



THE STARFISH
MANIFESTO

A Prophetic Roadmap for an
Apostolic Journey

Wolfgang Simson

T H E S T A R F I S H M A N I F E S T O

A Prophetic Roadmap for an Apostolic Journey

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Foreword

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints (Jude 3)

The Global Church has arrived at an incredibly significant kairos-time in its evolution. It is a day of enlargement, spiritual redefinition, increased understanding and total rightness – all aspects of life are being aligned with the template of the Kingdom. It is a day of unprecedented divine initiatives, as God seeks to reclaim His Church and enforce His purposes with an urgency never before seen. In these days of unparalleled eternal movings there is an urgent demand for all aspects of the faith to be brought into complete alliance with God's divine will.

The term that was coined to define the present initiative of God is "A Global Apostolic Reformation". This present reformation cannot be defined as a "move" - moves come and moves go and like spiritual junkies the global church runs recklessly in search of another move. I choose to describe it as a divine process that incorporates and encapsulates ALL that God is seeking to achieve from now until the ultimate completion of His will in the earth. It is certainly a day of unprecedented advance!

This advance, like all previous advances will not be without its unique breed of skandalon – those elements that seek to short-circuit the objective. In order to maintain the integrity of the present process we are encouraged by Jude to "contend earnestly for the faith..." But that earnest contention must be tooled – it must be Prophetically informed and Apostolically enforced.

This powerful and relevant process has been mired in misunderstanding, misconception and misrepresentation. The barrage of confusion has left most of the Church with a false view of the present Spiritual initiative while others see the Church as nothing more than "opium of the people". Manipulation is masquerading as leadership, Apostolic networks are no more than ultra-modern denominations, polished Pentecostalism is passing for Apostolic, merchandising and Christian network marketing is passing for evangelism, giftedness is elevated above character and religious imperialism has successfully disguised itself as missions. The result of this cacophony is a disfigured church that has not fulfilled its responsibility; a self indulgent, disparate and divided Christianity that has deceived masses engaged in blind loyalty to a system that is in desperate need of reform. Against this backdrop of prevailing exaggerations and abuses it is refreshing to read *The Starfish Manifesto*.

Wolfgang Simson strikes a deathblow on traditionalist, pseudo-apostolic companies, religious despots and charlatans who celebrate an apostolic and prophetic competence that runs only skin deep. This book openly exposes the redundancy, irrelevance and inaccuracy of the "Church as we know it" and it powerfully provides us with God's preferred alternative. It presents us with spiritual templates and workable solutions to centuries old inaccuracies. This book will certainly insult ignorance, inform our process, arm us to earnestly contend for the faith and provide us with clear revelational pathways that can lead us more precisely to the completion of all things.

Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord (Hag 1:13, KJV)

The Starfish Manifesto is not a ventilation of brainpower neither is it an abstract collection of statistics, historical data, scriptures, experiences nor academically enriched paragraphs. **It is however a spiritual life buoy that seeks to rescue the church from its desultory practices.** It is the embodiment of the writer's conviction. This puts an added premium on the book primarily because its impartational value is heightened by virtue of there being very little distance between declaration and lifestyle. In the words of Wolfgang "much of theology actually spells biography".

...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone (Eph 2:20,

Every divine initiative in the earth will require a clear, seminal declaration of truth in order to dignify the process. When Israel marched through the wilderness the movement of the cloud determined their movement. It was the blast of the trumpet that informed the people of the cloud's moving (Num 10). The trumpets then, represented the clear, articulate and unambiguous prophetic declaration. Without that "chazon" or prophetic revelational declaration we are left with an aborted process or a move that has a relatively short shelf life - where divine intent is derailed and divine purpose is deferred. But prophetic revelation is not a stand-alone commodity. When working in tandem with the Apostolic it becomes a lethal foundation on which divine architecture is actualized and built. These two competences have been preached into obsolescence by much of the Church. In other circles they (apostolic and prophetic) are competing with each other in an environment of perennial distrust and narcissistic power struggle. If these two ministries can truly die, then God's Ekklesia and the world will be better for it.

Wolfgang Simson has provided us with an exceptional book that allows us to look into the working reality of these two competences and the technology that will allow for God's intent to be fully constructed in the earth. A rare voice among many echoes!

Anderson Williams
Trinidad and Tobago

Foreword by author

Whoever wishes to follow God will do it either God's way, or his own way. Many have boldly declared their own ways to be God's way, without asking his permission. In kind, God is doing something in our days without asking anyone's permission. Those who sense it respond and either become revolutionaries, reformers – or rebels against their own King. The focus of this book is on the revolution that is happening out there. And it is causing those that watch it from inside established Christian systems to wish, believe and call for a reformation in their own camp. A revolution is a complete replacement of a system with a new one; a reformation, in comparison, merely changes and reshapes – reforms - that which already exists. However, I see the current Kingdom revolution, instigated by the King himself, as a benevolent and gracious act, calling both revolutionaries (the builders of new systems) and reformers (the re-shapers of existing ones) to march arm in arm, under the directives of their common King, Jesus Christ, into a common future. Today God's revolutionaries inspire, challenge and dare all of us to go where no-one has gone before; in-house reformers restore their churches, Missions and networks, while at the same time they help to redeem the rich spiritual legacy and heritage that each church and movement has accumulated in the past, striving to introduce their own spiritual gems into the public domain.

When Karl Marx published his *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, the founding document of Communism, he opened it by saying: "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism." In today's world, God's Spirit is haunting all of us; but not in the form of some ghostly phantom threatening to destroy and overthrow, but the Spirit of Jesus rallying all of us with striking, personalized invitations to individually and corporately engage in the biggest and most exciting endeavor of all of human history: the culmination and ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes with mankind before His New Age begins.

In 1996, I sensed I needed to start preaching, teaching, and writing about an imminent reformation that gradually starts by the return of house churches as a new, but actually age-old format of ekklesia. Since the book *Houses That Change The World* came out and was translated into nearly 20 languages, we have had a never ending stream of visitors at our house telling us we were expressing something that they had felt in their spirit loud and clear, something unspeakable they somehow felt was put into words by that book. Since then, hundreds of thousands of new house churches have been born around the world, and if research serves us right, it looks like this is only the beginning. *The Starfish Manifesto* is probably the last book I will write on the issue of ekklesia, and in many ways, it is the Big Brother of my former book on house churches.

In 2001, God had asked my wife Mercy and me to completely quit Church-as-we-know-it (CAWKI) and even missions-as-we-know-it, and to go into an unknown future. We felt lost, vulnerable, insecure, and alone. But after some time, God started to speak to us that a time had arrived where age-old secrets of the Kingdom and "mysteries sealed up until the last days" would be revealed, divine insights that would bring about a dramatic and revolutionary shift in the way the church understands itself and the task God has for her. One of these mysteries is the rediscovery of healthy apostolic and prophetic ministries that had gone through God's mill – not proud, triumphant, presentable and strong people and their ministries, but weak, crucified, no-name, faceless, and dead people, unimpressive folks.

I have three specific groups of people in mind for whom this book is written:

1) Seekers of Church 2.0. There are many who have grown up in traditional churches or missions who feel excited in their spirit, knowing that what they have experienced and seen in Christianity so far cannot be "it." It always has been church version 1.x, a slight upgrade, a cosmetic change of something that has posed as "church" for centuries. But there are literally millions that, either hiding it deep inside or voicing it aloud, know there must be more, something you might call Church 2.0. Through all sorts of means they have been thrown into a search-mode, looking for something else, something that goes beyond their past experience and brings them into a closer relationship with God and what it truly means to be the church. If this is you, I have good news for you.

2) I see a generation of young people rising up today and asking new kinds of questions. They (OK; some!) are passionately in love with Jesus, but strangely at odds with the Church. They are looking for a cause, a dangerous mission, something worth risking their lives for. If this is you, then I have good news for you, too. It may feel a bit like Neo in the film "The Matrix." He was offered the red and blue pill, took the red one (converted) and experienced how it was to be "born again" and rescued into the community of Zion on Morpheus' ship. As Neo woke up and shook his head, this is what he heard: "The answers are coming!" So hang in there.

3) There are those who are coming to Christ today completely outside traditional church systems. Are you from a Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Indian, Jewish, New Age, or completely agnostic background and looking for a church that is unlike the church? For a liberating place under the shadow of God where your brothers and sisters would wish to be, too? Then I have good news for you as well. The Western kind of church that you have visited, read about, or seen advertised on TV, is not the real thing. Jesus was an Asian. And the kind of Church he started is much closer to your heart and culture than you probably thought possible.

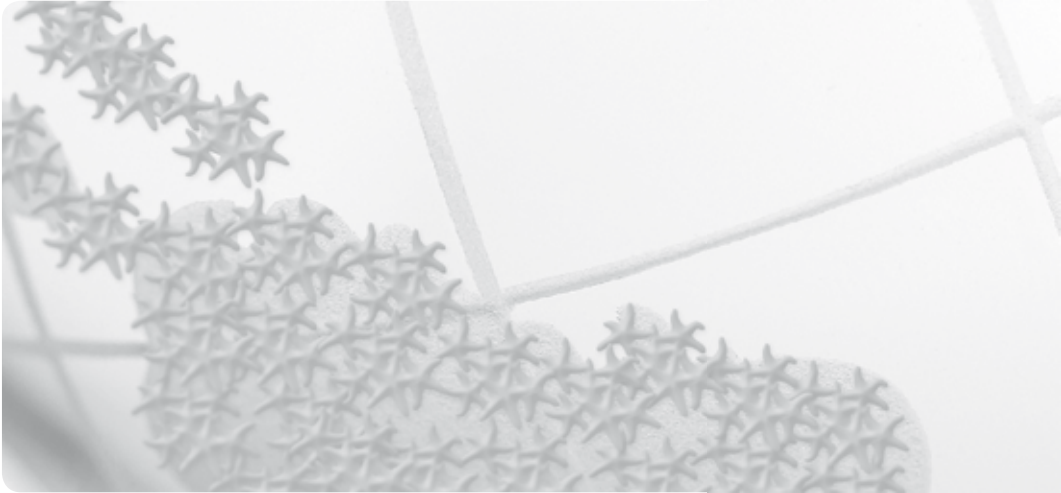
Finally, if you feel safe and comfortable in a position or role in traditional churches or missions, this book will probably be either rather disturbing to you – or it will open a surprising back door to a Christianity you never believed existed. And show you a church you never knew. And if you are a house church enthusiast of the kind that relishes total independence, rejects each and any authority, and have become a holy island, a part of a harmless, self-centered religious bubble, this book might serve to burst that bubble and invite you to an apostolic dimension of organic Christianity that you probably both wanted and feared: wanted because small little bless-me-clubs can become rather boring, ingrown, and insignificant after some time; and feared, because this means change, huge change.

But most of all, this book is written for all those followers of Christ who feel in between worlds and wish to dwell on a map of the Promised Land. It may be a bit like Columbus on his first journey to discover "India" after the point of no return, that particular spot in a journey where returning back is not an option anymore. The resources have run dry, and your only hope is that there is land ahead before all hope dies. For all those, I have a message. As Church-as-We-Know-It has faded into the distance long ago, there is a rumor that a new land has been spotted: Church-as-God-Wants-It. And that - God lives there.

Where would you rather be for the rest of your life?

Wolfgang Simson

October 2009



PART I: INTRODUCTION AND VISION

1 I spy something

I lift up my eyes to the mountains...said David.
Today, from which mountains does our help come -
the Swiss Alps, the Rockies, the Himalayas, or Mount Zion?

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND VISION

1 I spy something

You have probably played it, the kids game “I spy something”, where someone describes something he sees to a group (“I see something red!”), and the others have to guess what it is (an apple, for instance). Well, I spy something that God is doing, and I am not alone. After humans had their way with the bride of Jesus for many centuries, God is bringing back divine order into his house. He initiated a Holy Spirit ordained spring cleaning that refreshes, reforms, restores and repositions the people of God for the mission of God – if they repent.

David writes in Psalm 121: “I lift up my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from?” It is a sad fact of history that for millennia, the people of God were tempted to look at the wrong mountains for help. There were the artificial mountains of Egyptian pyramids and Babylonian ziggurats people gazed at for possible help. There were the mountains of Greek philosophy, a mountain of books and scientific knowledge, and some even looked at mountains of money for help. For many in the Roman Catholic world, the seven hills of Rome have been the mountains they were raised to look up to, and five centuries ago, the hilly areas of Germany and the Swiss Alps became the hotbeds of a theological reformation that became another mountain from which people expected help. For some time in recent church history, many around the world looked at the Rockies – the Rocky Mountains or the man-made mountains, the religious skyscrapers of the Mega-Church phenomenon as a symbol of the Western – mainly the American - church to guide their thinking. Only a few have realized that this is not where the real global spiritual leadership comes from at this moment in time. With a bit of straw in their mouths, many have started to look away from the Rockies and have been watching with fascination how in the last century many Non-Western areas of the world experienced a form of Christian revival. The number of Evangelicals and their churches shot up in countries like Brazil, Guatemala, Kenya or the Philippines in a way that surpassed anything that was experienced in the West. Many in the West started to wish that something like that should happen not only on these “mission fields”, but also “at home”.

But in the last two decades this explosive growth of Evangelicalism in the Non-West has begun to slow down significantly. Flagship churches like Yoido Full Gospel Church, started by David Yonggi Cho, began to stagnate long ago, and as researchers of the Cell Church movement report, even the vigorous idea of celling the church has clearly hit a ceiling.

In an age of increased globalization over the last few decades it was mainly Western products, goods and services that flooded the markets of the Non-West. Nokia, Adidas, Coca Cola, Audi, Kärcher, paypal, skype, Microsoft or Western Union quickly have become household names even in the remotest parts of the globe. There was even a certain frenzy in how the emerging generations in the Non-Western World bought into the new Western status symbols hook, line and sinker. It is therefore not really difficult to see that in the religious market, it was also mainly Western religious goods and services that have been the main import article in many nations around the world: God TV, Vineyard music, Hillsong, Willow

Creek, Rick Warren, Joyce Meyers or the Alpha courses have become household names in most areas of the world. In other words: the eyes of an amazing proportion of Christians in the Non-West are still glued to whatever comes down from the Rockies! But the growth in numbers of Evangelicals and their churches have started to level off significantly. Many in the young generations simply don't buy the plastic, predictable, middle-class, event-and-program-driven and deeply denominational churches of their parents any longer. Atheists, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, New Agers, Animists, Indians, Maoris and Aborigines or the remaining thousands of unreached people groups seem extremely reluctant to get excited with a church "made in the West" and then painstakingly imported and implanted into their soil and offered on the religious market. Watching the pandemonium of a competitive, fragmented denominational Christianity arrive at his hidden doorsteps in the Brazilian jungle, the chief of an Indian tribe in the Amazon area asked a German missionary in bewilderment: "Which one is the right church?" And, watching the members of each new protestant shop-front church condemn each other with gusto, he concluded that Christianity is not for him and his tribe. This story is repeated in countless versions around the globe. Many young people in the West are saying: "Jesus yes, Church no." And even those friendly atheists like the American Matt Casper (see his book *Jim & Casper Go to Church*), comparing what he read in the Bible and what he, in stark contrast, experienced in church (light shows, fog machines, worship bands, extended offerings etc included) asked: "*Is this what Jesus told you guys to do?*"

There are two facts that stand out for us to see. Fact number 1: The Non-Western World has mainly experienced a revival of the white man's church. After church "made in the West" has greatly succeeded to *sacramentalize* but almost completely failed to *disciple* the people of the West, the article (pastor, program, pews, parking lot) has experienced a global welcome and was gobbled up by many as if it were the real thing. But an exploding number of people in the Non-West are now noticing the straw in their mouths as well, and are experiencing the very same dissatisfaction with Church-as-we-know-it (CAWKI) as the many discerning followers of Christ in the West a few decades ago.

Fact number 2: the explosive growth times of traditional Evangelicalism are over and the development of the traditional churches in the Non-West has already hit a brick wall. What is already in full swing in the West – an exodus of "Out of Church Christians" who flee their traditional churches in search of God – is now starting to happen in the Non-West as well. And where will they all eventually turn to if not back to God, back to his book and back to his church – Church-as-God-wants-it?

The question for us today is: is this all there is to see? Should we be sad and resign? Or is there something else, some other mountain that we can look at and receive help? I absolutely believe there is. And in this book we will look at two such mountains and examine what help we can receive if we so choose to look at them. In order to do so we might have to un-glue our eyes from our fascination with CAWKI, a system that has learned to smoothly satisfy the religious consumer, excite and entertain the wary soul and tickle the mind of the intellectual. If we can allow our soul to do that, we will discover a world beyond CAWKI, a world that is so unlike what we thought we knew about Christianity, that for some this will take a bit of time to adjust our glasses and even see, let alone digest or even respond to what we see.

Where does our help come from?

In order to see it we might have to un-glue our eyes from our fascination with CAWKI, a system that has learned to smoothly satisfy the religious consumer, excite and entertain the wary soul and tickle the mind of the intellectual.

The largest mountain range in this world are the Himalayas, the “roof of the world” located between India, China, Pakistan and Tibet, overshadowing vast parts of Asia, home to more than 60% of the world’s population. However, in the additional shadow of Hinduism, the persecution of Communism, Socialism and the cruel dictatorships like Pol Pots something was birthed in Asia that few have seen for what it truly is. Hidden away from the eyes of many that looked for material success, the development of the Dow Jones and NASDAQ indexes or just easy living, in the furnace of poverty, rejection, strife, war and calamities an amazing, almost unheard of kind of Christianity was born in a place where few ever expected anything of value to come from.

This is not new. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, only a few kilometers outside of Jerusalem, all eyes were fixed on Jerusalem, expecting a messianic and powerful King to be born in the place of valor, a city that counts, in the only place of significance that the religious community had selected for itself. But when it happened, no TV cameras, radio microphones or journalists were present, and one of the most significant events in human history happened almost completely unnoticed by the world, with the exception of an audience of a pitiful few shepherds, a few diviners from Asia and – angels.

Nathanael, as he heard for the first time of Jesus, the former building contractor from the small, insignificant town called Nazareth, exclaimed: “What good thing can come out of Nazareth?” Again, Nathanael obviously had a firm opinion where the good things are supposed to come from – but Nazareth was not one of them. Nazareth, a small agricultural town with around 400 to 600 population in the days of Jesus, is neither mentioned in the Old Testament, nor amongst the 45 cities of Galilee reported by the historian Josephus. Its name is even missing from the 63 towns of Galilee mentioned in the Talmud. As no trade routes came even near Nazareth, the place was of no economic value – and therefore it simply had not found its way onto anyone’s map.

In a similar way, today too many eyes had been fixed for too long to the wrong places expecting spiritual direction and help. “Come and see”, Philip said to Nathanael, and in the same vein I would like you to have a quick look out of a window towards the Himalayas and “spy” some things you may not have noticed before.

In the Western world, success in terms of church and missions work has been measured mostly in numbers. Any set of number the west is familiar with simply pales before what has been happening in Asia recently. A protestant church with an attendance of over 100 in Spain or over 200 in Austria would count amongst the largest in the country. Norway’s largest churches gather around 1.000 attendees, the UK knows churches that top 10.000 attenders, and in the US, the largest mega-churches attract typically between 20.000 and 30.000 attendees.

I remember when I first read Rick Warren’s book *The Purpose Driven Church*, he reported of the planting of Saddleback Community church in 1980, and how it had grown to around 15.000 attendees by the year 1998. For Western eyes, a phenomenal success that had Rick Warren launched into becoming an international conference speaker with more than half a million pastors and church leaders attending his seminars so far. If my memory serves me right, 106 doctoral dissertations had been written on the story of his church by then. Just at the same time, I had heard of a woman in Vietnam – let us call her Sarah – that had felt lost and abandoned by the Western missionaries after the socialist takeover of

Vietnam in 1976. For many years, she and a few other women simply prayed what they should and could do for the salvation of her countrymen in the absence of professional missionaries and the kind of Western-implanted church they had brought. After many years of praying, the women felt encouraged by God to start underground house churches. In only 4 years, Sarah herself has seen more than 18,000 new converts that she had baptized herself. The subsequently emerging house church networks in Vietnam have now spread through the entire country and have reached many thousands of newly planted churches in a very short period of time.

As far as I know, not a single thesis has ever been written on the amazing work of Sarah, nor have many church leaders come to her to find out how she, as a woman, single-handedly has seen more fruit than one of the most widely celebrated pastors of the West, Rick Warren, and this not in 18 years, but in only 4 years.

The amazing story of the underground house church movements of China is probably most widely known. In a nutshell, since the beginning of Protestant missions in 1807, it has again been mainly a very Western church that had been implanted into China's soil by well-meaning missionaries. When Mao Zedong took power, about 2 million Protestants were known in China. As part of his "Cultural Revolution" Mao banished all foreign missionaries, nationalized church property, killed all the senior leaders and either killed or imprisoned all second- and third-level Christian leaders, banishing all public meetings of Christians with the threat of death or torture. The church was forced underground, and many in the West believed this would be the end for the embattled church in China. But on the contrary, the small flock started to literally thrive and explode in a way that has no parallel in the history of Christianity. Researchers speak of a 30-fold increase within only 30 years, so that by 1979 the original 2 million had grown into 60 million followers of Christ. This is a faster growth than even the early church experienced during the Roman Empire. In 2007, even Yie Xiaowen, director of the government's religious authority, spoke in an internal report of 130 million Christians in China, 20 million of them Catholics. Further research indicates that the number of followers of Christ may have reached as many as 200 million by now, and I am in touch with movements that see regularly over 1,500 new housechurches planted *per month*, or regional church planting movements in China that have seen the planting of 100,000 new churches in little over 10 years. If researchers like Patrick Johnstone (Operation World) or the authors of the "Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions" are right, the entire Western cultural hemisphere (North America, Australia and Europe) today contains not much more than 100 million followers of Christ, while in China even conservative, anti-Christian party officials admit those numbers in their country to be much higher than that. The development of the Body of Christ since Mao has been nothing short of a miracle – far beyond anything the West has either experienced or could even begin to imagine. Strangely enough, few seminars have been conducted to teach the stagnating Christianity in the West what they could learn from China. Most Christians in the West simply pity their Chinese brothers and sisters for the persecution they are going through, and completely fail to see what Jesus meant when he said "blessed are you when you are persecuted". There will be a time when Christians globally, having stared at the wrong mountains for help, will realize with a sudden shock how the Church in China has long been a prophetic

A woman, single-handedly has seen more fruit than one of the most widely celebrated Pastors of the West, Rick Warren, and this not in 18 years, but in only 4 years.

voice and an apostolic example for all of us. I have reasons to believe this time is now.

Tony Collis is a well-known Evangelist in New Zealand and currently pastors an Assemblies of God Church in his country. Tony and his wife Lynn have a long-standing passion for the church of Jesus Christ to return back to its original roots, and they have been developing a small network of what they call “micros” – small, organic communities or housechurches. Teaching these insights inside New Zealand, Tony told us, has not always been easy: “People seem reluctant to change, and feel very secure in the way they are doing church”. But the moment Tony took the very same message abroad, to a country outside the Western world and culture, he was able to see how explosive his own message and conviction actually was. Tony told me that he was approached in January 2004 by a Christian leader from Myanmar – the former Burma - to come to his country and help him train church planters. He commented that it had taken him 26 years to plant 12 churches and he did not want to take another 26 years to plant another 12 churches. He had read an article Tony had written on house churches in New Zealand and he felt that such a form of church would work well in Myanmar. His country has 50 Million people most of whom are Buddhist. Tony reports: “In January 2005 my wife and I flew to the capital of that country to train the first batch of church planters. In the following three months the movement grew to ten churches. In April we encouraged and trained the same church planters and the movement grew to ninety house churches in three months with an average attendance of 5. In September I visited again and the house churches grew in strength to about 35 per house church. By the end of the year 120 house churches were underway. In March 2006 I visited the country again to find 150 house churches. By then, they had a goal to see five hundred house churches by the end of 2006. In early October 2006 the movement had exceeded all expectations and had grown to over one thousand house churches now scattered all over the nation. The movement had grown to over 3,000 churches by the end of 2007 . . .”

Such stories are not at all unusual for Asia. In fact, a friend of mine has personally seen a few dozen peasants in a country in SE Asia go ahead and plant over 200 housechurches in the first, 3,000 in the second and 9,000 housechurches in the third year. ***Could you imagine the commotion if anywhere in the West a few farmers would get together and, within short three years plant a church that has seen 100,000 baptized converts?*** It would be an outright sensation, the story would be all over the news, the farmers would be speaking at all the major Christian events – and yet, I am pretty sure very few in the West have ever even heard of this, let alone asked the obvious question: how in the world did they do this?

India is another example of this. After the phenomenal growth of early apostolic Christianity in India, as documented in the scientific research of Indian scholars like Prof. G. Menanchery or Dr. John Samuel, there was a long time of relative silence in regards to the church, until, in 1706, the first Protestant missionaries arrived in India in Tranquebar on the shores of Tamil Nadu. This was the beginning of a new missionary era that has led to the fervent establishment of transplants of Western churches, schools and social work into Indian soil, strongly backed by Western theologies, and, of course, finances. The official Indian government census of the year 2001 states 24 million Christians in India (or 2,34% of the population).

However, that is not the full picture. Having lived in India for some time, I had the privilege of seeing firsthand the development of an entirely new movement that began completely outside the established, traditional church system. Historically, this probably began in 1994 with the fresh initiative of apostolic leaders like medical doctor Dr. Victor Choudhrie to go back to Jesus, his book and his church. This resulted in the starting of regional, flat-structured house church planting initiatives, that first spread inside the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh, and then started to multiply into other areas of India, predominantly in the North, interestingly not the traditionally “Christian” South. It is not at all uncommon to hear stories of young churchplanters or housewives to start a house church planting movement in an area, that first develops into a handful of churches, which quickly grow into hundreds and, a few years later, into thousands of newly planted churches. Careful, empirical research has verified that tens of thousands of house churches have been established in house church-networks in many Indian regions since then. The total number of newly planted house churches since 1994 in the nation has most probably surpassed 1 million already, with more than 25 - 30 million new converts, if not more. All indications show that this is only the beginning.

These developments are simply staggering, if compared not only to what the West has become used to, but even in contrast to traditional Church and Missions work in India. If CAWKI in India has grown to a membership of 24 million within the last 300 years since the first Protestant missionaries arrived, what could be the reason that just over the last decade alone a development has taken place in India that has seen another 25 to 30 million people added to the Kingdom – in a small fraction (6%) of the time? As we shall see, the recent explosion of church planting in India will have huge implications for those who wish to learn from it. The number of those Christian leaders from all around the world that visit India not anymore to teach and preach Western forms of Christianity (and finance Indian versions of it) but to explore the secrets of this amazing phenomenon – because this is what it is - is growing every year. Could it be that India, at this point, has more to teach Christianity in the West than the other way around?

Since the beginning of Islam in AD 622, traditional CAWKI-based Christianity has made very little impact on the Muslim world. As my former colleague and eminent Missions expert Prof. Bill Wagner points out in his book *How Islam Plans to Change the World*, Islam, in the past, has gained far more ground in traditional Christian regions than Christianity in Islamic regions. Even with an amazing amount of dedication, passion and risk taking, to the ultimate point of martyrdom as in the case of my study colleague Tilman Geske in Malatya, Turkey, in 2007, Western missionaries have seen precious little Kingdom growth, let alone multiplication or churches during the last 1400 years of engaging Islam.

However, this is not the final word. Well-known and respected Baptist misiologist and author David Garrison says: “More Muslims have come to Christ in the past two decades than at any other point in history. In North Africa, 16,000 Muslim Berbers turned to Jesus; in a central Asian republic, 4,000 Muslims have found Christ; 15,000 Kazakh Muslims found Christ in the past 15 years. Even Islamic experts recognize what is happening: a massive missionary movement of Muslims to Christ.”

In a seminar on churchplanting that I was conducting in Khartoum, capital of Sudan, in 1996, I met El Faqi. This former Muslim Iman had just come to Christ a few months before and had quickly understood the concept of house church,



In little more than a mere decade, this entirely new house church movement has seen more Muslims baptized than all other Christian churches in the country together in more than 200 years.

and of not bringing Muslims to a program-based church, but bringing an organic church as an extended and multipliable family of God to the Muslims. As I was visiting El Faqi and his family in his humble brick-and-clay home in Omdurman, just outside Khartoum, a year later, he made us to greet a long line of people who were standing patiently up against the wall inside his compound. "These are all former Muslims that came to Jesus in the last few months. More than 120, in fact. We have already established ten house churches, and we pray for this to grow to at least 1,000 churches in the next few years," he said, overjoyed by the prospect. However, God had allowed another path for El Faqi. A militant Muslim group got wind of him and threatened him with death. Just before his executioners came to his door, he and his family were able to get away, and ultimately were brought to the US for shelter. Sadly, he met there with a mysterious car accident and died, most probably another martyr.

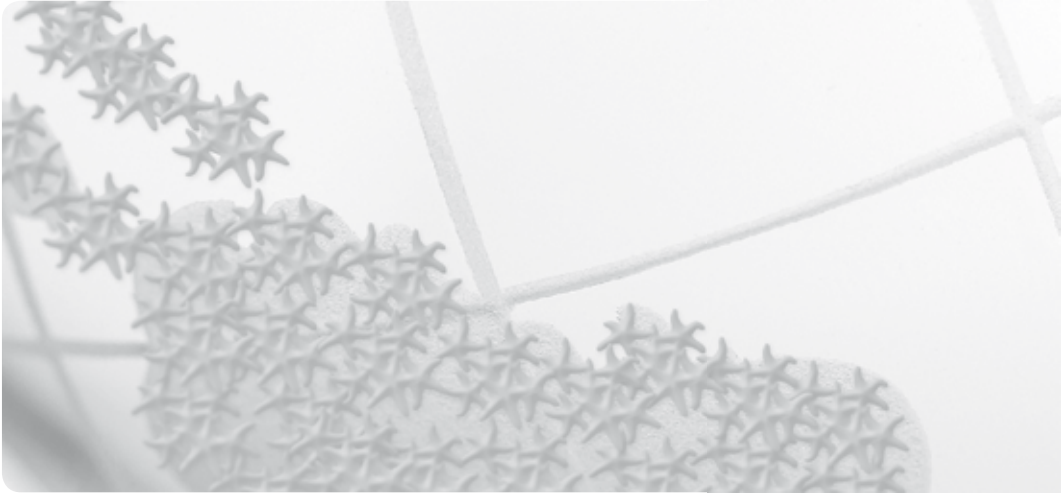
One of the most fascinating new developments is currently happening in Bangladesh. A young Bangladeshi man – let's call him Abdul – who was about to become a Muslim Imam, instead found Jesus, became an "Isahi" (one who belongs to Isa/Jesus) and turned into a church planter in the 1990s. He has since worked with an ingenious strategy of using what is called the "Camel method" and multipliable house churches. In a development that has stunned even the most seasoned Missions experts that have thoroughly researched this as a case study, tens of thousands of Muslims have since been baptized and integrated into *jamaats* (house churches) in a very short period of time. By the year 2004, around 280,000 Muslims had already joined this Christ-movement. Research conducted at the end of 2007 speaks of a confirmed number of over 800,000 former Muslims that have been baptized and integrated into house churches, and the current number (2009) is very possibly around one million. English researcher Patrick Johnstone in his 2001 edition of "Operation World" lists a total of 930,000 affiliates (not members!) of all known Christian churches together in Bangladesh, the fruits of a wide variety of Protestant Missions since William Carey started his work in Bangladesh in 1793. In little more than a mere decade, this entirely new house church movement has seen more Muslims baptized than all other Christian churches in the country together in more than 200 years. Are we already seeing the first fruits of a radically reformed Christianity that is seeing a new and huge missionary response? As hardly any of these astonishing developments have been duly reported in the traditional Christian media formats, this might come unexpected even to those who thought they were closely observing the growth of the Christian church. But if the underlying principles of what is happening in Bangladesh were studied and applied to other areas of the world, as, for example, Swiss Missiologist Dr. Marco Gmür has done, together with many others, we might start to see possibilities for the advancement of the Kingdom in ways we could have never imagined before.

Clearly something is happening that has never happened in this magnitude before in recorded history, and it is happening mainly in the shadows of the Himalayas, from where it is being taken and has already started to ignite fires in a number of areas in the world. Similar developments have recently emerged in Pakistan, Indonesia or even Egypt, where more than 4,000 newly planted house churches have already overtaken the numbers of all Protestant churches of all denominations together (around 1,260) in less than a decade. Even those coun-

tries in the cultural West that have started to listen to this revolution in the making, and begun to learn and even implement some of the lessons gleaned from this, are experiencing a quiet reformation. Quiet, because it has not yet really been discovered by the media. Quiet also, because the whole development looks very unimpressive at the surface, as it is happening mostly in modest homes or offices without their own TV shows to broadcast this to the world. Switzerland, Australia and USA are amongst the first Western nations to learn to listen and to learn that in this time, much of what the Holy Spirit has to teach to those that hear what the Spirit is saying does not originate in the West and is exported to the Rest (of the world), but moves very much from the Rest to the West. Observers like George Barna (USA) have pointed out that the emerging house church and simple church movements in the United States already have many millions of followers. At the rate of the recent developments and the changing of the spiritual climate in the US that sees people rapidly moving away from pre-packaged, program and event driven churches in search of down-to-earth authenticity and reality, regional networks of house churches are poised to become the new "mainline church" in a very short period of time.

I am not really proposing that the Himalayas and what can be gleaned from the Himalaya regions in terms of the development of the Kingdom of God is "the ultimate mountain" we all have to turn to for directions. I am saying, however, that the Himalayas, this "global Bethlehem or Nazareth", is a place where until today only few have looked to for inspiration to see where God is wanting all of us to go. But by any standard, the kind of Christianity that has been born there in the fires of persecution, in immense poverty, under unfavorable regimes, in the face of natural disasters and, compared with Western price tags, on an amazingly small budget, is not only of a quality and substance far beyond what the West has demonstrated in the recent past, but also of a quantity that defies the belief of most in the West.

But as long as we are humans – Asians included - we will all make mistakes, be less than perfect or miss some turns. This is why our deepest inspiration should never really come from models or concepts others have done or implemented. Rather than copying what some of the most fruitful servants of God have done anywhere throughout history, we should allow the creator God to lead us directly in what he wishes us to do in our time and place. He will do so individually, not by us copying others from second-hand knowledge, but he promised to guide us with his eyes. This is why there is another and truly ultimate mountain that we will learn to reckon with later. Isaiah writes about this mountain (Isa 2:2-3): "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief amongst the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his path. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."



2 The Tale of the Mosquito Net

**It makes me feel like I'm walking in a story that has already been written,
that I'm driving on a road unknown to me –
but very much known to God.**

2 The Tale of the Mosquito Net

Jesus was, among other things, a storyteller. And as this is going to be an attempt at a theologically serious book, let me therefore tell you a story – a prophetic story, with apostolic implications, as you will quickly see. And, to remain in touch with the starfish at the end of the last chapter, of course it happened at the shore of a sea.

It was March 1998. It had been quite a trip, but finally we had arrived – our young family of five – including our newborn, Benjamin. After a long flight from Madras, India, to the Philippines, an eight hour bus trip, a crossing crammed into the corners of a shaky ferry to an island south of Manila and a final, rocky trip on a Jeepney, we were there: Camp Rock! Nothing fancy, three or four huts on the beach, and sometimes, running water. Friends of ours, Christian and Christine Schneider, missionaries from a Basel church that I had participated in planting fifteen years ago, had worked for years incarnating Christ for some of the poorest of the poor in Manila's sprawling slums. They had decided to live with the poor, and once a year they conducted Easter Camps for some of the young people in the slums of Manila. Many young people saw the beauty of their own country for the first time. Someone once showed me the murky waters in Manila and joked: "If someone walks on these waters, it's not a miracle. That's how dirty the water is." It was around dusk, our children were finally asleep, and my wife Mercy and I took a deep breath, sitting down on the beach, overlooking the sea, holding hands. It was quite a romantic setting; however, we were in for a surprise. Some of the twenty or so kids who had come a week early to prepare for the Easter Camp were now splashing at the beach, having a good time. Having never left their slum area in their life, many were just excited to see clean seawater for the first time.

Suddenly someone cried: "Wolf, come quick, you've got to see this!" Mercy and I shot up, went down to the beach, only to stumble onto one of the most amazing sights we have ever come across. The young people had toyed with a mosquito net and thrown it into the water. For reasons beyond me, a shoal of little fish had obviously caught itself in the mosquito net, since we saw it teeming with those little creatures. It was those little fish that many Filipinos just love to eat fried with garlic rice for breakfast – the same garlic rice with fish for lunch – and fish with garlic rice for supper.

Someone had started to bring buckets and was scooping up those fish. And before we knew it, all available buckets and crates were full with fish! Some of the guys pulled up one of those simple outrigger boats that lay nearby, and started to pour those buckets of fish into that boat. And, before my very eyes, we saw the entire boat - a good eight-meter long, one meter wide and 60 cm high – beginning to fill up with these fish. As the boat was full to the brim, the kids just could not contain their joy anymore. They laughed, they danced, someone stuck his arm into the wiggly mass, another balanced a fish on his head, another downed a fish alive, and people started to come from their huts along the beach and participated in the party – carrying home full buckets of fish.

I was shocked. The odds of a full boatload of small fish trapping themselves in a mosquito net in between the splashing feet of young men is minute. Sci-

entifically, this is near impossible. And yet, it happened before our very eyes.

"What is going on, God?" I asked, incredulous.

"Watch it closely", I felt was his answer. So I did. And, next morning, the day before Easter, I spoke to the kids about John 21, that miraculous catch of fish, 153 of them, based on corporate obedience of the disciples to a prophetic word by Jesus. Small fish, as opposed to the "big fish" meaning an influential human being, spoke to me of the young and the poor. That translates into roughly 70% of the world's population, routinely overlooked by most traditional middle-class churches with their middle class evangelism and programs. Mosquito nets spoke to me of a fragile means of harvest no human mind could conceive; something that professional fishermen would only laugh about. But also something that, when successful, would draw all attention not upon proven methods or strategies, but upon an ingenious mind behind all this. Was it not the weak, the ridiculous, the foolish things of this world that God promised to choose to confound all of our informed wisdom?

But the story goes on. Around two years later, in May 2000, sixty of us met in Sheffield, northern England, to discuss the new phenomenon of youth churches. There was a growing feeling among many of God's passionate and dedicated servants that can best be summarized as, "God yes, church no". A local Anglican Church, St. Thomas, had acted as a host for young leaders from around the world to explore possible ways ahead. Each one of us was asked to give a brief report on what God was doing in our respective countries in regards to innovative movements.

In the middle of my five minute brief on Germany, Mike Breen, brilliant thinker and Senior pastor of St. Thomas at that time, came forward and gave me a little note. "Back there sits a prophetic lady" he said. "She will explode if this little message is not delivered to you right now. However, it makes no sense to me whatsoever. Does it for you?" he asked, gave me something, and bewildered, he left me.

The words penned on a torn slip of paper said: "Tell them about Mindanao!"

My mind immediately went back to the shore on that south Filipino island two years ago, the miraculous catch of small fish with that mosquito net.

And so I told them what had happened and how Mercy and I had witnessed this immensely unlikely harvest spectacle. At the end of this, the prophetic woman came forward, kind of breathless. She asked for the microphone, and said: "I just *have got* to tell you of a recurring dream I keep having. In it I have seen myself handing mosquito nets to African ladies in Tanzanian villages. I knew it had something to do with the spiritual harvest, but I had no clue as to where is the connection. So, in my dream, I have asked God what this means. He told me, 'You will one day meet a man who will explain this to you. You will recognize him with the cloth of his shirt; it will be exactly the same cloth that the Tanzanian women wore in your dream.'" And here I stood, having put on an Indian shirt in the morning, unaware, of course, that this was made of exactly the same cloth as those women in her dream.

"And then, all of a sudden", she went on, "I saw a scene from a southern Filipino Island. I saw outrigger boats on the beach, with a mosquito net spread over it, almost as you would expect a fishing net to be readied for a trip to the

sea. On the beach itself I saw kids, playing with marbles and coins right before those boats. However, they did not see the connection between the boats, the mosquito nets and the harvest at all. Then they started singing a song; and as they started repeating the refrain over and over, suddenly their eyes were opened. Totally surprised, they saw the connection! I had that dream so many times I even wrote down the words of that refrain that I heard in my dream", she said. "However, they make no sense to me whatsoever. Let me read them out to you." As she read out a few lines in an unknown language to us, she asked: "Anyone understand this?"

None of us moved; except one. "I understand this," one man remarked, raising his hand. "This is in perfect Tagalog language, our language in the Philippines," Jun Escosar said, a leader of a youth oriented church movement in the Philippines. 'The nations shall praise you,' it says, among other things. These are verses from the Bible, Psalm 67, a harvest Psalm!"

We were stunned! The prophetic woman did not speak that language at all, and yet, she had accurately heard and written down a piece of information that clearly did not originate with her. She went on. "This song changed them, and the kids in my dream went and took a boat and a mosquito net and made it out into the sea. As they threw the net out as if it were a fishing net, initially nothing happened. But then a few big fish jumped in first. And, almost as if they had been permission-giving, pioneering, bottle-neck clearing fish, this was followed by an endless stream of small fish catching themselves in that mosquito net. This was the beginning of the last big harvest on earth. It will take a miracle of God to get the eyes of the kids from the toys and the coins of this world; but when it happens, they will go harvesting with fragile nets. The kind of church that will bring in this harvest will be a simple church, like a boat that can be cut out of any tree. Nothing fancy, almost too simple to be true. But the glory for that kind of harvest will not go to human recipes and strategies, but to the Lamb of God, the Lord of the harvest alone," she concluded.

"What a coincidence," my human mind said. "An Irish prophetic in England dreaming of Tanzanian women wearing Indian clothes, a German with an Indian shirt seeing the connection, South Philippine boats, a dream with a song in an unknown language, a native speaker of Tagalog in the very room to interpret it, my goodness! What's next?" I wondered. Well, it was not over yet. (As someone has taken a shot of this very moment, I reprint it here; I am the second from the right, in the red-blue shirt).



"And this harvest, the *little fish* harvest with the mosquito nets, requires a new kind of funding," the prophetic woman said. "There is a man in this room. Your name is Rich, literally, Rich. You will have a role to play in the financing of this harvest." Humanly speaking she had no way of knowing that Rich Haynie

was in the room, at that time one of the fundraising directors of Dawn Ministries, a Colorado Springs-based missions strategy group. He had heard from God that new ways of funding will lead the way into the future of missions, of which he had already seen something in what he calls “The road less traveled in fundraising.”

Suddenly, I felt God pointing me to a man standing just opposite of me in our little prayer circle. Almost as if standing beside myself, I said to him: “I feel God wants to communicate something to you. As odd as it sounds, he wants to remind you of those typically European, Brothers Grimm type fairy tales. A good king rules his land; everyone is happy. However, the bad dragon attacks the land, devouring many. So the king puts out a prize for the one slaying the dragon and restoring peace: half the kingdom and the princess as a wife for the brave young man who does it. You are such a king, the Lord says,” I heard myself telling him. “And you are to give half of your kingdom to the young dragon slayers, the planters of new movements harvesting those little fish; however, forget the princess.”

