

THE ART OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
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Standpoint of Certitude: Paul is jolted out of this on road to Damascus
Acceptance of Scripture or Church teaching.

Standpoint of Self-Assurance: Rich young ruler - eternal Life on his terms.

Standpoint of Exploration: Not to jump prematurely to decision (as above.)

This latter is the heart of this book.

It utilises:

“Movement towards Insight” & “Framework for Theological Reflection”

MOVEMENT TOWARDS INSIGHT

Encountering Experience, then encounter Feelings which lead to Images which spark Insight which leads, if willing, to Action.

1. “MOVEMENT TOWARDS INSIGHT” ~ a gentle process

1. Defining Experience: narrative description relates us to others' experience.

Slow down experience to be descriptive and non-judgemental. “Entering Experience”

2. Defining Feelings: is the naming of our physical sensation (against illusion that we are in control). This is potent with meaning.

3. Defining Images: can be visual, tactile, aural, olfactory, savoury. They symbolise our experience. Images are not precise and encourage multiple reflections, resist our control and invite us in. Moves us to a new point of sensitivity and transformation.

4. Insight leads to Action.

Prayer, planning and other people can help the movement.

If we rely on spontaneous reflection from tradition it may be superficial. So –

Expanding on Experience.

Experience is so vast let us divide it up as follows:

1. Lived active Narrative. Our life story as it happens
2. Tradition: in our case Christian story – religious Wisdom.
3. Culture: the Symbols & ideas, the institutions/structures, the environment
4. Positions: attitudes and convictions.

These four all interrelate. Freeze frame to dig deep.

The Significant Issue: is “the heart of the matter”

Come to by gentle means and reflective imaging.

The Heart of the Matter

Must contain the energy of the experience

Needs a narrow enough focus

Free from ‘position’ statements

Should be different from the experience – a new perspective on it.

2. “FRAMEWORK for Reflection:

1. Focus on aspect of **experience**.
2. Describe experience to identify **heart of the matter**
3. Put this heart in “conversation” with **Christian Heritage**.
4. Identify new **meanings** and truths.

Process of personal Theological Reflection is them explicated:

1. Begin with Life situation
2. begin with tradition (bible reading)
3. begin with cultural text – advert, novel, painting, social conflict etc
4. begin with texts around a theme
5. begin with a theme from life – a transition, relationship, liturgical year.
6. begin with a personal position – a conviction.
7. begin with a religious experience.
8. begin with another’s theological text – a recent theological book etc

CORRELATION or CONVERSATION

Example: Woman with Haemorrhage

Action Source: what was hopeless? What was gift?

Tradition Source: What's hopeless re Woman with Haemorrhage? What gift?

Culture Source: Hopelessness in film? Possibilities in those stories?

IDENTIFYING NEW TRUTHS & MEANING FOR LIVING

Moves from group back to individuals' lives.,

Moves from correlation into judgement.

Can use sculpting, journaling, prayer, resolve.

“Something to take with them from the group”

- i.e. This has proved to be a ‘movement towards insight’.