepting diversity and respecting it are part of the ground rules. There’s a lot of growing, growing together in views of the Bible. It’s 34 weeks – one year of your life emphasised – it’s a small investment for a big difference!

PK: What difference?

I: the growth in knowledge, understanding, ability to listen to others, growing together in response to the Bible. There’s transformation. And you put it into practice. One of the members on Disciple One – well it brought leadership out of him. Confidence! The desire to offer something back, to ask ‘how can I be used in your service? It helps to so link life, faith and the Bible – like a pigtail to create something strong, there’s strength in the three.

PK: The impact of the Bible in that sort of context - how does that differ for you from say a great novel or inspiring film?
I: Been there, done that. For me it’s not totally the same, something precious is handed on from God’s faithful people down the years. Community. There’s the promise of finding a ‘treasure trove’. I don’t know how to justify it [pause] it’s vindicated by my experience. Like metaphors for Word: bread that feeds like nothing else can, not even a Pavarotti opera, and I want it there on my death bed, with my hymn book! [laughs]

PK: Your training as a Disciple leader, can you tell me a bit about that and what was expected of you?

I: Is the Bible alive for you first? Good teachers inspire, they don’t just offer knowledge, fruit of academic knowledge. We had to think about what kind of group we were dealing with, what’s appropriate to different people at different stages, how to nurture Christians. It’s a year or two ago now – lot’s of water! I really enjoyed Luke/Acts. Rattling good stories.

PK: So why does the Bible get described as the ‘unread best seller’?

I: why is not more important to so many? Problem of people hearing little snippets, not being able to connect it all together, we haven’t been helped in the church [to understand it] holistically! [pause] It’s a ‘holy idol’ rather than something day to day. It’s not sacred. I love the image of a dog-eared Bible. The quality of teaching as well – you have to grasp the beauty, mystery etc. People are frightened of have ignorance exposed.
That's down to the quality of leadership, the group. Not being afraid to ask the stupid question. I suppose there are some childhood negatives about being tested as well.

PK: We've moved to teaching and learning again, what are some of your frustrations or difficulties in teaching and learning the Bible on the course?

I: I'm not prone to frustrations! Especially not with a group. They're lovely [pause] even the difficult ones. They all get to belong in the end or I want to know why! The difficulties? [pause] Well we're stuck on the way the passage has been preached in the past. So where does the additional information not in the text come from? E.g. we had Martyn Atkins [Principal of Cliff College] to speak in the Circuit – the Woman at the Well, John 4, he really helped people to move on. Away from the simplicities, lifting the verse out of context. Helped them to move. There was a real gentle encouragement that we are not betraying our Lord, by having a more open and seeking approach [pause] the group helps.

PK: Interesting that a man speaks about that passage. Can men really understand a text about a woman’s experience?

I: Oh yeah! It's a different life experience. It's a challenge for men! You know when the 'breast-feeding’ metaphor is explored. *It comes from in here!* Especially when you preach - its Bible, experience and the doctrines of the church.
APPENDIX FOUR

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS

1. Our Calling
2. The Priorities
3. Principles from L&D
4. Word at Whitby Flyer
and flexible
Nurturing a culture in the Church which is people-centred
Encouraging fresh ways of being Church
- Developing more meaningful worship and prayer
- Underpinning everything we do with God-centred

Methodist Church will give particular attention
As ways towards realising the priority the
in the world and in the Church

Priority: In our fellowship with others wherever possible, the
Methodist Church will continue to grow and

Priorities for the Methodist Church

Evangelism
Make more followers of Jesus Christ

Challenge Influence
Be a good neighbour to

Service
Help people to learn and grow as Christians,

Learning &
Increase awareness of God’s presence,

Worship
God’s love

The Church exists to:

General Secretary
David G. Peers

districts and the Connexional Team, with imagination and courage,
calling us all together in developing the priorities in our Church’s

The priorities are a vision for change and for hope in the Church, God is

Promises for the Methodist Church:

Theعبد these challenges. All this is summarised in the
was for all of us to help one another, using all the
resources of the Church, to pursue our dreams and to

Throughout these considerations we keep
fundamental and deep challenges that confront

All our efforts in Britain today, in rural and urban all
churches, we have listened to the

Our calling is about the whole Church.
in the light of our calling, we have listened

in the light of our other churches, we have listened

us to be in the twenty-first century.

The Methodist Church and the Church of which God wants

We are together to become the Church God wants

Our next step to

we do so with confidence and conviction. It is a simple

In recent years our calling has become a familiar

Dear Friends

Learning and developing as the whole people of God

The Church expects that each one of us, young and old, will grow and develop in our Christian discipleship. The Methodist Church believes that we are able to do this when:

- we feel valued as individuals
- our real learning needs are recognised and addressed
- we have our experience acknowledged and are enabled to reflect critically on it
- we have the opportunity to learn from each other
- we nurture a learning community that is both valuing and challenging
- we are asked to question our current assumptions and practice
- we are expected to take responsibility for our own learning
- we are able to use our existing gifts and talents.

Conference 2001

The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care.'
Our Calling, Conference 2000.

The principles overleaf are an extract from a report on training adopted by the Methodist Conference 2001.

They are relevant to all contexts, at local church level and beyond, where learning happens, eg:
- house group discussions
- bible studies
- fellowship meetings
- sermons
- workshops
- junior church or youth club sessions
- synod presentations
- course tutoring
- church reviews.

If you are looking for help in improving training skills, undertaking a church review or assessing and meeting training needs in your church, circuit or district, contact your regional Training and Development Officer at www.methodist.org.uk, or call Liz Millard on 0207 467 5214, from whom further copies of this card will be available.

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The Methodist Church

Vice-President of the Methodist Conference
An invitation from the President and
30 April - 3 May 2004
Skeaton Castle Centre, Whitley

The Venue

The conference is held in Skeaton Castle Centre, an historic suite of rooms in an imposing castle set in beautiful grounds. The castle offers

a wide range of facilities:
- Worshipping leaders
- Workshops
- Evening entertainment
- Catering
- Accommodation
- Local facilities

The conference will focus on the theme of 'The Word @ Whitley' which will explore a wide range of topics including:

- Worshipping leaders
- Workshops with children and young people
- House group leaders
- Evangelism
- Leaders and medicines
- Lay workers
- Music
- Women's ministry
- Local preachers

A conference for everyone who has a role in helping those who are new to the Bible to make sense of it for themselves.

We invite you, whatever your theological bent, consultation.

Do you have skills to offer to this conference?
Do you like being made to think?
Surprised, entertained, and challenged?
Do you want to be personally nourished?
Are you exploring how to communicate the Bible in worship?
To approach this?
Are you looking for practical new ways to read and make sense of it for themselves?
Do you have a story to tell others?
Are you passionate about the Bible?
 Presidential and Facilitators Indicate:

- Reading the Bible as a spiritual exercise
- Current critical approaches to the Bible
- The Bible and women
- Wisdom literature and personal identity
- The Bible and the community
- The Bible and visual arts
- The Bible and public space
- The bible in essential practice
- New perspectives on Paul
- Recognizing the importance of the Old Testament
- The Groups’ Judaism and Christianity
- Team Woven
- Gopi Nay
- The Bible in everyday experience

Topics planned include:

- Academic Team
- and members of the Methodist Church
- Revd Dr Jack Read (Wesley House, Cambridge)
- Revd Dr Margaret Ashworth (Mount College, Derbyshire)
- Revd Dr Anthony Reddin (Queen’s Foundation)
- Professor James D Brown (University of Durham)
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