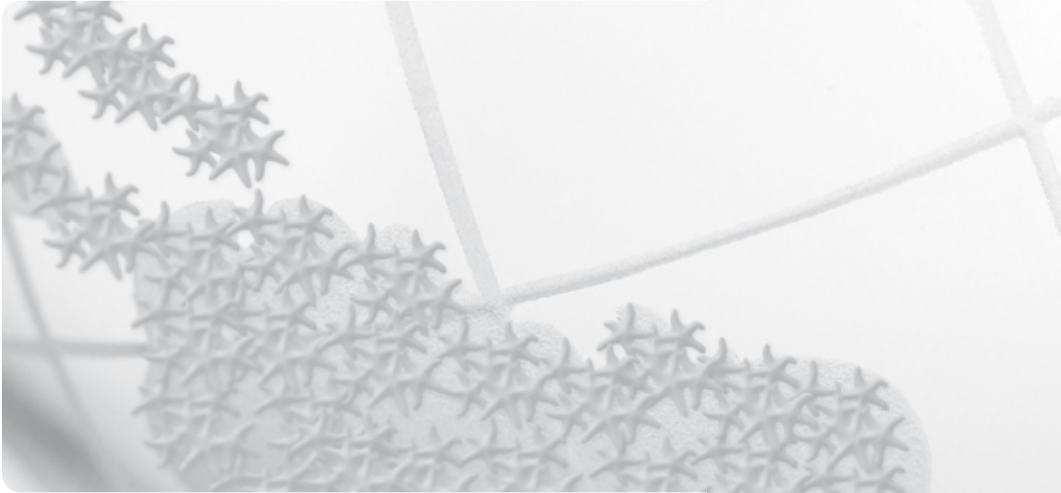
The man was in tears. “I accept that,” he choked. “God has already told that very same thing to me before. I am a businessman, in fact the leader of a Christian businessmen’s group, the FGBMA (Fuill Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International), in my home country, Indonesia. And yes, I will give half of my companies worth for that purpose,” he promised.

Now I am not typically in the habit of walking up to complete strangers and asking them to sell half of their possessions and give it away for God’s purposes. But, I mused, maybe I should. After all, Jesus did something like that, asking the rich young ruler of his day to even sell *all* of his possessions and give it to the poor. Why not walk up to the rich young (or older) rulers of today asking them to part with half of their “kingdom,” the assets they command, and give it for the apostolic purposes of God? And so, if you are one of those rulers or kings, consider yourself asked! However, if you are worth your money, you would immediately ask, and rightly so: “Who is asking?” I’ll come to that in a minute.

Now if this was truly a prophetic story, not a series of strange coincidences we stumbled on, but somehow God was behind all this - what does it communicate? Which direction is it pointing? What do we make of it? Does this give us some clues as to where we should place our attention and priorities? These are good and necessary questions, and I believe there are answers. However, I told you that true story only as a token. There are many such stories. And it makes me feel like I’m walking in a story that has already been written, that I’m driving on a road unknown to me - but very much known to God. A prophetic roadmap for an apostolic journey. This makes me understand a bit more that my little name - and your name - has a space in God’s great story - like young king Josiah discovered his very own name in a scroll (1 Kings 13) 300 years after it had been written, something that really fired him up and made him unstoppable (2 Kings 22). And it makes me laugh at the devil, who never saw it coming. And it makes me ask the question: if this is how God works and chooses to reveal things, how can we more regularly and with accuracy and honesty, fit into His story?

This brings us to a new section of this book that I believe can be an outline

of some of the new rule set that helps define our very path into the future. Let me start with pivotal concept I call *Spiritual Intelligence*.



PART II: THE PROPHETIC DIMENSION

3 Spiritual Intelligence

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan
to his servants the prophets. Amos 3:7

PART II: The Prophetic Dimension

3 Spiritual Intelligence

Pick up any best-selling novel and you will discover a plot that spins the old trio of sex, money, and power into ever-new twists – with folks from the CIA/FBI/NSA, BND, Mossad or MI6-intelligence community usually calling the shots. Given their superior Echelon/Big Beast listening sites, satellites, Dan-Brown-type decryption devices, formidable spying capacities and thanks to in-house leaks by folks on the payroll of services they don't belong to, they are always one or two steps ahead of the evil competition. And there is always a situation room somewhere where some big brass gray eminences in the background make decisions based on *intelligence reports*. But not only does the military have their spies; the economy has, too. We call them head hunters, university recruiters, "expert" trend analyzers, think tanks, futurologists or the simple research and development department, who, together with a host of "consultants," help to safely steer the company ship ahead in the muddy and turbulent waters at the edge of an ever-threatening chaos.

Even sports clubs have their intelligence, as anyone knows who has seen the film "Bend it like Beckham" or follows how some of the world's more prestigious sports clubs trade athletes. Most non-Christian religious communities have their Lamas, prophets, ideologists, fortune-tellers, shamans, and diviners who function as an intelligence service and their very own research and development department.

The basic concept of the role of intelligence or espionage is to gain access to otherwise secret, hidden or classified information in order to make this privileged information available to those who make strategic decisions. Usually people working within the security or intelligence community have a clearance rating that defines what level of classified information that person has access to. My mother, for example, was drafted as a radio operator into the German Army during World War II. Her musical abilities had provided her with an exceptionally good feel for rhythm. It allowed her to receive and transmit messages in Morse code faster than many of her colleagues.

At one point, she happened to be among some officers when a super-secret message came through, transmitted at immense speed that only the very best radio operators could pick up. She was ordered to decipher the Morse code transmission and furiously wrote down the words as they came. Several officers would snatch away the very sheets of papers on which she wrote in order to prevent her having access to information for which she was definitely not cleared. In another incident, at the very end of the War, the Hitler Regime was furious with just about everybody for obviously losing the war. Orders were given to search for possible culprits, and of course, anyone with only the slightest connection to Israel and Jewish roots was under immediate suspicion. Simply because of my mother's Jewish name – Simson – she was an obvious target. However, an officer friend who had access to the inner core of the army told her he had spotted her name on a blacklist for those destined

to die. This allowed my mother to throw away her uniform, run away, escape under a lorry seat, and make it into a zone run by the British. For me as her offspring, a piece of intelligence saved her life – and made mine possible.

Traditional intelligence is basically designed to gain bits and pieces of information through human and technical means. The NSA reads our emails through their Echelon System, the SND (Strategischer Nachrichtendienst/Switzerland) through Satos3 (codenamed Onyx). But there are other means to gain information people won't give up easily: eavesdropping, copying, stealing, hacking, bribing or worse – like extortion and torture. Spiritual intelligence works with different means, but along the same principles. Here, information is not gathered by human means, but in spiritual, supernatural ways. The core of the process is inspiration, an infusion of information from the spiritual world to the seen world, transmitted by means of the spirit. God uses various means for this. Dreams, visions, visitations, and hearing him speak audibly are among the most common experiences.

Rick Joyner, a prophetic teacher based in Charlotte, North Carolina, once told how one of their prophets had a vision of a FBI-wanted terrorist, sitting in a roadside coffee shop at a specific location in the US. They called up their contacts within the force and tipped them off. The FBI arranged to send a patrol - and bang, nailed the guy. Another prophetic man that will go unnamed once told me how he had been invited to one of those presidential prayer breakfasts in Washington D.C. As he was settling down in his seat, he felt a soft tap on his shoulder. Someone was beckoning him to follow him into the Oval Office. The President, then George Bush, Senior, basically told him that they had observed him and, asked quite bluntly, whether he could function as a "man of God" for the US government and the President himself.

Make no mistake. These are not fairy tales. If it means anything to you, many serious governments – and of course companies and individuals, churches, families, and individuals – have tasted some of this and know that it is for real. The Bible calls this function of spiritual intelligence "prophecy." As there are far too many incidents of that nature, let's suffice it to say that it is a confirmed historical fact that many kings and presidents have had such spiritual intelligence at hand; however, it is also a historical fact that rulers usually very seldom adhere repeatedly to healthy prophetic counsel. If you feel you have a nation to rule, a vote to win, a role to perform, it is at least unnerving then to listen to people who are clearly loyal to an empire other than yours. Prophets have always had two effects on Kings and rulers in all ages: giving them wise counsel, and deeply unsettling them because of the reminder that there is a God in heaven who knows everything and runs an empire of his own, in which even an earthly king is but a mere pawn.

The Judean king Amaziah is a classic. He was the son of Joash, who at an early age decided to restore the temple of God in Jerusalem, "rebuilding the temple of God according to its original design," a reformation project obviously surrounded by "many prophecies" (2. Chr. 24:27). As long as he listened to the prophets, Joash did well. Once his top spiritual aide, Jehoiada, died, Joash fell into that age-old political trap and listened to the praise of his people. In plea-

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**Temple yes, prophets no.
God yes, words from God,
no.**

sing people he stopped being interested in pleasing God. He wanted so badly to be seen in complete charge that he even rejected the prophets and had one, Zechariah, stoned, right in the courtyard of the Lord's temple that Joash himself had rebuilt. His approach was: temple yes, prophets no. God yes, words from God, no. Joash ultimately died like a fool, murdered in bed by his own staff. His son Amaziah came to replace him at age 25. Amaziah had witnessed all this. He knew exactly about the prophetic dimension, however he decided to ignore it. Once, when a prophet came up to him and communicated God's word for him, he stopped the prophet in mid-speech and said: "Have we appointed you an advisor to the king? Stop! Why be struck down?"

Obviously, his political position had become an idol to him, and he thought he had the right to appoint a prophet, like a pet. To act like this in the manifest presence of God, with fresh memories of his prophetic words and deeds, is the ultimate foolishness. A political leader not placing himself under the ultimate authority of God is foolish. Amaziah died an even more foolish death. Maybe this is where the word "amazing" comes from: describing a selfish king rejecting God who was within his very reach.

In other words: if you are in a position of power, God usually will have someone prophetic come to you and speak into your life. If you accept it and act on it, God will send prophetic words again and again. If not, God waits and sees and does not push it on you anymore. From then on, it is up to you to ask for prophetic counsel and make specific room (and time!) for it. However, if there is the real thing out there, you can bet that counterfeits do exist. Outside healthy and legitimate prophets of God, there is a never-ending stream of self-styled doomsday forecasters, DIY (do-it-yourself) "prophets" and pathetic charlatans that bombard and pester anyone with influence almost on a daily basis with "words" and Bible verses or any amount of esoteric nonsense. It is like a test. If someone in a position of power (King, CEO, President, director, etc.) truly wants God's council, he can and will have it; but it requires courage and deliberate dedication for a King or ruler of any kind to ask the one and only living God on a permanent basis for spiritual intelligence briefs.

For many centuries now the prophetic has been completely absent in CAWKI. And in the course of the theological liberalism and demythologization of the last centuries, the prophetic dimension has been surgically operated out of the theology of many denominations. But make no mistake – prophets have always been there. They may have worked as artists, poets, musicians, or inventors, but usually far outside the church. It is only a fairly recent occurrence that prophets have received a certain foothold on the platform in traditional Christianity. Being a relatively new development, many immature prophets – those ready before they are ready - have strained the goodwill of many churches and individuals. The devastating effects of their insensitive and sometimes plain wrong "words" spoken out of context have done great harm to the issue itself. And, since the astonishing lack of the prophetic dimension in classical Christianity has created such an immense spiritual vacuum and intense hunger for spiritual reality over the centuries, this has led anyone who is a little bit sensitive to the voice of the spirit to be offered an immediate Guru-status, a microphone, and a self-contained prophetic ministry. Sadly, some have accepted

that, basking in the man-of-God aura that others offer. However, prophets are not elected by people; prophets are made by God. I like the way A. T. Gardiner put it: **“When a prophet is accepted and deified, his message is lost. The prophet is only useful so long as he is stoned as a public nuisance calling us to repentance, disturbing our comfortable routines, breaking our respectable idols, shattering our sacred conventions.”**

In other words: many of us have had compelling reasons to throw that prophecy-baby out with our bath water long ago. But as we get in touch with the real thing, some of us might have to go down on our knees, scramble for that squalling baby, and then put it back to where it belongs; the bathtub. Let us now take a closer look at how spiritual intelligence works.

GPS: God’s Prophetic System

A few years ago some small devices started to revolutionize the way we drive our cars. Instead of a pile of city, county, state, and country maps that we consult to get from point A to B, many now have a small palm-sized computer sitting in their car. These little navigational computers – or GPS (Global Positioning System) – can calculate the exact position of the GPS device by triangulating the positions of a number of satellites. Therefore, it becomes possible to navigate to any address or waypoint, no matter whether we are on the move by boat, bike, car, or even on foot.

In this present prophetic-apostolic reformation, the prophetic gift has a role similar to the GPS-Systems for travelers. The current church scene (let alone the economic and political situation) has become a maze, at least for normal folk. It has become increasingly difficult to navigate spiritually, not knowing where we are on our journey, where exactly we are going, and whether we have to turn left or right at the next stop sign. To be on top of all this, we would have to look constantly at a million facts, developments, key players, and statistical developments.

Nobody knows what’s going on anymore – except God. And, instead of constantly going after the latest information we are starting to look upward for help. Here we discover what God meant when he said: “I will guide you with my eyes.” God speaks of a navigational system that he is offering to his people. It has a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The horizontal is the Bible, the unchangeable, revealed word of God that we can read and touch here on earth (“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105). The Bible is the ultimate map. The vertical dimension, straight from heaven, are prophetic insights, which may come in various ways: through visions, dreams, dialogs with God, angelic visitations, etc., that accentuate or temporarily lift out biblical truth, announce changes or are the symbolic red dot on the map that says: “You are here. Next left.”

The ‘Amos 3:7 –Principle’

The prophet Amos says:

‘Surely the Lord God does nothing,

Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets’

It has become increasingly difficult to navigate spiritually, not knowing where we are on our journey, where exactly we are going, and whether we have to turn left or right at the next stop sign. To be on top of all this, we would have to look constantly at a million facts, developments, key players, and statistical developments. Nobody knows what’s going on anymore – except God.

The principle is simple. God has deliberately covenanted with mankind and is transparent enough in this relationship that he allows for a select group of individuals to peep into his cards, or watch over his shoulder – a group who have a God-given security clearance and have access to otherwise classified information. In the Old Testament these individuals like Moses and Abraham, men God calls his friends, have such a security clearance. This friendship with God is closely related to our character, not just a charismatic gift, and requires, as my prophetic friend John Mulinde (Uganda) never tires of saying, a lifestyle of seeking God, ready to be set apart for God. The result are individuals who are set apart, different from the rest, to whom God communicates in special ways, and who also, in turn, call their people to be set apart, for the purposes and ways of God.

This insight is nothing new, but it has the potential to offend a democratic mentality that has crept into much of the Church that basically demands egalitarianism – no one is supposed to be different, we are all to be the same. We will come back to this later. At all times in church history, there were people who seem to have been able to hear God's voice in a special way. There was a significant increase of prophetic activity, though, in the 80s and 90s of the last millennium. But just the statistical growth of the prophetic does not necessarily mean that everything that calls itself prophetic really is. Many people, not only from the various charismatic movements of our days, are quite unhappy with the quality and caliber of the majority of prophets and prophecies they come across. The Bible plainly tells that it is possible "to speak our own heart" or "prophesy," what others want to hear or what seems politically opportune at the time. Here we have to remain with both feet (or all four wheels) firmly planted on the ground, and soberly watch two things: do the things prophesied actually come to pass (at least the vast majority, remember Nineveh that did not end as Jonah prophesied) and does the prophet allow favor to flow towards him or her, or towards God?

In my office there is a file with a label called Amos 3:7. Here I collect prophetic words that I observe because I consider them important, especially when they speak about the larger context, not just individual people or movements. One of these documents is a small booklet edited by former English Bible teacher Derek Prince called *He Will Tell you Things to Come*, collecting three prophetic voices speaking out about the immediate future of the church, much of which we are starting to see today. Six months before the devastating Tsunami (Dec. 2004), a number of prophetically gifted women (many illiterate) in India had foreseen such a catastrophe and recommended moving out of the coastal area that was later hit. Many have survived who heeded that prophecy. Some documents in my file have to do with the USA. Here are two examples:

Katrina: The "purifying" Wind

Scientists were not the only ones who predicted the catastrophic hurricane hitting New Orleans on the 29th August 2005. A number of prophets saw it coming, too. Rick Joyner speaks of the fact that in his movement there was a prophecy as early as 1998 that "New Orleans will look like an estuary." On the 29th of August 2004, a year to the day before the catastrophe, Chuck Pierce (USA) prophesied this:

God allows for a select group of individuals to peep into his cards, or watch over his shoulder – a group who have a God-given security clearance and have access to otherwise classified information.

"The Saul structure collapses, and a new demonstration with a new blueprint will be seen. This will be known as a meetinghouse. Wind and water will rise in the midst of New Orleans. Many from the south will come north for refuge. Prepare, prepare now for winds and water will surprise you. Shift! Saul will be no more. David will arise from this day forward. This will purify the land and bring great change. Get ready. Don't brace yourself. Throw yourself up. Get ready, for the New is coming. Every place I blow on will shake. The wind is coming on Louisiana, and it will shake the entire state. The south, purifying wind of my Holiness will sweep across Louisiana." (Katrina means "pure")



Erich Reber is a prophetic figure well-known far beyond his native Switzerland. He has probably one of the most exciting stories to tell of God calling anyone into ministry that I know. The long-term accuracy of his prophetic ministry is often so remarkable, that even secular businessmen or psychiatrists regularly come to him for counsel. Six months before 9/11, Erich experienced an open vision in which he found himself trapped in a collapsing high-rise building and almost lost his mind in this trap of concrete. God made him revisit the situation seven times. In

a vision on the first Sunday in July 2005, God showed him that he was going to shake London – and only one week later, the subway bombing in London took place.

In 1990, God visited him with a clear and fascinating vision about what God is going to do in the Islamic world. As a part of this, God spoke to him about an imminent "Desert Storm," which will lead to many Muslims seeking shelter in the only security known to them: the Mosques – only to find out that Jesus would reveal himself to them in their very houses as well as from within the Mosque. In a second vision in 1991, God showed him the sequel of the last harvest. According to his vision, it will happen in 4 phases: first God is going to visit the eastern Block countries (Russia etc.), then, God is going to bring in a huge harvest in Middle and North India. The third phase will be God visiting first the soft-Islamic, then the hard-Islamic nations, and finally, as the last phase, Europe and the West. All of this seems to be coming true: In a 1996 vision, God showed Reber a huge harvest in Middle and North India. Today, this is one of God's current hotspots, with an amazing number of new house churches planted so far.

In a vision in autumn 2002, Reber saw a coming terrorist attack (with Islamic background) on the US that will be so devastating that many thousands will be found dead. Reber, who has delivered this prophecy first in Canada upon invitation of David Demian, an Egyptian doctor with a prophetic calling, says he had been transported in the Spirit into the very US-cities and neighborhoods where this is going to happen, and saw many dead bodies strewn about. "It looked far worse than after the 2004 tsunami," he said to me. The result of this attack will be the emergence of a cloud of poison, that will hover over the US, and then slowly, over many days, move towards Canada. Since humanly speaking there is nothing that people could do, in utter fear and frustration many will cry out to God, feeling like the people of Israel trapped between the army

of Egypt and the Red Sea. God will answer, as he did to Moses: "Don't cry to me – stretch out your hand and use your rod!" And as people would pray in unity, God will have the cloud cast into the sea. This will have two results: firstly, it will lead to a great and new quest for God. The people of God therefore should get ready for a large harvest of people previously unmoved by God. Secondly, the US as a nation will over-react and retaliate with military means so strong that this will lead to a huge humiliation and demoralization of the Islamic world. This, in turn, will again open a door for the gospel, and many Muslims will be brought into the Kingdom of God.

Ways not works

How do we hear God in such a way that it truly points us into the right, and possibly strategic, direction? How do we hear God's voice – and do what he says? In the Old Testament, we find a distinct difference among the people of God. There were those who were interested in his works – and those who were asking about "**his ways**" (his plans, inner motives, etc.). All of them who joined the Exodus, for example, had ample chances to see God in action: thunder, lightning, smoke, trumpets, quails, manna, the parting of the Red Sea, miracles like water springing out of the rock. However, when there was a miracle, many who were only works and action oriented found it easy to walk away from God, to participate in casting a golden calf, to murmur, and look back longingly to their safe jobs in Egypt – including an allowance of onion and garlic -- but not so, the "friends of God." They were not looking for God's **hands**, "please do something for me," but for his **face**. "Let me know your ways," prays Moses on the Sinai. "Show me your ways, O Lord," asks David in Psalm 25. "How can I hide from Abraham what I am doing?" says God in Gen 18:17. And then God confers to him (as well as to Moses) possibly the highest title available on earth: "My friend."

How do we become such "friends of God" again? In intelligence language, we see here a group of people with a top security rating from God, who were given access to classified information stored with God that, no, not everyone had a right to know. Probably also within your acquaintance there are prophetically gifted people of God who have been given "keys to the Kingdom" – a PIN code protected access to a top secret and classified pool of highly sensitive and future relevant information that sits in the presence of God. Many modern day friends of God, prophets who have been called by God to seek out the voice of God not just for themselves, but for others (and even whole nations), tell of three phases in their own journey with God towards this:

1. I and God. This is the phase to build a deeper and more intimate relationship with God than others do; to simply invest more time, energy, passion, to even take days off or even take holidays for that, like Christians do on the various prayer mountains in Kampala, Seoul, Lüdenscheid, and other places.

2. God for others. This is where you seek God's face not because of yourself and your problems and questions, but because and on behalf of other people. "God, what do you say to my neighbor, colleague, friend, enemy, boss, president?" This is where we read the Bible – for others! Once we have put aside our own ego, we might start to hear God for others. And once we begin to pass

on what we have heard, we begin to become God's postman, his delivery staff, handing out his letters and parcels to others.

3. God and I. This is when we come to God and say: "All my own problems, issues, friends aside – what is it, Lord, that is on your heart, independent of my own perspective? Lord, where are you going, what will you do, and why are you doing it? Please show me your ways." You learn to "separate yourself for God," as John Mulinde aptly puts it in his booklet *Set apart for God*. And to become a little odd and absent-minded is probably a natural part of such a life...

Again and again, people who have embarked on such a journey tell that God is definitely field-testing our allegiance and our ability to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and not lean on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). In regards to this compulsory testing by God, no one I have heard of has moved on to a significant ministry in the prophetic who has not been challenged to follow God's directive over and above human reason. One prophetic voice once put it like this: "**God is offending our mind in order to reveal our heart.**" If this puts you off because, let's say, you absolutely want to be in control at all times or you are so committed to a theologically or ideologically safe system, then let me prophesy to you that you will hardly ever move into this dimension unless you change right here. God will simply use those who understand that God values trust more than action based on logical convictions. Would Peter ever have walked on water when Jesus called him to do so if he had insisted first to see scientific research papers written on "Where does this water-walking business work in Europe?"

An important case in point is Moses, an apostolic leader God had been preparing for 80 years. In the desert, God met him and asked him a simple yet profound question: "What is that in your hand?"

"A staff," he replied.

The Lord said: "Throw it on the ground!"

Imagine for a brief moment what went on inside the head of Moses, with all his 40 years of academic upbringing in Egypt, plus 40 years of desert experience. His shepherd's staff was not only the symbol of his trade, it was his support, his weapon, his strength, something to rely on. To throw it away in the middle of the desert was anything but logical. It made no sense! And then it became worse. The staff turned into a snake and Moses started running from it. One moment he leans on it, a symbol of his strength, and within a second, the thing has changed its nature and turned into a nightmare. Moses goes from loving his staff to hating it within the blink of an eye. And, to top it all, God's voice comes back and challenges him: "Pick it up by the tail!"

I remember once asking some Indian snake handlers what would happen if you picked up a poisonous snake by the tail. They clucked, humored by the thought, and said: "Sahib, easy. You can do it, sure, but only once. You want to be sure to be bitten by the snake, just pick it up by the tail. It will turn in a flash and definitely bite you. Poisonous snakes are picked up behind the head, not the tail!"

Now do you think Moses, with all his desert experience, did not know that? And here he was put to the test, what to trust more: His own 80 years of experience, his logical reasoning, and medical insights, right at a spot in the world

"God is offending our mind in order to reveal our heart."

where not even today you would find a clinic with snake serum – let alone 3500 years ago – or God and his seemingly illogical orders. Moses chose God over his own reason – and passed the test. God knew then that this man trusted him enough in life-or-death situations to be given a leadership role in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses, an old man with a stick, became God's master plan for delivering Israel out of Egypt.

Can I ask you something personal? What do you have in your hand right now? On what or whom are you relying – your title, position, salary, inheritance, friends, connections, looks, IQ? Could it, in God's eyes, be a snake looking like a rod? How would you know? Maybe you have to throw those things to the only testing ground that will very quickly reveal their true nature: *the dust before God*. Why not pause for a moment and do that right now? Or go for a personal retreat and take your time for this? It may be vital to your future role in the Kingdom.

Again, nothing is more dangerous for healthy communication than a mail-man who is being handed a letter for delivery, but who opens the envelope and makes his own corrections and amendments. So, character and charisma must match; anointing and the stewardship of that anointing must be balanced.

Here an example of Sadhu Chellappa (Chennai, India), probably one of the most fruitful and creative evangelists on the planet. He has probably led more Hindus to Christ than any other living person. He told me of one of his training days:

Preach to the tree!

In the middle of the night, he suddenly sensed God speaking to him: "Leave your house quickly, and run away!" Chellappa was used to accepting even strange instructions from God without discussion. He dressed quickly, and ran into the darkness. After a while, he felt God tell him "Stay here under the tree and start to preach!" Even for an experienced evangelist, this was rather surprising - there was no one to be seen. Why did God want him to preach to a tree in the middle of the night? He started to preach, and finally reached the point at which he called on his unseen listeners to give their lives to Jesus. He was rather surprised to hear a voice from the top of the tree, and see a man climb down and tearfully give his life to Jesus. The man had been about to hang himself from the tree as Chellappa started his message about Jesus. "That taught me to follow God's instructions, whether I understand them or not," he says (website of Sadhu Chellappa: www.agnministries.com)

To give you an example of prophecies that have been given but not yet fulfilled, here a word about Revival in Europe. In July 2005 Swiss Prophet Erich Reber had a vision of a huge harvest in Europe. Thousands and tens of thousands will be finding Jesus, whole stadiums will be filled and a great harvest will happen in Europe. But for this people need to be prepared; the people of God need to be expectant and ready for the harvest. The main points of his detailed vision:

- **Holiness, not just healing:** "Sanctify yourself, because tomorrow God will do wonders." Of course it is God's will to heal; but he is not ready to leave his glory to an unholy people. Way too many Christians are living a shadow

existence, a double standard life. But only with holy people can God fulfill his holy plans. Especially, uncleanness in sexual and financial areas is entirely intolerable for God. Right now, God is sifting through his workers and looking for obedience, not for those wishing more anointing or position.

- **Answers, not candles.** We will witness more and more shakings and catastrophes. These trials demand answers. Instead of lighting one more candle, announcing one more minute of silence, churches need to learn to give clear answers for mankind that is shaken again and again by God. And this answer is Jesus and Jesus alone.
- **Passionate nobodies.** Like Gideon's army of 300, God is sifting through his harvest workers. Who are those so desperate for God that they forget about their name, fame, and status? Those are the ones who are useful for God. These are the people God will use to write history. Others he will simply bypass. Which will you be?

But let us now have an initial look at the role of prophecy and inspiration from the perspective of well-known economic cycles that we have come to call Industrial Revolutions.

Welcome to the 4th Industrial Revolution

The one who knows the answer to the one-billion-dollar question: "What comes after the third industrial revolution?" holds the key to the economy of the future. It has been commonly accepted to speak of three industrial revolutions that have reshaped the economy and thus the face of the earth in recent history. An industrial revolution is a phase of rapid technological, economic, and social change that follows a base-innovation of such radical dimension that is groundbreaking in every sense and which, of course, revolutionizes the workplace. New jobs are being created, old forms of work vanish.

The 1st Industrial Revolution

It was 1769. After the groundbreaking invention of a machine using steam power to pump water out of mines by English blacksmith Thomas Newcomen in 1712, it was the pioneering spirit of **James Watt** that introduced the **steam engine** for industrial use. Steam power as a foundational power source took over from water and wind. Steam powered spinning machines were 200 times more productive than manually driven spinning wheels. This led to a revolutionary change of the human workplace, and forever affected everything, down to family structures and the thinking-patterns of individuals.

The 2nd Industrial Revolution

The second industrial revolution began through the invention of **electricity**. **Thomas Alva Edison** invented the gramophone in 1877, and in 1879 the world stared into the first light bulb. Assisted by breakthrough developments in the chemical industry as well as using oil for the combustion engine, this led to a technological revolution, which profoundly changed life and economy at the beginning of the 20th century.

Right now, God is sifting through his workers and looking for obedience.

The 3rd Industrial Revolution

This was spearheaded by the invention of the **computer**. As early as 1941, German engineer **Konrad Zuse** built the Z3, the first programmable electromechanical binary computer. In 1971 the first microprocessor hit the market, and with it the first “micro-computer”: Altair 8800. In 1976 Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak developed the first computer for private use: Apple 1. The rest is history. More than 575 million computers were in use worldwide at the beginning of 2005. Predictions say that this number will double by 2010. With the arrival of the Internet the information-age was born, dividing the world into **Knows** and **Don’t knows** – and created a historic wave of new ignorance, as people began to drown in information: Data, data everywhere – but not a drop to think!

In 1990 the knowledge of mankind doubled every 2 years; today, it doubles every 5 months, or faster. Futurologists are predicting that in 2050, the human knowledge-base will double each day. But who can remain on top of this surge of information? Key questions today therefore are: how to organize exploding information, and: how to manage the chaos? In 1926, Russian economist **Nikolai Kondratieff** proposed the theory of long economic cycles. His thesis: waves arising from the launching of **basic innovations** launch technological revolutions that in turn create lasting change in leading industrial or commercial sectors. The five basis-innovations were: 1) industrial revolution (steam age); 2) steam railways and cotton age; 3) The steel and electricity age; 4) age of oil, car, and mass production; 5) information and telecommunication age. Today we float expressions like postmodernism or Generation-X, and many are busy with incantations of a “6th Kondratieff,” which is to say that we don’t really know what comes after postmodernism.

The Inspiration Age

I seriously propose that the key concept revolutionizing (not only) the economy in the future will be inspiration. In the information age we are online – via modem or DSL. But on the other side is still only a computer, data programmed by humans. In the Inspiration Age we also will be increasingly online: with the invisible world. **The basic innovation is the widespread discovery of the reality of inspiration.** German psychologist Gerd Gigerenzer published a book in 2007 called *Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious*. He scientifically researched the power of intuition in regards to economic decisions and concludes that humans (and women probably more than men!) seem to have an unknown organ that is capable of receiving information “out of nowhere” that, if heeded, often sees a better economic result than decisions based on a cold analysis of all the facts.

One thing is for sure: whoever grasps the nature and anatomy of inspiration, and the connection between inspiration, innovation, and industrialization, will have a huge head start into the future. The future world, I propose, will be divided into the *inspired* and the *uninspired*, those offering inspiration, and those buying – or ignoring it. No human being is able to know all the relevant facts anymore – he depends on the right inspiration, whether he likes it or not. Management by gut feeling or spontaneity won’t be enough. The Bible describes the End of Ages as an era where there are two groups greatly contrasting each other: an anti-Christian, Babylonian world system, a “container

The Bible describes the End of Ages as an era where there are two groups greatly contrasting each other: an anti-Christian, Babylonian world system, a “container of all unclean spirits” on one hand, and “apostles, prophets and saints” on the other. Both groups are inspired – from vastly different sources: one by Satan, the other one by God. If this describes the climax of human history, we better get ready for the future. And make sure we are truly online with God.

of all unclean spirits” on one hand, and “apostles, prophets and saints” on the other. Both groups are inspired – from vastly different sources: one by Satan, the other one by God. If this describes the climax of human history, we better get ready for the future. And make sure we are truly online with God. The places where prophecy happens is where people of God spend private and corporate time in God’s presence – as they draw near to him, God draws near to them. How do these “inspiration factories” or “dream laboratories” work? How does this look in practice? Here is an example from the business world:

“God gives it to his beloved in their sleep”

Have you smiled about this nice little verse before? Actually, the bed is probably the most prophetic place on the planet for a human being. As we finally shut up, God finds space to talk. His spirit talks to our spirit. Most of the prophetic people who I know and sometimes travel with are a plain nightmare of a roommate. “For God speaks, though man may not perceive it, in a dream, a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds” (Job 33:14-18). These guys are really online at night! They toss, moan, talk, suddenly get up, kneel, pray, back to bed, more tossing – and then try to sleep during the day.

It was 1995 when a man from Pondicherry in southern India woke up one day with a stunning dream. Very clearly he had seen a chemical formula in his dream. As he wrote it down it turned out to be a formula for a glue. And more than that: he realized from his dream that one of the components actually is available as a by-product at another factory – for free. He set out to test that glue, planned its production – and in no time, “Jabez Polymer” was born, a company that quickly gained a place among India’s leading glue manufacturers. People whispered that the owner had imported costly high-tech know-how from America and thus made it so fast to the top. The company was able to make so much profit that it could support many missionary projects in India. An inspiration had become an innovation. But: as in many God-inspired business ideas, this one was short-lived, too. They do convey an important lesson, but are not geared to create everlasting financial independence. After 2001’s 9/11, a granulate necessary for glue production at Jabez was difficult to get without paying a bribe, because it could be used for the production of explosives, too. Since the company did not want to bribe, finances became tight and things started to peter out.

I want to establish this simple principle: inspiration precedes information, and spiritual intelligence that is inspiration-driven is therefore more far-reaching than traditional intelligence that tries to collect information and connect the dots. Both are necessary, and both are helpful. But they need to come in the right order. In today’s information-flooded world, no one in his right mind can base sound decisions solely on traditional intelligence anymore; he *will* err! Just look at our secret services. Therefore, we all need to reach out into the invisible – the spiritual plug-in point – and learn to rely more and more on inspiration rather than just information.

Here an rudimentary anatomy of the process of inspiration. See it as a waterfall that cascades down five steps like this:

Intimacy**Inspiration****Information****Tradition****Faded memories**

Intimacy (with God) is the spiritual place, the source of inspiration. When you draw near to God, who is Spirit, he promises he will draw near to you. This is where God reveals secrets, plans, agendas, in the place where you and he whisper together like friends. And in this place of intimacy, when he whispers, "I love you," you faint.

Inspiration is a fresh droplet of revelation, supernatural knowledge from God in the form of visions, insights, pictures, etc. When the revelation "I love you!" hits you, you cry.

Information is empirical data; sound bytes. You read or hear: "God loves you." And all you do in response is nod. "Good to know!"

Traditions are frozen information, the collective memory of a people. When you recite John 3:16, you frown. "Yeah, that's what they say."

Faded memories occur when you have moved so far away from the source of inspiration, God-stuff appears to you like disconnected puzzle pieces that may make you feel warm, but will have no effect on you. You hear: "God loves you," and you smile and reply: "How sweet!" and order another ice cream. An actual bombshell of inspiration has become an irrelevant piece of hearsay.

The Bible speaks of a demonic world out there waiting to be teachers and inspirers of man. To ignore it is like ignoring a red light and walking across a busy street.

Humans basically have one key choice to make in life: to live an *inspired* life or an *informed* life. To choose not to be inspired by God means to choose to be inspired by man – and drown in all that human information, tradition, or be trapped by circumstances, the Status Quo stuff. That is a guarantee of missing the original goal of life altogether. And there is something worse than that – to be inspired by the one thing that mankind without God is inspired most: Mammon. The Bible speaks of a demonic world out there waiting to be teachers and inspirers of man. To ignore it is like ignoring a red light and walking across a busy street. To do nothing in self-defense and remain passive in this key area is to be washed away with the spirit of the age, tossed about like a small boat in a big sea. It leads to a life that I call Life 1.0, a downgraded life, a life of subsistence and ultimately slavery, where we are forced to do what we don't want to do. Inspired people hear from their maker about their destiny, find out their reason for existence, and are spiritually empowered to fulfill their special mission in life. In short: Inspired people are alive in the fullest sense of the word; informed people merely exist but do not really live.

Prophetic Pictures

So, what exactly are prophetic people hearing and seeing about the future of the church? Do you ever hear a healthy prophet say: everything will be as it is; the church of the future will be just as the church that we know right now? I don't. Therefore: **what happens if nothing happens?** For decades, many prophetic men and women have had what I call prophetic pictures. They are like distant glimpses

of a reality not yet there, shadows of something brewing, rumors and rumblings of something about to arrive.

You might remember the vision that Kansas City's Mike Bickle and Timothy Jones related. In 1982, Bickle was in Cairo, Egypt, and heard God say to him: **"In one generation I will change the shape of the church and its expressions."** Prof. Nigel Sykes, Warwick University, UK, a prophetic man to whom God has shown some of the future economic developments around the globe, has a constant theme: **how the caterpillar develops into a butterfly.** Rick Joyner, a prophetic teacher in the US, picked up the same picture: a church like a caterpillar, creeping up and down along the earth, that will transform into a beautiful butterfly, able to spread its wings and not anymore be confined to creeping along the contours of the earth, but freed and newly carried by the winds of the Spirit.

In the UK at the end of the 1980's, a number of prophetic voices communicated that God was saying this: **"Give me back my church, so that I can give it back to the world."** This implies that the church has been taken captive by controlling leaders who have shielded it from the world, who will have to let go of their control, give God back the ownership of his church, who will, in turn, restore it into its rightful place as a blessing to this world.

In 2002, Andrea Xandry, a prophetic man in Zürich, Switzerland, wrote a book likening the present situation of the church with Paul's journey from Malta to Rome. During a violent storm, the ship was about to perish with all hands on board. However, Paul had a prophetic word for everyone, which later came true. He said: **"No one will be lost – only the ship."** (Acts 27:22). In a similar fashion, Xandry speaks of the ship as a picture for the church. As we know it today, the church will not be able to reach its apostolic destiny. For this, all had to abandon ship and take a swim. Everyone reached land in safety...

Lucas Sherraden, a pastor in Houston, Texas, spoke of a "baptism of fire" coming to the church, burning away the slacks, purifying the inner heart desires of God's people. This will result in an ongoing outbreak of apostolic demonstrations of God's power in signs and wonders. The miraculous and the supernatural will become normal in many churches. Sherraden said, **"Church will not be what we have come to experience and know.** The most powerful demonstrations of God's power did not happen when God's people gathered for meetings, but it happened when those immersed in fire went out to the world. Miracles happened to the lost. I saw neighborhoods gathering in front of houses where someone everyone knew had just been healed of terrible diseases. I saw people in the workplace stop their work because someone was healed right on the job. The greatest expressions of church happened unexpectedly and in unpredictable places. This will also lead to spiritual fidelity being restored. I saw church leaders and Christians who were on the trading block selling themselves to many things. Church growth was a fascination and it became harlotry. Effective ministry and techniques that led to life transformation were fascinations and leaders were selling themselves to be more effective. After the river of fire experience - spiritual adultery burned away for many."

At this time in history, many prophets declare that an untimely birth is about to happen – a church born inside the church that is not welcomed by its mother, but by God. An offspring no longer named after the Mother-Church, but after the Father God.

Many prophets have seen the birth of Rachel and Jacob's son **Benjamin** (Gen. 30-35) as a prophetic type for the future of the church. Rachel, who had become a bit grumpy at not having children, finally became desperate and said to Jacob: "Give me children or I'll die!" Very much like a church that is not fertile at all, but pushes all the buttons to appear fruitful. After a few successful births, she finally starts to deliver her last child on her way to Bethlehem with so much difficulty, that she dies. Before she dies, she names the boy Ben-Oni, that is, son of my sorrow. In many ways, today's church is like Rachel, that in her desperate attempts to multiply herself, she finally delivers a seemingly untimely birth – on the road to Ephrat (Bethlehem). She delivers a trouble maker, someone she does not merely lose sleep over, but she loses her life. And before she passes away, she attempts to give one final, devastating label to the boy: Ben-Oni. But, as the story tells us: "...his father named him Benjamin," which translates, son of my right hand.

How many prophets and apostles have been born in the church at a seemingly inopportune time, and been called by the established system a Ben-Oni, troublemaker, son of sorrow? But God stepped in and renamed the boy, putting away that label of shame and replaced it with the greatest privilege a man could give: to declare a son to be his right hand man, his executive. At this time in history, many prophets declare that an untimely birth is about to happen – a church born inside the church that is not welcomed by its mother, but by God. An entirely new breed, rejected by a mother that ultimately only wants to build itself up, like Rachel, but this new-born is accepted and empowered by God the Father. An offspring no longer named after the Mother-Church, but after the Father God.

Perhaps, you yourself are such a troublemaker, at least in the eyes of religious folk around you. So let me tell you: you are not alone; you are normal; come home. Dad calls you Benjamin, not Ben-oni.

There have also been quite a few prophecies regarding a resurgence of new leadership in the Church, about the coming "apostles and prophets." Here are some.

Kelly Joel Weiler says: "I suppose many are looking for a new breed of hot-hots who will be so much hotter than the rest. They'll flash bigger smiles, have more confidence, walk with more polish, and teach the flashiest sermons. But how many have walked with Paul, or Peter, or Thomas, or Matthew? 'The scum of the earth' was what they were sometimes called. Crucified, homeless, despised by some, recognized and honored by others. I believe the Lord has been preparing a whole special generation of apostles and prophets for some time now. Though they may first appear on the scene in a somewhat typical fashion, ultimately I think what is brought to the church will significantly change the appearance of what we currently call church. Any ecclesiastical/political revolution will be the result of the content of their lives and ministry, but not throne seeking on their part. This will bring a whole new blood line into the leadership of the church. It's not a political revolution, exercising a new type of dominion or papacy. What they bring is a revolution of heart foundations, which will inspire a revolution of leadership and ministry; returning the church to the foundations of 'one body, one family, one for all and all for one.'"

Teri Lee Earl says: "My understanding from the Lord since 1996 or so was that there would be a spontaneous work of the Lord, one in which He independently called and commissioned many out of the spiritual desert. They may be called prophets and apostles by the Lord but they need take on no such titles for themselves, for they will be busy going about the work of apostleship or prophet, rather than stroking their egos with titles or self-promotion. They would also largely be unaware of each other at first and work very independent of one another. If they connected up with one another, it would not be due to an organized effort by man or religious organization, nor would it be under the control of any hierarchy, for they would know to avoid that."

Prophetic warnings

Riding the wave of new promises and prospects, some have begun to publicly lay claims to this leadership and loudly trumpet: "We are the ones you have been looking for!" Sadly, America is one of the nations that have been leading this for some time now. In the words of Teri Lee Earl: "It is somewhat dismaying, even shocking, that a group of prophets can get together and decide they are 'high level,' 'national,' or 'international' prophets, announcing themselves as though they are the greatest voices of America. Jesus said, "They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues... The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

But one does not have to be a prophet to discern odd things. Good common sense helps, too. A good place to discern spiritual pride is not only the self-announcement, but also the financial and relational price religious customers have to pay for learning 'new wave,' 'cutting edge' words or teachings. However, in the midst of a corrupt and toxic materialistic environment in the Western church we should not be overly surprised if prophets make profits and apostles sell epistles. Especially since the arrival of the Internet, many of us are bombarded with advertisements and excited announcements about 'apostles' and 'prophets' and their books or conferences.

