

## APPENDIX I: Personal statement

This thesis argues that the pursuit of theology is to some extent an autobiographical exercise;<sup>1</sup> it further argues that a writer's presuppositions and commitments play an important part in the conversations s/he has with the Bible, the Christian community, and the wider world.

Behind my questions in this area lies the view that it is not possible to eliminate such background and experience and pre-understanding. Nor is it desirable, if we believe that such things are (at the least) one of the ways in which God communicates to us, and therefore the seed-bed for new ideas. However, we must acknowledge that such things can potentially be obstructive rather than constructive. Therefore the thesis suggests that an attempt to elucidate presuppositions and commitments is necessary.

As well as applying this thinking to Cone and Novak I need, very briefly, to apply it to myself. I am white, male, English, 45, the son of an Anglican prison chaplain; my first academic discipline was mathematics, I worked in West Africa for two years as a maths teacher and on my return to England for two years in industry as a computer analyst/prgrammer; I am married with three teenage sons, and I am an Anglican Vicar (moderate Catholic) in Carlisle. No doubt many of my presuppositions will be more obvious to others than to me<sup>2</sup> but I should perhaps say that I am not a revolutionary. I value the fabric of ordinary everyday life, the routines in which we find ourselves, the faithful perseverance of those who keep things going.

I do recognise, first that change very frequently, if not always, comes from minorities, from those on the fringes; second that it is almost always resisted. Further, the voices from the margin may be far more muted than the voices from the centre. These points should make us attentive to those asking for, or wishing for, change – and aware of those opposing it – and careful of which side we take! A realistic Christian analysis will always have to deal with the use of power by some one or some group.

However, I believe that, with a few exceptions, real gains come incrementally. My Hewlett Packard Font Management programme puts it succinctly: “No type design is created out of thin air. Every typeface, even the most radically new, echoes the forms of the faces that came before it, if only because we wouldn't recognise its characters if it didn't.”

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<sup>1</sup> see, for example, McFadyen: The call to personhood (CUP 1990) passim

e.g.: 'the social codes and structures which are simply "given" for persons are not arbitrary realities antithetical to the personal, but ossifications of previous personal communication; they are not so much objective as inter-subjective realities.' p 84

<sup>2</sup> see McFadyen: The call to personhood (CUP 1990) p 164: “...a person is never fully transparent to him or herself. This has only partly to do with the complexity of human being: it has equally well to do with the fact that personal identity is not something which can be known by itself, but only in its orientation to others....”

see also p 201: “self is not a substantial but an organisational reality; not something which is individually derived and held, but a means of organising oneself which is socially acceptable.”