A great diabolical strategy would be for Satan to, yes, see the coming of a new time, new ministries, and a new church, and then try to ruin it by pushing actors on the stage before they are ready. If we look around in classical Christianity, there is really no shortage of immature, wanna-be apostles and wanna-be prophets, often rejected and therefore insecure individuals who have not yet overcome their own bitterness and rejections, waiting for their great coming-out day. And no one will deny the existence of simply uncrucified religious alpha-males, who are more testosterone than Holy Spirit driven, who just love the thought of becoming a spiritual king, admired and enthroned by the praise of his lesser subjects – or his peers. These are the easy prey of Satan as he recruits folks for a demonic and strategic disinformation campaign, attempting to distort biblical truth and create a cynical backlash against all things prophetic and apostolic. UK Church planter Bernard Sanders says it like this: "We should not be surprised to see the devil try to put up a smokescreen of premature, counterfeit, or illegitimate apostolic ministries in order to confuse the faithful and burn the ground, so that when the real thing comes, everyone will have already gone home, disappointed

by countless fakes, unfulfilled hopes, and gives no more than a tired wave of his hand when he hears words like 'apostolic' and 'prophetic'."

Steve Snow writes: "I sense in the Lord that the Apostolic reformation is about to burst forth upon the church. There will be two streams. One will seem prominent with many "big-name" people declaring their apostolic credentials. The other stream will be the 'unknowns,' those who have been trained and developed over time - those who are 'nobodies' in themselves. I also sense a warning - the apostolic stream - the prominent ones by those who are known to many - will be used by the enemy to turn the church leadership into a dictatorship. This will be a return to the same conditions that occurred in the 2nd century AD when local elders - called Bishops - became higher ranking regional leaders, and eventually one became the Pope. The Lord, though, is raising up his apostles - those called, those created, molded over time, those who are humble, those who are broken, for upon these will the Lord's authority be poured out. These are the ones who understand authority and will give their very lives for the church of God, should that be required. The Lord says - resist the apostolic that seems right - the one that seems as if it will succeed."

When the Stones Cry Out

There is a dimension of prophecy that is hardly ever recognized by Christians. It is when God, in absence of a suitable vessel among his own people, chooses to make his voice known by using other means and people. We all have read of the famous donkey of Balaam, which was able to speak the truth and see spiritual reality before the rider, who was supposed to prophesy (Num 22). And Jesus once said: "If these become silent, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40). And so, in times of prophetic silence, rather than the church prophesying to the world, the world prophesied to itself - as well as to the church.

In the absence of the church being a prophetic voice to the world, it was often secular people, officially disconnected to God, but sometimes more in tune with what God thinking than the church itself, who became prophetic voices. They picked up something out of the air, an issue that the church should have picked up long before, and tried to voice and live it as well as they could. Many of them were scientists, artists, politicians, and inventors, people who saw something of God without necessarily knowing who dropped it into their mind. Did Einstein really know who put $E=mc^2$ in his mind while he was asleep? And yet it revolutionized technology until today. Remember Da Vinci, that brilliant artist and scientist who rebelled against the naïve and stubborn science monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church of his day in ways that made American novelist Dan Brown a millionaire just by writing about it?

Remember Mahatma Gandhi, this brilliant near-apostolic leader involved in issues of justice, nation building, non-violence and embracing the poor? Remember Marx? Although I don't at all believe that Marxism is the answer, here was someone who spoke out early and cohesively against the blatant capitalism exploiting the poor. Remember the flower-power people, the Hippies who sang "make love not war," rejecting the blatant materialism and boring, square, workaholic lifestyle of their own pseudo-Christian parents? Remember, literally, when the (Rolling) Stones, that rock band, cried out: "Sex, drugs, and rock and roll!" as an angry, loud protest against the pathetic, consumerist, streamlined, bigoted, and monotonous 7-5 society around them and tried to provoke everybody?

In times of prophetic silence, rather than the church prophesying to the world, the world prophesied to itself - as well as to the church.

They were simply looking for means to move the unmovable, a self-absorbed, materialistic, cold and plastic capitalism that trapped people in "the system."

Like "The Stones", many age groups have used music like jazz, originally the music of black slaves preaching liberty with the trinity of piano, bass, and drum. This was followed by Bebop, Beat, Pop, and an endless succession of musical styles like groove, rave, Hip Hop, etc., that, in many ways, were nothing else than loud cries for meaning, love, sense, in a spirit of agony, protest, and the defiance of youth dying in a sea of predictable, materialistic boredom. The same is true for the creation of "coolness," that show of unperturbed hip and emotional distance in the face of "a life full of shit" as any street kid in Harlem would say. When no one spoke out for the liberation of slaves, they would sing gospels, songs of freedom and liberation, about prophetic subjects that concerned not only them, but also their white oppressors who needed liberation and deliverance probably even more than them.

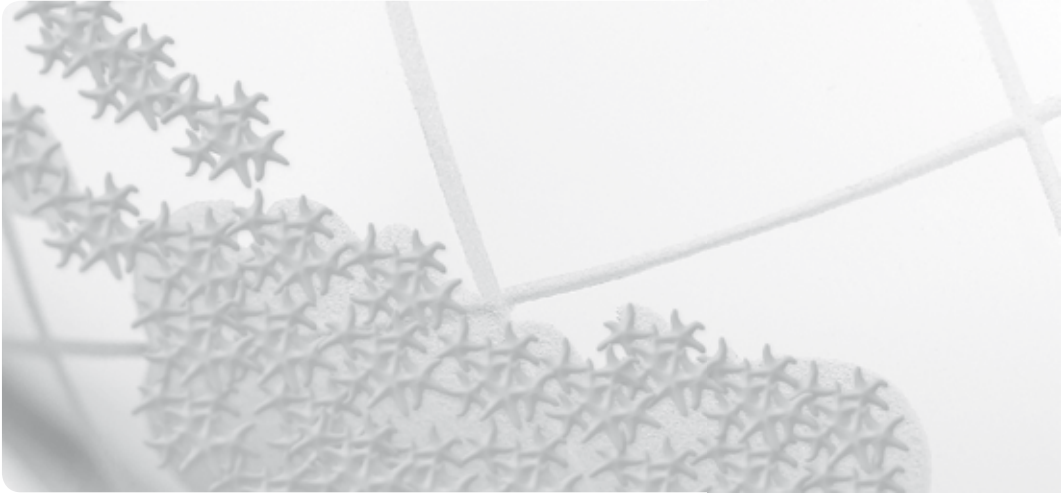
All of them knew something was wrong, terribly wrong, with life, and they were desperately looking for the enemy. This search was prophetic! They knew they needed help, and they looked for a Messiah, looked for love, yes, in all the wrong places, but at least they were looking, mainly because the church was not providing. Should this not have been subjects that followers of Jesus voiced? Is this not what Christians should do, to help people get out of a world that is basically a trap? Say what you want about Socialism and Communism, but they put more thought and effort into defining communal living, the sharing of material goods in order to alleviate suffering and the creation of a just society than the churches in the capitalistic West - and were ready to die for that by the millions. What did the church say and do about this? I remember translating Ron Sider (author of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*) at a large conference in Germany in 1993 where he spoke on the terrible injustice in the world to a mostly charismatic audience. I watched folks leaving the conference while he spoke, because they had come for some charismatic kick, not to be reminded of injustice.

Remember the New Age movement in the 80's, Fritjof Capra, Marilyn Ferguson and all? The movement was crying out: Where is spiritual reality, spiritual power? And the powerless church of the West that has created this very vacuum of the spirit did not know better than to point their fingers, attend some New-Age-Oh-My-goodness seminars to prevent any infection, warned everyone not to get involved, and trotted on, basically unperturbed.

Today God is using films with prophetic subjects like *The Matrix*, *Braveheart*, *The Lord of The Rings* and others to communicate prophetic messages around the globe. Or books by novelists, known and unknown. And again and again, God speaks through music and arts, most of it - in the absence of more guys like U2 singer and Christian prophet Bono - done by people not yet connected to God. No, it's not the full gospel; no, it's not enough for salvation. But it makes folks hungry for more. And hundreds of millions are listening, most of them people who would never darken the door of a traditional church building. And it puts people into a search mode.

Remember: first search, then find. Imagine a church out there, out where the questions are, the teens, the people in the clubs, concert halls, galleries, in

the media, in politics, among the 300 million Dalits of India looking for identity, among the 27 million slaves we have today on the globe, in education, arts, sports, interpreting the prophetic dreams and healthy questions that today's society discusses. And when we finish imagining, let's do it. Millions of people have Jesus-shaped questions - and Church-as-God-wants-it, the church that he invented, is the vessel to harvest those people. However, most folks only know Church-As-We-Know-It and are perplexed, because they see the difference between Jesus and the classical church system very well, and wonder where to go. So they go back to more concerts, music, arts, and media. So why don't you also, like a growing number of Christians who begin to see the connection, open your house, open your kitchen, open your fridge, invite folks with questions, forget all churchyness, and let the answers begin to sink in?



4 Prophetic Signposts

The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

This is why I speak to them in parables:

**“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.” Mt 13:10-13**

4 Prophetic Signposts

In this chapter, I will relate a number of significant prophetic stories for us to do some exegesis. They are significant to our subject in that they are all related to the apostolic journey ahead of us. They don't just carry personal encouragement, they carry Kingdom substance. And if it is true that God still communicates prophetically – within, and never exceeding, the framework of biblical revelation – then these stories point us into some very exciting and challenging directions. And they provide a surprising encounter with God for us; because in prophetic experiences, God so chooses to step out of the invisible, invades our world, zooms out hidden truth for us to see, shows us connections we have never guessed, and prepares us for special times and events we would not have been ready for otherwise.

And I yes did say exegesis, as in Bible interpretation. Exegesis attempts to answer basic questions about a biblical text, like what does the text say, what does it mean, what should we therefore do. And, although not exactly a classical Western exegetical question, but one that I favor a lot: healthy exegesis should not only ask what do we do with the text, *but what does it do with us*. It is good to ask: How do we integrate a new nugget of information of God's story into our story, our already existing theological paradigm, and set patterns of life? But it is even better to ask: how do we ourselves become a part of God's story as it unfolds?

Healthy exegesis should not only ask what do we do with the text, but what does it do with us. How do we ourselves become a part of God's story as it unfolds?

It is a humbling insight for many if they realize that the truth of God is not only out there for us to find, it is hunting us, wisdom calling out on the streets, crying out at the head of noisy streets, waiting to find us and turn us upside down, asking: Adam, where are you? Eve, what have you done? As God and man meet, in the word of God, in dreams and visions, in prophetic events, in humans destined to meet, God is clearly the agent, and man is reduced to a creation before his creator. You may have met people who completely failed to impress you, and you simply walked on. But you don't meet God and fail to recognize it. He does leave an impression! Remember Daniel, falling into unconsciousness, overcome with anguish because of the vision, helpless, too weak to stand even before the angels? Or Ezekiel, face down? Remember John, falling at his feet as dead when Jesus spoke to him?

Some of us may have a very small expectation as to how it is to encounter God. It comes from the many centuries of powerless Christian religion, experiencing hundreds of sermons and predictable, cookie-cutter services and liturgical rituals without having any significant impact on us – except for some religious shivers and warm feelings. That's why I probably need to say this: If we truly meet God, it revolutionizes us, turns us upside down, and delivers us. We laugh, cry, repent, give up, surrender, totally change, and we might even do that most unnatural thing of all: it leaves us speechless, like Job. In my own life, I have experienced most of this, including those most profound personal encounters with God that simply left me speechless, when there was nothing to say. A true miracle, for anyone who really knows me...

However, being overwhelmed is not the only way to judge whether you have met God. If prophetic stories are one of the many ways God speaks to us today, we have to take it seriously, submit it to the Bible as the final authority of God, and then proceed. Chris Daza, a prophetic friend from Malawi, keeps reminding us that there are four levels of the prophetic: 1) The prophetic spirit is on all of God's people; 2) Since God's spirit is a prophetic spirit, "we all can prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:2), that is, to speak forth things not of our own that have been given to us from God; 3) There are prophetic people, prophetic ministries, people who exist to be constant interfaces with God, a satellite dish on earth, a navigational beacon for the lost or an irritating voice in a sea of complacency. And 4) The Bible is itself the inspired word of God, the very highest form of prophecy we know, to which all other prophecy – as well as heresy - must bow.

Prophetic stories are different from prophetic words. In stories, not only are the words important, but the setting, the context, the characters, the way in which God communicates something. I sometimes refer to this as "prophetic art." Art is tremendously effective in communicating the truth of God – without using words as the main communication tool. For many reasons, many people can't hear the straightforward gospel anymore – or not yet. And that is why millions of all ages desperately need an artist, not to preach answers to them, but guide their questions – a painter, a singer, a composer, a musician, a dancer, a sculptor, a poet – to describe to them outer shapes and filigree aspects of the creation, to whisper to them about God's goodness, to make the observer want to stretch out his little finger and just see if he can touch the untouchable, to guide his imagination and invite the person to discover a reality behind what is seen with our naked eye.

I am thankful to Mike Bickle for his helpful triplet to treat prophecy in three phases as revelation, interpretation and application. Although I think not all of the prophetic can be grasped this way, it is a good tool. So this is what I ask you to do if you agree: once I have told you a story, could you pause for a minute, ask yourself and God these three questions (and maybe later discuss this with your family/house church/friends):

- **Revelation;** what is the essence of the message that God communicates with the story?
- **Interpretation;** after being weighed, what does that mean? (Go back to the Bible and the current newspapers for a broader backdrop)
- **Application;** what therefore should we do - or stop doing?

The stories that I will tell here all have an implied message. I believe they are all small fractions of a larger message that the Spirit of God is saying to the Churches with great urgency today. If we as the body of Christ want to hear and discern God, we need to take a triangular look: look up, around, and into the book. In other words: 1) we need to spend time hearing from God, or hearing from those who heard from God; 2) we need to do horizontal research and observation and simply read the newspapers; but only observing statistical and demographic trends or cultural and religious/church developments will not be enough. It shows us what's happening, not why; it makes the church, at worst, follow trends that culture or fashion dictates; 3) and we need to read

and reread the Bible and remain with both feet standing firmly on God's word. Otherwise, we are in great danger of sleeping through new developments, slumbering while God moves, just because we have locked our eyes on a few pet subjects and like to hear only what we want to hear.

One of the amazing realities of our time is the significant groundswell of catastrophes and disasters of all kinds to what even the secular media calls biblical proportions. Earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, famines and other calamities seem to be happening with greater frequency than ever before. Could it be that God is literally raising his voice in order to get through to us? When his disciples pressed Jesus for signs of his coming, these are some of the things he specifically mentions. (Matt. 24). But now the stories.

Houston: The split pulpit

The first story comes from Houston, Texas. The event I will relate happened on the 20th of October 1995 at a church called Christian Tabernacle. Pastor Richard Heard and his leadership of the 3,000 member Pentecostal congregation had started a series of "revival meetings" on October 6th and had committed to give the Holy Spirit full control over those meetings, says my friend Jim Rutz, a Colorado Springs based author (*Megashift; The Open Church*) reporting on the event. In a worship atmosphere "thick" with God's presence at the 8:30 a.m. service on Oct. 20, Evangelist Tommy Tenney and Heard were hesitant to break a worshipful silence with their preaching. Heard, at one point, leaned over toward Tenney and said, "Are you ready to take over the service?"

Tenney responded that he feared going to the pulpit because he sensed that "something big" was about to happen. Heard rose a few moments later, walked across the soft-padded red carpet, mounted the 28-inch platform, grasped the podium and read 2 Chronicles 7:14. "What the Holy Spirit is saying to us is that we should seek God's face, not His hand," Heard told the congregation. "We should not be seeking just His benefits, but should be seeking also to know Him."

At that instant, a loud clap of noise hit the sanctuary. Heard was thrown backwards and landed eight or nine feet away, flat on his back. He lay uninjured, but overcome by a sense of the Holy Spirit's presence. Only a non-stop twitching of his right hand showed that he was still alive. The podium — made of a half-inch thick, black Plexiglas material — did not fare as well. It was split into two pieces that were flung toward the congregation in different directions, landing six or seven feet apart.



The congregation was stunned. Tenney gave several altar calls, and people kept coming forward — some falling in the Spirit before they reached the altar area. Fifteen and a half hours later, at midnight, the meeting ended. There was no earthly explanation for what the people had seen, but they knew God had spoken loudly. Tenney said he believed God had zapped the podium in two "as a symbolic slap in the face for the tight human control of the church across America." Later, the pulpit manufacturer was informed of the incident. The firm denied

there was any way the material could ever split as it did — along a diagonal jagged line (the pictures shows Tenny with the split pulpit). If the podium had been subjected to extremely high pressure – 57,600 pounds per square inch, it would have shattered into tiny splinters like glass, the manufacturers said. But they insisted the material would never split by natural means the way it did that Sunday morning at Christian Tabernacle.

The two broken pieces were first kept in the church office. But a steady stream of curious people vying for a glimpse of the broken podium forced church officials to relocate the pieces back in the sanctuary. After some time, Jim told me, the church replaced the pulpit with another one – and went on with church as usual. Something I believe they should not have done.

I remember sitting with Tommy Tenney one time, asking him what he believed was the message God wanted to communicate with the split pulpit. He said: "I was not so concerned with the split pulpit, I was concerned with the split heavens." However, that answer left me somewhat empty. If God so chooses to go to the extent of having a prayerful, dedicated, "good" pastor like Heard fly through the air and lie out cold before the audience; if he so chooses to split an unsplittable pulpit before everyone's eyes, he has an extremely specific message that is implied in this: Before you read on, what would you say was the message, if you can accept at all that this was "from God?"

Interpretation: What if Tenney is right and this was a symbolic "slap of God?" What should change? And what does the split pulpit symbolize? This is one of the ways I read it: At the time of Jesus, the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple was tightly guarded by the Levites. Once a year, one of them was allowed to pass through the veil from the Holy into the Most Holy. When Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, died on the cross, the New Testament reports a tearing of the veil from top to bottom, a symbol of the freed up access to God: now everyone could approach the throne of grace with confidence, since from now on, there is one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus (and no caste of priests anymore). The veil: a symbol of his body, which was now torn, once and for all (Hebrews 10:20).

This was incredible news to all of mankind; however, professionally speaking, it was not such good news for the Levites. For them it was like having a letter of termination on their desk, saying: "Thank you for thousand years of faithful temple service; from now on, you are not needed anymore, since Jesus is now building a temple of living stones called the Church, where everyone is a royal priest. Go join it. Thanks again. God".

I believe this was hard for many to take, since it meant the extinction of the entire priestly class that professionally stood between God and mankind, mediating between the two parties and making a living off it through the payments of tithes and offerings. I believe that through church history, the veil has crept back, installed by a religious mediating caste, again establishing itself in between God and man, and, in the worst possible language, describing itself and the organization it built as the very sacrament of God.

The symbols of these new and completely unnecessary mediators are many; anything that makes it clear that there are these two groups, "lay people" and "clergy," modern Levites, just like in the good old days before Jesus

had died. We even see this in the blunt architecture of church buildings with clear fences and distinctions in between the two religious casts. Add to this, the Reverend's collar, a badge saying "clergy," liturgical dress codes - and the pulpit! You either stand behind it, or sit before it. The picture is clear. However, if humans again start to control the open line between God and man by sitting on it and throw back the development into a pre-Christian stone age, would you not understand God being more than a bit picky about it?

Question: How does a church without human mediators look? What kind of architecture would be needed? When would you – if you happen to be one who is into wearing clerical garb – ever stop wearing it?

Esther of India



A second story comes from India. I must admit that, as the editor of the *Fridayfax* (now *Starfish News*), an electronic bulletin committed to reporting verified God-stories around the world, I have heard many legends. I decided to publish this story only after repeated requests for verification and research through personal friends in India who I trust, such as nationally known surgeon Dr. Victor Choudhrie and Prof. Alex Abraham, a leading Indian neurologist. Both confirmed the report. At a

church-planting conference in Madhya Pradesh state, Rev. Amos, a personal friend, told of the following events: a church-planting team visited a village without a Christian church. As usual, they asked whether there was a sick person in the village for whom they could pray. The villagers led them to a hut in which a family lived, with a severely disfigured five-month-old baby: it had two heads and two sexes, both male and female. The parents and other villagers looked on in suspense to see what the Christians would do. In faith, one of the church-planters laid hands on the child and prayed to Jesus for a miracle. As she prayed, the two heads became one! After further prayer, the child was left with only one sex: a girl! The village's first church was planted as a result of the miracle.

Dr. Choudhrie wrote to me: "I sent pastor Earnest Singh to the remote village, about 400 kilometers from here, to investigate the healing of the baby with two heads. Singh's report reached us on 14th September 2000. The region is swarming with Naxalites (militant Hindus) who control all movements and confiscate cameras, but we managed to get a photo of the healed child. She was born with two heads and four eyes, only one of which was normal; the others looked like balls of flesh. The people's first reaction when the baby was born was that it was the Devil incarnate, and they planned to put the baby in a clay jar and throw it into the jungle. They later began to pray with four Christians, Adu, Shadru, Dashru and Labhu. As they prayed, the baby was transformed, its two heads becoming one, with two normal eyes. The little girl, now called Esther, is healthy in every respect" (see Esther on the picture with her parents).

Erich Reber's comment: "When I heard Rev. Amos' report, my mind still challenged whether this miracle really occurred, God spoke to me very clearly. He showed me that the church in Switzerland also has several heads. Beside Jesus Christ, there are others: materialism, humanism, rationalism, mammon, worldly heads and so on. The identity of the church is also not clearly visible; people looking at the church from the outside can't tell what it is. Just as the woman laid her hands on the sick child, God is initiating a movement consisting of countless women, men and children, who are praying that Jesus will be restored as the only head, and the true identity of the church become visible."

River Aare in Thun: the flood of the Holy Spirit

Let us stay with Erich and a vision that he had about the river Aare around Thun, Switzerland:

"Right in the middle of a Sunday morning service in November 1997 in Halle 21, Thun, I experienced a vision that I immediately shared with the church. All of a sudden I was taken by the spirit of God out of the auditorium and placed alongside the river Aare in Thun. My grandfather had once shown me the place – I was five years old then. A little signboard stood there, indicating the high water mark of the river Aare during a severe flooding some decades ago. In this vision I saw the waters of the river rise even higher and expand over and beyond the boundaries of the Aare. I saw people with sandbags, hastily trying to stem in the flood; but in vain. The Lord said: 'This is how the water will come. You have corrected the path of the river, built floodgates and created nice strolls along the river. You allow the river to flow exactly like you want it to. But if the water level increases only a little bit, everything you built is gone.' This first part of the vision was fulfilled in summer 1998," says Reber, and points to a local front-page newspaper article that depicted the city flooded exactly as he had described it before, in spite of elaborate, classical Swiss precautions to prevent just that.

"But when will the second part be fulfilled?" Erich asked. The Lord continued to speak: "That is how you deal with the flow of the Holy Spirit in your churches, ministries and your personal lives. You only allow me to flow the way you want it. Some want me to flow like this; others to flow more like that. You are creating nice strolls along my river of the spirit and cast a framework for me to be confined to. Some like me to be deep, slow moving water, some like to watch me like a gushing waterfall cascading down some steps. You pray for revival, but revival should come exactly as you imagine it to be. However, I will come through a revival that goes beyond your frameworks and human expectations. I will greatly overflow over all the boundaries you have set for me."

Erich concludes: "I saw how the entire Christian landscape in Switzerland was totally altered. The forms of services, the length of meetings and the way Christians are sharing their lives with each other changed completely. The present day forms of most Christian worship services will become a thing of the past. In the vision I saw how Charismatic, Pentecostal and Evangelical church and ministry leaders from all over Switzerland tried to restrict the flow of revival into a safe riverbed that was consistent with their own expectations, by placing spiritual sandbags along the river. But they were flooded and came to be suddenly trapped under their own sandbags. Many stayed captive under their own, self-imposed sandbags, although they were strongly convinced

that their actions were utterly correct. Others broke free and were taken along into the majestic river of the Holy Spirit.”

Toronto: The disarmament of the Christian Militia

In November 2003 I led a seminar about the prophetic and apostolic ministry in Toronto, Canada. For the sake of convenience – and not because the church then was in any way interested in what we discussed – the seminar was held in the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, the internationally known former Vineyard church led by John and Carol Arnott. Starting in 1994, millions of people gathered there to experience “the Toronto blessing.” Up to 5,000 people attended the almost daily evening services. Observers spoke of one of the longest-lasting revivals in history, and when I wrote a Friday Fax report in 1999, they had just celebrated the 3 millionth visitor.

On this November evening, I sat in the empty hall, waiting for the seminar to begin in one of the upper rooms. A question started to nag at me as I watched the church’s musicians routinely setting up their instruments for the evening service to which only 20 people showed up, lost in the large hall. Where did all those millions of people go? And where did God go? So I asked him. “How do you see what happened here, God, and why it stopped? What does the church scene look like from your perspective?”

Over the next few minutes, I experienced that which prophetically inclined people would call an “open vision.” Not only did I see a film in my spirit but felt myself a participant in the midst of the film. For many, this may be an astonishing new perspective on how God is moving right now:

The three booths

I saw a long line of newly saved people entering the Kingdom of God. Everything was new for them, so there were three booths set up for them to pass through. At the first booth, they would sign up for God’s army and pledge total loyalty to God. From then on, they were under orders, no longer their own, and were given a uniform and boots. At the second booth, they were given a sword, and at the third, a scythe - a harvesting tool. Astonishingly, only around one in a thousand of the new arrivals even went to the first booth; almost everyone went to the second stand, and almost everyone also ignored the third stand. Almost nobody went to all three stands, as God explicitly intended.

The Irregulars

Everyone hurried directly to a huge plain full of people and activity. Under an enormous dust cloud thrown up by the many feet, small groups quickly formed and were joined by the new arrivals. These countless groups made themselves banners, flags, and uniforms decorated with very creative logos and emblems. It was an incredible colorful confusion of thousands of small militia. In other words, an irregular army. The chaos was complete; some blew for attack, others for retreat. Some acted out bizarre rituals, others sat around the campfire laughing. Some practiced sword fighting, others gathered and even buried their weapons and spoke of peace. Some of the groups attacked each other. It was a scene of hectic activity, but without any recognizable order. Generals cooked, cooks were pilots, and pilots dug trenches. I was horrified, and saw clearly that this army would never win any battle. Everyone was

terribly busy, but all the zealous action came to nothing in the long term. It was an army unaligned.

The Angels

Suddenly someone shouted, "The Angels of God are coming!" They were right. Way off, I could make out a huge number of God's white warriors, powerful, almost larger-than-life angels. The people broke out in an ear-shattering shout and cheer, "Hallelujah, the angels are coming. At last, it's about to begin!" The cheering was indescribable. But the excitement slowly faded, and the shouts of "hallelujah" died out. Finally, silence descended. Then I looked at the angels more carefully. Standing close together, they looked like a police cordon in front of a crowd of hooligans, with set, sad faces. Step by step the white phalanx slowly approached the motley crowd. Consternation spread, and some of the banners began to retreat. Pale-faced, the people stumbled backwards, shocked and unable to comprehend what was happening. In their shock, some even lost their swords and pennants. The mass of people were driven back into a large valley without exits as the rows of angels slowly but deliberately advanced. The people were finally trapped in the valley like sheep. Some began to cry; others called out to God for mercy, yet others called for help. Most were simply silent.

At last, a huge angel stepped forward and said in a voice loud enough to be heard in the farthest corners of the valley, "That is enough! You have done as you please for long enough. End the war you declared yourselves. Submit to your God. Lay down the banners and flags you made yourselves. Take off the uniforms and boots you were given, as well as the insignia you created. Repent, because you have been disobedient. Lay everything on the ground beside you and kneel to ask your Father to forgive you. In His mercy, he will grant you a fresh start."

The people froze. Astonished disbelief spread through the crowd. Some started to talk, some even started shouting, "Pay no attention to them! Listen to me!" But some began to understand. A few sobbed. One or two started to remove their insignia, lay down their banners and flags, take off their uniforms and kneel in the dust, asking God for forgiveness for their disobedience. Whenever another person knelt - or even an entire group - an angel left the phalanx, took what the person had laid down, and carried it out to the plain, slowly creating a huge mound of banners, flags and uniforms.

The angel then returned to the kneeling person, both as a sign and a guard, because some of the people who had not yet understood what was happening were angry, shouting, "Traitors! Deserters!" at those who knelt, ordering them to return to their militia. The number of stubborn rebels and militia leaders shrank continuously as more people recognized that they had been incredibly misguided, and they laid down their uniforms and weapons. Finally, after a long time, everyone was kneeling. The angels set the huge mound of uniforms, banners and flags alight, and everyone watched transfixed as their once so precious possessions vanished in the flames. When the fire had burned down, the angel spoke again in a very gentle voice, saying, "Now stand up and follow us. Let's start over again."

A new start

The people stood up, naked, without uniforms, but their shame covered by the angel at their side who led them back to the point at which they had entered the Kingdom of God. This time, each person went slowly and deliberately to the first booth to write their name in the army register before receiving a new uniform and boots with no insignia. The angel then took them to the second booth, where they received a sword, symbolizing the Word of God. They then went on to the third and final booth, where they were given harvesting tools and a clearly defined task and position. The angel then took them to a specific position on the plain, where he instructed "his" person to assume his personal position and to obey God's battle orders. The angel then left. With time, an incredibly powerful army formed. Everyone was in the right place and knew exactly what his job was. Nobody did what seemed right in his own eyes, but paid great attention to his God-given task and function. I saw joy, but also wild determination, written on the people's faces. That was the end of the "film" for me. I had tears in my eyes, and was both horrified and thankful. At the end of my talk that evening, I decided to recount my vision just as I have written it here.

Clint Toews

Clint is a Canadian prophet and author from Winnipeg. He stood up at just that moment, explaining that he had planned to speak at another church in Toronto, but that God had redirected him, telling him to be where I would speak, and that he had a prophetic word for the moment. I do not allow just any "prophet" to take the microphone, so I checked with my friend Dr. Ken Stade, also from Winnipeg, who led the meeting. He agreed that Clint should speak.

"No!"

Clint said that God has a very simple message to us all, written in Joshua 5:13-14. Shortly before conquering Jericho, Joshua encountered an unknown man armed with a sword. He approached the man and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" The man answered, "No!"

Clint exclaimed, "This 'NO!' is God's answer to our unspoken question about when he will join our project, our plan, fellowship, church, outreach, even our war. God will not join our human plans, and particularly not our church. It is He who builds His church. So, "No!" But if we repent, confess our pride, our pitiful denominationalism and favoritism, and kneel down and remove our shoes because we recognize that Jesus is standing before us, the Commander of the Lord's army, then he will again assume the command that we have usurped. If we then take the place he assigns us and follow His commands, victory will come quickly; Jericho is a historic example. The honor for God's victories will then no longer go to some banner, flag, denomination, mission agency or terrific plan to save the world, but to the Lamb of God alone, Jesus Christ."

Original purpose-a dream in Uganda

For a number of years I have been following with great interest the spiritual developments in Uganda. Uganda – with dictators like Idi Amin and Milton Obote in the 70's and 80's - has gone through extremely rough times. Christi-

ans were persecuted, churches closed down, the AIDS rate has gone up to over 30%, inflation was at 380%, and the WHO declared in the beginning of the 90s that the country would collapse by 1997. One of my friends, John Mulinde, a prophetic man in Uganda, was rallying the nation in the early 1990's for prayer, repentance, and reconciliation. A number of videos (*George Otis' Transformation Video 2* is one of them) have documented – and even the WHO speaks of it – that a miracle has happened, and the country has turned around from a completely bleak to a bright future in probably one of the most fascinating stories any country could tell. The AIDS rate has come down dramatically, as has the inflation rate. Through the ministry of John Mulinde and others, many Christians around the world have become aware of the fascinating prayer movement that has been birthed in this nation in a time of deepest despair, travail, when no human means would be good enough and only an act of God could save the doomed nation.

In my understanding, this great turnaround experience would have opened the nation for a great harvest through mass planting of churches, and I have been on the lookout for years for apostolic people in Uganda who would carry such a vision and strategy. For this, an indigenous apostolic house church planting movement would have been ideal, I thought. But all I found were Christian leaders who were content with ministry, church and business as usual. Deeply disturbed by the lack of finding anybody of that kind at that time, I had been praying about this, puzzled and worried, afraid that a great *kairos* opportunity in history might be lost.

One night in 2003 I woke up in a hotel bed in south Uganda after an extremely vivid dream. I had dreamed of a nine-year-old Indian girl who had died in North India. I had been invited by the family to speak at her funeral. A day later, the father of the girl, a very distinguished man in a business suit, called me over the phone. He said that he had never ever heard things like the words I shared at the burial. I answered him: "Yes, but your girl was also a very special person. She had a unique gift. She could walk up to anything, plant, animal, person, touch it and declare its original purpose!" With this, the father broke down in tears and hung up the phone – and I woke up with those words in my mind.

Original purpose - it kept ringing in my head. "There is an original purpose for everything, and it needs to be declared. It's the prophetic ministry that declares such a purpose. "Is it dying, Lord, in Uganda?" I prayed. "What are you telling me?" As I asked these questions, I took my Bible and went down to pray some more, surrounded by that fascinating Ugandan wild life. Being in a national park close to water, it felt like the Garden of Eden again. And as I felt God direct me to start at the beginning of the Bible, I saw a connection. One of the fascinating tasks of Adam in the Garden of Eden was to name birds, beasts, and livestock. Naming includes the declaration of purpose; to express what something is made for. The same is true for a human being, as well as for a race or an entire country – God has made everything for a special purpose, a certain goal.

Satan's biggest and most deadly attack on a person or a nation is to attack its original purpose. One of the most devastating ways to do that is to attack the very ministry of God that declares this original purpose to man: prophecy, and the outworking of that prophetic declaration especially within a garden, a

jurisdiction, an apostolic framework. If a person loses the original purpose for which he was made, all is lost; the person becomes a clone, a passively living being, rather than actively alive. If a country loses what some call its redemptive purpose, it becomes a copy of its neighbors, and degenerates into just another country. Its godly soul dies. What needs to happen more than anything else, therefore, is that the little girl in my dream, and her vital ministry, needs to be kept from dying an untimely death, and the prophetic must be encouraged, in all innocence, to declare again the original purpose over people and nations.

I believe what I experienced in Uganda was a warning dream, as it says in Job 33, that God may speak to man through dreams and terrify them with warnings. I received this in a way that made a lot of sense to me, highly personal, straight into very unique circumstances, Garden of Eden and all, and if you look at it, it may make no sense to you whatsoever. That is one of the very reasons I included this dream here. But maybe this also speaks to you. What would that nine-year-old girl (for me a picture of the gentle and prophetic Holy Spirit) have declared over you?

If a person loses the original purpose for which he was made, all is lost; the person becomes a clone, a passively living being, rather than actively alive. If a country loses what some call its redemptive purpose, it becomes a copy of its neighbors, and degenerates into just another country. Its godly soul dies.

Erich's Tree vision and the storm "Lothar"

At the end of the 20th century, Erich Reber had an open vision in which he saw himself in a huge forest with big trees. These trees were being threatened by a huge chainsaw about to cut them at about hip's height. Erich knew these trees represented individual churches, and the saw represented "the axe of God," a judgment threatening to cut them down should they not produce. He pleaded with God, telling him he can't do that, and heard God commission him: "Go, fight for every tree!"

Erich went, hugging those trees in his vision, pleading with them, "Please, do bring forth your fruit, otherwise that saw of God will cut you off!" Ultimately hardly any of those trees changed, and the saw came and cut most of them down, with only a few left standing. As the trees fell, Erich could see that the trunks had been rotten inside; the trees had been eaten from within, and only stumps remained. However, something amazing started to take place. With most of the trees gone, the soil of the forest underwent a transformation. It had been pretty dead and unfruitful in the shadow of the mighty trees and their foliage. But now, new light, warmth, and fresh air touched the soil and made it fruitful. Very soon, a new type of growth came up. But this time it was not new trees, it was bushy plants, quickly creeping and multiplying everywhere; one could not see where the beginning and the end of each plant was. This happened until the whole ground was covered with this type of bush.

When I heard it, I did what I used to do with a number of prophetic words like this: store it in the fridge. In other words: hear it, pray about it, and let it sit for a while if I do not feel an immediate prompting to react. To be honest, I was not at all prepared for how soon and real this prophecy would come true. Around Christmas 1999, on the 26th of December that year, a friend of mine, a born-again Catholic priest in the village where I lived, invited me to speak at a morning service in a neighboring village called Altenburg.

I agreed to come and spoke to a full church about Matthew 7:24-28 in which Jesus describes the man listening to and obeying his words and building his house, therefore, on the rock. Those who would only hear but not act accordingly would be fools and build their house on sand. "The rain came

down, the streams rose, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash (Matt. 7:28).” As I spoke these words, there was an eerie sound whipping around the church; the stained glass wall of the church started to shake severely, and I was increasingly worried whether that wall would hold up. As the service ended, people went out into an amazing storm, hats and scarves flying, and many of the free issue of the Fridayfax bulletin I had printed for them as a takeout were flying up in the air.

As I went home and listened to the news, they reported a storm of unprecedented strength and quality. Whole roofs were taken off, and huge parts of the forest looked like an incredible bomb had exploded. Uncountable trees looked like they had been cut down at hip’s height by a gigantic chainsaw. That day, around 90 people died in one of the worst storms in European history that was named “Lothar”. I have made many pictures of entire forests cut down by this storm. Many of these tree trunks were rotten at the core. That’s why they were unable to resist this kind of onslaught.

Interpretation: I see this as a natural fulfillment of the prophecy Erich had. Quite often, spiritual statements have natural consequences. Sometimes a development in the natural precedes or depicts a similar development in the spirit world. In my observation, many traditional churches fight with erosion from within; the burnout rates of pastors and leaders are simply alarming, and if there is any significant shaking, like personality clashes, financial pressures or vision crises, many churches simply fold. Often, new organic churches seem to spring up in the very “parishes” of such churches, spiritual vines that multiply rapidly. And people, first mourning the loss of “their church,” now feeling pastorless or leaderless, are thrown into the water in a sink-or-swim fashion, and forced to take some action. As they make themselves and their gifts, talents, and houses available for God, new growth takes place, and a new fertility develops where previously it looked pretty bleak.

The Norwegian version of this

This story had another interesting implication for me. In the year 2000, I had been invited to Norway to speak at a number of gatherings. One of them was a meeting with around 150 Norwegian leaders, many of them from the Lutheran State Church, the Norwegian Oasis movement, as well as ministry leaders and Free Church leaders. The meeting was to be a one-day seminar on a Saturday in a Lutheran Church building in Bredtvedt near Oslo. I was told to give a seminar on house churches that Saturday until 3 PM, “and then be ready for a real tough, Viking-type question-and-answer time where they will take you apart Norwegian style, from 3 to 5 PM,” one of my hosts told me with a wink in his eye.

I did my thing and it was close to 3 PM, when I had an impulse to tell them the story of the tree prophecy and what I had experienced in that Catholic Church building. There was a stunned silence. Kari Foss, who led the meeting – then the secretary of the Oasis Movement – took the microphone and said: “There will be no question and answer time whatsoever. We all know exactly what God has been telling us. We know this very prophecy in Norway, too. Therefore: the altar is open, you can now come, repent and pray.”

I was stunned, not knowing what was going on. Many of these precious

Norwegian leaders were praying, some crying, kneeling in the aisles or in front at the altar. After some 30 minutes or so, I decided to go outside, find myself some coffee, fresh air and all, because I could not understand what was happening. Outside, someone who had participated in the seminar led me before a stone bust that stood in front of that church, and started to take pictures; a lot of pictures. Between all those smiles, I asked: "What in the world are you doing? Who is this bust-guy, and who are you?" It turns out he was the secretary of the Pentecostal Federation in Norway, and he told me something I had not known before: A very similar prophecy like the one I had just shared was being discussed in Norway at that time. And the man depicted in the bust was Hans Nielsen Hauge, a man who had lived around 200 years ago and had been preaching an almost identical message to his countrymen that I had just preached: house churches and a holy reformation of life. "Norway had been a fiercely Lutheran nation then," he said, "and Hauge was opposed, persecuted, thrown into jail, went into exile in Denmark, came back, wrote tracts and books of all kinds, but was basically seen as a disturber of the peace because he would encourage people to meet in homes. Finally, when they saw that they could not get rid of him, they allowed him to find a home in this very church in Oslo-Bredvedt, where he lived for another seven years and then died. And his message died with him. Today, 200 years later, Hauge is seen in Norway as a spiritual father and apostle to the nation that has molded many generations of leaders. And only God could arrange it in such a way that the message that died here in this very church building should resurface right here, right now," my new friend said. Then he took another picture, urgently invited me to attend a national Pentecostal pastors meeting in a few months, and we departed.

Why, God, such a massive Tsunami Devastation?

My wife Mercy, of Indian origin, wrote what follows as the massive Tsunami struck on December 26, 2004: "My heart wails for the loss of thousands of my countrymen, one third of them being children. There is no word that can express the pains of the orphans and widows, the poor and the needy. In a fraction of a second people were made homeless and aliens in their own country. Those who survived have to leave their dead behind without any proper burial. We do not know anymore who to cry for, the dead or the survivors. Their safety and security is in ruins. This disaster is beyond mourning. All of a sudden within a very few hours tens of thousands of people are dead and billions of dollars of destruction struck various countries. Who can explain this? What mind is able to grasp the situation? What technology could have prevented such a destruction? Thousands of Christians are lying face down in the throne room of God asking for his grace and favor, forgiveness and love, help and healing. Many thousands are asking: 'Why has the Lord done such a thing? Is not God slow to anger and full of compassion? Did he warn his people when they felt secure?' Any many others shrug their shoulders, talk about fate and return to business as usual.

Beyond the chocolate side of God

We have seen what a Tsunami can do. But how can a mere man stand in front of God when He comes in his fury? Then there is no escape. So the question is: what has made God "come in his fury?" For many this is very difficult to

comprehend. Many have preached just only about the chocolate side of God, just what the people would like to hear. We do not want to hear much about a God that is different from a loving Dad. But He also is a consuming fire, the hammer that breaks the rock, the double-edged sword, the twister of oaks, the flasher of lightning, the jealous one, the winnowing fork, the one on the judgment throne... and the one who disciplines those whom he loves. Yes, God can be provoked by our actions. What have we, His people, done that He couldn't turn back His anger? Did we escape but barely? And why were we spared?

When I bring the Ocean Depths over you

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: When I make you a desolate city, like cities no longer inhabited, and when I bring the ocean depths over you and its vast waters cover you then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will make you dwell in the earth below, as in ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, and you will not return or take your place in the land of the living. I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign LORD.” Ezekiel 26:19 – 21

“See the storm of the Lord will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly” Jer. 23:19-20.

The countries that were hit by the Dec 26th Tsunami definitely still have a majority of inhabitants who worship false Gods, including Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists. In India in one district alone 2000 Catholics who were in a Sunday morning mass were completely wiped out – all dead. The tourists, many of them who enjoyed themselves limitlessly in Phuket had no time to repent for their deeds. The continuing bloodshed of the murdered Christians in Indonesia cries out to God from their ground. In all this, did the small children deserve such a wrath of God? Let my bones tremble at the holiness of God. I do not deserve any answer from the Almighty. God has spoken prophetically many times about Tsunamis. Again and again he warned, but it wasn't taken seriously. We all seem to love prophecies of revival, but what of judgment and correction? Who are we to choose to listen to one aspect –and reject the other?



For whom then to weep?

What a horrible thing has happened to us. How did we get so remote from God's heart? He has called us to be his servants to the lost world. But we have made him our servant for our needs. We are supposed to do justice and be righteous. But in his own church, God sees horrible injustice and unrighteousness. Corruption and

misuse of power is daringly evident. Instead of correction and discipline we rather live to embrace a lie, a life of many double standards. We take even the

**We have given Mammon
a honorable place in our
pious religious church
systems.**

slightest correction as groundless criticism and personal attack. We seize those who warn us of the dangers to come and we judge them. And even worse, we lead God's people astray by using His own name. We tolerate sin in the church. In the West, some even baptize cats and dogs, bless homosexuals. We divorce and remarry. We live in adulterous relationships. We are unwilling to reform our old ways. We feel secured in our slippery path. We are unable to discern evil from good, holiness from uncleanness. We hardly see a difference between a Christian and a Non-Christian in everyday life. We are full of greed and lust. We are concerned about expanding our own ministries and building our own paneled houses just like those in the secular business world do. We have set our hearts on dishonest gain and extortion. We copy the secular systems to run our conferences and schools. We are so much involved in buying and selling Christian things. We run fleshly profitable businesses by using what belongs to God. We have given Mammon a honorable place in our pious religious church systems. We have made ourselves busy, making our own idols and worshipping what our hands have created. We care less to stand in the council of God. We have proclaimed our own soothing words to the people so that they will like us and pay us. We have cared less to be just and right. We have closed our eyes to the aliens in our countries. We have refused to rescue the oppressed from the cruelty of their oppressors. We have not paid attention to defend the cause of the poor and the needy. We have done much destruction to His church and His sheep. We follow an ungodly course. Because of US, ungodliness has spread throughout our land. We have gone astray from our Creator. Whom shall we weep for, the dead or those who are being spared?

Therefore, what do we do?

1. Wake up to build His Kingdom – together. With how much more fury can God hurl us out of his sight if we continue to take the days of grace for granted? As the whole world is trying to hasten humanitarian relief efforts and to reconstruct the tourism industry, do we hear God hastening us all over the world to wake up to build His Kingdom? Now is definitely NOT the time to expand our one little church or mega church. It is now the time to die for our human dreams, for our selfish lifestyles and to live for God's purposes selflessly. He is not coming back with his furious passion for our little church or our mega church, he comes for HIS bride in his splendor and majesty. The body of Christ in each region needs as much regionally coordinated rebuilding as the Tsunami hit areas need.

2. Show people where the Rock is. We see heart-moving scenes in the media. People running in panic in India because of false alarms, gripped with fear everywhere, grabbing their loved ones, no where to put their hope. And, in the next scene, we see women kneeling down in the church, crying out their hearts to their father. When everyone else is in despair and running to save themselves, only Christians know where to run to – the Rock of Salvation. The living God is the only Hope and the only Life. His love is stronger than the Tsunami. His waves of compassion are as high as the heavens. He even writhes in pain for his people. He intercedes with deep sighs and grief.

3. Explain the water. Firstly, God sends water as a judgment sign to wash away those things that are not built on the right foundation (Matt. 7, 24-28). Second-

ly, water is a sign of blessing for the nourishment of new plants to grow.

4. Seek His face. Let us, his people, make every effort to beg God to show us his face and not his back. There is still a lot to be done.

5. Scream out for our own deliverance. I believe the time has come for us Christians to ask God to sift us with his double-edged sword. Where we are in bondage to human systems, trapped in demonic cages, let us learn to scream out to Him for deliverance from the bondage of a dictating Self – asking God forever to cater to our ever-increasing “needs.” Let us realize with intensity and clarity that God Himself has needs and plans, too. Our place is to help Him fulfill his Supreme plans, not to make him part of our small human plans. Then we will learn to fit into His Story – even at the end of time.”

So far Mercy’s response to this.

A few interpretations

The 26th of December is a day, when people in many parts of the world feast, drink, and celebrate Christmas. It is also the day that in Roman Catholic cultures is remembered as “Stephen’s Day” – a day to remember the first Martyr of the Christian faith, Stephen (Acts 6). Today, Prof. David Barrett estimates an average of 166,000 Christian martyrs per year. Do the stones scream? Does God’s earth revolt? Interestingly, this day, the 26th of December, has a stunning history of catastrophes:

Year	Where	What	Number dead
1939	Erzincan, Turkey	Earthquake 7.8	20,00– 30,000
1993	Gyumri/Armenia	Plane crash Antonow An-26	35
1999	NW Europe	Storm Lothar	more than 100
2003	Bam, S. Iran	Earthquake 6.6	41,000
2004	Indian Ocean	Earthquake/Tsunami 8.9	ca. 275,000
2006	SW of Taiwan	Hengchun earthquake 7.1	2

The Natural as a mirror of the Supernatural

It is sound biblical teaching that the natural is a mirror of the supernatural. “The spiritual did not come first, but the natural – and *after that* the spiritual” (1 Cor. 15). A God who actively participates and even shapes the things of this world is definitely not only *informed* about current events, he has actively allowed them to happen. This can only mean one of two things: he either (passively) allows judgment, or he actively judges by means predicted in the New Testament as pre-end time announcements of impending judgment, like war, diseases, inflation, earthquakes (Matt. 24).

God is no Santa Claus

A need-driven church culture, infotainment-preaching, cheap grace, and self-propagating denomination building, have created a Church that is no longer a biblical Church. The seeds of humanism, individualism, the worship of our own opinions, and the works of our own hands have cut us off from God’s reality. Some have even come to see God as the ultimate universal servant – his duty is to provide everything from health and wealth, fun, business, parking lots and marriage partners (if we feel so, even more than one) - and he’d better do so on time, or else we switch churches. Libertarian do-as-you-

Christianity has not only dethroned the biblical God as King and Lord, it worships two new Gods: individualism and the so-called freedom to do as one wants.

If the Holy Spirit is no longer the driving force of the Church, Mammon is.

please Christianity has not only dethroned the biblical God as King and Lord, it worships two new Gods: individualism and the so-called freedom to do as one wants. By default, it installs personal wellness as the new judgment seat, and rejects any biblical standards, laws or statutes, violates every sound biblical discipling and building patterns. Of course, it protests loudly at even a hint of a present or future judgment of God as a threatening concept for little children. It is drunk with the image of materially successful and independent individuals, blessed endlessly by a purely loving God who is far removed from everyday life - a lovely, nice and cuddly grandfather, smoking his pipe in his rocking chair and benevolently giving gifts. I call this "Santa Claus Deism", the pagan concept that God, after creating the world is not anymore actively involved in the current world affairs. This caricature of God is not only a diabolic distortion of the true God, it serves to cradle billions of people in ignorance and sin. But this caricature won't carry people: it will burst open like a soap bubble - especially when a crisis comes. Such self-made sunshine theologies and American-dream-supporting church-systems will not be able to give any solid answers to the increasing questions our societies face: why all that pain, divorce, drugs, porno-addictions, pathological depressions, fits of rage and fear, ADD, suffering, unemployment, terrorism, demonism, and insecurity?

Any sober statistical glance at today's traditional Churchianity will show us that it is being shaken to the core, as, for example, John Noble documents in his excellent book *The Shaking*. But what of those who won't change, no matter how shaken they are? I personally believe for a number of reasons that remnants of traditional Churchianity will always remain. These remnants will have one of two choices: either they will enter even further into spiritual oblivion; exist in a laggard-minded, hyper-conservative and basically fearful bubble of religious self-preservation as long as the funds last. Or, traditional churches will join the rank of those streams that flow into an ocean of religious and self-centered ecumenism. There, people will eventually believe everything *as long as it is not written in the Bible*. There, God is reduced to a distant author of a set of interesting but not binding "world ethics," and because everything is so do-able, people make themselves hyper-busy in the sense of a churchy version of the UN. Since God seems dead, all work has do be done by humans. And so they fight poverty with the means of Mammon, become activists with endless political and liberal programs, all unknowingly geared to ultimately procure a religious red carpet for a false Messiah, the Anti-Christ. At least someone will have to welcome this person with shouts of Hallelujah and Glory...

What does this mean?

From what I understand, God is doing two things:

1) He is actively judging the church by allowing it to enter a Babylonian Captivity. In a recent book, *The Price of Money* (published 2005, in German), I document that if the Holy Spirit is no longer the driving force of the Church, Mammon is. And Mammon and Babylon have a very interesting relationship. Part of this captivity is the current obsession with hyper-activist, high adrenalin programs and methods and approaches, celebrated as saviors for a run-down system. This is why it was spot-on what a Korean pastor's final comment was,

after touring the US: *"It's amazing what you people can do without the Holy Spirit."* This all reminds vividly of the people of Israel under the rule of Pharaoh: in the past they built Pharaoh's structures with bricks, but now they also have to come up with the straw to make the bricks and work double-time. And a whole world is deprived of the Gospel of Jesus because of a non-apostolic church extraordinarily busy with itself and desperately running to get straw and bricks to let the show go on.

2) The other thing God does is that He gives all of us a fantastic, historic chance to build again, to renew our foundations, to rebuild the ancient ruins, to open clogged wells of the past, re-touch the age-old apostolic and prophetic foundations, and become part of probably the last harvest on this planet.

Rain and gold

This is the last story I'd like to share here. Having been involved in house church planting long before, I began, around the end of 1998, to share publicly about a necessary reformation of Church into multipliable, organic house churches with an apostolic focus to saturate people groups and regions. This took me into many countries and places where I felt somewhat like a postman delivering a parcel, and then returning home. The odd thing was, in the first 12 months of this, from 1999 to around the year 2000, almost every single time I – and others who had a similar message – would speak somewhere on the globe about this, there would be one of two strange things that happen, be it Atlanta/USA, Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia, Nürnberg/Germany, Wilderswil and Herisau/Switzerland, and other places. Either it would rain (or snow) right then and there in such a torrential downpour like people had not seen in a long, long time, or people would be covered suddenly in their faces, on their hair or hands with fine gold dust miraculously appearing on them while I watched. I found both of these manifestations rather strange, and actually frightening. I have my own feelings about people being crazy for all sorts of manifestations, and have peeped into quite a number of gaping mouths with new, miraculous gold teeth fillings, with various degrees of excitement. And to see some of this happen in my own meetings truly puzzled me. Once I was speaking in Herisau, Switzerland, and the worship leader of a church who had invited me came up and said: "This morning our little daughter came out of the bathroom, all covered up with gold dust. We were at first angry at her, asking her whether she had played with Mummie's paint box. 'No,' she cried, 'it just happened.' As we dusted her off – sap – it came back on her before our eyes. Gold dust all over her! Does this mean anything to you?" he asked me.

Then, it did not; but some time later in a meeting, as friends of mine reported on similar experiences during the same time, some prophetic people present pointed out to us what this meant. In many classic evangelistic strategies there is a huge loss of the harvest through inadequate follow up and not very fruitful attempts to assimilate new seekers into traditional churches, something that Alan Hirsch calls "outreach and in-drag." As we get the harvest vessels ready, multipliable house churches with the ability to catch the harvest and multiply with it, God will open the sky for his rain to fall in an entirely new dimension. This is similar to the story of the supernatural oil pouring into the vessels that Elisha asked the widow to prepare. The oil kept coming as long as the vessels were there. God would do the same with a spiritual harvest if we

A whole world is deprived of the Gospel of Jesus because of a non-apostolic church extraordinarily busy with itself and desperately running to get straw and bricks to let the show go on.

on earth can get the appropriate barns or vessels ready. God is not interested in continuing a spilling process that results in a dramatic attrition of the harvest with a retention rate of a mere 5%, although contemporary evangelists seem to feel comfortable with that level of success. Even among those converts in classical evangelistic rallies who remain in the church, more than 95% of them never become disciples of the Lord, because the very setup of the outreach, as well as the non-apostolic architectural design of the participating churches, makes no provision for discipleship.

And the gold? It is the color of the King, we were told. It simply means: This is the message of the King. If you are his subject, take heed. It takes precedence over anything else.

Now, as I write this book years later, I have the joy to observe that the downpour is just beginning. And we still have a glass of that gold dust in our cupboard, and once in a while I take it out, look at the dust in it and watch it sparkle.



PART III: THE PROBLEM

5 Unmasking the Problem

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Eph 3:14-21

PART III: THE PROBLEM

5 Unmasking the Problem

Even in an age abundant with prophetic answers that are shouted from the rooftops, we may first have to return to face our deepest *questions*. Without good questions, even the best answers could confuse or even disturb or annoy us. God himself is a master interviewer of man; he is an expert at asking questions. In fact, God's main way of dealing with mankind is to ask penetrating questions, from "Adam where are you?" to the final questioning before the Great White Throne, that probably begins with "where have you been?" And so, asking comes before answers, searching before finding.

Here a few of the most pressing questions that seem to be asked by followers of Christ around the globe:

*If we are so right, theologically, why have our countries gone so wrong?
Why has the Church in 2000 years not finished its job to disciple the nations?*

What is God up to today?

What are his ways – not only his works?

Where is the power of God evident today?

How can we fit into what he is doing?

How can we do what he is blessing?

What, exactly, is the Kingdom?

What is the church – and her role in this world?

And to what end, exactly?

Why is there a financial deadlock on anything to do with Missions?

I have been asking many of these questions for decades. And as much as I have wanted to find answers, to my surprise, many of the answers actually found me. So I can and will not really take any credit for them. I did not just stumble upon them: many came literally in the form of an inspiration, a revelation, not by means of information. Several times I found myself suddenly inside a prophetic story, or a prophetic person would speak to me. Most often, however, it was in those times alone with God, reading my Bible, that he so chose to open up a subject to me. And then I could not wait to write it down, thinking: "My goodness, I never saw this!"

Einstein once stated: "The same level of thinking that created the problem is incapable of solving it." John F. Kennedy said: "If we want to change reality, we have to begin by recognizing it." No one looking out the window, watching TV, reading the newspaper, running a country, a company, a church or just having kids can deny that the amount of problems "out there" seems to grow at a distressing rate. Financial, political, organizational, relational and ideological problems abound. Typically, we humans do one of five things when problems arise. Run from them; avoid them; ignore them; cover them, or solve them. A superficial glance tells us, that - obviously - solutions one through four are cheapest. And so it should not surprise us that the vast number of people chose

them. Path number five, however, is by far the most intelligent one. But how do we intelligently solve a problem?

Intelligent problem-solving strategies usually follow a routine of questions. 1) What's the problem? 2) What are the solutions? 3) In what ways can we implement these solutions? 4) And what resources are available to us? Just like a good medical doctor would first run a thorough diagnosis and an extensive check-up on us before he suggests a therapy and a cure, we need to do likewise, even if it hurts. As followers of Christ, we have at least two ways of analyzing available to us: we can look at the symptoms at face value, or we do a prophetic, *discerning* analysis. To test things according to face value is a familiar way to rate things, and we do it all the time. We look at key factors that can be measured and compared, computed and analyzed; then we connect the dots and, hopefully, come up with a comprehensive understanding. The key question is the same as most of us ask each other when we meet on the streets: how are you doing?

In our prophetic analysis we look at the problems in a sort of X-Ray way. We try not to see with our natural eyes – facts, figures, statistics – but with the “eyes of our heart,” looking at issues behind the obvious, the “scenes,” and the masks that we all can put on. We want to answer the question “how is your being,” that is, to what degree are our lives, families, churches, ministries, consistently aligned and dedicated to the values of the Kingdom. Essentially, how God would see things!

If we do not correctly analyze the problem, our solution will be, at best, to treat the symptoms, like a superficial paintjob over a ship that is only held together by rust. At worst, our very solutions will be part of the problem. All failing therapies begin with shallow diagnosis. And, nobody likes problems. Problems are not nice. But if we ignore them, they won't go away on their own, they only will become worse. Let us therefore take a deep breath and try to look at the root of the problem – so we can become part of a lasting solution. A little bit of detachment helps, otherwise our emotions can get in the way. So let us take a stroll to a mountaintop, take a look from a good distance and look down at how the church is faring so far, and how the prospects are for the immediate future. We will do that with a global perspective in mind, but it might be an interesting exercise for you to picture yourself here, your family, or the church or your current mission.

I group this analysis into three areas: personal, corporate and contextual problems. For the personal problems we, and no one else, are responsible. We face corporate problems because we are part of a community, an organization or any other entity that has, as a whole, run into problems we ourselves may or may not have not caused. Contextual problems arise because our environment or the time we find ourselves in, present certain challenges that has lead to problems, usually by failing to adapt to a new situation. We may not stand responsible for those kinds of problems at all, but if we understand the nature of the challenges, we may find it easier to overcome them.

Contextual problems

First, let us look at some contextual challenges that cause problems for the Church at the beginning of the 21st century. I have reasons to believe that we

If we do not correctly analyze the problem; our very solutions will be part of the problem.

have entered a time prophesied in the ancient book of Haggai: *Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens, indicating the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

In this first decade of the 21st century, we are crossing the threshold of an era of world history in which we will witness a shaking of everything that can possibly be shaken. Values, systems, patterns, currencies, loyalties, cities, icons, landmarks, rules, institutions, organizations - everything man-made already is, or definitely will be, shaken to the core, so much so that its marrow and bones will be seen, the wires will show, and its entrails will be exposed. Finally, under immense and unbearable pressure, when our human designs are forced to drop the curtain by which we have guarded our most secret secrets, the world will be able to gaze upon the inner workings, the core of the core of it all, and it will be in plain view: the engine, the heart that drives it all, quite literally, *the spirit of things*.

After this shaking, our human towers and concepts will either wither into oblivion, falter away and fall apart – or call out for reinforcement, backup, the cavalry, the necessary empowerment by a force beyond ourselves, without which nothing that is will sustain for long. No government, company, church, not even a family will be able to survive or even thrive in a hostile or even toxic environment of fierce competition, overpowering pressures, and a merciless race to the top, without doing the trip and ultimately walking up to a *plug point*, to a power source outside the visible world. The question is: what current will it be, AC or DC? By what, or, more precisely, by whom, will we be powered, when we realize that we *just cannot* sustain ourselves on our own?

Globalization is only a symptom, not the cause, of this high adrenaline era. After an age of revolutions of all kinds, the subsequent attempts at fierce democratization, the struggle for independence and even liberty, we have seen that man just cannot but either rule or be ruled. There is no such thing as a free man, as many sobering French are realizing now. After a wild era of liberty, *savoir vivre*, licentiousness, and being against being against, many are seeking rules to live by, looking for their own long-lost roots, and - can you believe it? - guidelines. Is there a rulebook out there, a manual of life? Globally, we are definitely witnessing the return of the Empires; America, the emerging China, and even imperialistic terrorist networks like Al Qaeda are all showing the unmistakable hallmarks of trans-national empires. This poses a crucial question: who are the emperors? Of what stuff are they made? And who crowns them?

All this has a much more simple reason than any Wall Street, Pentagon, or political analyst or journalist could fathom by looking at the surface of things. To put it bluntly and cut to the chase: *God has stood up*. He is getting ready for the last part. As God gets ready to revisit the planet, a final homecoming, he is putting his house in order so that it may finally achieve the very reason for which he created it in the first place. My prophetic friend Erich Reber of Switzerland calls this "The Return of the Holy". This has huge implications, politically, economically, and spiritually. It will fix a hefty price tag on every form of spiritual anarchy, once-celebrated independence, where we even run churches by

zeitgeist-driven rules that we invent as we go, and discard as we go on. There is no such thing as spiritual licentiousness. But where people ignored this, it led to the establishment of churches after the image and skillful imaginations of men, churches that at best are religious reflections of the culture that birthed them – lifestyle churches like ice cream, the flavor of the day. Many Christian leaders are so bogged down with running the shows that their feet have lost contact with earth. Some of them are realizing it, some not yet. Can you hear the voice of Paul, as he spoke these words at the Areopagus in Athens nearly 2000 years ago: “The divine is not an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:29, 30).

Having moved from Modernism through the transitional phase called Postmodernism into a time that I call the “Age of the Spirit,” followers of Jesus Christ find themselves in a strangely similar spiritual and political context as did the early church in Jerusalem or Antioch during *Pax Romana*. Permeating our world is now another thoroughly pagan, animistic worldview that has moved millions of people from rational to spiritual interpretations of life. This creates a huge opportunity for the Church to re-embrace its spiritual tools like prophecy, healing, deliverance or dream interpretation. But it creates a huge problem for a Church that is less spiritual than the world, and tries “to embrace yesterdays technologies tomorrow”, using, for example, the means of modernity to communicate to a post-postmodern world.

Politically, we experience the emergence of a military- and market-driven global empire. It is a near-global *Pax Americana* with a common language, English, and communication systems that connect people at the speed of the Internet. This has many advantages: imagine the apostles Paul and John with a mobile phone and an airport 30 minutes away, putting the latest decisions of a Jerusalem apostolic council on their website once Parmenas, the deacon, has finished typing up the notes on his laptop! Imagine the early church following the advances of all their early apostles by eagerly reading their blog spots, interceding for them, while the four unmarried daughters of Philip the Evangelist and Agabus the Prophet email them prophetic words as they go.

Such contextual changes are only a problem for a Church that is slow to respond to change, a church that is more traditional and conservative than its own context. But for a Church that is built on an eternal foundation and is therefore free not just to slavishly react to the context but to propose an age-old solution into everchanging situations, all of this represents huge opportunities. One of the fascinating aspects of all the turmoil the world experiences is that through this shaking, when the dust settles, a new breed of spiritual leadership is emerging on the planet. As our research indicates, this new breed will accomplish in an amazingly short period of time what generations have long desired to see – but who have almost given up hope. It is the completion of God’s ordained tasks for the human race on this planet. Just like in the Steven Spielberg film remake of Orson Welles’ “War of the Worlds” (2005) something has been, lying in the depths of the earth for ages, waiting to be awakened. However, it will not be to the destruction of man, but towards the very completion of the original reason that God had designed man. Foundational to this is the rediscovery, research, application, and finally the symbiosis of two

resources that the Bible calls prophetic and apostolic functions or ministries. We will look in detail into this later.

Personal problems: if you don't solve them, nobody will

Problem: We are not asking the right questions.

Most of our questions are about us, rather than about God. I call this the "He-questions" as opposed to the "Me-questions," as He is at the center of things, not I. I as a person, we as a family, need those answers more desperately than the answers of a lesser and much more individual nature: our personal search for reality, and all those me-questions (what's my mission, role, place, job, partner, etc.). After centuries of individualism, where specifically in the West the individual has been placed far above the community, many are starting not with the He-questions, but the Me-questions, and often will only find a way out of their own personal circus *if they stop starting with themselves*.

At this point in time, what would you say are your biggest questions?

Problem: Education beyond obedience.

Most of us have been simply educated far beyond our obedience. This opens up the danger of living in a theoretical world full of inconsequential truth, and we start to loose contact with a practical life that is down to earth. An accumulation of religious knowledge that does not translate into a changed life can become quickly a cumbersome burden; similar to an obese person that carries too much body weight. It has been well said: "A second on the lip, forever on the hip." The same is true for a generation of spiritual consumers and even spiritual gourmet diners that wished to sample from the truth of God without understanding that truth can never be possessed. It is not we who own the truth, but *the truth wants to own us*. Truth is a person – Jesus himself. This makes us an appendix to him, not him an appendix of us.

Problem: Our own visions.

There has been a time where I would say: I have a vision. But I now realize that this puts far too much emphasis on me. The reality today is that it is the other way around. A vision has me. But for this, I simply had to die to my own vision.

Former Egyptian medical doctor David Demian, who now has a prophetic ministry in and beyond Canada, once asked those representing churches, missions or projects to write down their vision statements. Some had printed versions of it; some went ahead and quickly wrote it down. Then Demian asked all in the meeting to lift these vision statements into the air and said: "With all those vision statements in existence, how will we ever be able to work together in unity under one King? We won't! Therefore, let's burn them all in the name of Jesus and start acting according to his vision."

You may already have a "vision," a plan or a concept. You may even have already committed to follow a method, to run a church or organization, or you are run by it, or plan on doing so. You or others around you may look at you as a visionary, someone with grand ideas. But God has probably much larger and far-reaching plans for you than you have for yourself. I contend that man's deepest problem has always been a crisis of vision. He has not seen it the way

After centuries of individualism, where specifically in the West the individual has been placed far above the community, many are starting not with the He-questions, but the Me-questions, and often will only find a way out of their own personal circus if they stop starting with themselves.

God sees it. Our vision is determined by how clearly – or foggily - we see the path that God has laid out for us once we close our eyes. “Where there is no vision, people perish,” is a well-quoted bible verse. However, vision does not mean a program or a recipe for action; the Hebrew word for vision (*chason*) is far more comprehensive. *Chason* means a continuous exchange of sight, eyes locked into each other ensuring a constant stream of information between two people, an ongoing dialogue between God and man, man literally being online with God.

One of the fiercest competitors of godly *chason* is that, as Paul says in 1 Cor 13:9, “we know in part;” meaning we confuse the small fraction we see for the big picture. If there is God, the last thing we need is another good idea of man, for this may lead us to become captives of our own small visions, highly individualistic and opinionated fragments of God’s objective reality. There is an ongoing activity before the throne of God; what if we took a snapshot out of what is continuously happening there, a mere frame out of an ongoing film, capture it, enlarge it and declare it to be “our vision?” We might gaze at a still picture, but we would miss the film. That is why we need to learn to bring our visions before God again and again and ask him to deal with them accordingly. Otherwise, we will be trapped in a vision from yesterday and are in great danger of giving our lives to something that was good, but not God.

Corporate problems

The biggest corporate entity that Christians are tied into is obviously the Church, as in Church-as-we-know-it. My German friends Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk have done a superb job in creating analytical tools for churches in their *Natural Church Development* process, at this point in history probably the most widely used tool for church diagnostics on the planet. However, even such tools may not show us the full picture, because it compares individual churches to a standard, an “ideal church,” a measuring rod that may not be as accurate as we think. As you already know or will see as you read on, CAGWI – church-as God-wants-it – is an entirely different animal from CAWKI – and we might create a few good feelings among church boards by comparing a not-so-good traditional church with a fine-tuned, award-winning-for-best-practices traditional church, when the problem may very well be that the entire traditional church system altogether is the problem, and we might find ourselves comparing apples and oranges.

A look at Evangelicalism today

Let us have a discerning look at what has been termed Evangelicals. We will *not* be looking at traditional religious institutions or Churches/Denominations that, as a whole, either have left biblical grounds a long time ago, or never had it in the first place. Among the latter, for example, are the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, or pseudo-Christian cults, like the Mormons or the Jehovah Witnesses or some African Inland Churches. Among the former, those that once had a strong biblical foundation but since have generally moved away from it are a variety of Lutheran and Reformed Churches, as well as a number of Methodist or Anglican Churches. In all of these groups we will definitely find Evangelical believers and sometimes, biblical teaching or even evangelistic preaching, but church policy as a whole has long ceased to

be shaped by biblical convictions. Exceptions of individual congregations or the few renewal movements within those streams rather emphasize the rule. In some of these traditional churches we will continue to see new life, and some will even surprise us at wanting to plug in and transition into the current reformation.

What we are looking at in this brief analysis are those *Evangelical* churches, denominations, and mission agencies that theoretically confess to the authority of the Bible, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and the necessity of a personal conversion in order to be born again – churches that at least strive towards a biblical set-up of their structures and policies. Among those will be the typical Free churches, Evangelical denominations, Charismatics and Pentecostals of all kinds, Evangelical independent churches, and a host of networks, movements, conferences, and apostolic or neoapostolic networks comprising roughly 650 million Evangelical people on the planet. The Evangelical movement as a whole has seen a lot of growth since the beginning of the 20th century, however, almost all of it outside the Western world. At the beginning of the 21st century, that growth rate in the non-West has significantly cooled off and has slowed down to a crawl. Inside the West, traditional Evangelicalism is, at best, a stagnating movement, in reality essentially fighting for survival. It is this 650 million strong block of Evangelicals that we will look at, since it represents, at this point in history, the largest organized concentration of born again, Bible believing Christians.

Problem: Fuelled by tradition, trapped by tradition.

There is an extraordinary host of treasures and brilliant things that the church of the last 2000 years has left for us, fascinating insights by godly thinkers, a legacy of martyrs, wonderful breakthroughs here and there, that all of us should value and treasure. There is a legacy of God in the old churches, and, as Jesus said, let us not mix new wine into old wineskins, because otherwise the new wine, and the old wine – which is good! - shall be spilled. But even if old wine is good, that does not require us to fall down and worship old wineskins. We should take traditional structures for what they really are: means and ways that our forefathers designed or inherited from their ancestors in order to worship and serve God, given their own level of revelation in their particular time in history. They tried to be obedient to God and the set of rules available to them the best way they could, and we should honor them for it. But that does not mean that we are bound by their boundaries, tied by their traditions, and destined to remain trapped in systems designed in another time, for another world. Neither should we attempt to win the world of tomorrow with the means of yesteryear, with one or two hands tied behind our back by ropes called the “traditions of the elders” where human laws have precedence over God’s laws. No free man would do that unless he is bound.

The Ephesians 4:11 maturity test

Any therapy is as good as the diagnosis. And just like a doctor who looks for vital signs like heartbeat, blood pressure, or cholesterol levels in his patients blood, let’s look at **six vital factors** that correspond to six ministries we find that God gave us in the New Testament “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ might be build up, until we all reach unity

in the faith and in knowing the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13). Paul recommends to the Corinthians: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Is Christ in you – or do you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5). As there are six ministries- apostolic, prophetic, teaching, pastoral, evangelistic and diaconal/ administrative ministries – that are given by God to affect the wider body of Christ (some might want to include elders into this list as well), how have these ministries done in effectively preparing, building up, and maturing Christians, so that they will reach their two main original destinations – to be conformed into the image of Christ and to make disciples of all nations? If, on a scale of 1 to 100 maturity, the "full measure of Christ", would be 100, and complete immaturity would represent the value of 0, to what degree would an average Evangelical church or mission reflect apostolic maturity, prophetic maturity and so on? If we think of a traditional church with 100 active members, how many out of 100 would reflect a healthy and mature evangelistic or teaching ministry in their lives?

Knowing that there is more to each of them, I have selected three defining, vital aspects of each of these six ministries:

Ministry	defining hallmarks
apostolic	a) multipliable foundations and architecture, b) unity in purpose, c) completion of mission
prophetic	a) providing intelligence, b) personal and corporate vision, c) empowerment
teaching	a) able to understand, b) explain and c) defend the Christian faith
evangelistic	a) depth of conversion, b) retention rate, c) quality of discipling
pastoral	a) member care, b) eliminating hurt and trauma, c) team building
diaconal	a) needs taken care of, b) distribution of wealth, c) administration lifted off the other ministries

If we agree to this way of thinking, to what degree is today's Evangelical church a mature reflection of the apostolic ministry? If a key aspect of apostolic ministry is about laying mission-based foundations and designing missional structures for churches and ministries, and doing so in a way that can be multiplied in their absence, how many out of 100 traditional churches truly reflect that? The passion of healthy apostolic ministries for the oneness of the Church will always work strongly towards the unity of the Body of Christ in any given city, region or nation. How is "Oneness" lived and experienced, locally? And, did the church in general achieve its apostolic mission to make disciples of all nations? What would be, in your mind, an accurate rating of the Church in your area?

How is the prophetic aspect developed in the church? Is the prophetic ministry generally accepted and fervently practiced in terms of a spiritual intelligence for the church? And is the church a prophetic voice to the world, to those outside itself? And what percentage of the church members actually do

prophecy, and to what degree is prophecy a trusted resource for church members' personal and corporate envisioning? Is the prophetic ministry in place to empower people, helping them find purpose and enter into their God-given potential, interpreting their dreams and helping them to find answers in their pilgrimages? What would be your assessment?

To what degree is the Church in your region a mature reflection of the teaching ministry? To what extent are members able to comprehend biblical truth, have an "educated faith" rather than mindlessly repeating what others told them to recite? How many out of a church of 100 can explain Christianity well to others and "give reasons for the hope that is within them?" And how many can seriously defend the Christian faith in apologetic terms to those opposed to it?

What about evangelism? How would you see the average depth of conversion? How many come to Christ not to see their problems solved, but their sins forgiven? How many have truly experienced a change of ownership and are now completely sold, clearly the property of Jesus Christ? How many of those who profess Christ through evangelistic activities will still be found 6 months later as vibrant members of a church? And how many have found a spiritual mentor who engages the new convert in discipling, and how many members of the church actively do provide that discipling ministry?

Let us look at the pastoral dimension. To what degree do church members feel that their spiritual and emotional needs are met? What about the elimination of hurt and trauma - how many were able to find peace of mind, forgiveness, inner healing and deliverance from their hurts, traumas and demons of the past? How many are able to counsel and minister to others in that area? What about team building: to what degree is the pastoral ministry active in connecting people and participate in building ministry teams? Or is it more the bitter truth that almost everyone is doing "his thing"?

Finally the diaconal perspective. How many people have found that after joining the church, their material needs have been taken care of through the generous sharing of possessions and communal living among church members? What about the distribution of wealth - to what degree have Christians who have more than they need shared their material possessions with the Christian and then the non-Christian poor and needy in their area? How many involved in the five earlier mentioned ministries have experienced that their natural administrative burdens have been lifted off their shoulders by administratively-gifted/deaconal persons?

Problem: we fail the maturity test.

I do not know of a scientific study that has been done in this area yet. And without good research, our analysis will always be highly colored by our own perspectives and limits. However, after I penciled down my own numbers for the church situation in areas I am well familiar with as honestly and well-meaning as I could, I simply felt devastated. In almost no area was the mature reflection and fruit of any of the six ministries anywhere near a 10 out of 100.

In schools, less than 60 out of 100 is a fail. How would we describe 10 out of 100?

If the glancing analysis above were only vaguely correct and close to the truth, what would a doctor recommend? If you go to school and bring home grades that, in each and every subject, are far below the “fail” level, what would your teachers tell you? More and more Christian leaders are speaking out on this, laying their cards on the table and saying: **we are not really ready and prepared to face the issues of the 21st Century – neither economically, politically, culturally (post modernity), nor spiritually.** One symptom of this is **burgeoning burnout-rates and sabbaticals.** We also live in a time of the greatest upheaval of Christendom. Constantine Christianity is divided like never before into 39,000 denominations, and, in the West, shrinks in spite of (because of?) its hectic activity.

There are a number of dramatic consequences and follow-up problems due to a lack of maturity. Here are some of them.

Problem: Identity crisis.

Vast proportions of the Body of Christ have an **identity crisis.** For many years I asked as many Christian leaders as I could the question: to what degree do you know your calling, your purpose, your special mission assigned by God? Only about 10-15% of all full-time Christian workers (pastors, missionaries, etc.) could accurately state what ministry role God has given them in terms of the well known six ministries mentioned above. **A full 85-90% cannot answer that question,** or they answer that they are just doing a job within a Christian group/church/mission, or pretend not to understand the question at all. If we take that question to the pews and ask ordinary church members of Evangelical congregations across the globe, my guess is only about 2% will be able to state with some confidence that they know which role they play in the church, that they have found a place of ministry corresponding with their spiritual gifting, and that they know what their ministry will be. This corresponds with the (benevolent?) statement that 90% of all Christian men in the US will not reach the finishing line, according to Bob Buford, author of the book *Finishing Well.*

Problem: God yes, church no.

Many Non-Christians in the West have been saying God yes, Church no for decades. Now, many Christians are joining them. Prof. David Barrett and Todd M. Johnson estimated back in 2001 that Christians **without a traditional local church,** number about 111 million. Today's 20,000 “neo-apostolic movements” count for about 394 million Christians, who, as Barrett estimates, will be 581 million in AD 2025 – 120 million more than all Protestant movements together. Around 10% of all Christians living in the West, says Australian Alan Hirsch, have already concluded: God yes, Church no; and are currently embarking onto a spiritual journey, completely reconfiguring their faith. This number might actually be much higher. Researchers like George Barna or Peter Brierly have observed that more than 30% (US) of all Bible-believing Evangelicals do not any longer consider a traditional church to be their spiritual home, while the number in the UK may have gone well beyond 50%.

Problem: We don't grow up.

If the number of people reaching maturity is a sign of a fruitful Christian ministry, and the number of milk devouring, denominationally minded, baby Christians who Paul spoke of in his letter to the Corinthians is rising, then **immaturity has become the hallmark** of the Christian enterprise. Sascha Lehnartz, author of *Global Players, Why we don't grow up anymore* (in German only), analyzes the Western and Japanese phenomenon of **kidults**: eternal teenagers who refuse to grow up and move out into adulthood. Soon, according to statistics, we will live to become 104 years old, but will remain frozen with a mindset of a 24 year old, forever trying to remain young, cool, and playful. We will be XXXL-sized babies watching Teletubbies, listening forever to the sound of the 60s (70s, 80s...), reading Harry Potter and playing videogames.

Let us look a bit more into this, as the significance for the Church is huge. In 1960, 77% of all 30-year-old women and 65% of all men of the same age were "adults," meaning they had left their parent's home, finished their education, were financially independent, started a family and had kids. In the year 2000, the numbers dropped to 46% of all women and 31% of all men (aged 30 and below). More adults between age 18 and 49 now watch **Cartoon Network** rather than CNN (and even CNN carries mostly "infotainment," a mix between news-information and entertainment). Mainly three things, American pop culture, globalization and post-modernity, says Lehnartz, have released a global retro-virus, colonizing our imaginations and framing icons for a future that basically condemns all of those infected with this virus to eternal youth.

Elvis Presley died in 1977 at age 42 from an overdose of drugs, still being a grown-up kid in his oversized playground called **Graceland**. Almost his entire house consisted of playrooms and toys. As more and more kids who should be adults by now and have kids themselves refuse to move out of **Hotel Mom**, remain financed by Dad, forever studying and waiting for something to happen that probably will never happen, many parents are getting nervous. Why otherwise would a book like the one by Richard Melheim with the telling title: **101 Ways to Get Your Adult Children to Move Out (And Make Them Think It Was Their Idea)** become a national bestseller in the US?

In Christian terms: fewer and fewer Christians want to leave the safety of their homes and secular jobs to face an increasingly tough world and the mature adventure of trusting God. Increasingly confused, anxious and insecure they look for "Mom and Dad," for a pastor and a nice little church to take care of them; a place, where they can be – and remain – **children**. Many treat Christianity as one big videogame, a place where they can cuddle in warm and cozy Christian churches, entertained by their programs, complete with the dubious excitement of a Christian pop chart, safe in a religious bubble, as if Christianity is a Neverland Ranch for Christians. However, maturity has something to do with being thrown out of the nest, like every healthy bird family still practices today. As pastoral, evangelistic, and teaching ministries focus mainly on the **gathering** aspect of the church, prophetic and apostolic ministries focus more on the **scattering** aspects. Their historical absence has a direct link to the growing immaturity among Christians. Their resurfacing in today's reformation, however, is one of the greatest signs of hope for a new maturity that is desperately needed for the challenges of tomorrow.

Problem: Traditional Evangelism does not work.

It has been known for many decades that the retention rate (those that stay on after being “won to Christ”) of traditional Evangelism (rallies; media; hand-outs) is below 5%. Recent studies actually speak more of only 1-2% of new converts who will be able to find their place within a church after they have raised their hands in an evangelistic event. This would be an extremely sobering statistic for anyone in business – 2% customer satisfaction is a sure recipe for quick bankruptcy. Millions of people walk the earth today, often enough cynically refusing to engage in any conversation about God, because they are the dropouts of superficial evangelistic efforts of the church in the past. It reminds us of the biblical vision how “the dead bodies of men shall lie like cut grain behind the reaper with no one to gather them” (Jer. 9:22). The vast majority of all evangelistic messages is consumer-friendly, packaged and geared towards quick decisions, often appealing to personal problems and needs rather than the state of lostness and the need to be saved, healed, and delivered by Jesus Christ out of a pitiful, lowly, selfish, aimless, and sub-standard form of a godless existence.

Problem: We teach ourselves to death.

Anyone observing the educational scene knows that business in the “knowledge sector” is booming. Traditional schools and colleges do not seem to satisfy at all. People today learn more than ever – and seem to know less than before, and feel ever worse prepared to handle life. Christianity, sadly, is no exception. We witness an amazing array of seminars, workshops, courses and conferences, an explosion of books and materials, media-based curricula, and distant learning concepts and even revivals of the good-old Sunday school. But to what avail? Christians are more confused than ever, side-tracked by multiple options on just about everything, while learning has become almost completely disconnected from life and personal obedience, as we witness the biblical truth that people are “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth” (2Tim. 3:7). The time seems to have come for a reformation of learning, and, if any do, the disciples of Jesus would have the tools for that. We will look at this later.

Problem: Failing stewardship.

A few sobering facts reveal how widely the deaconal aspects of today’s churches miss the New Testament mark. According to David Barrett’s studies, about 250 of the 300 largest, international Christian organizations repeatedly report incorrect or falsified numbers about their development, and therefore lie to the public. Encouraged through lax controls, church treasurers embezzle \$16 billion of church money every year. Only 5% of all cases are found out. Every year, more church-money is being embezzled than spent for the entire global missions operation. Christians are spending more money on their annual tax returns (\$ 810 million) than for all their staff in the non-Christian world. The current average cost for Christian evangelism and missions is \$330,000 for every newly baptized person. Every year 600,000 fulltime Christian workers reach pension age. 150,000 of them will find out that their employers have made no provisions whatsoever for their old age. While most money of Evangelical churches today goes to budget items like the church building fund, salaries,

and programs for Christians – things the New Testament does not know of – only a shamefully small fraction, less than 2% of the Evangelical money spent globally, goes to missions and the poor. This is not only wrong, it makes the church fail any test on the financial and administrative account, especially in the eyes of the world to whom it should be a beacon of light. As the administrative/deaconal ministry was originally set up distinctly connected with the apostolic (Acts 6), this link has been historically severed. As a result, we watch the apostolic trying to work without the deaconal ministry – and be overwhelmed by administrative tasks in the process - and the deaconal work cut loose without an apostolic focus anymore – thus becoming merely a need-driven, humanitarian social service operation.

What is your personal view?

If this analysis is anywhere near the truth, how do you rate the situation of the mainline Evangelical streams in your country, area or town, personally? How about your own church setup? Watch out for traps that cloud your assessment. A typical trap is that we compare our situation “to the worst church in town,” to groups that are considered off the wall, in other words, to a yardstick, a standard, that makes us look good and feel good. The only helpful plumb line and measuring rod is the word of God, not the organized and institutionalized sins of other sinners. Change typically happens only in a crisis if there is a personal and corporate conviction that there is an alternative.

The personal level: - our own gut feeling - is important for our own motivation. If things like the above do not hit you between the eyes, and you find it easy to explain them away, ***you won't change***. And on the organizational, corporate level: if the board of directors, your presbytery, your presidents and CEOs do not fall on their knees and cry out for mercy and forgiveness, let's face it - things will remain the same. Furthermore, the situation will become worse, because from this point on, not only are things not going well, but also now we know it and won't change. This means we are living in denial. Denial could also be called hypocrisy – one of the worst sins that Jesus spoke against, a life lived against the principles of God in full knowledge of the truth. Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing today that you did yesterday and expecting different results. To keep doing what we know does not work demonstrates irresponsible thinking. If a leader does that because he is bribed, bought, or has completely resigned, he is no longer a true leader.

How personal opinion, subjective thinking, and preferences, color our thinking and the advice that we give, can be seen from an example that my Dutch friend Marc van der Woude told once about a recent experience he had. Marc was invited to speak to the leadership team of a Christian organization in Holland that was looking to the future and wanted to get a better view of what God is doing in the Netherlands. He reports: “So they invited three people: a church growth specialist, the director of the Evangelical Alliance, and me. I kicked it off by stating that the Church in the Netherlands is in an existential crisis of the Laodicea-type, and that the only way out is a revival of the heart, a renewal of the mind and a reformation of structure, that will lead us back to a Jesus-centered, disciple-making movement that impacts society. So I challenged the organization to train Christians in the basics of hearing God's voice,

Change typically happens only in a crisis if there is a personal and corporate conviction that there is an alternative.

healing and deliverance, Christ-like character, discipling people, and starting a movement of small groups.

After me came the church growth specialist. He immediately stated there was possibly no bigger contrast imaginable between his perspective and mine. He gave some examples of renewal in traditional churches (a bit more Evangelicalism, a bit more of the Holy Spirit) and basically said that the church was doing alright and was certainly not in need of drastic measures.

The Alliance leader came up and gave some inspiring examples of Christians who take the lead in relevant debates in society, and that the best form of church was a combination of small groups and bigger celebrations led by clergy for worship, communion, and baptism – which in my view goes against the understanding of the priesthood of all believers.

You can imagine we had a great morning. But I found it hard to believe that two people who by the nature of their role in the Evangelical movement should be visionaries were so traditionalistic and un-missional in their views. I left the meeting with an even stronger conviction that it's really time to push for reformation, and see the church become a movement again, and not hold back."

What happens if nothing happens?

I was once invited for a workshop on house churches, as a part of a larger traditional church-planting congress in a Western nation. Speaker after speaker came to the platform to explain why church-as-we-know-it in that country does not work anymore; God yes, church no; the youth; postmodernism; facts, statistics, testimonies, the whole thing. All of this screamed: *so change!* But at the end of the conference, people were encouraged to go home and go on, unwilling or unable to consider serious alternatives. A friend of mine summarized it like this: People are so dependent, almost drunk with their safe religious world, so that their only response is, when confronted with facts and figures as to why their system does not work: *Do not confuse me with the facts!* Rather remain an ostrich with your head in the sand than wake up and face reality.

In other words: subjective thinking, a safe place in the religious establishment and one-sided personal preferences of individuals are leading to entirely different conclusions, and an amazing ability to hide from the truth. It almost sounds to me like people are saying: All right, we are on the wrong boat, but our kitchen is excellent. Yes, we are going to the wrong destination, but our captain is a first class counselor, full of wisdom. Our ship, OK, is actually sinking, but don't we have a beautiful flag?

And could it be that prominent leaders in the church actually become false prophets when they simply keep on saying: "All is well in Zion" – and it is not? If they keep on saying what people want to hear – rather than what God has to say, whom do they please? If this is you, what should you do? And if others keep on doing that, what will God do with them? *What should we do with them?*

Prophetic analysis

All facts, figures, and newspapers aside: if we take seriously any, or even the entire list, of the prophetic words, pictures and warnings mentioned before, what is the sum total of the verdict? Everything is OK, so let's get on with business as usual? Slight corrections may be necessary, but the general direction is

Do not confuse me with the facts! Rather remain an ostrich with your head in the sand than wake up and face reality.

in order? Or do they sound to you more like a shot in front of a ship's bow, forcing it to heave to?"The judgement – meaning the re-adjusting- always starts at the house of God", writes Geri Keller, a senior Christian leader in Switzerland. "Just like it was with Lazarus, our God must be untangled from the strips of linen and cloths of our traditional understanding." Geri goes on to say: "Until recently, it has always been the church that was central to all of our thinking. But all those fights to be recognized as the one true church is water under the bridge. It is the Kingdom that Jesus brought into this world that must be central to our faith. More important than any love or loyalty for the church, recapturing this vision for the Kingdom must be our central task."

Not a single prophetic word indicates that all is well in Zion, that the church should and will just go on like before. Let us sum up the analysis and statements from God implied in the prophetic pictures and stories in chapters 3 and 4 brief:

- Enormous change will come to the church, compared to a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Those who therefore warn of change and advocate the prolongation of the Status Quo are, quite simply, false prophets who the Lord has not sent.
- We have stolen the church from God, and he wants it back from us thieves.
- If the church continues its course, it will be shipwrecked and lost; however, the people will be safe, but not the structure.
- God wants a veil-less church without pulpits and clergy-laity distinctions. A pastor, no matter how godly he conducts himself, actually stands more in the way of this than he is of help, because he has become a symbol of that very discrepancy.
- A revival of the heart, a restoration of heart foundations, a "baptism of fire," is necessary for the purification of our dirty and sleepy hearts. Unholy people cannot build the Kingdom of a holy God. Therefore "sanctify yourself, because tomorrow God will do wonders."
- The future of the church will be given to passionate nobodies. So stop trying to be *somebody*, or you will be bypassed. If you have the choice between two apostolic streams - the prominent one with many "big-name" people or the stream of "unknowns," choose the latter.
- A church in travail over its very own Ben-Jamins is normal and to be expected; however, let the father name the child, not the mother.
- Like Esther-of-India, the two-headedness of the church must end, and the song restored to a spotless bride.
- Like the River Aare, God will cause the Holy Spirit specifically to break out of all man-made spiritual riverbeds, flood the land, and alter the landscape altogether. No one is supposed to be hurt by this, except those who both cannot let go of their preconceived ideas about revival and those who are being carried under by their own "sandbags" – measures they introduce in order to control the flow of God's spirit.
- Much of Christianity behaves like it is in a self-made war, an unorganized, colorful spiritual militia that God is going to stop because it leads nowhere. He is initiating a back-to-square-one movement; running anyone who is ready to repent through a spiritual boot camp and placing him exactly in

the spot in God's army where God had planned for him to be.

- God is announcing a final probationary time for "the trees," each one getting a personalized warning at their doorsteps, laying the axe at the root and asking them to please bring forth fruit. If they do not, most will be cut down by God himself, meaning that God, not men, will pull the plug on them in a sort of spiritual euthanasia. This will clear the way for a new bottom-up movement that will cover the land. Some trees will remain standing – some as a monument, some others in order to contain the harvest of yesterday.
- If people still do not listen to God's prophetic words, he will, like a good father who gets through to his stubborn child, resort to even stronger messages that no one can overlook: tsunamis, earthquakes, wars, famine, and plagues.
- Manifestations of oil and gold: where people are moving into the correct direction of the king's will, God will encourage them with signs following.

Now it is one thing to receive a prophetic word; it is another thing to obey it. "Although the Lord sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen" (2 Chron. 24:19). The Bible is very clear: "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). What if we do not hear or change?

Probably one of the most quoted prophetic chapters in the Bible in regards to the current situation of the Church in general is Haggai 1. The book of Haggai is about a necessary reformation that religious folks contest. I have taken the liberty to recast this chapter in today's setting, and it goes like this:

God can wait – but how long?

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built.'" They say: first we have to finish our plan, our project, our building site, reach our goal, build our church, finish paying the mortgage for our church building. Our, our, our. And soon we will have another anniversary. You surely do understand, Lord, that we first have to finish celebrating ourselves. And we have way to go. We do like our church buildings paneled, fitted with the latest equipment, no expenses spared. After all, it's the Lord's house we build, wireless microphones, glass pulpits, vaulted, beamed ceilings and all, just like the fancy platforms we see on TV.

God? He can wait. Is this so hard to understand? The Lord's house has to remain in ruins. That is how it is. Has always been. Our thing simply has precedence.

Well, says the Lord Almighty, have a look at your statistics. You preach without end, create endless programs, train and educate yourselves beyond obedience, but to what end? You evangelize, but you are not a true evangelist, which in turn is necessary to truly evangelize. Hardly anyone out there wants to join another "God squad." Some enter the front door, but most leave quietly through your back door. Disappointed. Are you seeing this? Does this not strike you as odd? You rush from conference to workshops, consume sermons and endless meetings – a new concept, a new magazine, a new strategy – and yet you remain as immature as ever! You are running in place, and some are actually moving backwards. Your pastors and teachers burn out, your finances

dry up, your old members die faster than you can gain young ones, the enemy eats your children, and your program machine eats you.

I have heard your excuses. You say: "That's normal. Everyone does it. Zeitgeist and all, it's usual, and we are actually doing quite well, compared with, you know! And we don't know any better. You see, people are kind of hard to please nowadays, if we don't give them a good show, they will simply go next door; and take their offerings with them."

You actually dare to say you are really building the Lord's house, because you mistakenly assume that **your** ministry, **your** church, **your** organization truly is the Lord's house? You have the audacity to proclaim that you and your group are the center of God's will, his very own handiwork, so that you can passionately and with religious fervor pray your fleshly prayer: 'Oh God, please bless me!'

No. You are wrong. Stagnation and burnout are not normal. Running in circles is not progress; it is a symptom of my people in the desert. It is the result of my absence. No, a thousand times no: **my house is not your house**. What started as my church is marred and mutated beyond recognition! You err greatly. I have only one Body, not tens of thousands of splinter groups, an army blown to pieces, fighting within itself and holding its ridiculous logos and emblems on their banners into the air. No, I don't want your denominations; they were never my idea. I want a bride without spots and wrinkles. When will you join me in wanting the same? How long do I still have to wait?

When will you understand how serious your situation really is? You constantly expect revival, but those hot words and expectations have become straw in your mouth. And hope deferred makes your hearts sick. And why all that? Because you simply do not build my church, but yours. You do not expand my Kingdom, but your little empires. You have booked yourselves out so much that my agendas simply do not fit into your calendars anymore. You are suffering your own self-made stress and pressures through engaging in things I have never ordered.

And the worst is that on this hamster's wheel, the religious rut in which you have chosen to run, you cannot hear me anymore. And so you behave as if I am present in your meetings, but I am not. You sing and play and dance, completely surrounded with Christian posters, phrases, pictures on the wall and Christian toys you call merchandise, living in a religious bubble, the mere illusion of a life in my presence. Do you realize how truly quiet your quiet times have become?

But you go on and on, rally half the planet if you happen to invent yet another method or concept, actually advertising yourself as brilliant innovators, so that your Christian rating and your sales moves up. You want to prove yourself, implement your ideas. What about my ideas? Am I the Lord, or not? You declare easily: "In the name of Jesus!" but when have you sought my face, when have you sought my counsel, and have been commissioned and mandated to truly speak on my behalf?

And when I speak out, you say: "Sorry, what did you say? Did I hear something? Hello? Is someone out there?" because my voice is drowned in your noisy programs. And if you happen to pick up some of what I say, you incredulously look up from your hectic schedule, as if I disturb you, and tell me:

"Excuse me? Did you mean to say we should lay our churches and minis-

Stagnation and burnout are not normal. Running in circles is not progress; it is a symptom of my people in the desert. It is the result of my absence.

tries on the altar and die, so that we, collectively, live for God?

Excuse me? Did you mean to say we should actually start to be one body in our city and region and start acting as one?

Excuse me? Did you mean to say we should leave our denominationalism behind and move ahead as one body?

Excuse me? Did you mean to say we should be one, so that the world shall believe?

Excuse me? Did you mean to say we should actually hear your voice – and do what you say?

You can't be serious. Never. Without me. Too complex. Maybe in ten years," you say.

Do you want me to wait until your human plans have finally expired? Until even more members have left your churches, and the young have turned away, bitter, because you wanted them to become a number in your programs? Do you seriously think I'll wait until your ideas run out, and, more important to you, your money? You preach about the cost of discipleship. But do you not see the horrendous cost of a life in disobedience, a gigantic debt of which you cannot even pay back the interest? Why do you call me Lord, Lord! and simply and stubbornly do not do what I say? I can hear the "Lord! Lord!" slogan of the oil-less virgins already today. You know that faith without works is dead. Whoever does not do my words, builds on sand. Why do you want to build on sand, like a child? Is there no self-respect and integrity left in you?

Moses and his successors are still wringing their hands in my presence, while my people are unperturbed in celebrating their festivals down in the valley, dancing around their golden calves. No, my people absolutely do not want what I want. They want peace, they want their religious needs met, hear weekly lullaby sermons to soothe their souls, read novels, dance, eat, buy, sell, and a religious system that buries the dead and takes care of the kids, while the parents dedicate themselves to what really counts: make money and pay down the mortgage. Sometimes, my people want some excitement, but not too much, they say, not too much, please. Something must happen – but nothing should change. The good times must go on, no one should disturb the system, upset the boat, rattle the cage – so that everyone can go on sinning as usual, as if that were part of your human rights Charta.

Do you not realize that it is I who has closed the heavens? And all you can think of is call a prayer meeting to pray against the devil, because not in your wildest dreams you would imagine that **you are the problem**, not the devil? When have you humbled yourselves under my strong hand? Yes, you have become my fans; been there, done that, bought the tape and the shirt. But you know what? I don't want fans. I want disciples.

Can absolutely nothing upset you and get you out of your rut? If my word is not enough, how come you do not hear my prophets? Or my earthquakes, wars, catastrophes? How can you sit and watch what is happening in Israel – and just carry on business as usual?

You sing, "come among us, oh Lord!" and yes, again and again that is what I try to do. I come for a brief visit, but then I am compelled to leave right away, driven away by your disunity, your screaming self-righteousness, your double standards, your secret sins, your egotism, your addiction to self realization, and your unclean heart. And I would so much love to dwell among my people.

**Something must happen
– but nothing should
change.**

When will I finally be able to do that?

And therefore I have news for you. I have heard your excuses long enough about why you just cannot get around to building my house. I declare to you that I have now stood up and will enter the scene. You will be surprised. I will no longer be forever deterred by the disobedience of my people. The time for my homecoming has come. I will wait no longer. And you should also stop waiting for the impossible to happen. You have hoped that I, the Lord, will become a member of your church, your ministry. It won't happen. In fact, it will happen the other way around: you will have to join me now. Stop praying that I should forever bless what you do. Rather, start doing what I bless. Do in obedience what I tell you. My time has come. Now or never. With you, or without you. And there are many who have become pregnant with my plans, those ready to obey. Many of them are newcomers. Did I not say that the last shall be the first? So do not be surprised about what is being born these days.

Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin

Babylonian King Belshazzar once used goblets from God's temple for an orgy, praising his own idols and breaking out toasts with the very vessels of God. In the midst of this Belshazzar went on to praise the prophet, clothed him in purple, put a gold chain on him and declared him the third man in his kingdom – but changed nothing. The end result: that very night Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over his kingdom. In other words: accurate prophetic words are not Spam-Emails from someone we can afford to ignore for too long. They are messages from the King of Kings who has the power to judge. And if we do not follow his words, we have to pay a steep price, a bill bigger than we can afford. We have to remind ourselves in a time when many Christians celebrate themselves, their concepts, partying in their self-made temples, and toasting to the greatness of their own religion and any anniversary we can think of, in the name of Jesus, that this very Jesus may see our situation far differently than ourselves and, yes, may appear, but mainly to kill the party.

A traditional way to deal with unwanted prophecies is to kill the prophet. There is no shortage of verses in the Bible about this ugly habit. God once charged Jeremiah to "stand in the courtyard of the Lord's house and speak to all the people... perhaps they will listen and turn from their evil ways." "But the priest, the (other, false, agreeable) prophets seized him and said: You must die!" (Jer. 26.) Jesus spoke about the same issue when he said: "God will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute." (Luke 11:48). If we translate all of this from the more harmless problem-language into the not so harmless sin-language, how would we have to call it what the bulk of the Evangelical Church globally is deeply involved in? It would definitely include idolatry, individualism and materialism.

Idolatry is breaking the first commandment, the worship of things that set themselves up before God, in order to give us identity, security and destiny. This goes hand in hand with the passionate worship of what our hands have made (Jer. 1:16). Studies like Frank Violas book *Pagan Christianity* indicate that 90% of what Evangelical Christians love to do when they come together is literally imported, Christianized paganism. These idols can be people, gurus, experiences, but most of all our self-made liturgies and religious routines, sanc-

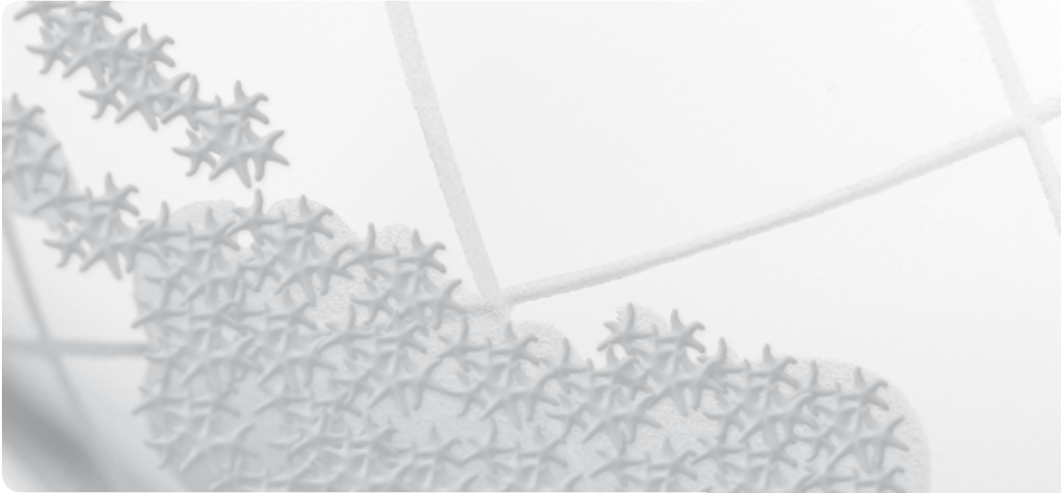
tifying our own deals with God. In such a case we would be completely obsessed with literally worshipping our worship, idolatrous to the core.

Individualism is that amazing inability and rock-bottom, hard core, pagan unwillingness to follow someone else's directives in the name of personal freedom. Therefore, we have become captives of our own opinions or opinionated leaders, cursed to do as we *like*, unable to do as we *should*. Churches are tossed about like driftwood in the sea with ever-new fads and waves, since we have chosen our own ungodly church patterns and sets of rules, an upside-down church architecture where apostles and prophets are least rather than first and second. That sets us up for a horrible waste of God-given resources and dreams of God, and reinforces CAWKI, as Dr. Theo Kunst, one of my former Professors has termed it, as a **graveyard of callings** for an overwhelming percentage of Christians.

Materialism our budget, priorities, and structures, prove beyond doubt that we have chosen to take the bulk of our identity, safety, and destiny, from matter rather than from God. Without a safe income, a secure job, money in the bank and in our pockets we freak out in fits of existential fears and run amok. We operate unethical fundraising campaigns, "fleece the sheep" any way we can, preach ridiculously unbiblical myths about tithes that are more reminiscent of extortion. We perpetually try to twist God's arm to somehow bless our business; we preach at revivals in order to have a revival in our own purses, or to make silly Constantine-type quid-pro-quo arrangements with the government. We run our churches like businesses. Our missions are powered by principles of mammon, and we attack anyone who questions our set-up as if our very life depends on it.

But even if people agree to most or all that I have just written above, nod gravely or admit that this is possible, why don't they change? If people do have *chason*, or even if they are convicted to see the things of God after it has been rubbed into their face many times, why, we need to ask, would people still remain unchanged, against all evidence, against all statistics, against all odds? **What on earth has so much power over people that they would rather die than change?** What gravitational power has mesmerized whole segments of Christianity to such a degree that they seem to be immobilized beyond human hope in a form of religious stupor and inertia, forever trotting their religious paths? I will tell you. **It's the money.** That is why we need to take a closer look at Babylon and the issue of breaking covenant with a covenant-keeping God for which I have devoted the entire next chapter.





6 The Covenant Principle – or, Why We Got Deported to Babylon

She will chase after her lovers but not catch them;
she will look for them but not find them.

Then she will say,
'I will go back to my husband as at first,
for then I was better off than now.' Hos 2:7

6 The Covenant Principle – or, why we got deported to Babylon

From the very beginning of creation, God has established very clear boundaries and parameters for us humans within which to relate to him. As a creator, he has designed the world to function according to laws, rules, and principles that he has built in – like the law of gravity, the way the stars are set up, or the separation between land and sea, night and day, differences between animals and humans, male and female. For example, he set up “the garden” as a meeting point between man and God, a place God would walk in the cool of the day among humans. In other words: the relationship between God and man is regulated and it functions according to a firmly defined set of rules. And: it is God who makes these rules, not man.

Adam and Eve were given two jobs, “to work the garden and to defend it” (Gen. 2:15); otherwise, they were free to do anything in the Garden of Eden, except: eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The deal was clear: you eat from that tree, you die! Diabolically inspired, they chose the liberty to cross God’s law, and the result was a severe punishment: mortality, expulsion, sweat, pain at childbirth, and so on. In other words: death set in, exactly like it was spelled out in the deal between God and man. This was the cost of their rebellion. And a rebellion against God’s laws is always also a rebellion against God himself – overlooking or ignoring his compassionate and loving fatherhood that made him set up those rules for our own protection in the first place.

A rebellion against God’s laws is always also a rebellion against God himself

As things Post-Eden got more and more corrupted and even “giants,” the *nephilim*, the crossbreed of fallen angels and human women, started to walk the earth and became heroes, God decided to put an end to it all, “since my spirit will not contend with man forever.” As God saw how great man’s wickedness had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time, the Lord was grieved and his heart was filled with pain. He said: “I will wipe mankind from the face of the earth, for I am grieved that I have made them” (Gen. 6).

But, as we know, Noah found favor in the eyes of God. And so God gave Noah a fresh start. In order to make it legally binding, God made an extensive covenant with Noah and his sons (Gen. 9), and signed it with the rainbow in the sky in order to remind humans and himself of the oath God swore.

As the story of redemption unfolds, God came to Abram and made an elaborate covenant with him (Gen. 15) in the tradition of covenant-making of the time, which involved the sacrificing of a number of animals, the shedding of blood, and even the exchange of names: God is later known as “the God of Abraham.” A covenant then was the strongest possible bond between two parties, stronger even than family ties.

God is a covenant making and covenant keeping God

The day it truly dawned on Daniel why God had Israel go into the Babylonian exile, he repented in prayer, fasting, sack cloth, and ashes, and came straight to the point: “Oh great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant

of love with all who love him and obey his commands... we have sinned, we have rebelled, we have turned away from your commands and laws. Lord you are righteous!" (Daniel 9). Even if we humans break the covenant with God – he keeps it. Humans are covenant-making and covenant-breaking; God, however, unlike humans, absolutely does keep his covenants.

I like the way my Ugandan friend John Mulinde summarized this:

"If we do not understand what a covenant is, key insights as to who God is will remain hidden from us. When God made a covenant with Abraham, it did not at all happen the way we do this today. In Genesis 15:18 it says: "That day God cut a covenant with Abram"; the Hebrew word for cutting is *karath* and for covenant *berith* (meaning also to cut, select, dine). In the days where people lived in clans and tribes, covenants were always blood-covenants. Without the flowing of blood no covenant was valid. The understanding was, that "the life of a creature is in its blood" (Lev. 17:11.14).

In a blood-covenant two partners would become one; their souls would mingle and become a new form of life. A blood brother is a much deeper relationship than our own brothers according to lineage, and would last forever. Two representatives of two clans would come together in the presence of witnesses, cut their arm and mingle the blood, which they would drink in turn. Then they would work out the exact terms and conditions of the covenant, and wipe the bloody knife as a signature on the document of the covenant (something the color of the wax used to seal royal documents in the color of blood - red - reminds us even today).

People cut covenants mainly for three reasons: a) to deepen an existing friendship into a blood-covenant; b) to make peace between warring parties, securing protection for the weaker tribes when covenanting with a stronger one, and creating a legal bond between two parties; c) and lastly, business. If two families or tribes were united in a covenant, the entire household of both was included. A person in a covenant relationship no longer belonged just to himself. He was now living a corporate existence. He literally now had two bodies, since his covenant-partner also carried his life in him, and he carried the life of his covenant partner. This had serious consequences. In case of danger, you could absolutely rely on help from one another. At the same time, a covenant partner had access to all material possessions of his partner, just as they were his own property. They co-owned their respective possessions and held them in common.

At the time of cutting the covenant, blessings and curses were pronounced to underline the pros and cons. The most severe punishments were spoken over any breaking of the covenant – including over the following generations. Cutting a covenant was a very elaborate pro-

If we do not understand what a covenant is, key insights as to who God is will remain hidden from us.

cedure. People discussed this up to three years, to negotiate terms and details and document it in writing. This included the exchanging of gifts, weapons and clothes. Finally, the act of cutting the covenant itself happened.

Among the Hebrews, it was customary to walk in-between the bloody path between animals that had been sacrificed and placed into two heaps close to each other. As people walked through the blood, the killed animal vicariously symbolized the penalty of death, should the covenant be broken. Then the covenant would be sealed, meaning that salt was rubbed into the self-inflicted cuts in the arm, so that a lasting sign would remain. Sometimes, a pile of rocks or a large stone would be erected or a tree be planted to remind of the covenant. Then the blessings of the deal would be shouted out aloud, as well as the curses for breaking it. Then the new covenant partners would amend their names: from now on, they would carry both names, his own as well as the name of his new covenant partner. At the end of the ceremony, both partners would join for a common meal."

Jesus makes a new covenant with us, with the exact same consequences. Jeremiah had prophesied this in 31:31-33: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not like the covenant with their forefathers, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them. This is the covenant I will make with them: I will put my law in their minds and write on their hearts."

As the Holy Spirit is poured out into our hearts, love for God and each other are the outer signs of this covenant. However, this does not mean there are no rules anymore, and everyone is just happily drowning in a sea of unconditional love. Dr. Georg Huntemann, formidable German Professor of ethics, said it like this: "The Old Testament law (Hebrew: *thorah*) encompasses not only all 613 do's and don't's that the Jewish Talmud counts, but comprises the entire teaching of God to his people. In protestant history most theologians sadly have concluded that the teaching of God is not valid anymore for Christians, as it is now replaced by the 'law of love' once and for all." Nothing is further from the truth. To deny the existence of rules defining our relationship with God "in the name of love" is the very language that breaks our covenant with our loving God. From now on, it is the love that the Holy Spirit gives us that empowers us to keep the covenant. Jesus laid down the rules of this new covenant very clearly, for example in Matthew 5-7, also known as the Sermon on the Mount. He gave clear conditions under which we can access the blessings of God and inherit them. He did this not out of a new legalism, but to lay down safe terms within which to have fellowship with God. As we learn to keep our part of the covenant, God will keep his, and stick to the deal. If we break this deal, we should not be surprised if the authority of God is lacking in our lives. God is simply keeping his deal.

John Mulinde goes on to prophesy: "In today's fast-moving and fast-changing world, more and more securities will vanish, new needs and challenges

will arise, the circumstances will alter. That is when our only security will be a personal, deep, intimate relationship with God. The systems of the world are collapsing. If you have part in them you will collapse with them. Fear and desperation wait for those who do not use these days to separate themselves completely to God, to be set apart for his purposes. The world as we have known it will come to an end. Systems, old securities, routines, and areas of comfort, will fall apart. People will be selling whatever is dearest to them in order to buy security. But there will be no security other than: set yourself apart for God and enter his covenant!"

In Deuteronomy 28-30, Moses lays out one more time the covenant between God and his people. He includes a long list of blessings, and another long list of curses. As punishments for breaking the covenant, there are three clearly distinct stages of punishment: 1) Individual curses; this includes mental and physical sicknesses, economic setbacks, and curses on their children. 2) The second, more severe level of punishment is that God is going to take away the executive power from Israel's leaders and give it over to foreign kings. This results in raids, invasions, and finally Israel becomes a satrap, destined to toil under the taxing rule of pagan nations. The book of Judges is full of examples of this second kind of punishment for covenant breaking. 3) The third and ultimate punishment, when nothing else will do, is exile, the expulsion of God's beloved people from the land of promise, who are then made to live in a diaspora, cut off from their own land and made subject to the will and culture of pagan peoples and their kings.

When the divided nation, Judah and Israel, were separately taken captive into exile, they knew that this was the ultimate punishment for their obstinate sin, their rejection of any offer for restoration and the countless prophetic warnings like this one by Isaiah: "The days are coming when all that is in your house shall be carried to Babylon" (2. Kings 24:1). Exile does not come lightly. But when it comes, it is an extremely serious punishment, only to be topped by the special dispersion that the Jewish people experienced after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, when the entire Jewish race was scattered into the nations and lived in a diaspora situation until today, with the exception of the slight minority of all Jews who have come home again since the foundation of the modern state of Israel.

The anatomy of Babylon

The biblical city of Babylon is a creation of human pride in the plain of Shinar, founded with the battle cry "come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11). The word Babel (sounding like the Hebrew word for confused) was given to this city because God decided to confuse the language of the whole world there. The next time we read about Babel is when Nimrod, the son of Cush, son of Ham, described as "a mighty warrior," founded the very first Kingdom on earth that the Bible describes as one built on military might. Babylon was among the first centers of his Kingdom. Cush was a son of Ham, that son of Noah who discovered his father's nakedness and told it to his brothers. This was an act of unimaginable irreverence, for which Noah, once sober again, placed a curse of Ham's son

Canaan. That led to the first slavery mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 9:27). Canaan was Cush's brother. Many of Canaan's sons became founding fathers of tribes and nations that have been a thorn in the flesh for Israel ever since – until today.

Babylon, mentioned 260 times in the Bible, has seen an enormous succession of Kings, who usually were more than Kings; they were emperors, king over other kings in a transnational rule over Mesopotamia and beyond. One of these kings was Cyrus, who said about himself that “the Lord, the king of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth” (Ezra 1:2), a striking similarity to Lucifer's statement to Jesus in Luke 4:6. A succession of such emperors ruling Babylon, or modern day Baghdad, has seen names like Baladan, Nebuchadnezzar, Artaxerxes or Darius. Saddam Hussein had tried to revive that very mantle. But it is not who possesses Babylon, but **who is possessed by it**. Why do I say that? It seems that Babylon is not just a geographic or political, but a spiritual center as well. It forces people to dominate, to rule over other rulers. Why, otherwise, would Saddam Hussein in his right mind – if he ever had that – start a silly war with neighboring Iran and foolishly attempt to invade Kuwait in broad daylight? Maybe something invisible had invaded Hussein previously that made it natural for him to attempt to behave like a modern czar, a Nebuchadnezzar. Right now, technically speaking, “King of Babylon” is the US-President, by the *defacto* role that the US military has taken since moving into Iraq.

**it is not who possesses
Babylon, but who is
possessed by it.**

After having an extremely prominent place in the prophetic writings of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the apostle Peter connects the city of Jerusalem (from where he wrote his letters) with Babylon, since he sends greetings on behalf of the church “who is in Babylon, chosen together with you” (1 Peter 5:13). Babylon then reappears in the book of Revelation as a mystery woman riding a scarlet beast covered with blasphemous names. She is called a mystery, the mother of all prostitutes. Prostitution in the Bible is first and foremost an engaging with gods other than the true God, or “being in bed with demons.” The woman is a city sitting “at the waters,” the crossroads of many nations, peoples, and languages, ruling over the kings of the earth. She has become a home for “demons and all unclean spirits.” Merchants grew rich from her excessive luxuries, and she was called a “city of power.” It was a place of trade, and merchants sold their cargos “to her.” When Babylon was gone, the market was gone. The items Babylon used to buy reads just like the list of the Wall Street stock market (Rev. 18). And another clue: Babylon has obviously treated one group of people very badly: “Saints, apostles, and prophets” (Rev. 18:20), and “in her was found the blood of all who have been killed on the earth.” This would include Abel.

If we take biblical exegeses serious, Babylon is something that can be described by a complete list of these words: pride, confusion, military power, kingdom/political power, money, marketing, nations, false religion, full of demons.

What does Babylon represent? What is it? What entity does justice to all these symptoms? I believe it is a global, empire-minded power-structure that has military resources, controls the economy, has made binding agreements with religion that sanctions its actions, is driven by pride and confusion, spans all or most of the nations of the world, and is driven by the demons of greed, and, most of all, is violently opposed to anything genuinely prophetic, aposto-

lic, or truly holy – constantly in bed with Mammon. An entity that therefore says: If we have the money, why do we need God?

I believe that we witness the emerging of the mystery woman called Babylon in a global birth process that we all have come to call **Globalization**. Make no mistake: I did not say globalization *is* Babylon; globalization is only *the process* by which we see the rule of Babylon installed globally. If Babylon was a cute little girl-baby playing with bricks in the days of the tower, a toddler in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and a teen-age girl at the time of Cyrus, the woman has now definitely grown up and knows what she is doing. The adult, final version of Mrs. Babylon is the result of globalization, and will take on the form of a near-one-world government, most probably with a US-led military policing the globe's good and bad neighborhoods, financed by Wall Street, advertised by Madison Avenue, journaled by CNN, entertained by ever new versions of "American Idol" and a value-system that (US-) acclaimed author and former Pentagon security-strategist Thomas PM Barnett so aptly describes in his book *The Pentagon's New Map*, which we will discuss later.

Since the USA is clearly the leader in this process of globalization, as Barnett states, we are basically talking about an Americanization of the world into one great consumer-driven market, a vortex that follows its own "free market" laws, forcing every independent or disconnected economy to give up, sooner or later, and join the game for a piece of the globe in the name of global peace. The whole endeavor is sanctioned by the prayers of many Evangelicals in the US literally drunk with nationalism, complete with a new era of spiritual colonization: after traditional US missions are almost done, now myriads of self-employed and self-proclaimed American "apostles" busily bring "apostolic order" to the world, enlisting the hundred thousands of desperate and foundationless Evangelical churches and groups aimlessly floundering around into their elitist, pyramid-style networks and apostolic clubs, for a hefty fee, of course. They are fiercely contested by similar pseudo-apostolic religious gurus from Mexico, Nigeria, and other nations, trying their best to copy their North American idols in style and to bolster their religious networks.

The values that America stands for today reflect the spirit of Babylon better than anything else visible today. Under the leadership of the USA and other closely associated Western countries, the Evangelical movement in general (there are exceptions) has been led captive to franchise American-based church systems, mega- and meta-church growth methods, and mission concepts all over the world. Could it be that in many cases the people of the world thought they are getting the real church, while in reality, with bold shouts of glory and hallelujah, they were given a Babylonian version of it? This situation makes it especially tough for all true believers in the US, whether they are in government, business, funding, media, or on the church scene, as they are part of a system that is the problem, not the solution. Trapped and enslaved in an almost watertight self-gratifying system that has overpowered most, toxic with the values of Babylon, many US Christians are confused by millions of options. Most simply need deliverance, inner healing, religious detox, rehabilitation, and to be released into their proper place within an apostolic-prophetic Christianity that does not have its center in the US. For this, "America needs all the help it can get from the outside world, because it cannot save itself,"

says my friend, American author Brian Dodd. It may sound strange, but when God called my wife Mercy and me in the year 2000 to become missionaries to America, we were asking God for months to give us his love for that country. And he did. Maybe it humors you, but I bought an American flag and put it in my office, to remind me daily of God's love and my love for this nation. Mercy and I realized that only if we truly love someone could we change him. And maybe that's the real reason why I as a Hungarian-German-Jew and my Indian wife Mercy dare to speak so freely about both our deep love – and deep concern – for the US.

The Current Babylonian Captivity of the Church

Martin Luther in his days spoke of a Babylonian Captivity of the church, and squarely identified the Roman Catholic Church as “the whore of Babylon.” I believe he was not only wrong in his analysis, but also wrong in the ways he applied the cure. Here we have a typical case of a superficial analysis of the problem that leads to the fact that the solution remained very much part of the problem. It is true that the Roman Catholic System has elements of Babylon, and you could use the fact that it was built on seven hills – like the city of Rome – to support that. But Babylon, as we have seen, is a much bigger animal. The Roman Catholic Church is neither a military power, nor does it control the stock market, and it is definitely not responsible for the death of Abel – but the spirit of jealousy that drove Cain is. Even if the Catholic Church had been the problem, the Lutheran Church was definitely not the cure. Except for some theological innovations – and the invention of the pastor's wife - the ecclesiastic setup, the command structures, and the financial skeleton of the Lutheran churches, are not at all radically different from the Catholic original. It is still a Lutheran version of a Catholic version of that peculiar religious marriage between cathedral-based worship and the liturgical traditions of Jewish synagogues, something that I have termed **Cathegogue** (more on this in my book *Houses that Change the World*). Yes, the world has a lot for which to thank Luther; but that should not trick any of us into overlooking the horrible theological errors and strategic mistakes he made.

These “loopholes in the reformation,” as I call them, include an almost complete absence of missions, and Luther's most tragic decisions regarding money and the poor. Luther's terrible role in regards to the poor was something that greatly endorsed the so-called peasant war, where 100,000 German peasants who had hoped that Luther's reformation would change their pitiful state, died a bloody death, murdered by charges of the rich, the clergy, and the powerful, with Luther cheering them on “to beat and kill them like mad dogs wherever you find them.” This has hardened the hearts of the poor up until today, and brought a cursed financial legacy on any church or mission that boasts a Lutheran or Reformed work ethic. Finally, Luther's outright demonic hatred and furious writings against the Jews as well as his expressed condoning of the killing of Anabaptists who preached, because they were not ordained clergymen, should convince anyone that Lutheranism was no cure for a Babylonian Captivity at all. It simply made some folks move to another part of town that still carried the name Babylon. You don't want to idolize such a man if you are not either drunk by religion – or employed by it.

Just a glancing look at almost any movement that calls itself Protestant, in history or today – besides being driven mostly by a reactive spirit of protesting - still shows four glaring weaknesses: (1) a typical non-holiness, non-apostolic, completely under-funded mission philosophy; (2) one big festering wound in the area of money, work, and the poor, driven either by a spirit of poverty or a ridiculous, mammon-ridden prosperity gospel; (3) an unimpressive and perplexed relationship towards the Jews that typically, rather than “make the Jews jealous,” is being jealous of the Jews themselves, and finally (4) a striking and irrational fear of losing control over just about everything in regards to organic house church networks that most seasoned Protestants just cannot seem to understand. When my Dutch friend Marc van der Woude stated that he would not hesitate to baptize new converts in a house – outside a clergy-run church operation - two **Protestant** church leaders in the Netherlands immediately objected and outright called him heretic.

Dr. Thomas Giudici, former Chief Financial Officer of Basel City in Switzerland, compares in a simple matrix the key differences between **cosmos**, the secular, fallen world, and **The Kingdom**, the sphere under the rule of God.

	Cosmos	Kingdom
Key objective	Maximization of gain	Love
Key value	Competition	Servanthood

These are the rules of the game. If we want to score goals, we have to adhere to the principles of the game; otherwise, we produce systems conflict. If we want to make money (maximization of gain), we have to compete on the market, show – through logos and ads - that we are different from the competition, and push our products ahead of others in order to get the largest market share. If we want to score goals in the Kingdom, then “the greatest of it all is love,” and “no one is greater than the one who serves.” If we do business in the operating spirit of the Kingdom, that is, by loving and serving everybody, this works very well – but only for a short time, before we are sunk by the sharks out there. Watch it: most Christian businesses – **Crown or Kingdom Companies**, as some of them are called today - that try to establish this as a permanent rule-set, have an extremely short lifespan of profitability.

And if you try to serve God and his Kingdom in the “cosmic” spirit of maximizing members/money/fame by competing with others through colorful logos, mission and vision statements, amazing projects, and a style and sanctuary that is so very “different,” all you are doing is trying to play golf on a soccer field, applying cosmic Babylonian principles for Kingdom work and attempting to build the church that Jesus speaks about with principles of the world. This simply will never work over and above some personal empires, one more denomination or another short-lived religious mom-and-pop-shop independent of the independents, because the entire concept is neither rooted in scripture, nor ordained and commissioned by God, nor does it work to fulfill the tasks that God has designed the church to do.

We need to realize that lies like “Money makes you happy;” “more is always better;” “Got money? Why do you need God...?” or a cynical sentence like “work and earn, pay taxes and burn” (inscribed onto a house once in our

neighborhood) are part of **The Gospel according to Mammon** – a message that many Christians have become glued to. Most humans that don't listen to God anymore perk up when the issue is money. And so it's no small wonder that Christianity is experiencing its greatest financial crisis of all times. Traditional churches sit on countless unmarketable buildings; globalization leads to a new poverty in the West; and many consumer-oriented Christians in a tightened economy discover a "me first" mindset. But we only reap what we sow. This is why an increasing number of churches, organizations, and missions, are having their plug pulled by God – and, watch it, will soon be gone from the map. At the same time, more and more people are discovering New Testament finance principles – usually at a fair distance from traditional churches and their unhealthy teachings on money and work – and discover a financial freedom they never dreamed possible. God is clearly calling us all to a **financial reformation** – which we will discuss later.

My point here is very simple. **A just, covenant-making and covenant-keeping God who keeps to his own rules had no other choice than to give the church over into a Babylonian captivity.** Even if we break covenant, he will keep it, the good and the bad part. Exile, a Church placed under, not over, a Babylonian rule set, is the only form of punishment that would be severe enough to sober those asking questions, to wake up those who look at the statistics, to cut to the heart of those who smell that something about CAWKI is definitely fishy. Jeremiah 9:12-13 says, "Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross? The Lord said: 'Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me and followed my law. Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts and the Baals, as their fathers have taught them.'" This is not only a binding agreement for the old order, but also for the new, as the book of Hebrews says: "We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1-3)

I believe that since the time of Constantine, through millennial-long rebellion, the apostate church has continuously embraced church structures that God has never commanded. It has raised the traditions of "the elders," the impositions of the teachings of "church fathers" over and above the word of God, and has basically broken every rule and stepped over every boundary that the Bible has set up. Beresford Job, UK-based Bible teacher, has written a book on this subject called ***Biblical Church – A Challenge to Unscriptural Traditions and Practice.*** The church has had no shortage of prophets and those others who have warned about this, but it has managed to label them routinely as heretics, false prophets, cult leaders or has just ignored them.

If we look at the symptoms of the Evangelical movement today, we see a prevailing controlling spirit, a stunning absence of spiritual power and apostolic or prophetic insight, a praise-the-Guru-mentality that would pale any Hindu, an inverted value pyramid (what biblically should have priority, is by default at the bottom of the list), a mammon-driven bureaucracy, an empire-type superstructure, and a fascinating incapacitation in the area of mission,

work-ethics/poverty, and making any sense to Jews. In the eyes of the world, the Evangelical church has become the tail, not the head. It has lost its authenticity, cannot speak with one voice because of its fragmented condition, and therefore, is barely recognized by the media. Most of its operations are driven by religious consumerism, a blatant materialism inside the church and that phenomenal Protestant inability to operate and function based on faith rather than calculation. This is probably one of the reasons why so many Evangelical churches find themselves hectically busy proving God is still with them. Just look at the amazing plethora of Evangelical projects, plans, and conferences, and you know exactly what I mean.

In this process, **Americanism** has indeed captivated most Evangelical protestant churches around the world, as American author Gene Edwards points out in his almost unknown book, *The Americanization of Christianity*. The Christian version of the American Dream – a house of your own, two cars and lots of fun and ice cream – looks like this: have a church of your own, an average of two wives (one divorced), and a self-focused life drowned in events and programs packaged to cater to the gustoes of religious consumers in the name of liberty. So relax, sit back and enjoy the show. American-style colonialism has captivated, beyond belief, the hopes and imaginations of the identity-less Evangelical movement around the globe. The only time such a cultural takeover has had a similarly negative effect on the global Church was at the Synod of Whitby in 663, where Celtic Christianity was officially taken over by Roman Catholicism, actually after winning an argument about proper hairstyle for clerics and the correct date of Easter.

And so, Evangelicalism, figuratively speaking, sits like a caged duck, waiting patiently for its Babylonian custodians to bring grains and water – or take it to the kitchen. I call this the **duck syndrome**. Have you ever asked yourself:

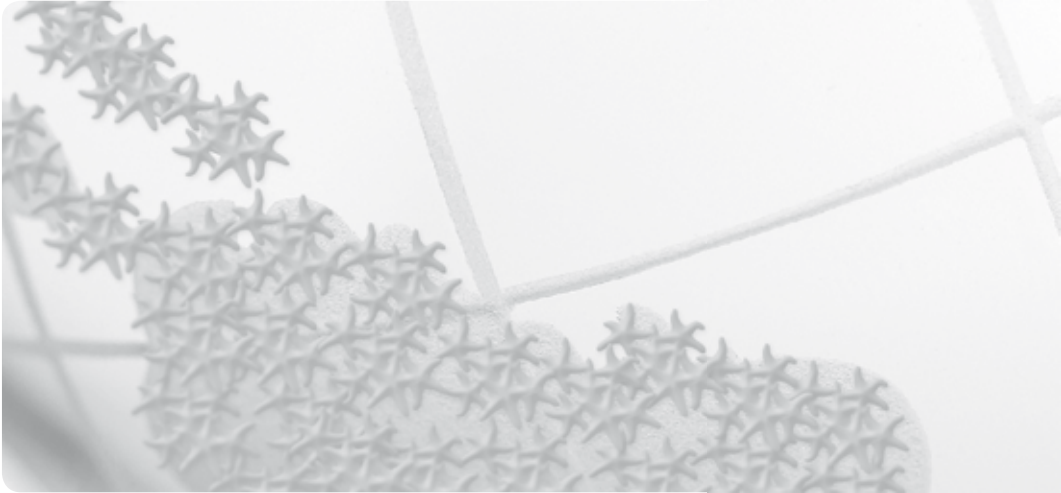
How wild is the duck?

“Domestic ducks have a fine life. Their existence is safe, even predictable. With their clipped wings, there they sit in the barnyard, their life laid out for them as straight as an arrow: from the roost to the trough, and on to the pan. The ducks tell themselves and their children: that’s life, it won’t change; it can’t change. It has always been so, and always will be. Only twice a year, in spring-time and autumn, there is great excitement in the barnyard, and the little duck-world is tumbled upside down. Their hearts beat faster, adrenalin pumps through their veins, and they even try to leap into the air in a vain attempt to fly. It’s the time when the wild ducks fly high and above the barnyard in their arrow-formation, off and away to a distant destiny. And down below, strange, forbidden, and heretical thoughts shoot through the brain of the domestic duck: *what on earth am I doing here?* Is not my place up there, in the sky, with them, migrating together with my wild brothers and sisters, high above all barnyards, fences and troughs? But, for good or bad, the spooky feelings are soon gone, as the wild ducks vanish beyond the horizon. And the tame ducks lower their sights, pat each other in affirmation on their backs with their clipped wings, and nod to each other: only a dream, a *Fata Morgana!* Let’s return to the real world, the world of barnyard, trough – and pan. For sure, to be a domestic duck has a lot of advantages. Usually it’s warm, it gets the fodder in time, and it will hardly ever be eaten by a fox. But it has some drawbacks, too.

Well, it can't really fly, and the routine numbs it beyond recognition. But, to be a wild duck has its drawbacks too. It has to stand against the cold, uncertainties, and hunger. Quite a price for freedom..." (From *Der Preis des Geldes* – The Price of Money – by Simson/Giudici).

Mankind's breaking of the covenant with God who keeps his covenants, and has therefore bound himself to them, is the main *legal* reason for the current Babylonian Captivity of the Church. But a second and very powerful reason exists why Christianity has arranged itself so well in Babylon. It has to do with the source of blessing. If the Church loses the amazing privileges of a clean and healthy relationship with its covenant partner, God, it looks for alternatives for privileges. If God does not gratify the Church anymore, and keeps it therefore in a permanent state of mere subsistence, the Church has definitely found ways of self-gratification. "The world" in the cosmos-sense of the word, generally gratifies the strong, beautiful, and intelligent, as its heroes – the successful achievers who know how to climb carrier ladders, enter the limelight and those who know how to sell themselves well to the market. The rule is simple: you do this, and you have all the goodies. You don't, and you are a loser. As a result, people who have "worldly" power, money, and the status that comes with it, are admired, envied, idolized, and copied endlessly. As the Babylonian Church has attempted to fit and conform itself into the Babylonian pattern of life, it has found a new way to be the church - simply without the *blessing* of God. Let God thunder outside as long as he wants, send hailstorms, sicknesses, and calamities – we are under the safe roof of Babylon, are paid and insured and have firmly tapped into the Babylonian power system that makes us seemingly independent of God – and his blessings.

In summary of this chapter: Christianity has been spiritually deported into a Babylonian captivity, because it has legally broken the covenant with God. God "however" kept to the covenant, and therefore, had to deport us to apply justice. Settling down in Babylon, we have made new covenants, not with God but with the Babylon system. If we wish to get out, we would need to repent of our covenant-breaking with God, break with Babylon and move into a spiritual journey I call apostolic migration, the subject of chapter 9. Before we do that, we need to pause and look at a pivotal word and concept in the Bible that it is well worth to study it in this context: **blessing**.



7 Blessing: The power of God to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth

Grace and love is unconditional, blessing is not; it hinges on God's "if"

7 Blessing: The power of God to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth

A fascinating biblical insight is that God is both a loving, gracious God, and a God who is willing and ready to bless us. One has to do with his *heart*, the other with his sense of *justice*. However, there is a huge difference between grace and blessing. Grace – like the love of God – is absolutely undeserved, unconditional. Yet, **his blessing is absolutely conditional**. It is tied to human behavior, especially our behavior towards God. “If you keep my commands, I will bless you” is the constant theme of the Bible, Old and New Testament alike. If someone chooses not to obey God, that does not mean God stops loving him. In the parable about the two lost sons, the father loves the lost son absolutely. But did he bless him? Bless the mess he was in after leaving the father’s house, running away from the healthy rules of his household? No. God loves absolutely everybody on this planet – “for God so loved the world...” – and God is and will be gracious to all of us. He promised this, and it is his nature.

Grace – like the love of God – is absolutely undeserved, unconditional. Yet, his blessing is absolutely conditional.

However, not everyone on this planet is blessed. The Sermon on the Mount is an example for this. “Blessed are the peacemakers” does not mean that those preventing peace are also blessed. “Blessed are those with pure hearts, because they will see God,” does not mean that this particular blessing (to see God) is open to anyone, regardless of the condition of his heart. Again, grace is unconditional, blessing is not; it hinges on God’s “if.” “IF you obey the Lord your God, all these blessings will come upon you” (Deut. 28:2), is the sum total of very comprehensive chapters at the end of the five books of Moses, establishing many foundational patterns of relationship between the people and their God, and defining eternal reasons for blessings or curses.

None of these rules have ever been taken out of function. Just because Jesus came into this world to revolutionize the way sin is handled and to make us sons and daughters of the Kingdom, does not mean that we can sin now, as pampered and disobedient children of a God who seemingly does not care about our integrity, character and standards. We cannot bask in God’s unconditional grace and live like everyone else around us: basically an individualistic, opportunistic and libertine life, full of spiritual licentiousness, changing our colors as we desire, adhering to the latest spiritual fashion and fad, savoring the religious flavor of the day, flowing with the Zeitgeist, and attending cool lifestyle churches with exactly our kind of music, language, and culture.

What exactly is blessing?

The Hebrew word for blessing is *barakah* (*brk*) and it means knee. In a play of words, the Hebrew root word for lightning is *brq*, also pronounced *barak/q* (as in Ehud Barak). The prophetic symbolism is clear: if a creature kneels before its creator in worshipful obedience, God will bless it just like lightning comes down from heaven and literally gives anything it touches a divine energy-upgrade, a different quality. If it is true that “God is light” (1 John 1:5), then the original creational command “let there be light” can also be translated: “let there be God!” Let the essence of God – light - be. Light is a fascinating element that

scientists puzzle over until this very day – just the way humans puzzle about God. Light, in the strictly scientific sense, is:

the form of radiant energy that stimulates the organs of sight, having for normal human vision wavelengths ranging from about 3900 to 7700 ångstroms and traveling at a speed of about 186,300 miles per second.

German physicist Max Planck suggested that electromagnetic energy is emitted and absorbed in the form of discrete bundles, or “quanta.” He stated that the energy of each quantum depends only on the frequency V of the radiation, and is given by a very simple formula: $E = hv$. The quanta, which came to be known as photons, behaved like particles. So light is both energy and matter, wave and particles. Got it?

For most humans, balancing these two seemingly conflicting concepts (is light energy, or is it matter?) is difficult. Let’s therefore focus only on the lightning process by looking at lightning, that amazing, high-voltage energy transfer, that is, in essence, a transfer of light from heaven to earth in the outward form of an electrical charge that comes in bolts. If God chooses to bless something or someone, he gives it an upgrade of light; he “enlightens” it, imparts himself – remember, God is light - into others, he charges it with energy of which he himself consists. He puts himself in it. And thus this blessed object can do what only God can do. Do the impossible, since it is empowered to do things beyond itself.

In the New Testament, the Old Testament concept of conditional blessing has not really altered, but is further applied; the Greek word for blessing here is *eulogein*, literally to speak good about someone. If God speaks good about someone, that person, figuratively speaking, carries letters of recommendation by God himself, opening doors and access to realms prohibited for those not carrying such legitimization. A blessing is given by God - or by a person in a God-given position of authority, like a father to a son, as something extraordinarily special bestowed on someone - with a specific purpose to it. Blessings are not at all given by chance, cheaply dispensed, a farewell formula as we depart, but represent a very powerful, spoken impartation of divine favor and divine nature.

If God speaks good about you, blesses you, and if you are therefore an official emissary of God, then this is good for you. You are not only on the road in your own name; God has so chosen to place his seal of blessing on you. **You are about the King’s business.** This means far greater authority and greater leverage than being about your own business. To bless is to lay God’s name on someone or something in order to achieve its God-given destiny. To bless means a spiritual impartation – not in the magical sense that someone carries a bigger portion of magic substance, but in the sense of a download of a divine empowerment. To bless means to lay God’s “yes!” on someone. A blessed person literally carries letters of recommendation from God, someone who is positively spoken for – either by God or a godly person. Blessing, therefore, is God’s wind in our sails as we pursue the King’s business, his air under our wings as we fly to his destinations. Let’s now look at one core aspect of this blessing that I find most crucial for the task ahead: the discipling of the nations. If we are not blessed for this, would we ever dare to try to reach that goal?

If God chooses to bless something or someone, he gives it an upgrade of light; ... he charges it with energy of which he himself consists.

Blessings are not at all given by chance, cheaply dispensed, a farewell formula as we depart, but represent a very powerful, spoken impartation of divine favor and divine nature.

Whom does God bless – and for what purpose?

In the first pages of the Bible, each blessing is framed in this very same sentence: “And God blessed them and said to them: be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” First God spoke this into animals (Gen 1:22), then into humans (Gen 1:28), then, after the flood, into Noah: “God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” This means that the blessing itself is an endowment, a divine ennoblement and empowerment for the very task mentioned here: to be fruitful, multiply, and (thus) fill the earth.

Next, Abraham is blessed – so that all nations on earth are blessed through him. How? “I will make your offspring like dust” – note that God is obviously promising him multiplication: Abraham’s children will have children that have children with more children, and so on - multiplication again! And here is a connection we should not miss: God’s blessing of fertility – be fruitful - directly ties with the command **to multiply and fill the earth**. The obvious end result of God’s blessing are three things: **fruitfulness** – the ability that something fruitful comes out of our work and we have children; **multiplication** – that our children have children and our fruits grow exponentially, not linear by addition; and **earth-filling impact** – a divine license for global distribution, spreading the approved things of God to the four corners of the earth. Without blessing, this would be an entirely futile endeavor. Unblessed behavior may lead to addition and growth, but not to multiplication and ultimately filling the earth.

When do blessings appear? God did bless “the seventh day” (Gen. 2:3), because “God rested from all his work.” And isn’t it amazing that, quite frankly, as we rest, multiplication happens? Multiplication of our genes happens not as we hunt, work, strive, build, but **as we rest**. It is something beyond us, something we cannot produce of ourselves. That is why those who think of themselves to be most actively and passionately consumed with world missions must understand the “theology of resting.” It is out of rest, the concept of being inactive in God’s presence, where new things are born. When Jesus said to his apostles “come with me into a desert place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31), this was to make sure they were not consumed by the ever hungry and never sleeping religious consumerism of those who want more action. Action does not lead to multiplication; rest does. A church without an understanding of the “Sabbath rest” will be swept away by the demands of the needy, hungry, hurting, and lonely, and while having a great time of action serving those needs, will miss the boat of multiplying – and filling the earth. Fruitless “Christian” activism without reproducing children who reproduce children is the sickness, not the cure: hectic churches full of programs and great activities that simply do not reproduce by planting daughter churches. Not planting more daughter churches is the hard evidence of churches that exist without being true and healthy churches, but a religious enterprise, showing the very symptoms of the absence of God’s blessing in public display. Quite frankly, I have sat with many church and mission boards and pastors who have admitted, in behind the scene meetings, that if they stop pushing programs, events and services, or cut the budget, the entire enterprise would falter and die down. “If we pull the plug, the whole thing stops,” one senior pastor said. Well, maybe God has pulled the AC plug long ago, and we simply have not noticed it because we are on DC power.

In history, Israel broke its covenant with God and, as a result of this, entered into a particular “un-blessed” time. When God removed his blessings, and replaced it with curses, God was still Israel’s lover; he was still gracious. But he stopped blessing them, as he had promised he would. Again, this meant that even though God loves us, that does not mean he automatically blesses us. Blessing comes through obedience to God’s rules. We might totally enjoy being God’s children, but refuse to obey his commands. It is absolutely possible, therefore, to be a gracious, loving person or church – full of laughter, action, charisma, and joy - but not a blessed person or church at all. What would that mean?

Graceful but unblessed

You can be a loved child of your gracious parents, with all the toys you ever wanted, but if you rebel and disobey, this could mean a denied access to your inheritance, your parents not really standing up for you, not backing you up all the way. They would not withhold their parental love, but clearly would withhold their blessing. For a church, this would mean a group of people in love with God and each other, full of grace and joy, with all the charismatic gifts in operation – but without God’s final approval and blessing. Did you see how Paul extends *grace* to the (disobedient and immature) church in Corinth at the beginning and the very end of both his letter– “grace to you” - but not his *blessings*? Paul seemed to have clearly understood this principle, and also knew that for earth-filling, apostolic work, he needed to come with “the full blessing” of the gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:29).

God gives us grace and his love in abundance, but the necessary blessing “to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” is amazingly absent in the church. Statistics speak here for themselves. So if God does not multiply us, what do we do? We go on to multiply ourselves. And the way to do this is to produce clones, replicas, copies of ourselves, by driving our DNA into others, a process we call teaching, church growth, and denomination building. Finally we start transplanting our thing into other cultures as well, and call it missions. The result? Rather than the organic multiplication of originals, we will have an epidemic of clones and copies, produced by the photocopy machines of Christian franchises, churning out cookie-cut Christian versions of McDonald hamburger outlets through Bible schools and training programs that produce look-alike, think-alike, and smell-alike people and religious experiences, with staff who in their corporate culture and uniformity are a shameful disgrace to God’s originality and creativity.

The absence of blessing, again, means first and foremost unfruitfulness (stress, strain, Sisyphus-type work), the absence of multiplication (we augment by addition, more work, enlargement) and provincialism, the absence of a world awareness, let alone world impact. In short, the absence of God’s “YES” on our seeds. Likewise, the absence of blessings also means the absence of light: darkness. Now is this not exactly what we see in many if not most traditional churches – and also in non-apostolic, happy-clappy, self-centered house churches? A church full of grace – but with the absence of God’s blessing? The impossible notion of a dark lighthouse? A church where Jesus has done what he has promised he would do to disobedient, unrepentant churches: to remove their lamp stand? (Rev. 2:5) A church where the light has become dark?

Where nobody in the darkness around you notices that a city of light is in his or her neighborhood?

The Art of Blessing ourselves

The question is: what have we done in the absence of God's blessing? In our human resourcefulness, we have done three things:

1. In the absence of God's blessing, we blessed ourselves – seeking an upgrade of our pitiful, fruitless, and non-multiplying existence through alliances and covenants with Egypt, Babylon, Mammon, and anything that looks good. As God stopped gratifying us by granting fruitfulness and multiplication to the ends of the earth, we gratified ourselves and even usurped the job of filling the earth, faking apostolic multiplication by exporting ourselves using marketing techniques, networking, and buying and employing staff and representatives for our movements and denominations in foreign lands.

2. We created a blessing industry. We have learned well from Jacob to steal a blessing, and ultimately to play God and get ourselves blessed. Blessing without condition is a stolen blessing, a powerless religious ritual that may inspire awe and raise goose bumps, but is ultimately an illegitimate product. Together with insurance against hell by following certain rituals (child baptism, prayers, church/mass attendance, absolutions, the Eucharist, etc.) the dispensing of blessing actually has formed the core business of the religious industry. Make no mistake: there is an amazing increase in people wishing to be blessed. Blessing is *in*. I believe this is one of the main reasons of the growth of churches of an inherently religious nature. People go there to be blessed, not changed. They go on Sunday because of what they have done on Saturday, and repeat it next week. In the process, humans have been pulling the blessing of God over stuff that he just would never bless. Most churches behave as if a blessing can be dispensed without any prerequisite, without conditions.

3. We declared an absence of rules. We said: there are no blueprints, rules, laws, or spiritual principles that we should live by. Everyone should do as he pleases and follow God the way he feels and wants. With almost 40,000 denominations on the globe, most have accepted a standard of relativism: everyone is free to do as he wants, live and "do church" any way he likes it. You don't criticize me, and therefore I don't criticize you. Deal! However, the absence of a yardstick, God's plumb line for Christian living and for church has made a blessed life literally impossible, because if there are no rules, you cannot adhere to them. Therefore, you simply cannot be blessed anymore for observing them. This devilish notion of needing no rules is plain licentiousness, usually brandished today in defiance of fundamentalism or legalism. The absence of any rule – "say no to saying no!" - has a special appeal in a post-modern culture and with Muslim fundamentalism and its results on the news almost every day. Who wants to be a legalistic fundamentalist, ever? But this does not mean there are no foundational absolutes anymore, nor Kingdom of God principles that are valid today. If there are no rules, how can we obey them?

Many of those foundational principles, in addition to the Ten Commandments, have been rephrased and formulated by Jesus and could simply be called "the commands of Jesus."

The Commands of Jesus

One of the greatest blessings spoken about in the New Testament – the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit himself – is given as a response to people's obedience: "The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey him," explains Peter in Acts 5:32 to the Pharisees. And Jesus calls obedience a core requisite for entering the Kingdom of Heaven, when he sternly warns: "Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of the Father who is in heaven." This will probably come as a shock to many who have been raised in more charismatically oriented churches, being familiar with prophesying, casting out demons, and the doing of many miracles (Matt. 7:22 & 23), when Jesus has to tell to some: "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" Jesus describes the secret of his life as "always doing the will of the father;" "not my will, but your will;" "I only speak what I hear the father speak;" "I only do what I see my father doing;" "it's the father who is in me who does all this." In other words Jesus is highlighting that he is utterly **dependent**. He has declared personal bankruptcy and dependence on God. Anything done in independence from the father will vanish, be gone with the wind, and will have the devastating effect of having no effect. "He who believes in me, as the scripture says, streams of living waters will flow from his belly" (John 7:38). "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching" (John 14:23), and finally, a culminating point, when Jesus declares boldly: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). I do not have the space here to elaborate in more detail what Jesus commands; Mark Klassen, a missionary to Asia, has shown me the (unpublished) book of his Dad, Herbert Klassen (*Obedient Love*), who describes sixteen commands of Jesus in detail. They are: repent, believe, be baptized, be filled with the Holy Spirit, follow, forsake, fear not, beware, pray, fast, love, serve, seek first the Kingdom, break bread together, go and make disciples, and teach. Peter Wittstock has written a fascinating book called *Hear Him*, painstakingly listing and analyzing all the 125 commands of Jesus.

As Jesus gave his disciples the "Great" Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations," we see the three realms of blessing again: fruitfulness, multiplication, and an earth-filling impact on the entire planet. How can this be? As we have seen, blessing means that God dispenses himself, his very own presence and substance, into man for this very central purpose of fruitfulness, multiplication and the filling of the earth. And so we should not be surprised to again find the very same promise of Jesus right here for this three-fold task: "I will be with you!" (Matt. 28:18-20). Finally the "disciples went out and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word" (Mark 16:20). So we have to get back there, at any cost. God's disciples need God's blessing, his endowing and empowering presence, without which the entire endeavor of World Missions becomes absolutely futile.

In other words: we cannot afford to win the world in our own style, spread our spiritual genes and ways everywhere just because we so happen to have started one more denomination or ministry and now feel called to fill the earth with it. McDonalds and Coca Cola have the same, and have done so successfully; and so did every major cult. But does this make them holy? We have to start asking questions about God's ways again, his blueprints for action and his architectural plans for the ekklesia. As we will find out later, there is an amazing

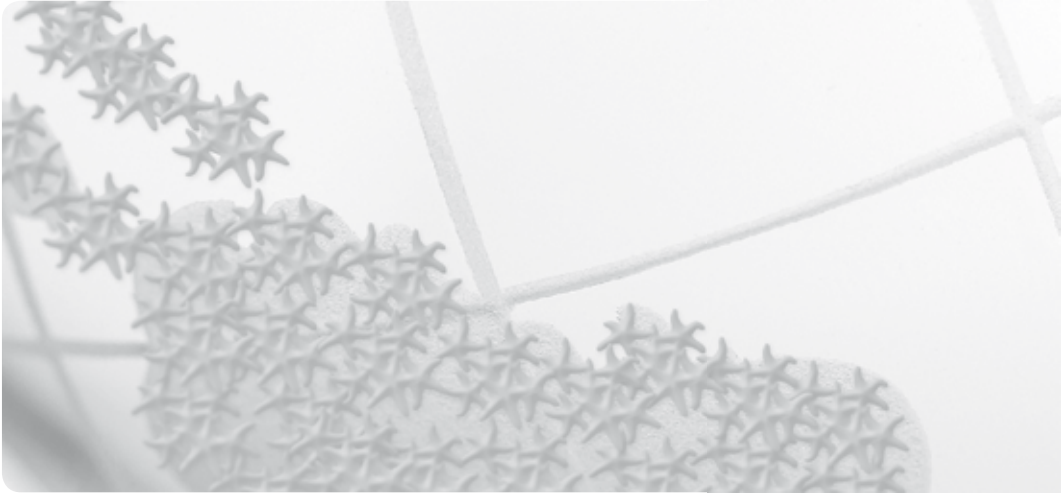
Jesus has declared personal bankruptcy and dependence on God.

foundation of simple yet powerful principles to be rediscovered, things that the church has trampled under its feet in the course of history as it was scrambling to be active and look busy. It's not: "Jesus is coming back – look busy!" But: "Jesus is coming back - be found faithful to his commands."

In the absence of God's blessing we have found unique ways to bless ourselves in ways of self-gratification by means of money, Babylonian style. Arranging ourselves with the principles of Mammon has opened the church wide for demonic influences seen in materialism, false security, and for Christians being forever busy in budgeting, planning, fundraising, and controlling.

If this analysis is correct, the road back to God and into his purposes is two-fold: *repent and restore the ancient paths and the commands of Jesus*. Repent of our covenant-breaking mindset, renew our own covenants with God and each other, and move out of Babylon as quickly and thoroughly as we can. Second: Go back to the *ancient paths* (Jer. 6:16), walk the good way and do everything we can to gain a thorough understanding of God's blueprint for leading a blessed existence. Build accurately within God's revealed patterns in all areas of life, including the church, synchronizing earth with heaven.

Let us pause here for a moment, reflect on this analysis and ask the obvious question: **where do we go from here? If these are the problems, how can we become part of the solution?**



8 Where do we go from here?

“What do you think?

There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

“I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?” Mt 21:28-31

8 Where do we go from here?

My interpretation of what God is currently doing is pretty straightforward and simple. He prepares the world for the return of the King, ushering in the last leg of history. First, he is calling all of us back to a practical submission to Jesus the King, his Kingdom and therefore his Kingdom principles. One of these Kingdom principles is the foundational role of the apostolic and prophetic ministries. **The present historic re-emergence of apostolic and prophetic people and ministries is leading to a threefold reformation.**

The first one is a reformation of ekklesia, the nature, essence and structure of the church. Part 1 is the rediscovery of organic community, the emergence of house (or simple) churches. Part 2 is the rediscovery of the apostolic and prophetic dimension of the church, the restoration of prophetic navigation and apostolic government, and implementation of apostolic building principles, without which even the fledgling new house church movement will be in danger of decaying into self-centered little groups of “us four no more” that have little or no effect on the village, city, or region in which they live, toying with community for their own good rather than living it for the salvation of the surrounding community.

A second reformation is in progress in the area of economics, where God truly is in charge of money and work. At the heart of it lies a recapturing of what I call messianic work and finance principles, something that goes far beyond tithing, “apostles in the market place” or BAM, business as missions.

And **thirdly, this will lead to a reformation and restoration of Christian unity**. As followers of Christ do their homework in reformations one and two, non-apostolic competition and silly sectarianism driven by fear and money will cease to be exciting, and we will quickly move into an era of oneness in spirit and purpose, like a swarm of fish or birds locked into synchronism, miraculously moving as one, almost as if orchestrated by one invisible choreographer.

This can only happen over the dead body of one of the most cherished idols in Western Christianity: pseudo-sacred individualism, where everyone believes there is a God-given right to do as he pleases, not as he should. As the oneness of mind we read about in Acts 1:4 or 2:1 again re-emerges by our individually and corporately going back to the very apostolic and prophetic foundations of the ekklesia, the consequences will be earth-shattering, and this will be felt on an individual, regional, and global level. What price would you be ready to pay for this? What needs to happen to get *you* involved in this?

Individuals and families will experience a deliverance of small-minded, inward-looking, consumer-driven, traditional religion that threatens to transform and degrade them into passive couch-potatoes - paying their tithes and church taxes while watching with increasing boredom Christian professionals run the show. Through an apostolic and prophetic DNA-reconfiguration of their personality (a person’s bios, if you think of a computer), individuals will also experience a literal upgrade of their own human existence, including a restoration of dignity because of a recapturing of their destiny, their original purpose. The biblical word for this is an impartation of grace, a vital element of life in our search for true significance.

Regionally, this will lead to the development of regional apostolic movements in geographical and ethnological jurisdictions that will not always follow the borders of present day nation-states, but the contours that the Finger of God has left in geography and has determined the times and exact places where people groups should live (Acts 17:26). We will witness the emergence of city or regional churches, regional apostolic funds, and deacon networks for works of service, love and compassion for the poor and underprivileged. A new form of church, firmly embedded in between the two poles of secret, underground and organic *koinonia* and more public, governmental aspects of apostolic policy will begin to affect the entire matrix of society: education, economics, arts, culture, media, and politics.

Globally, this will lead to the emergence of a flat-structured, polycentric, post-denominational, extremely well connected and truly international form of Christianity, an apostolic and prophetic movement that in the words of Jesus is a.k.a. *The Bride*. Rather than prescribing anti-aging crèmes and pills for a withered lady, marred by the horrible wrinkles of fragmentation, chattering toothlessly because of endless chewing and bickering over the splitting of Calvin's, Luther's or the latest Pope's or some Christian Guru's hairs in a spirit of religious bigotry, the Lord of the church is inviting you and me to return to the original.

I am sure you have already heard him speak to you, your wife, husband, kids, and grandparents – otherwise, why would you even touch a book like this? We will witness the emergence of periodic and even constant global apostolic prophetic think tanks, resembling the Acts 15 council of Jerusalem, where those called into apostolic and prophetic functions lay aside their own agendas to individually and corporately come before God for his counsel and plans; ready to move when he moves; ready to wait when his pillar of smoke so chooses to linger. We will, among other issues, witness the re-emergence of "Josephs," people called by God and today's Pharaohs into ultra-strategic positions, providing God-given sustenance in an age that will both see the growth of incredible wealth and incredible need, in the emergence of a token taste of that eternal empire of God that the Bible calls the Kingdom.

The God-given blueprint for this has already been almost completely discovered; the people of peace are almost in position and place; the key players are already (or almost) dead to themselves – and therefore ready to be relaunched into action from a Tarsus or Jeremiah's well. When God says "Go!" and *chronos* becomes *kairos*, and with the infusion of only a few dozens of billions in funds, this will radically reshape the entire Christian landscape at a speed that will be breathtaking – and life-giving for many. This is much larger than a reformation back to old-time religion. This is about Reformation Reloaded, about a **Reformation of Life**.

This will not happen uncontested. In fact, I would expect that the entire process outlined above will constantly be underestimated, misunderstood, denounced, outlawed, fought, and betrayed every inch of the way. So what? What is new about that? Most probably, like in the days of Jesus, pharisaic religion will call for its crucifixion; some ill-informed governments will call it a cult; some self-absorbed church leaders will call it rebellion. Otherwise, it's simply called The Church in its final chapter of fulfilling of the Great Commission.

This is about Reformation Reloaded, about a Reformation of Life.

This will mean entering an arena of conflict, passing through a raging fire stoked beyond human ability. Entering this path will mean the fighting of the powers of religious self-preservation. It may mean breaking out of institutionalized forms of religious gluttony and the tradition of men, and overcoming a demonic world dead-intent on tearing down even the slightest thought of anything like this, trying to replace it with a harmless substitute – or join it, when it sees it cannot be stopped. In other words: this is not for the timid. It will require our death that you and I embrace willingly – and dead people cannot be killed again. It means that on this side of heaven, unlike in the dream factory of Hollywood, the heroes of God are crowned by defeat, not triumph. Are we willing to be part of this, or would we rather settle for Church-As-We-Know-It? Remember the film “The Matrix” part one? Neo being offered the red and blue pill by Morpheus? Take the blue pill, wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want. Take the red pill, and discover how deep the rabbit hole goes.

Maybe you say: nobody has ever prepared or called me for something like this; I have stood on the sidelines, watching over the hedge as others played. And, in any case, I am too young, too old, too smart, too dumb, too rich, or too poor. Well, consider this era of self-pity to be history. God *is* calling you. And *you* know that. If no one has done this before, as someone who has taken the red pill, I hereby call on you to rise to this challenge and be recognized. Recognizing that you would not have it if God had not given it to you, I call you to put your God-given sword on the table, be it your gift as an artist, teacher, evangelist, or your money and your talents, your hotel, Chalet, restaurant, ship, plane, helicopter, company car, or your ability to cook or wait on tables.

**This is not for the timid.
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that you and I embrace
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... the heroes of God are
crowned by defeat, not
triumph.**

In Part IV of this book, we will be trying to captivate the re-emergence of the prophetic and apostolic ministries as healthy, biblically and down to earth as possible. If they are the foundational ministries as the Bible describes them, these ministries and the people currently charged with these callings and giftings on earth will be the one single group used by God to reshape and reform the church, and, as a result, will re-shake the world. As these two ministries, unaccustomed to each other for many centuries, initially threaten, then, after the fear wears off, court each other, they are destined to fall in love, get engaged, and finally marry and have very interesting children. A church born out of a legitimate union of apostolic and prophetic ministries will have an entirely different DNA, a different aggregate state, and will be of a different quality altogether. When water meets fire, we discover steam; and, what water and fire on its own could never accomplish, steam can. It can power locomotives, ships and machines to achieve what no one dreamed possible.

We will finally take a closer look at the missional design, the apostolic architecture of the church, and consider some of the apostolic tasks that lie ahead and discuss the implications of this for individuals, churches and regions. If this is where we are going, then all of us will have to come to terms with four realities:

1) TWAWKIO. The-world-as-we-know-it-is-over. Leaving a modern information age and lately a post-modern imagination era behind, we have already entered what I call the *Age of the Spirit*. As the context has dramatically altered, this will require an entirely different rule set, should the church wish to move

up from being the tail to again being the head and scoring goals. The political, economic, and cultural changes today are clearly setting the stage for the last leg of history. As we learn to understand the new rule set, we will not only be able to navigate the times ahead, but prophetically challenge and change at least half of the soon eight billion people on this planet to join in the greatest Jesus movement this world has ever seen.

2) CAWKI, church-as-we-know-it, goes backstage; CAGWI – church-as-God-wants-it - appears for the final act. Ideally, it will be both a revolution outside, and a reformation inside legacy churches that will learn to walk hand in hand and inspire, challenge and cross-fertilize each other. Organizational and traditional, Constantinean Christianity will never cease to exist; but, in this age, it will soon lose much of whatever credit is left *if it continues simply to prolong religious tradition*. If CAWKI does not change and accept a monumental reformation, it will remain a reactive ghetto, angry at a world it no longer understands, a pale caterer of ready-made Christian programs for passive Christian consumers, and will serve as little more than a religious insurance company for the unaware and uneducated in some fear of hell. It also will be seen as a place of immense busyness and growing frustration for those truly called to the world, not to the church, a burial ground for callings and giftings. What emerges, like a butterfly out of a caterpillar, though, is the missional ekklesia, CAGWI, the Church that is designed for mission. It consists of the small and the large, (a) **the organic**, nameless house churches that form multiplying networks and finally city churches and regional, modern “Antiochs”; and (b) of **the more public**, governmental dimension, ekklesia as the parliament of God, a place from which to influence and redefine every matrix of society in the spirit and authority of the Empire of God. In *Houses That Change the World*, I elaborated on (a); this book focuses on (b).

3) Whenever the prophetic and apostolic has been like a mirror reflecting the true intentions and ways of God, this mirror has been diabolically shattered into a thousand pieces and distributed around the globe. Searching out those shards, re-collecting and reassembling them will lead to a recapturing of the vital apostolic and prophetic dimension as a God-given and therefore non-threatening resource for the church – and will initiate a long overdue upgrade of a human version of ekklesia into God’s version.

Throughout church history, there has always been a love-hate relationship between the church and the apostles and prophets, as there was between Israel and the apostles and prophets who God had sent to them (Luke 11:49). The eternal battle between self-absorbed, idolatrous complacency and healthy, missional challenge (let alone the unhealthy ones) has snapped the Christian ties of love again and again. This has resulted in the contemporary, ugly fragmentation of the Body of Christ into roughly 39,000 “protestant” denominations – plus 50,000+ agencies as well as countless religious mom-and-pop shops - outside the pseudo-apostolic Roman Catholic system. All of them, let’s face it, will never even agree to agree. And the only way forward may very well be the leaving of the CAWKI-Matrix altogether - and joining the formation of a global new wineskin, an entirely different species of ekklesia. *This is exactly what I propose.*

For this, we will have to cut through a jungle of hot and conflicting claims

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coming from larger-than-life personalities, guru-driven cults, and so-called apostolic networks that look strikingly like the denominations of old and religious empires around uncrucified, religious, alpha males. But take heed: before the arrival of something genuine, let's simply expect Satan, the great tumbler of things, to put out yet another smokescreen—a fake, immature, upside-down version of what God is about to do—so that, when the real thing comes, people might give a tired wave and look the other way. As easily as the Pharisees and Sadducees dismissed their own Messiah right before their very noses, people might miss out once again and fall into an exhausted slumber like the five proverbial virgins on low battery power after the religious excitement of the pseudo-apostolic fake fades away. Satan usually counts on an ample supply of people who are naively convinced they are ready before they are ready, the pre-desert Moses, pre-Tarsus Pauls of the day.

This means that we will have to walk across a lot of burned ground together. While our soles touch the smoldering remains of movements and groups that have proclaimed “We are it!” only to crumble and fall apart before our eyes, another fading wave, we shall press on, driven by the conviction that the real, authentic apostolic prophetic Christianity exists. This conviction is fuelled by the fact that we know our own hunger for it is real. And as we ask God for a fish, he won't give us a snake. Discovering and engaging in the apostolic dimension of ekklesia will therefore lead to an immense upgrade of existence, liberation of long trapped potential, as we embrace the mind-boggling dimension of the cross. Maybe it is God Himself who wants to attempt to win back the spent and nearly-lost trust the people of God have suffered at the hand of the proud claims of self-appointed Super-apostles and prophetic enterprises scorching the land. Maybe God invites all of us to not throw out the baby with the bathwater, and keep hoping and looking for the true apostolic and prophetic people among us and go wild together and with God.

Satan usually counts on an ample supply of people who are naively convinced they are ready before they are ready, the pre-desert Moses, pre-Tarsus Pauls of the day.

4) All this is leading towards a Reformation of Missions. Missions has been, for a long time, mostly an extra-church activity, centering on the sending out of persons from CAWKI, to reproduce, at best, inter-cultural and adapted forms of CAWKI in other areas and cultures, driven and mostly financed from a HQ on the other side of the planet. A missionary force of currently around 450,000 individual “missionaries” is doing good – but is it “doing God?” Are truly all of them sent by God? Given the amazing burnout rates, attrition, frustration, replication, duplication and plain repetition that so characterizes modern missions for anyone who cares to look behind the scenes, where the exceptions confirm the rule: **how apostolic is what we today call Missions?** The validity of one's being sent in the New Testament is directly linked either to the direct promptings of the Spirit, as in the case of Philip (Acts 8), or to biblical apostolic ministry – they are the ones who were sent, or they are the ones who send others. God has sent out many things in the past: the Bible speaks of the fact that he sent signs and wonders, prophets, his spirit, his son, his word, his angels. Jesus sent out The Twelve, later the Seventy Two, and, even later, apostolic teams like Paul and Barnabas. How many of today's missionaries are truly sent by God? Or just by a church, agency or, at worst, religious zealots or imperialists who, in usurping and assuming an apostolic role, function in bold replacement of God the sender? We would have to judge that by the fruit. And as we later take a closer look

at “apostolic fruits,” I will leave this discernment to you.

It is a sad fact that most of today’s “mission” activities happen unrelated to each other, outside any apostolic framework or a cohesive, legitimate, locally driven apostolic strategy, and therefore the right hand typically does not know what the left is doing. The immense waste of time, lives, energy, and money, where everyone is frantically reinventing the wheel, forever on planes and in board meetings, out there finding yet another white spot on the map of the world to implement *our* angle, *our* program and drive the flag of *our* church or missions into foreign soil – violating one of the Pauline principles of never building on another man’s foundation – and hiring one more national or regional director for *our* Church X or *our* Mission Y, is simply not worth being called Christian, let alone apostolic. It’s a religious business whose hour has come to an end in sync with the great global fading of CAWKI.

In spite (or because?) of all that talk of strategic partnership in Missions, an amazing wave of roundtable-ism and tales of synergy, most churches and missions still ignore some of the very core principles of apostolic mission. Often, this leads to nothing more than a reproduction of non-apostolic and non-prophetic forms of church and ministries, simply adding quantity, not quality, multiplying our own inherited religious DNA, an ecclesial and behavioral code, into other areas of the world. This, I contend, might actually prevent and slow down missions in the name of missions.

However, as we move into an age of the apostolically and prophetically designed church, the DNA, the very sending base, the template of ekklesia itself changes completely, and therefore completely redefines missions. Missions is no longer a delegated activity for the local church misfits and enthusiasts, but becomes the very heartbeat, the DNA, the inbuilt ability and engine of Church-as-God-wants-it. *Missions then means to stop sending out missionaries, because the church is sending out itself, multiplying house churches, networks of house churches and whole regional “Antiochs” in a viral, epidemic fashion, carefully observing the apostolic principles of the Bible and moving under the prophetic guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

I believe this will increase the number of “missionaries” dramatically, and the church will start to behave like a starfish, that amazing sea animal that has regenerative and therefore reproductive abilities beyond our wildest imagination. Cut it almost any way you like, and it will grow back those cut off legs, while the severed leg itself will grow back into an entirely new starfish. The cut (read: persecution, opposition, threats, excommunications, crucifixions, and martyrdoms) actually does not damage, but speeds up the multiplication of the species. That is why this book concludes with the logical consequences of this reformation of mission.

Ideas have consequences

If the wrong ideas have been guiding us, we need new ones. One of my basic themes here is that the entire thinking pattern established behind CAWKI is faulty to the core and needs to be changed. Ideas have consequences, and if we want to see things changed, we do not have to change our practice, but our ideologies, which legitimize our practice. As we then “change our thinking” (Rom 12), our actions will follow. As Christians, we have been victims of too

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If we want to see things changed, we do not have to change our practice, but our ideologies, which legitimize our practice.

many lofty theological opinions. That is why I will try to connect every major statement I make here with the bedrock of biblical revelation and indicate references of biblical texts in brackets. The inspired word of God is the only available plumb line for life and faith, and I have done my best to show biblical principles based on biblical theology first, before I come to implications and applications. In all cases, I recommend you have your Bible ready to re-examine some thoughts and theologies that are new or unfamiliar to you before you dismiss or accept them. It is my passion for biblical theology that makes me believe that the truth will set us free. But more than that, it is my passion for the person of Jesus that has taught me that it is never theological systems, doctrines, or the letter of the law that breathes life, but our intimate, personal, and passionate relationship with the lover of our soul, Jesus, that ultimately makes all the difference in the world – and beyond.

Open source

If it is not anymore about us having found the truth, but the truth having found us, who has a copyright on it any longer? This is also why I have decided not to publish this book the conventional way – buy it, read it, shelve it - but use it as an invitation to join an apostolic-prophetic “open source project.”

In closed source projects, individuals hold their cards close to their chests, and personally speak a final and seminal word on an issue. What you get is a snapshot out of a film, a limited book, a personal opinion. You take it or leave it.

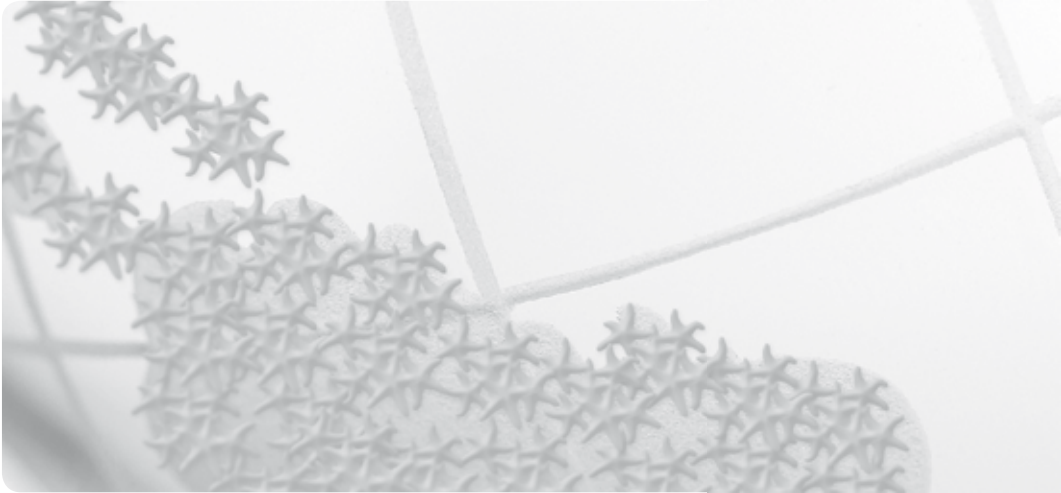
In the software world, we speak of open source projects if a core of software developers give deliberate access to the program code (which would be a holy cow for closed source projects because it would mean to lay the cards open on the table) and ask gifted individuals to participate in a constant upgrading of the program. Linux, Thunderbird, Firefox and others are some expressions of this.

What you get is a network node, an entry point to join the definitely most exciting adventure this planet has for us humans: participating in how the Great Commission comes to its conclusion.

We will need a constantly evolving and open-minded apostolic and prophetic knowledge base, where all those committed to this present phase of the Kingdom can participate, and, by their own contribution, can help evolve and fine-tune systems and patterns for the current apostolic advances on the planet.

This is the engine, the operating system of the Starfish partnership, that will welcome anyone anywhere to contribute who he is and whatever he or she brings to the table in the service of our King.

Once any one of us says “yes” to this, it will be like joining our hand with Jesus, responding to the frequency of The Holy Spirit, and following the calling of our father in heaven. And if our past life has been lived within traditional forms of Church or Missions, this will mean going on a spiritual journey that I call apostolic migration, the subject of the following chapter.

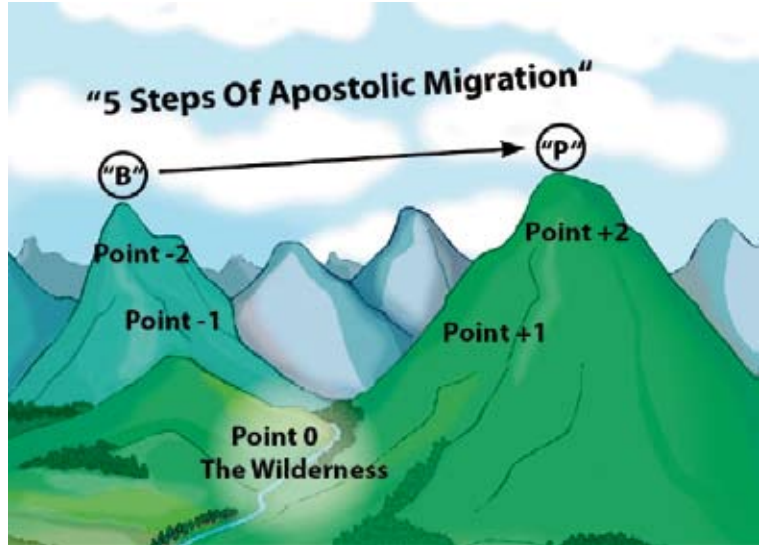


9 Apostolic Migration

And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"
"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. Gen 16:8

Hagar was unable to answer two simple questions by the angel.

9 Apostolic Migration



Each autumn we experience a mass migration of many animals, like migratory birds when they fly to warmer areas. In spring the birds leave their winter exile and return to settle in again. Birds do this instinctively; they follow their built-in wanderlust, rather than making a decision based on pros and cons of migration. This migration is inspired by an inner impulse of every bird – and a healthy herd instinct.

In Christianity, we are now witnessing such a migration of global proportions. An ever-increasing number of followers of Jesus Christ are getting restless, starting to ask questions they never asked before. They can't see or find their place in traditional churches anymore. And so, they are breaking camp, getting out, jumping the fence, entering a search mode, moving away from the masses, breaking new ground, finding new friends, and becoming part of an entirely new, exciting scenario. If you talk to these people, you will hear things like this: "God has asked me to leave. I feel I need to move on; there is this little voice in me that won't be silent, telling me to seek God outside traditional boxes." And they would follow others who are role models for them. Sure, there is a false and unhealthy herd instinct that does not listen to the spirit of God, but conforms, trotting along to the peer pressure of folks around them. This is the safest way to end up as a domestic duck, running with the masses, governed by traditionalism, fear, false security, and fear of change. No, we won't even start to discuss their end here.

In the last chapter we explored why this global spiritual depression has resulted in a full-blown Babylonian Captivity of the Church. Speaking figuratively, this means that the Holy Spirit stands at Babylon Railway Station, blowing his big whistle. He calls for repentance, return, and migration back into the Promised Land of true New Testament apostolic-prophetic Christianity. And he

calls not just for cosmetic changes, but for us to align our entire architecture and DNA to biblical standards, calling everyone to wake up, get packed, move, and join the great move that I call an apostolic Migration. Before all of us start moving, we need to get back to the rulebook, for good.

Back to the Bible

"Clean people have dirty bibles", one of my spiritual fathers kept telling me. Find folks with tattered bibles, worn out by constant use, colored, ripped apart and sown together, and you find gold. Some decades ago, it was normal for a fight to break out here and there over accepting certain passages of the Bible as binding for life. In today's world, the practical rejection of the Bible altogether has become epidemic in many parts of Christendom - even in the Bible belt. One of my friends, a pastor in a major "Bible-believing church," asked a member of his CAWKI-church to quit committing adultery. The story became public, and who got fired? Right, the "unloving" pastor.

The phenomenon of experience-driven rebellious Christians ready to celebrate themselves at every moment has two symptoms: the rejection of biblical authority as such – and the readiness to believe absolutely everything, as long as it is *not* written in the Bible, and as long as it is fun. On the other hand we witness an astonishing rediscovery of the Bible, for example among new converts, or those Chinese Christians learning by heart entire chapters of the Bible, or Western discipleship movements like the ones you find at Church Multiplication Associates, inspired by my friend, church planter Neil Cole (USA).

Blessing, as we have seen, occurs where people live and work within the ordinances and patterns laid out by God in his word. Internal and external poverty follows where people just won't do that. The Bible also indicates a last, great harvest, and speaks of a last, great persecution, both issues that God is making his people ready for today. The direction is clear: back to the word of God – or, in the language of Swiss prophet Erich Reber: "Learn to eat my word again, and go back to the mountain of transfiguration where you will see no one but Jesus alone".

So the simple answer to the question "where does the Holy Spirit wants us to go?" is back to the Bible, back to God, back to the roots of the Christian faith, no matter what. This has gripped the hearts and minds of millions, and lies at the heart of the present realignment and reconfiguration of the Church. This global spiritual migration usually seems to happen in five steps or phases. I call those phases -2 to +2. It is a bit like moving from one mountain peak to the other. **Peak B** (Babylon) gives a great view to **Peak P** (prophetic-apostolic Christianity). It looks as if you can almost touch it, but, alas, you can't move from B to P straight as the crow flies. It requires an often difficult and painful descent from one mountaintop, negotiating the valley in between, and then, ascending an entirely different mountain. Not all will succeed at that. The following will help to explain why **most Christian leaders of one era cannot become the leaders of the next era**.

Here a brief look at the five phases of this journey:

Point -2: Our church is *the* church

This is where most Christians are today as this new move of God unfolds. Most are just plain unaware of anything outside their small religious world and have

Where does the Holy Spirit wants us to go? Back to the Bible, back to God, back to the roots of the Christian faith, no matter what.

settled for a simplistic conclusion; our church is all there is! Some are born into their church tradition, some have chosen a form of “happy-clappy” Churchianity where they feel good about themselves. When you talk to such church members about the need for a new paradigm, their response is basically, *“I have no idea what you are talking about.”* Their little world is either such a safe religious haven, or they think the new choir is just great, the last conference was outstanding, the new pastor very promising, and the building and parking lot almost paid off. Any talk of a Babylonian captivity is considered a joke, at best, and the motto is: “Do not confuse me with the facts.” This ostrich mentality can quickly evolve into a dance on the tip of a volcano, once the finances get tight, the burnout-fever strikes or people start leaving for a hip church next door. Such a house-of-cards can quickly collapse when something happens to one’s idolized church or guru. People at waypoint -2 need to hear a simple **message**: read the newspaper, look out the window, and look at the signs of the time. Your small religious world made up of theological debris is burning, the days of old-time religion are over, therefore get up, start moving, - or keep drifting into a religious oblivion.

Point - 1: The Balancing Act

This second point or step in the process of apostolic migration represents people who are no longer satisfied with happy-clappy church as they have known it. These are people who have heard from God about more authentic expressions of church. After all, which prophet has ever prophesied that the future will just be like the present? First, however, they usually say: “something must happen – but nothing should change.” They have begun to move in their spirits, but their bodies and their money have not yet moved. This begins to stretch them – and leads them into a spiritual balancing act. It’s like that you are sitting in the wrong bus – and you keep sitting there. You see, the seat is nicely warmed, the neighbors so very friendly, the ticket has been paid, and after all, what would the people think. We are inwardly torn. A fresh vision has gripped us, let’s say, by stumbling across the stunning verses in Acts 2:42-47, and has left us hungry, thrown us into a creative crisis. With time, the tensions only grow bigger and bigger – until the pain becomes unbearable, and we get up and press that red button – and get out of the bus.

The message for folks at waypoint -1: be honest to yourself, follow your heart, end the balancing act soon, and press that button.

Ground 0: Welcome to the desert

This is where we get out of the bus, and, my goodness, find ourselves in the middle of a desert! Looking like losers, alone, vulnerable, shivering in the cold, we face a time of thirst, dark valleys, and reorientation. We feel that we are being broken and we experience what the biblical kernel of wheat feels as it falls into the ground to die. We realize: the old must die to make room for the new. This is where pastors and other leaders start selling shoes and driving taxis again. Yes, we emigrated from Babylon, but now Babylon in us has to die. It’s a place of quarantine: once we are out of the system – the system also has to get out of us. For this very reason God engineers the wilderness as a place of *“spiritual death”* to the old, a place of *“religious detoxification”* where God deals with our “baggage.” The **message** for folks at this waypoint is: die thoroughly!

**Yes, we emigrated from
Babylon, but now
Babylon in us has to die.
It’s a place of quarantine:
once we are out of the
system – the system also
has to get out of us.**

Don't linger at all the oasis and force your survival with all those gimmicks and tricks. God has arranged for our big self to die – our religious ego, our fleshly, consumer-oriented Christianity that had only one question: *what's in it for me?* This mindset cannot be disciplined – it has to be killed. And, this cleansing process takes time, more time than most would think. As a rule of thumb, one month quarantine for each year of passive participation in traditional Christianity. For active ones (like paid church/mission staff): double that!

Point +1: The Jordan

This is the phase at which people choose to leave the past and the wilderness behind and to “cross over the Jordan” into the new paradigm of what God is doing. This requires both a *leaving* (of the old) and a *cleaving* (to the new). It requires us to “uncovenant” with what has gone before, and to make a new covenant with God's new unfolding paradigm. Jonathan is a (bad) example for this. Jonathan covenanted twice with David, the new (apostolic) leader, while he himself was the son of King Saul, the rightful and appointed heir to the throne of Israel. But: “(David) rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city.” (1 Sam. 20:42). Jonathan was unable to “uncovenant” from Saul and his system, and in spite of yet another covenant with David, ultimately died with his father. Here at “the Jordan,” where we can already smell and see the promised land, hear the cowbells on the other side, is also the place that requires an ultimate step: leave the old, overcome a life lived by sympathies, and simply do better than Jonathan. And know what? In the desert you will have met many new friends, fellow-pilgrims, fellow-outcasts. After some time you wonder: what once looked like a lonely loser looks now more like a movement of pioneers! **The message:** say your farewell quickly – and get into the water. You will see; it will part for you, too.

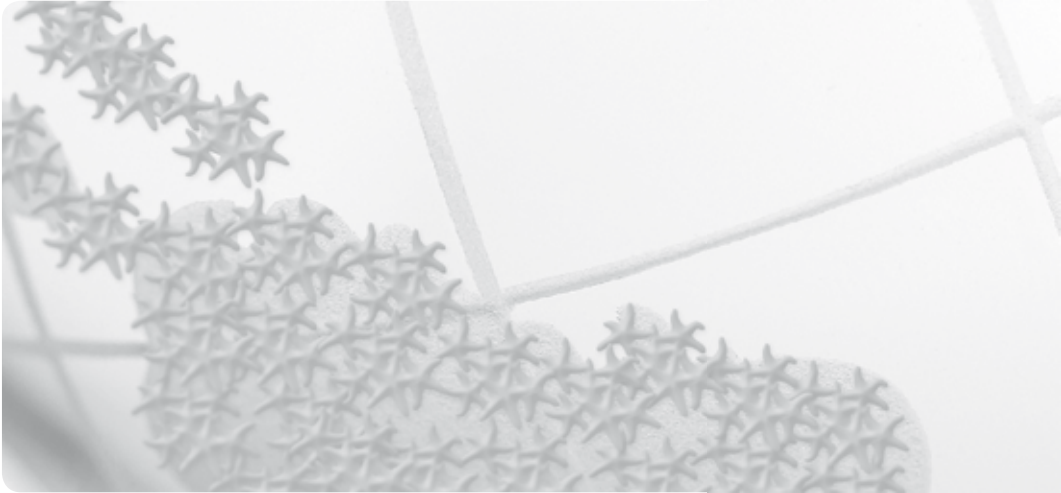
Point + 2: Apostolic Conquest

Once you have crossed that Jordan, it's time to take up your position together with others and start taking the land for God. Here you need to answer three key questions for your life: what is your personal mission? Where (geography) are you supposed to live and work? And with whom has God placed you? A former question, “What church is good for me,” fades, and is replaced by a much more important one: What kind of church can take and possess the land? What kind of church is good for God? Like in the early days, this will lead us into developing regional strategies, house church networks, city churches, five-fold ministries, a citywide servanthood that I call apostolic diaconia – and much, much more. As the church again functions “under God,” so also we as a person and family will find our place of godly destiny. If this is not worth dropping everything else for, then what is?

Where (and when) in this migration are you at this point? What, therefore, will be your next step? And where on the U-map are those very close to you, the people you love and know? Why not take a big piece of paper right now, draw your version of this “U-turn” and enter the waypoints -2 to +2, and add the names of people around you as you see them on this journey. Then, develop a specific message for those at the various stages to better understand their own situation, help them to find that red dot on the big map of life that says: “You are here!” and encourage them to move into the right direction.

A former question, “What church is good for me,” fades, and is replaced by a much more important one: What kind of church can take and possess the land? What kind of church is good for God?





10 My own story

**“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.
“Come and see,” said Philip. Jn 1:46**

10 My own story

By now you might be asking: How does any of this look like in your own life, Wolfgang Simson? So I would like to share a bit of my story here. On a larger, truly reflective, theological scale, I would say that much of theology is actually spelled “biography.” *“Who are you and how have you become the way you are?”*, are so much better questions than just *“what do you know?”*

Plainly, if someone had suggested even 20 years ago that I would be writing such a book, I would have laughed in his face. In many ways, the older I get (I was born in 1959) the less I feel qualified at all, and I increasingly suspect that I have been pulled into this without being told where this was going. There was a time when I would have felt privileged. I felt I was sure about things; I had seen success, even tremendous success by any standards. Today, I am not so sure. Rather than giving you my complete story, let me give you a peek through some defining moments in my life. I feel I live a small life with a small family in one of the smallest villages on the planet, complete with a small budget and riding probably one of the smallest mopeds that you have ever seen. But even a small guy can have a big God, right?

My first revival

The only revival that I can remember in my childhood was when I was three. My mom was playing the organ in a small Lutheran church in a small Swabian village called Beuren near Stuttgart. It was Christmas Eve, and the church was packed full with people. Since there was no place on the pews anymore, I had to sit on the edge of the organ bench. I tried. At the very end, somewhere between *Silent Night* and *Oh Tannenbaum (Oh Christmas tree)*, I was gone. Having fallen deeply asleep, I sank down and hit the foot pedals of the organ. It screamed like a wounded elephant – loud like you would not believe. Everyone was startled. I think some spring had broken, so it kept on screaming no matter what key my poor mom pressed or whatever she pulled or pushed. The behemoth of an organ had to be finally shut down. The good part was that someone had rushed and gotten me a chocolate, since I was crying. Later someone joked and said: at a very tender age, you have experienced all the main symptoms of a modern day revival. Loud church music, standing room only, you fell down, everyone was excited, you cried, and later you laughed (chocolate-related).

The only other vivid memories of church was that I felt sleepy the moment we entered, that I could not remember a single word the pastors ever said, that it was always cold, and that, economically speaking, my participation in “confirmation class” was one of best paid jobs (counted as cumulative value of all gifts received divided by hours in class) I have had so far.

Otto’s legacy

As I grew up with my single mom, we sought and found a boarding school. It turned out to be a joint venture of the State and the Lutheran Church, the Evangelisches Seminar Maulbronn and Blaubeuren, a “seminary” that gets you ready for theological education in the prestigious university-town, Tübingen. The same school that Hölderlin and Hesse had attended; and most remar-

kably, Otto. Otto Keller was a lovely, tough, hard laughing character, a student everyone liked - until he became a Christian. Once after a spring break, Otto excitedly called me into his dorm room and shared with me how he had met Christ. I considered him to have gone mad. But after all, he was such a nice guy. Few years later Otto died in a car accident. Seeing pastors, deans and deacons everywhere, and walking everyday through an empty monastery where we students were made to sing the *Complete* (that monotonous monks' song) convinced me beyond the shadow of any doubt that neither theology nor church was for me. Never say never.

An Angel on the streets of Stuttgart

1982 proved to be a turning point in my life. I had finished my A-levels and was waiting for a spot in the university to open up for me to study medicine. In the meantime, I did civil service in exchange for the military service in Germany, and was later asked to take over a social worker's job in the service of the government. In winter, this meant taking care of up to 200 stranded and homeless people, often brought to us by the police who had picked them up on the roadside, frozen stiff in their own vomit and urine. This was not a harmless job, since representing "the government" to people who saw themselves as society's rejects could be quite dangerous, and it often happened that someone would break a beer bottle and chase others around with the sharp-edged makeshift weapon he had just created. For some reason I found it easy to make friends with a few folks who had been with the notorious French foreign legion and had gone slightly mad, but not mad enough not to be my bodyguards.

Through the indescribable human tragedies represented there, the pain, blood, sufferings, and crazy stories I was seeing and hearing on a daily basis – academics becoming drunkards, beating up their wives, thrown out of their own apartments, falling apart and living like animals on the streets, until they finally ended up in the government homeless shelter I helped run, I was asking myself the question: what if Otto was right; what if there was a God out there whom we could know? There must be. Was it possible, like Otto and others I knew were saying, that there was a way to personally know Jesus? Jesus had impressed me with his stand for justice, almost as much as the church I had known so far has failed to impress me.

And then something unbelievable happened. For months on end I had been drinking coffee with a suicidal man in that shelter, after his dad had just visited him, just to convince him again and again not to take his life. This happened every 2nd Tuesday, when his father, a stout Swabian, would come in his impeccable white Mercedes 200D and tell him helpfully what a black sheep he was. Once, returning to work after a long vacation, I opened the newspapers and saw in the obituary section a line that said: "No one knows why." A man had poured petrol over himself and had died. And you guessed it: it was my every 2nd-Tuesday-guy! It made me angry and gave me a feeling of utter helplessness. Here I tried my best to change the world for good, and can't even keep one suicidal, depressed man from killing himself. It's not just – not just at all, I thought. Where was God in all this? I pondered. Could it be that he is out there, Jesus, like some folks have told me, folks like Otto?

A few days later, I was driving home. I had been at a jazz session, it was

around twelve midnight, the restaurants and cinemas in Stuttgart were closing and the streets were full of folks hurrying home. I sat in my old, green Ford Escort, listening to music, sitting on Friedrich Strasse, a ten lane street, 300 meters from the railway station waiting for a red light to turn green, when suddenly a man appeared at my window, knocking. I shot him a glance: black coat, 40-ish, hat. Looked like an upper class tourist who had lost his way to the railway station.

“Can I ask you a question?” he said.

“Sure,” I conceded, notching down my tape player to hear him ask his question, probably about where the railway station was. However, I was not prepared for what came next.

He pointed his finger at me and said: “Do you know Jesus Christ personally?”

I was shocked, transfixed by this question as if it were an arrow. How in the world could this man know that I am secretly asking that very question, just now? And so I sputtered something like “Would be great!” just to get rid of the man, and yes, finally the red light turned green and I could get out of that trap.

In my off hours of the social workers job, and even before, I had been working as a taxi driver in Stuttgart. When you live on the roads, day in day out, I’ll tell you a little taxi driver’s secret: you develop eyes at the back of your head, too. I looked back at the black-clad guy to see whether he runs to cross the five-lane road, dodges the cars that have started fast, or just stands still. So much more was my shock when I saw him vanish into thin air, right before my very eyes! He was definitely gone. I almost had an accident, that’s how surprised I was. Probably you would have been, too. To my knowledge, I have had a number of strange experiences in my life before, but to see a man, an angel? – whatever – dissolve into thin air in the midst of Stuttgart was a bit heavy.

Somehow I made it home, shaken up, into a small furnished room at Birkendörfle, a small road on the side of Stuttgart’s Killesberg. Sitting down in my room, I found a Bible, sitting on a shelf collecting dust. My mother had come to Christ a few years before through the tapes series of a Dutch Evangelist called Wim Malgo, and had been trying her best to win me over, too. I took that big book, opened it to anywhere, and started to read. “Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Yes, it is possible, this verse said, to know God, personally, I thought. Straight answer to my secret question! Could it be another “accident?” I went down on my knees before my closet, and started talking to God.

A church with closed doors

In the weeks that followed, I hungrily consumed the entire Bible, reading it in one go. As I read through the book of Acts, it hit me: “Dear God! I’ve been visiting all the wrong churches! The real ones must still be out there!” So I started out to visit every church in Stuttgart I could find. Out of decency, I will keep my various disappointments to myself. They would fill a separate book that hopefully will never be written. I found no way to enter the system! I was offered paper, told to come again some time, and given ever more paper. No discipleship, no personal touch, no one who took me under his wing, just programs and more programs. What I did not yet understand, then, was that the

Lutheran Church in Germany that I was born into had become so adamantly liberal and humanistic that it had ceased to be a Christian church at all. To give you just a little idea of it: when I came home to Beuren, the small German village where I had grown up, I walked up to the Lutheran pastor, who knew me well. I told him: "Pastor So-and-so, I think I have converted to Jesus, and now I kind of feel like the lost son coming home. Can I be of any help - let's say start a youth group, a prayer group, anything?"

"Only over my dead body!" the man barked. And it seemed he meant it.

Because of an early and acute sense of justice, as a young man I had been involved in politics. From the day of my conversion I knew that once I had found answers, I needed to share them with others and arrange life accordingly. So I set out to do what I had earlier vowed not to do: study theology. Through various circumstances, God led me to study in Basel, Switzerland, at a free Evangelical theological academy, then the only seminary-level theological institution in the entire German speaking world, I learned later, that actually still believed the Bible was the inspired word of God. Learning Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and "Commentarian" or *theologese*, that secret theologian's language, probably a form of Christian Sanskrit, an artificially complicated language strictly for Priests only to safeguard a body of secret religious knowledge (and the business that can be made out of selling bits and pieces of this esoteric knowledge to an otherwise uninformed laity Sunday after Sunday), I waited for "it." When, I wondered, will they cut to the chase and tell us how to do what Jesus had commissioned us to do: to disciple the nations?

It never came. "For the next 5 years, theological study is now your proper worship," we were seriously told. "So, study 90% of your time, and the other 10% go get involved in some local church." I did try. From the very beginning of my Christian life, I instinctively knew that I was supposed to have something to do with winning Muslims to the one for whom they unknowingly search: Christ. And so I would go to one of 20 churches over the course of the next months and say to the pastor or whomever I could talk to from the church leadership: "I have come here to study theology and plan to be a missionary. Can I join your church?"

Usually, that caused two reactions. One: theology students usually bring problems, because they have all those fresh questions, and their Greek and Hebrew is usually better than the rusted version of the pastor's. So there was an "I see, aha, I see!" response (meaning: another one of those.) And the missionary part meant that in 5 years this man would probably end up on our budget. So the final response typically was: "Very good; and this is a serious issue, brother. Why don't you pray about this some more to see if God would confirm this! And make sure you have looked into all other options." A pious way of saying: please do find another church! For me this meant that this church business was really getting to me. Or was something wrong with me? Had I forgotten to brush my teeth?

The answer came after a weekly indoor football session some of us students had, over a good cold glass of beer afterwards; I sat down with two bible school graduates, new friends of mine, Ralf Dörpfeld and Volker Heitz. All three of us had a mission vision. And all three of us had found it hard to find a place in church. And so, half-jokingly at first, we came to a serious decision. Let us start a church ourselves, straight from scratch, with new converts from the very

streets of Basel. And when the church has grown big enough, we will send us out ourselves – but don't tell anybody about it.

However, that's exactly what happened. We started what would today be called a youth church that was organized as an organic house church (although we had never heard of it); eating, celebrating, out on the streets, into each others life, all like *a big fat Greek wedding* – if you know the famous film. We were praying, Bible reading, baptizing, back on the streets all the time, interrupted by short stints at my theological seminary. And people came to Christ so quickly that within a very few years, we had grown to 200-300, a sizable church for Basel, Switzerland, where the largest church in the country then was somewhere around 1,000 in attendance.

My theological suicide

Two events were extremely formative for me during this time. One I call my "theological suicide." The other is traditionally called, "the calling" – the moment God introduced me into the mission for which I exist.

First things first. Our new church in Basel saw quite a growth. Other churches started respecting us; we even became known around the country. But two things bothered me beyond measure. One aspect of this was that even if "our church" would continue to grow at a rate of 100% per year as it did in the first 4 years, it was still a drop in the bucket compared with the big picture. The overall city of Basel then had 219,000 inhabitants, and together with another 50 Evangelical and 50 nominal churches at that time, we saw a combined church attendance of 6.4% of the city's population. Altogether, those who had an "Evangelical" conviction saw 2.1%, as Volker Heitz and I found out in a meticulous research we called "*Wie christlich ist Basel?*" This bugged me. Was our job to grow another church, church number 101, or was it to reach an entire city, region or even nation? Even when some groups started to get worried about our growth, I felt we were barely scratching the surface.

The other aspect was that we experienced hardly any supernatural events. In the Bible we were reading about signs, wonders, transportations in the spirit; we knew about a few cases from church history. We had heard about recent miracles in Indonesia and China, but our own daily work was kind of dry. Hours and hours of tough work, following up street evangelistic contacts, endlessly reading the Bible with folks, talk, talk, talk, and then back to the seminary. More talk, more paper. I was reading two books a week, listening to witty Professors all day long, and I sensed something within me becoming somewhat proud and arrogant with all that accumulating knowledge. If I would listen to someone's sermon, it would probably not take me long to figure out to what theological school the person adhered and which books the person had read. Everything was so terribly "boxed," explainable, logic. In other words: things became predictable for me. Predictable meant boring, and boring meant I lost touch with the living God. I knew I was in deep trouble when I once sat through one of my really "quiet times" one morning, reading Isaiah 30:15 ("Call on me and I will show you *things that you don't know*") and kept asking myself: What else could there be out there? However, God convicted me of my silly and naïve small-mindedness, and I immediately knew what an incredible arrogance it was for me to think that way. Now that was a new thought I had not known before.

I started crying out to God about this, and with the other two men, we

decided to come together every morning for an hour of prayer to cry out to God for his hand to be stretched out to us and through us. It went on for months. In one instance, I was traveling with Volker, one of the guys, in his beat-up white Volkswagen Beetle on the highway. It was winter 1985-86 and pretty cold outside, so I remember we turned on the car's heater, which was kind of tricky, since quite an amount of exhaust would then be miraculously blown into the car at the same time, which again meant you had to open the windows, which meant it became colder... you get the picture.

Here I sat in that fuming car 30 km outside Basel and prayed: "God, I am tiring of all this fleshly work I am doing. I know it looks exciting to those who don't know us, but I feel it does not seem to get us anywhere. Help!!" Then, a flash went through my head, and I had an idea. "OK Jesus, here is what I'll do. I hereby formally invite you to do things to me and through me that I do not understand. I quit wanting to understand before I act. I surrender that filter of my human mind that sits as a judge and tells me what is acceptable and what is not, what might be of God, and what might not. I'll quit putting everything into a box. And I want to go one step further. Jesus, I invite you to do things to me and through me that, at this point, I honestly feel are theologically wrong and should be forbidden – as long as this is you. Amen!" The fumes in the car were not really inviting for me to take a deep sigh, but I did. It almost felt as if something had cracked within me. "*This is my theological suicide*," I joked to Volker. "Look, all those hard years of theological training to figure everything out, and then such a ridiculous prayer. I feel like a fool!"

Your mission is...

However, something began that day on the highway that unfolded as I went on. The first thing that actually changed in my life was that I somehow was able to show my feelings for God again, for example to cry when I prayed. But then came something I had read about, heard about, hoped for – but was not quite ready when it happened to me. God stepped into my life in a way I could not have imagined. Actually, it started with a small prayer retreat in a small place called Rührberg, a few kilometers outside Basel. Six or seven of us had come together as a church leadership to pray about the future direction for "our church." One morning we decided that each one of us would take a time-out with God alone for five hours, and then regroup and discuss what we had "heard." I started to walk into the woods all by myself, and thought: "Five hours! How will I make it through five hours of prayer? What is there to talk about our church with God for five hours?"

However, I did start to pray for a few minutes, when suddenly someone spoke to me in a clear, gentle, audible voice with great clarity. "My son, stop it. Let me ask you some questions." I stopped dead in my tracks, making a 360-degree turn in that forest to see who or what is happening to me. But the voice carried on, and in an instant, I knew who was talking. "What is it that you can be thankful for in your life this far?" he asked.

Obediently, I started thinking about this. And within minutes, I was crying, listing all the good things in my life, feeling overwhelmed with the goodness of God who had done so many good things for me. Then God started to say a few sentences about my role on this planet: why I was here, what was my mission, and what would happen. I beg your pardon for not sharing this in

detail at this point, because you would probably think the very same thing that I thought when I heard it myself. At the end of this, he gave me what I call a homework assignment. God gave me four names and told me to go and learn everything I can from them. These names were Peter Wagner, John Wimber, Ralph Winter and Don McCurry.

I had read of them but knew none of these four men personally at that time. I was surprised to find out that all of them essentially lived in one city, Los Angeles. And I was wondering, how can I walk up to these well known Christian leaders and tell them: "Hi, I'm Wolfgang, a Christian taxi driver from Germany; please teach me all you know; God told me to ask."

As a boy who had grown up fatherless, I had a time when I was calling out to God to be my father, to give me human fathers and make me a father for others. And God started to answer this one by one. He gave me people who had somewhat of a father's function in my life, a long list of more than 40 people, among them men like Colton Wickramaratne, an apostolic man from Colombo, Sri Lanka; Indian Evangelist Sadhu Chellappa, who later became my father-in-law; Prof. Samuel Külling, Old Testament scholar and founder of the theological seminary where I studied and whose assistant I later became; Donald McGavran, Professor of Church Growth at Fuller School of World Mission; Werner Sidler of Switzerland, prayer pioneer and long-term missionary to Ethiopia; Brian Mills (Interprayer, UK); Roger Forster, and in one way also Roger Mitchell, formerly from Ichthus Christian Fellowship, London.

Roger Mitchell was one of the guys who came over from London once in a while to visit and mentor our new church in Basel. We had been searching for father figures who would stand with us, correct us, and encourage us as we wished to be involved in missionary church-planting and tell us once in a while that we were not crazy; but to tell the truth, we did not find many at that time. When Roger Mitchell came, he prayed for us three – Volker, Ralf, and me - and had what he called "a picture" for each one of us. This was an entirely new experience for me, and with quite some excitement I listened to his words. He saw me as a "weaving chair," a hand loom, slotting threads together to ultimately become a carpet. It made no sense to me whatsoever, and, when asked, also not to him.

"But tomorrow comes Sue, my wife," Roger said. "She has an ability to interpret such things." Well, as Sue was given this task, she was praying for a while, and then said: "Oh, now it's clear, absolutely! It's church history in the making! One of your tasks is to bring together people who will need to be woven into a carpet that is going to be laid out as a historic welcoming carpet for the return of our King Jesus. However, you will see that carpet only from behind; but there will be a time when this carpet will be turned over, and only then, in retrospect, will you see the beautiful design that no man could have conceived."

As one of the youngest German delegates of the Lausanne Movement for their meeting in Manila 1989, I got to know Jim Montgomery and Wolfgang Fernández, both of them passionately involved with the young "Dawn Movement." DAWN, an acronym for Discipling A Whole Nation, was determined to set out to help national leaders of vision strategically – they called that type of person a "John Knoxer" after the Scottish reformer John Knox - to develop and implement a saturation church planting (SCP) movement in their nation.

DAWN's mission vision read: "To see SCP become the generally accepted and fervently practiced method to complete the great commission." I had by then already developed my own mission statement: "To see a shopping window of God in walking distance of every human being on the planet." And so I knew that I had found peers and allies. Much to my joy I found that it was Don McCurry who served as the Islam-adviser for this group, and so I got to spend invaluable time with this brilliantly gifted evangelist and mobilizer. When DAWN got started as an organization, their offices were in the US Center for World Mission started by Ralph Winter; and on the board of DAWN was a certain C. Peter Wagner. The significance of John Wimber, whom I met several times before he died, was becoming clearer to me once I saw what God had intended about the original destiny of the Vineyard movement.

Skipping over a number of years, probably the most exciting event to be mentioned here is the wedding to my beautiful Indian wife Mercy in 1990. In between our engagement in 1989 and our wedding in 1990 she was diagnosed with a malignant tuberculoma in her brain, and she arrived in Germany for our wedding heavily sedated with chemical drugs. However, much to the amazement of the city clinic in Lörrach, Germany, who did a new CT scan and X-rays, she was declared completely healed. It was in 1995 when God suddenly spoke to me again, in an audible voice. I was sitting in my car en route to speak on church planting at a Baptist pastors' seminar in Germany, when I heard him say: "Go to England." Just like that. I had never thought of it before. Encouraging national Christian leaders in Germany and Switzerland to work together towards a SCP movement had always been a challenge. But leaving was not something I saw myself doing at this time. After I heard from God, I called up Mercy on the car phone and said: "Listen, Mercy, I feel God has just now spoken to me about moving. But I am not telling you what he said, OK? Could you drop everything and pray about this yourself? I'll call you in 24 hours." Mercy did, and when I called her next day, I was not even shocked when she said: "England. He said go to England."

England

In England, we found everything ready for us, complete with a lovely pastor couple, Barry and Bunny Kirk, then leaders of "Tilehurst Free Church" in Reading, as well as a friend whom I later understood to be an apostolic man, Bob Smart. It was a time of transition for us; God was getting us ready for something new, but we did not yet know what it was. In my consultancy work as a church growth and strategy advisor for a number of churches and movements, I also had the pleasure to work with Dr. Bill Wagner as chairmen of the European Church Growth Association. During this time and after intense travels around the world to study church growth and church planting movements as well as consulting and encouraging national leaders in around 60 nations, two things became increasingly clear to me. One: there is a church out there that has developed mainly outside of the sphere of influence of Western Christianity, Western money, Western political ideologies, and Western ecclesiology. Much of it is called the house church movement, but there are aspects that go far beyond just a church in a house.

I saw a missional potential there I had not thought possible before. First: the attitude, in which most Western church leaders looked at those house

churches, if they would at all recognize it, was usually one of pity: "Yes, in the absence of religious liberty, in a persecution climate, that's what these poor guys probably need to do, until they also gain religious freedom and develop our kind of "real" churches"

Second: running on present models of church, mission, church growth, evangelistic hit-and-run approaches and (at best) tithe-oriented financing, the church was marching backwards, not forwards. A few celebrated victories and breakthroughs, usually in Third World Nations, could not cloud the general collapse of Constantinian Christendom in its various forms into its own religious box. Without a return to the simple, organic, New Testament church, mission and finance principles, there is no way on earth that the church would reach its original, God-given goal. At that time I did not realize that the question I was actually asking was: "the type of leadership and church that we need is prophetic and apostolic. What will that look like?" And I also realized that so many people were asking that same question, that I was just another one dumbstruck by the very same how does a true to the original Acts 2:42-47 type church look like today question.

In 1997, we moved to Madras, India, opened an office that we later found was less than 100 meters away from where the Apostle Thomas is said to have had his prayer cave in the First Century. Together with friends like Dr. Victor Choudhrie, Dr. Alex Abraham, pastor D. Mohan, and others, we witnessed the emergence of an entirely new movement in parts of India, something that I now call the New House Church movement. By early 1998, already a few thousand house churches had emerged in India – and it was only the beginning. This started to have immediate implications not only to win Hindus to Christ, but also for the Muslim world.

I had realized that the problems many Muslims have with the gospel is not so much with the person of Jesus at all, but with the westernized Christian church and its imposing, colonizing attitude that still smelled of a modern version of the crusades, that horrible age where misguided or demonized "Christians" sought to buy God's favor by "cleansing" holy places from what these pseudo-Christian infidels called infidels. If it were only possible to liberate the gospel from its westernized church culture and have Arabs, Egyptians, Sudanese, and Saudis invent church for their area directly from the biblical blueprint, not a Western churchy template, I thought, this might build a bridge for many millions of Abraham's descendants into his very bosom. It was a dream in 1997, but today, some of the fastest growing house church movements on earth are in those nations; in many places, led by former Muslims who have found Jesus.

Given the explosive nature of the subjects discussed here, if you see it from a traditional church or denominational backdrop, I had decided to pursue this in non-Western countries, but to be as silent as possible when I am in the West. In Cyprus, March 1998, upon the direct invitation of some of the national Arab Christian leaders who knew me well enough to smell that I was hiding something, it was the first time that I publicly spoke about the missional possibilities of a house church movement.

"Wolf, you are harboring something; we know it. Come on, let's hear it",

said one of my Egyptian friends, then on the leadership team of AWEMA, Arab World Evangelical Ministers Association. I did and spoke for 45 minutes on the subject of house churches. This caused considerable excitement for many, but also a deep shock for some. And it led to the publication of my book on the subject of house churches, exactly nine months later.

Taxi to Heliopolis, please

How do you proceed to develop something like this in a theological and political church minefield? My old school would tell me to do research, to find out whatever I could about a country – key players, key problems, key developments, key events, key partners – and to act on the best knowledge and with strategic determination. Yes, I have such files – a meter thick – on many nations. But I quickly found out there is a better – and cheaper way. I don't have to know everything when I am a covenant partner of the one who knows it all.

It was in Cairo, Egypt, that God taught me this lesson in the form of another prophetic experience that still shakes me. I had been invited to preach to around 2,000 people in a rather large church in a run-down area of Cairo called Shoubra el Kaima. After the meeting I had to go by taxi from Shoubra to a private address in Heliopolis, the northern satellite town of Cairo, in order to be picked up by car at 5:45 for another meeting in a Catholic church by 6 p.m. I had been at this address once, but I did not know the street name nor number; everything there looked alike; one high-rise apartment building next to the other, thousands of them, home of more than 4 million people in this incredible "suburb" alone.

The pastor in Shoubra had organized a taxi – a real Cairo taxi, worn and torn, but faithful beyond comprehension – and read the Heliopolis address to the driver, who nodded and took off. The paper slip with the address landed in the mud, probably trodden under by the hooves of the next donkey. Five minutes later, the taxi driver realized I was not from here, a Westerner, a Gringo. And he remembered one thing: all Gringos have just one destination in Cairo, and one only; the Hilton Hotel by the river Nile. And his memory of the address where I was supposed to go had quickly joined the mud in Shoubra – it was trodden under, unable to be retrieved again, replaced by only one big, bold name: the Hilton. And so I soon sat there in my taxi in front of the Hilton. I was lost. I did not know where I was; I had no clue where to go; all I knew was I really had to be there in 15 minutes.

What do I do now? "Help," I cried to God, feeling ridiculous. "God, please help me, I am completely stuck. I don't know where I am, I don't know where to go, the driver speaks no German, nor English, and I don't speak Arabic...."

"That is not entirely correct," I heard God's voice suddenly again.

"Which part?" I thought back.

"You know enough Arabic," I heard. I was puzzled. "Well, I can say a few words like one, two, three, *habbibie, shukran* and of course *Ahlan We Sahlan*. And I can say left, right and straight."

"That's good enough," I heard him say.

And suddenly the plot dawned on me. "No, no, this won't work, I can't believe this," I cringed. But the more I thought about it, the more it made sense. God knows this town; he knows what I don't know. He knows where I am, and

I don't have to know everything when I am a covenant partner of the one who knows it all.

he knows when I have to be where. And I knew enough Arabic to tell my driver at each intersection whether to go left, right, or straight. I took a deep breath, prayed in desperation, and said to the man: *El Alatul! Habbibi, El Alatul, Go straight, my friend, go straight!*"

His eyes went wide and big at the same time. I was greeted with a stream of astonished Arabic, but all I could repeat over and over was this little sentence, until he finally gave up and did as I told him. However, there was an intersection coming up, and I had to tell him *something*, quick. Inwardly praying like crazy, I coolly told the driver: *El shemal*, turn left, as if I knew what I was doing. From intersection to intersection I told him my little *shemal, alatul* or *el jamin* (go right), and after some minutes he was watching me as much as he was watching the road, his astonishment growing by the minute. It seems we were taking back roads and shortcuts that only the seasoned driver would know, although I was completely lost, not knowing whether we were going north, south, east or west. All I remember is that suddenly I saw my friends on the road in Heliopolis, waiting outside their car. "I'm here; I'm really here!" I thought, as I staggered out. The taxi driver was so astonished that he would not even ask for his fare. "Oh, Wolf, just in time!" my friends exclaimed, and I was whisked off to the next meeting, still not knowing what had hit me.

But it taught me a big lesson. I started to understand the value of being led by God even in the midst of chaos. It also told me that to lead others does not depend whether we know the full picture or have sat through all the briefs. We don't have to have anything figured out. All we need is three things: a complete trust in God who knows what we don't know; the guts to make a fool out of ourselves as we follow his advice, and three simple words in Arabic (throwing in the ridiculous little bits we do know).

A few more things to conclude this section, which I hope will encourage you to experience similar things in your own journey and love story with God. In the beginning of 1998 we knew our time in India was over. Mercy and I decided to pray together about our next step, including asking a group of others to pray with us and to ask God for answers on our behalf. In India, we had seen the beginning, the inauguration, of a new church planting movement that carried the seeds of almost unlimited multiplication in it. The possibilities for global missions seemed endless. What would be next?

In an amazing game of puzzles, God had given a small piece of revelation to a number of friends all over the world. One would write: "I saw you live in a hilly area at a very clean river that makes a sharp bend where you live, and another river enters into it at the height of where you will live." Another one, Swiss pharmacist Martin Thomi, said: "I saw that you live surrounded by borders." Another one, my friend and colleague Bruno Bayer, wrote: "I usually never dream, but I dreamed that we both were going up and down the Rhine River, training church planters. The name of the river is Rhine."

One prophet from Ghana, Bernard Ankoma, picked me out in a crowd of 300 Christian leaders in Madras and told me that I was to go back to my mother's land, and there would be a large financial project waiting for me, but I should not worry, the money will be there. Another one, former India YWAM director Sam Dharam, a prophetic man and good friend, actually saw our new house in the spirit: "You are living in the middle house of three houses built

together. They are all similar, but not the same. Two stories, slanting roof, your house has green windows, a green door, and a chimney that is on the left of the roof." A Swiss businessman, René Bregenzer, had been told by God to buy land in a small town called Jestetten, Germany, near Schaffhausen, Switzerland. He was to divide that land into three parts, and give it away to missionaries so that they could build homes there. He found two, but no one for the middle part. When he asked one of the two, William Lerrick, who he thought would live there, William, a gifted firebrand evangelist from Indonesia with a prophetic gift, answered: "Wolfgang Simson will live there."

When I was asked by Ueli Haldemann (the other missionary), a wonderfully gifted deacon with a heart for prayer and revival, to have a look at the house in the middle, I realized that Jestetten lies at a fascinating slope of the Rhine around a place called Rheinau, (the Rhine being as clean as it gets after being cleansed by passing through Lake Constance, Bodensee). This place is in a hilly area, surrounded by Swiss borders on almost all sides, and by the time I arrived there I fully expected the house to have green windows, a green door and a chimney on the left side of the roof. And it did; complete with a spiraling staircase I had always wished to have in a house.

We decided to buy the house, although we hadn't enough money to purchase a car, let alone a home in that category whatsoever. It was our own version of experiencing Isa 55, to "buy without money". On the day we moved in, in the letter box there was a letter from a family in Switzerland that I didn't know personally, not even today. They said they had heard of us and had decided to give us 50,000 Swiss Francs as a gift and asked for our account information to wire us the money. This plus some other gifts that arrived unexpectedly allowed us to buy the house. In other words: we had arrived in Jestetten.

And so it happened that exactly seventeen years after my experience with God in the forest of Rührberg – one hour's drive from Jestetten – I came back to the very same place. It was a strange feeling, to stand among those trees where God had somehow reached out and spoken droplets of encouragement and vision into my young life. In 2003, I stood there again, saying: "Dear father, I am back, seventeen years later, remember? This is the spot where you spoke to me about the future, including those four names that I should seek out and learn from them. As much as I can tell, that's what I have done. With unmistakable clarity you have brought me here to Jestetten, for a reason that is completely beyond me. What am I supposed to do here in this place? I feel like I am stranded, nothing is happening. Where is the action?"

This time there was no voice. But I felt God's spirit speak to me nevertheless. ***"Jestetten is your Tarsus. This is your place to die. Go learn what that means."*** In the next few days, I read the excellent biography of Paul written by John Pollock: ***The Apostle***. In a world full of action, success, breakthroughs, and drama, I felt God was taking us into a school to study a subject that I would have never chosen. We were to learn about the dimension of death in a ministry that wishes to give life – or, in short, the cross. In the world, successful leadership is crowned by triumph. Business, sports, and politics: everything seems to lead up the career ladder, and finally to financial independence. In God's book, success is crowned by suffering, by death. People (like Moses or Paul) who start strong finish weak, because they have exhausted themselves into others. Just like a mother who gives birth to many children, it is not the mother who

We were to learn about the dimension of death in a ministry that wishes to give life – or, in short, the cross.

steps from strength to strength, but she starts to have wrinkles and withers – the proud signs of parental achievement. It is the kids who grow up. Maybe maturity is best expressed in a life of dependency, not independence. Anybody could do that.

After all, Jesus stepped down from heaven and became a small guy – like the rest of us, leaving all the royal insignia behind. Instead of sitting on the throne in Jerusalem, which most if not all of his disciples fully expected, he finally hung on a cross and looked – at least for the time being – like a complete loser. And, did you know, every single apostle in the Bible ended in martyrdom or at least in exile? Almost as if to say: don't remember us, but remember God. In our case, we started to understand that it might very well be that God is asking us to step down from everything and vanish into oblivion. Yes it's true, we still feel so young, so very much at the beginning of things. Maybe God will give us another chance? Until then, we will wait and see. We have decided that we don't want to jump ahead. If Jesus says go, we will go. If he does not say a thing, we stay. I'll return to this in a later chapter called "The Tarsus Principle".

"Go naked" - Mercy's letter

In mid-February, 2004, my wife Mercy wrote a letter to some of our friends to explain what had happened. Mercy wrote:

"Dear friends, after some time we would like to send you a summary of what is happening here – with us and to us.... We must warn you: it's a rather long letter; maybe you can read it in portions. I feel so humbled to write this letter to you. I greatly respect those people who have laid down their lives totally, their comfort, their success and their securities for the sake of the gospel in the past history, in the present and in the future in order that only one name will be glorified.

On 1-07-1998, we moved back to Germany from India. For the first 3 years I didn't know why we were here. We had open doors to go to South Africa, to Finland, to Cairo, to Singapore, to Texas. Germany was the last place I would choose to live and raise kids. Some of our neighbors and friends asked us more than one time why we ended up in Jestetten! Well, God showed us this place and that's why we are here. Not a fancy answer. Many times I asked Wolfgang 'what am I doing in Germany?' No sensible answer came. Why would God clearly show us where to live and say nothing about what to do?

On the 6th of Dec 2001 Wolfgang and I were in Colorado Springs, USA, for a DAWN team meeting and I don't know if it was the jet lag or if it was God who woke me up at 2 A.M. in the morning. Anyway, I was wide awake and didn't know what to do, so I started to pray about all things that came to my mind. Suddenly the Lord spoke very clearly and said, "Go naked." I didn't understand at all what he said. I put this very quickly in my mind into the last drawer of my to-do list - "when we are old and all the kids are out of the house" and continued to pray for all other things that were still coming in to my mind. The Lord said again "go naked." I turned my head and saw Wolfgang sleeping - actually snoring - next to me. Then I started to ask God if I'm hearing right. The next hours were filled with lots of questions, and by now I was sitting on my bed, startled. I imagined myself going naked on the streets and the people staring at me and laughing with question marks and stars in their heads saying she is

crazy, and friends trying to keep a good distance in the crowd, commenting between themselves she lost her mind, and all the police sirens coming only into one direction: to arrest me.

Knowing very well that God would never allow something like this to happen to me I asked, "God, is this what you want me to do?" He simply said, "Yes!" I asked, "you are not serious, are you?" and he said, "Yes I am serious." I asked him, "But not now, right?" And he said, "Now, right away." Wolfgang woke up, because by now I was walking in the small guest room of our friend and was trying to get away from hearing God more. Wolf said, "What's going on?" I said, "We got to go naked." The next two hours we started to pray and discuss and argue and bring back to memory the things that God had spoken to us through different people in different places and situations and trying to connect each of this to each of the other to bring a neat conclusion that would look satisfying to God, to us, and to all our relatives and friends.

Again God said "Go naked" and he started to show us how to strip ourselves. He said remove your identities, your titles, your ministries and ministry positions and your names and so on and on. Get out of everything that has given you a cloth to cover your shame, anything that has protected you from cold and heat. We were scared, no more speech left! God spoke to us through Isaiah 20, and we knew it meant to step down from positions, out of organizations, lay down titles and completely get out of every structure we have been in, in order to prepare for... what?

What are we going to tell people? How are we going to tell people when we ourselves don't understand why, what, when, and how? We tried to share a little bit of these things with some of our very close friends. (Maybe we didn't do it carefully enough not to shock others, we were shocked ourselves). The reactions were, "you are crazy! Are you out of your mind? Are you sure you want to do that?" "We will pray that God will speak to you clearly." Our response: Oh no please, thank you, just don't do that!

We came home and took awhile to write our farewell letter to some of our friends and colleagues in various parts of the world. It was the hardest thing that we together have ever done in our lives. With lots of tears and prayers and pain stinging in our hearts, we had to say things that were not easy for us to say. We asked for forgiveness, we forgave others, and we could not give a clear explanation of what was going on. When people who were not familiar with us asked us who we are and what we do, we told our names and then suddenly felt naked. We had no answers for questions like "how do you do and what do you do?" "Which mission are you working with?" "Who pays you?" We ended up talking about our past: we did this, we did that in those countries and now we are waiting on the Lord for our next steps – probably spiritualizing it as much as possible. Who would want to bluntly say, "We are naked!" But we did wait on the Lord for the next steps. Strangely enough our next steps were no longer moving forward - but backward.

God led us to thank him for the many things he has done for us, his love and mercies, his protection and provision, his goodness and grace and on and on, they are countless. Then he brought to light our pain and anger, feelings and wounds, manipulations and rejections that we carried as we served him. "Get naked, don't dress up yourselves with them," he said. Then he showed us our own dirt that stinks, our unforgiveness and lovelessness, personal sins,

long hidden secrets in our hearts, in other words: "get naked!" We often felt like getting into the laundry machine and spinning at 1500rpm.

So are we clean and perfect now? I'm afraid not. Since God told us to go naked exactly two years ago, and he really meant it, we are being stripped naked slowly and steadily. There are times when we feel God has left us alone and there are times we feel like a little baby cuddled in his arms. Then the next day it is like, God where are you? Help! All we know is that for the last two years we have been riding on the roller coaster with all sorts of emotions of fear and despair, forgiveness and love, frustration and pain, hope and longing etc. - all at the same time. We are learning to trust, to be humble, to let go of our names, to die so that He can live in us. Is it easy to die? NO. Are we clean today? No. Are we learning? Yes. Do we make mistakes? A lot.

As we submitted to God's ways of dealing with us, in spite of thousands of unanswered questions, He was now and then gracious enough to show to Wolfgang what he has in his mind for us. So Wolfgang would tell me that the Lord had spoken to him and he wants us to do this and this. I didn't like it. I didn't want to be pushed from one thing into the next thing. We sometimes argued so much that we exploded. He would sometime come home and say that every time he drives by the river Rhine, he cries so much that he has to stop driving and pray. Or at other times instead of being in the office, God would tell him to go to specific regions and pray. He would come home with so much excitement to say these things, and I was cold, very cold. I would say, if God tells you to do things then do it, but without me. I have done enough ministry for the rest of my life, and I have fasted and prayed enough for many countries in the world for many years. I have done my job and in fact I should have my retirement now. God would show Wolfgang names of people, visions and dreams and even what to pray and I would tell him that, maybe that is all your ideas and desires to see happen. I was opposing and rejecting any dreams and plans. It was not easy for both of us and none of us got to get a start anywhere. I was basically afraid about others using us for their own purposes, while we ourselves didn't know anymore who we were, where to go, what to do. We were in a very vulnerable situation – that means, easy prey for the enemy. Some of our friends were giving prophetic words into my life and I would not accept it. I said to Wolfgang, "If God can speak to you and to others about us, He can also speak to me. I will only accept it if God will directly speak to me in a way that I can be convinced."

A few days later, 6th of Jan 2003, we had had guests staying in our home and they were now leaving to go home. So the six of us came together to pray - and God came there in a way that I didn't recognize him at first! When I realized that it was God, the next 45 minutes I lost control of myself. I was shaking, gasping, jumping on my knees (it was impossible when I tried it later) and I was seeing things like in a trance. I'm not a person who easily feels comfortable jumping and shouting in front of others. But the Spirit of the Lord was heavy upon me; I had to support my jawbones to put words to what I was seeing. At first I saw a huge golden ripe harvest field whose ends I could not see. Then I heard the Lord say "this is my last harvest." I saw a valley full of workers: men, women, children, old and young, who God had prepared for this purpose. They were coming from all directions and situations. Then the scene changed, I heard the sound of the rain, streaks of water started to flow. It

started very small and increased steadily. Soon I heard gushing water and saw this river flood and fold and run wild over the boundaries for it that had been made by human hands. No one could control its flow. People just stood in awe as the spirit of God flowed in this region. I saw demons flee out of this area into the darkness; they looked very scared and trembling. God said persecution is coming, prepare my people to stand firm to the end. Many will fall, therefore watch out and stay humble. Almost every other sentence was, stay humble and stand firm to the end. This went on for 45 minutes and I couldn't understand some of the things of the spirit with my human mind.

Now that did convince me, slowly things are falling into place. Some of our questions and doubts are getting cleared up. The pain and the sorrows are healing and fading. We are still fragile, we don't have all the answers and we don't yet see the next step. We are totally depending on God for the next direction. It is not to build a new name or ministry, it is not to build another organization or denomination, and it is not even a call for revival. It is about making room for the move of the Holy Spirit to flow like he chooses, and a cry to the Lord of the harvest to send his workers into his field. It is about equipping the workers for the works of God. It is about listening and obeying in spite of whether we understand with our minds or not. It is about people who are dead so that God can live again through us who are dead. He died so that we can live now; we die so that he can live again in us. Die to our selfish acts that we do in the name of God.

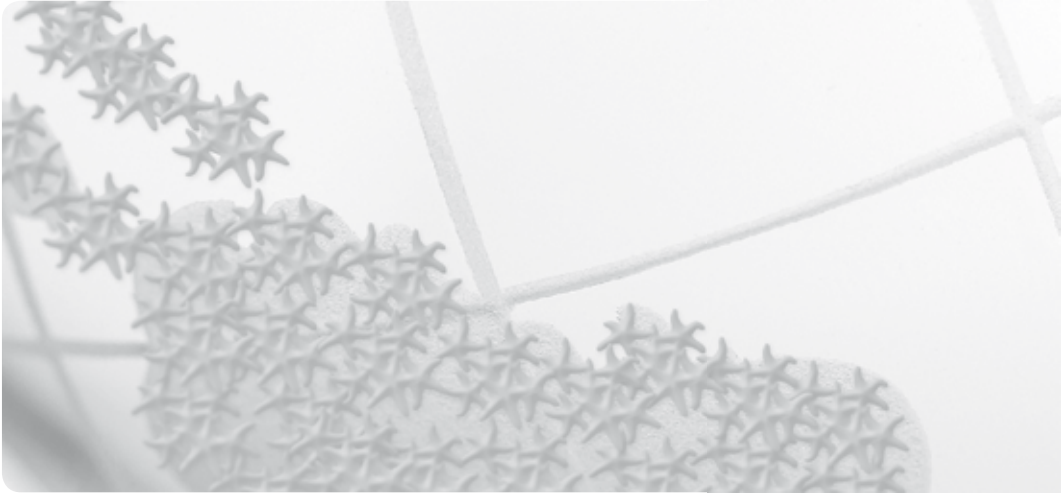
In the past some of our friends asked us why we are hiding and are not being part of this and that, that are happening all over the world. Some friends didn't understand us because we couldn't give an answer. I'm not sure if we yet have all the answers. Some are rightfully upset about us, and it is OK. We were upset ourselves. The last two years we have gone through ups and downs many, many times. It is not yet finished; we still are sitting with our seat belts tightened in our roller coaster, ready for the next swoop. One thing we know for sure is that we got to get naked.

Wolfgang and I have dropped out of all that we were part of in the last fourteen+ years. We have cancelled travel schedules. We want to focus on equipping the harvest workers as much as God will allow and guide us. We feel strong and weak, excited and nervous at the same time sitting in the roller coaster. We have some answered, and a lot of unanswered, questions. But with the grace of God and the only hope that he gives in Jesus we are able to face tomorrow. A personal Thank you goes to all of you who have read this to the end and all those friends and relatives who have gone with us through thick and thin. Please remember this is a shortened version of our last two years. We will definitely appreciate your comments and responses and your prayers and prophetic words and corrections and we will try to answer your questions too if you have any. We love you all!

Your harvest co-worker, Mercy and the rest of the Simsons"

**He died so that we can
live now; we die so that
he can live again in us.**





PART IV: THE APOSTOLIC DIMENSION

11 Apostolic Architecture

Apostolic architecture means to build accurate, kingdom driven governmental systems in direct prophetic synchronization with the purposes of God, that allow for the inbuilt multiplication potential of the ekklesia to function properly and therefore to reach its goal.

PART IV: THE APOSTOLIC DIMENSION

11 Apostolic Architecture

The question of *apostolicity* – what defines divine sentness - is the one million dollar question of the church. To recapture the essence of the meaning of *apostolic* is to today's Christianity what the Holy Grail was in the Middle Ages. The word apostolic means *sent, according to the mission*. Architecture is how things are conceived and designed so that they fulfill their special purpose. The combination of the two words therefore describes how sent things are crafted and made so that they reach their destiny and goal. One of the most beautiful of God's creations is the Church, and he has commissioned her to fulfill two special purposes: to make disciples of all nations and to become a spotless bride for himself. We therefore have to ask the question more specifically: how has God designed the church to reach those two goals? How, exactly, is the *sent church*, the church on a mission crafted so it can reach its final destination? To use a modern word: what is its *functional design*? If we build a good car to bring us from A to B, we take the ingredients of a car: engine, wheels and body, and assemble them in such a way that the car runs and fulfills its purpose. And if we build a very good car, it also looks good!

In this part of the book, we will look how God has designed the things he created so that they fulfill his will. "God has established fixed patterns of heaven and earth" (Jer. 33:25). He said: "I am God, there is no other. I make known the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying *my purpose will be established and I will accomplish do all that I please*" (Isa. 46:10). And if it is true that "the Lord has made everything for its own purpose" (Prov. 16:4), then we humans, who are created in his likeness, will have to ask: what is God's purpose, and how did he intend to see it done?

Prophets declare God's purposes, apostles fulfill them.

Eternal Purposes of God

If God has made everything for its own purpose, what are his intentions? I believe we can see at least three purposes that are eternal. If it is true God has made man to be a partner for God, to end his own loneliness (over and above the perfect unity with the Trinity), he has three supreme things he wants to achieve. God the father is on the look-out for a fitting girl for his son; looking forward to a family with as many sons and daughters as possible; and finally he is planing a home, a place to be with his family forever. As we will see later in greater detail, the key prophetic ministry function is to declare the purposes of God. The apostolic ministry, however, sets mechanisms in place of how to achieve them. Said very directly: Prophets *declare* God's purposes, apostles *fulfill* them. To reach a purpose, we all use methods, certain ways of doing things, systems, architecture, and ultimately government. A government is nothing more than a system set in place to make sure a certain purpose is established and fulfilled.

Let me put this insight into a small table:

Purpose (prophetic)

- 1) The father looks for a Bride for Jesus
- 2) The father looks for sons and daughters
- 3) The father looks for a home for himself to dwell

Architecture (apostolic)

- marriage
- family
- city (a family of families)

If God looks for a bride for his son Jesus, a marriage is the only legitimate way to see that happen. If God wants more sons and daughters to be with him, the only way that this can happen is through the establishment of family, the beautiful entity that comes out of a fruitful marriage in which husband and wife are intimately together in love and passion. And as God wishes to spend eternity with all the families that have emerged through the union of Jesus with his Bride, a single house will not be enough to contain all of them. It needs to be a city, a God-sized city, the heavenly Jerusalem. This means that God needs to put certain mechanisms into place, without which these three purposes would not be reached. He needs to install government, a rule-set that makes sure his goals are fulfilled. It is precisely for this purpose that God is calling people into his service who exist to ensure that the proper architecture is in place to achieve his will. This is, in a nutshell, what the apostolic mandate is all about.

The origin and source of the apostolic mandate is not humans, but God. We don't send on behalf of God – God does: “As the father sent me, so I send you,” says Jesus in John 17. And so we have to ask ourselves first and foremost: what is God's intention for mankind? Whom does he send? And how has God therefore set things up, how has he designed this to happen? If we learn that, we will be able to fit into his concept and run with it. If we do not know this, we run the danger of trying to fit God into our little human concepts. And no, he will not run with it at all. God is the original architect, the grandmaster of building, art, and design, the ultimate systems designer, software developer, solutions provider, the ultimate and perfect host and owner. We are his creation, invited to live on his earth and to become his children, so we can cooperate with our father to accomplish his will “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Temporary purposes of God

In order to achieve his eternal purposes, God has designed some temporary things that exist to usher in another eternal world. Human kingdoms, for example, pass away; but “God's dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away” (Daniel 7:14). “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matt. 24:35). “Knowledge will pass away” (1. Cor. 13:8), “the rich will pass away like a wild flower” (James 1:10), and “desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:17).

In heaven there will be no church? It will not be necessary anymore. Church is a temporary invention that will pass away, being replaced by something that is eternal: the city of God. In brief, what is it that God has created, and why?

1. God has created this world as an outflow of his creativity, and in order to give a space, a dominion, a jurisdiction for men to rule, and, probably most important, a place for love to happen. In this world, God has created man in his image “in order to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move

along the ground" (Gen. 1:26). For this, God gave them his godly commission: "He blessed them and said: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28).

2. God has created the *heavens*, plural, obviously a multidimensional reality including heavenly beings, angels, stars, or the throne of God as the seat of His power.
3. God has designed for these two to be integrated, to move towards each other.

As the world has fallen away from the presence of God through the original sin, God has not given up, but is initiating his great plan: an amazing redemption, a loving and strategic encounter between humans and himself. He was the one who asked the first and most penetrating question: "Adam, where are you? Eve, what have you done?" He initiated *missio dei*, the Mission of God, a gigantic search and rescue operation that has spanned, so far, over thousands of years, all across the globe, bent on recapturing the stolen romance of God being together with humans, ultimately winning back the bride for Jesus that Satan has stolen and run away with.

The purposes of Satan are threefold too: he wants to prevent the Bride from being ready for marriage, to stop any sons and daughters from being born out of this union, and he does what he can to prevent humans and God dwelling together. For this, he tries to hijack the Bride, to besmear her, fragment her. To prevent any healthy passion and intimacy, he seduces humans to exchange intimacy with activity, and passion with drivenness. Satan understands God's plans only to a limited degree, but he understands them enough to attack three things more than anything else: marriage, family, and cities. He wants to paint these three vital elements in the ugliest possible pictures, so that no one will desire it anymore. He attempts to pervert the love and passion of a couple into mere lust, mindless and perverse sexual acts, destroy life-giving families into dysfunctional and pathetic war-zones, and make our cities look like a desert, run by gangs, violence and Mammon. This is why one of the central goals of Jesus' mission is "to destroy the works of the evil one" (1 John 3:8), to destroy his plans and acts. Jesus will not do this alone; he is actively recruiting others into this as well.

A deadly mission for a lovely goal

This mission is not romantic at all; it's absolutely deadly. So far, it has involved God's sending his messengers and his people on an extremely dangerous overall mission, broken down into millions and millions of special ops, individual mission trips and projects, which are usually so tough, that most of his precious and best people die in that battle – including his own son, Jesus. Jesus once described this mission as his "sending lambs among wolves," including walking on snakes and water. No one, absolutely no one, who has not understood the ultimate price to be won by that kind of mission, would ever even dare to think of sending lambs among wolves – it would be a bloodbath! Why would you send out your kids on a street full of violent gangsters? Why would you send them into the midst of a war, where the bullets are flying left, right, and center? Why would you want to send those whom you love into a battle, a minefield where they will most probably die? Because of the ultimate price

that is at stake: the redemption of mankind back to God, to achieve his ultimate purposes of eternal communion.

This is one of the reasons why God has never placed much responsibility on pastors for that deadly task of sending out sheep; they would simply shudder at the thought, revolted by the mere images of conflict, and their entire good, God-given pastoral and shepherding heart would cringe in agony at the thought of wolves' lamb chops. They would rather protect the sheep thoroughly from even seeing or smelling a wolf, and have them securely cuddled up in their wolf-proof fenced pastures. That is one of the perplexing reasons why good pastors, if they do not work hand in hand with those who I call "*scatterers*," in spite of all their best intentions will influence and shape the church with their pastoral values (*stay home, sheep!*), and so its apostolic mission (*go get the wolves, sheep!*) will be successfully thwarted and delayed.

At the core of this enormously time-consuming, global mission initiative of God are three vital elements: God, the people of Israel, and a temporary vehicle of redemption, designed by God for that purpose, that the Bible calls ekklesia. God is the ultimate architect of all this. He knows the end from the beginning, operates on an omniscient and therefore utterly reality-based optimism, and has a profound knowledge of who has the last word on all this. He is motivated by his unbelievable love for the unlovable and his father's heart to reconcile himself to his lost sons, to restore a wounded, ugly, dirty, selfish, and deeply lost people and a full basket of nations to himself. He is fully prepared to a level of selflessly mediating between the core warring parties and making an enduring peace that our most brilliant human thinkers like Norwegian peace-philosopher John Gauteng and other Nobel peace prizewinners have not yet seen. God does all this by revealing himself piece by piece, giving well-planned gifts to man, and ultimately and deliberately dispensing himself to humans in what the Bible calls the economy of God (from Greek: *oikonomia*; 1 Tim 1:4). In contrast to our secular human economy, this is driven not *by what we can get, but by what we can give*, and God became an all-time example for this: he gave all he had, including his only son.

The inauguration of government

Where humans join God voluntarily in this conquest, ever new beachheads of God's rule are established, breakthroughs and victories are accomplished that advance God's ultimate plan - that heaven and earth should meet - against the dark schemes of "the enemy". If the Bible describes "The Kingdom" as **the sphere of God's uncontested rule**, we can call the growing synchronization and increasing integration between heaven and earth *Kingdomization*. Jesus teaches us to pray to our father: "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The Kingdom is designed to grow *on earth*, based on two core prerequisites: 1) when and where human beings as individuals place themselves under the King, they become royal subjects, "God's own possession" (Titus 2:4), sons and daughters of the Kingdom. 2) As they do that *in unity with others*, and as more and more individuals - starting with two - begin to understand their role and mission in life, they become officials - agents! - of their heavenly King here on earth, his ambassadors, and are empowered and mandated to start establishing his heaven-based Kingdom also here on earth as Jesus did. Just like him they need to die like a kernel of wheat in order to see fruit. And as they do that,

Go get the wolves, sheep!

they stop being individuals anymore, and become part of a corporate entity, the church, a *civitas dei*, a city of and under God, where Jesus has promised his presence “when two or three are gathered in my name,” or, an Old Testament precursor of this: **“How good it is when brothers dwell together in unity, for there the Lord commands his blessing” (Psalm 133).**

Once a part of the Kingdom, people will need to begin functioning according to the laws of the *government* of this Kingdom – and not anymore according to their own whiff and will, personal preferences, and opinions, the operating system of the world. For a government to be established, it has to be inaugurated, to be sworn in. And once it is operational, it requires not only individual but corporate obedience to the governmental principles of the Kingdom. Much of what the Kingdom actually is all about has been misinterpreted in our modern hyper-individualistic times as individual obedience.

Individuals, passionate for God, pursuing their individual journeys with their God, being obedient to their maker, are simply not enough. Individual Christians make no sense whatsoever. That aspect of individualism, seen through the glasses of our modern times and mainly a problem of the highly liberalized West, is not entirely correct. And to reject the fact that a kingdom has rules and regulations, and to demand or celebrate the complete absence of systems or structure is neither a biblical nor a particularly mature thing to do. It is chaos, absence of order, and has neither a lasting shelf life nor power to change anything. The anti-institutionalism that we often see today among many Christians is often born out of the spirit of the Age – remember Elvis, Marlon Brando, jazz, Hip-Hop, Pop, 1968, the results of an age where being anti-everything was hip and cool? But many Christians are also perplexed: if the church is supposed to be the solution, why do they experience so many problems with the church? Many have wandered the minefields of church systems not at all built in accordance to God’s patterns and have been cut and bruised in the process. Today, many carry wounds of loneliness, bitterness and rebellion, suffering from church-produced - *ecclesiogene* - traumas, wounds and neuroses. But non of this should cloud the reality that a Kingdom is not a group of individuals doing what they want, but a group that does as it should. It has to learn the high art of moving in unison, flying like birds in formation, swimming like fish in a shoal. This only becomes possible when the sons and daughters of the Kingdom will specifically agree on three things: a) who they are (and therefore what their specific role is), b) what the general objective is (the mission), c) and what the battle plan, the overall architecture looks like. This can only happen when people reach a certain maturity level, a level of Christian existence I call corporate obedience, where people start to do what the early church modeled for all of us. They preached as one, acted as one, **they were one**. And God was with them, because they respected and reflected his building principles of ekklesia. One of these principles was: they dwelled in unity, so God could command his blessing. This is how the apostolic multiplication of the church to the ends of the earth began. Another principle was **apostolic alignment**: apostles were able and allowed to function as apostles, and the rest of the body aligned itself into their architectural design.

Once this crucial oneness has been established, then the Kingdom can expand, according to the will of Jesus who taught us to pray: “Your Kingdom come.” The Kingdom is designed to grow organically, “like a mustard seed,” says

A Kingdom is not a group of individuals doing what they want, but a group that does as it should.

Jesus, and it grows unerringly towards a culmination point, a climax. The Bible calls that ultimate historic apex the “fullness of time,” when the fullness (Greek: *pleroma*; Rom 11:12) of the gentiles are brought into the Kingdom, when all nations have heard the gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 24:14), and *all nations* are being discipled (Mt 28:18). “With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. **You have made them to be a kingdom** and priests to serve our God and they will reign on earth” (Rev. 5:9,10). This speaks of the time seen by Daniel, when the rock, Jesus, devastatingly thrown without a human hand at the feet of the Statue representing systems of human might has grown to become a mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2), when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15). From our present day situation, this will mean getting the church ready to become truly prepared for a host of mass movements in order to reach all those goals, rather than to be or to remain a reflective group with a ghetto-mindset that huddles together in seemingly safe traditions and that tries to weather the storms our globe will go through.

Let us not forget the clear biblical teaching that the ultimate destiny of this world, Planet Earth, is to be replaced by a new world: there is a time when the earth is no more. Planet Earth is not a permanent place; it is a temporary abode, to be replaced by a new earth: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea” (Rev. 21:1). Heaven will experience the same fate. The end result is called “The Kingdom” - and on the dark side of the Kingdom, a place called Hell.

Since the creation of the world, humankind has always fallen into two groups: those who accept what God is doing, and those who reject it. The ones who reject it usually spoil things for those who accept it – at least for a while; eating the wrong food in the garden and killing Abel was only the beginning. There is a “domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13), interestingly not called a *kingdom* of darkness, since Satan is no king, but only a prince. This satanic area of rulership (Greek: *exousia*, sphere, official power), probably best translated as jurisdiction, is an area of dominion run by “authorities, powers of the dark world, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12; Greek: *epouranias*). Its ultimate seat of power is a certain geographical place where there is a nexus, an overlap between the seen world and the demonic realm. The Bible calls this “the throne of Satan,” the city where Satan lives and has his throne, Pergamum (Rev. 2:13). From here Satan can roam the earth and has open access to the throne of God, where he does what he does: “accuses the brethren day and night.” Once he is taken care of, the Kingdom of God comes in fullness, because no one contests and challenges it anymore (Rev. 12:10). However, enough damage will have been done by the dark world and the people who chose to remain in it that they render the earth, as we know it, mortally wounded and doomed. Planet Earth will have to be abandoned like Paul’s ship on the journey to Malta – everyone was saved, except the ship.

Plants with a mission

The first thing that clearly has a functional design - an apostolic architecture of sorts - is found in the first living thing God ever created: Seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seeds in it. As it turns out, these were *plants with a mission*: “Seed-bearing plants on the face of the

From our present day situation, this will mean getting the church ready to become truly prepared for a host of mass movements in order to reach all those goals, rather than to be or to remain a reflective group with a ghetto-mindset that huddles together in seemingly safe traditions and that tries to weather the storms our globe will go through.

Whatever God creates has the seeds for its own multiplication already in it.

I was once called to speak to a prayer movement that asked me, after they had functioned for quite a while: "How can we bring multiplication into what we are doing?"

I said: "Simple. You can't do it. It's either there, or it will be difficult to do some genetic engineering to implant seeds into something that originally had no seeds."

whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seeds in it" were given to be food for humans and animals alike. So the "apostolic mission" of plants and trees was simple: distribute around the earth and be food! Did they achieve this? I think we can safely say yes. How did they achieve it? By functioning according to their inbuilt design that is described as "seeds in it". This amazing concept of "seeds in it" - something that Genesis 1 repeats six times, as if to underline it - is of unique importance, an important key to understanding the nature of apostolic, missional design and architecture: Whatever God creates has the seeds for its own multiplication already in it. It does not have to be enhanced, evolved, developed, or injected with another DNA, genetically altered, or even trained to act against its own nature, but to be what God made it to be - and therefore it will faithfully multiply because of its genetic make-up. God had it designed that way.

The same is true for God's amazing invention called the church. Left to be and to function according to its original design, it absolutely has the inbuilt capacity and ability to do what it was designed to do. According to its inbuilt apostolic architecture, God made it to completely fulfill its several functions described above. However, if we mess with it, try to make ekklesia something "better" than God did, we will violate, mutilate, and ultimately incapacitate the church, so it will no longer be able to reach its mission, even if it desperately wants to. It is of course part of the message of this book that this exact incapacitation has happened. A humanly altered, mutilated version of ekklesia has been handed down to us through history to the degree that the original design is almost completely unrecognizable. What does the world see looking at the church? Is it the original design - a stunningly beautiful bride who was able to respond swiftly to the voice of the bridegroom and win the hearts of many in quick succession? Or, if we take the earlier prophetic pictures seriously, is the church rather seen as a double-headed being of twin sex, a toothless, near-deaf, old, scarred and crippled, hardly recognizable woman beyond menopause, dragging itself over the sand of history in a futile attempt to win a war?

I was once called to speak to a prayer movement that asked me, after they had functioned for quite a while: "How can we bring multiplication into what we are doing?" I said: "Simple. You can't do it. It's either there, or it will be difficult to do some genetic engineering to implant seeds into something that originally had no seeds."

Part of the function of apostolic and prophetic ministries, as Eph. 3:3-9 describes, is that certain apostolic insights are given by revelation, and are to be passed on to others in order to make plain - or, better, to illuminate (from Greek: *photisai*, enlighten) - the mystery of the church. In other words, those apostolic and prophetic callings - more than any other ministries in the Bible - are designed to be revelatory, receiving secrets and classified information, specifically created to reflect and illuminate much of the proactive purposes and directives of God, just like spies and generals of an army working perfectly together. And not only that, but they also are designed to install governmental systems to ensure that God's directives are accomplished. That is why I sometimes call the combination of apostolic-prophetic people working in unison "the mirror," something that is able to reflect back some of God's light and,

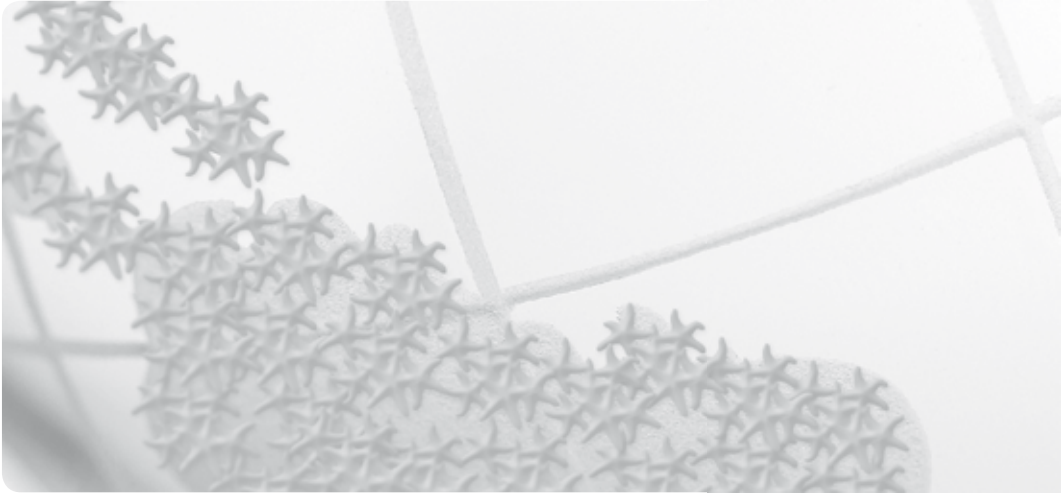
therefore, enlighten the path for the church on its mission.

Knowing full well from experience what an apostolic and prophetic church can do, the devil attacks this development more than anything. He hates it. I believe he has greatly succeeded in taking that “mirror” and smashing it into a thousand different pieces, distributing it around the globe. However, for centuries now, the people of God have searched, asked, probed, dug, questioned, reasoned, turned every stone on every shore around in hope of finding another apostolic or prophetic shard, a piece. And I believe they have been successful as it has been brought together piece-by-piece by faithful servants of God. I am just one of those who have been searching, collecting little bits and pieces for decades, together with many of you. I don’t think we all have found everything yet, but I believe we have found enough of the mirror to start piecing it together and begin to hang it back on the wall. And then the mirror will start working again – and allow the church to swiftly move ahead, just like it did in the beginning.

To summarize this: apostolic architecture means to build accurate, kingdom-driven governmental systems in direct prophetic synchronization with the purposes of God, that allow for the inbuilt multiplication potential of the ekklesia to function properly and therefore to reach its goal.

As we are clear about the destiny of all this, let us now look at four categories of the apostolic question: “what are the foundational building principles of God?”, “what does the apostolic design of ekklesia look like?”, “With whom does he build?” and “how does God build?” where we will look at practical implications and applications of all this.





12 The Blueprint Question – How does God build?

If the Lord builds the house, nobody labors in vain

12 The Blueprint Question –

How does God build?

The world is divided over the question: Is there or is there not a creator? Did the world come into existence Big Bang-style, and we all are not much more than spontaneous products of macro-evolution, or is a thoughtful creator behind all this?

Those who deny the existence of a creator are usually puzzled by the many recurring scientific discoveries that almost all of life is governed by axiomatic, foundational *principles*. Amongst these principles are $E=mc^2$, the laws of quantum physics, biogenetics, the genomes, the double helix of life, DNA, the atomic and subatomic structures, or the nature of light and sound. Who made all those laws? Evolutional accidents? Or are we all looking at building principles, architectural blueprints, an intelligent design, fingerprints of God whichever way we turn, whether you believe in him or not?

In God's fascinating dialogue with Job, he asks him a startling question: "Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?" (Job 38:33) The obvious answer is "no". But those rules obviously exist. The laws of the heavens: what is that? Are there spiritual laws that guide spiritual things? And material things, too?

Consider Phi 1.618 Φ

For many millennia, the number PHI, or 1.618, has been known to be a fundamental building block in nature, a proportional ratio that, amazingly, much of nature seems to be locked into. One of the ways this is known is through the **Fibonacci sequence**. This is a series of numbers where each number is the sum of the last two, but also the quotient of two neighboring numbers: 1 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 55 89 144 233 377 610 and so on. The bigger those neighboring Fibonacci-numbers are, the closer is their quotient to Φ , 1,618 (3 divided by 2 is 1,5; 610 divided by 377 is 1,61804). Did you know the statistical relationship between male and female bees in a beehive community is 1,618? If you look at sunflower seeds that grow in opposing spirals and you divide the ratio of each round's diameter to the next, you will get PHI? If you look into spiral pinecone petals, the leaf arrangements on plant stalks, and the segmentation of insects, you will see that they are all arranged in a ratio of 1,618 to each other. PHI, wherever you look.

In architecture, quite simply put, PHI is a holy number. Since the buildings that architects design seek to reflect human needs and are build to suit human ratios – the relationships within the human anatomy, myriads of scientists and artists have tried to decipher the mysteries of the human body. The oldest known collection of human ratios was found in a chamber inside the pyramids of Memphis (ca. 3000 BC). Similar works by Ptolemy, the Greeks, the Romans, the canon of Polycletos, Alberti, Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and especially Albrecht Dürer have explored this.

Dürer laid down a simple "canon" of such relationships:

- 1/1 full body height
- 1/2: upper body: from chin to groin
- 1/4 length of leg from ankle to knee and distance from chin to navel
- 1/6 length of foot
- 1/8 length of head and distance of nipples
- 1/10 height and breath of face including ears
- 1/12 breadth of face underneath nose, breadth of leg above ankle, etc

The fact that the human body is a masterpiece of symmetric architecture became world famous mainly through Leonardo Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, named after famous Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius. And, would you be surprised: if you divide the body height by belly-to-bottom-distance, you get PHI. Shoulder to fingertips divided by elbow to fingertips: PHI. Hip to floor divided by knee to floor: PHI. Fingers, joints, toes, spinal divisions: same. PHI, 1.618 became known as "the divine proportion", and many artists rigorously adhered to it in their work. In the architectural and conceptual dimensions of the Greek Parthenon, the pyramids of Giza, the UN building in New York, even in the compositions of Mozart's sonatas, Beethoven's 5th Symphony, the musical works of Bartók, Debussy and Schubert, if you look for it, you will find variations of PHI.

Famous French architect Le Corbusier used this Φ - ratio (also called *The Golden Cut*) in all his architectural projects after 1945 (he called it Le Modular) as well as in the famous north Indian model city, Chandigarh, where Le Corbusier acted as a city planner. Many scientists and artists say that when things in art are depicted in correct proportions to each other reflecting real life, you will stop just to look at them – and start gazing, experiencing, feeling them, almost as if you suddenly see things in three dimensions. As God is an artist and not a pragmatist, he would never create a simple, functional box. Look at how he went about the making of the Tent of the Meeting (Ex 25:8.9): "And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them, according to all I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it." And when you read the whole story, you are amazed at the intricate, colorful, elaborate design that God has put into this. The end result is not a tent. It is a piece of incredible art, something humans would not have been able to construct on their own. Much of today's loneliness, desperation, and violence, in so-called ghettos have to do with life-denying architecture, where Mammon has been the architect with his credo: cram as many people as possible into as little space as possible in the cheapest possible forms of human habitation.

All this, to point out: there are clear laws and principles built into nature, in everything you see, in everything created. And every building project in the Bible even remotely connected to God is never ever given into the hands of imaginative people dreaming up concepts and designs of their own, but to people who were given clear directions and detailed architectural advice. The owner of the house has decided what sort of house he wants – the contractors or builders are not free to alter this at their own will. If we find those patterns in nature, how much more important will it be to understand the most basic conceptual dynamics when we attempt to work together with God to expand his Kingdom. Otherwise we may be found to be working out-of-tune or out-of-

touch with the owner of the building site – and to just point to other construction workers doing the same won't be of much use. But let us now begin to look at the five main principles in Scripture that show how this worked.

If the Lord does not build the house, the laborers labor in vain (Psalm 127:1)

All of us know this verse, and essentially it says: God is an architect; he builds a house. If he does it, fine; if he does not do it, not fine. The main symptom of a house that the Lord does not build is vanity: the laborers labor, but in vain. The house won't be finished, although work is there for everyone. Busyness is no sign of God at work.

If we look at today's Christian scene, we see a lot of work, extraordinary busyness; churches, agencies, mission societies, everyone builds. But we also see a lot of "vainness" – general stagnation of the Christian operation with very few exceptions, the absence of growth even in times of immense, time-consuming programs. And in most cases, we see slow or even alarming decline despite (or because of?) frantic activity. 18,000 fulltime pastors – the number of a sizeable town – leave US churches prematurely every year, frustrated and disappointed. If you ask them why they left early, you will hear things like, "I couldn't see the point in continuing to do what I was doing, because I saw no progress, no hope, no change." Burnout rates, sabbaticals, member-care and counseling among full-timers are at an all-time high, while morale is at an all-time low. Even Bill Hybels' church icon *Willow Creek Community Church* near Chicago is leveling out and starting to shrink. Pastor David Cho's *Yooido Full Gospel Church* in Seoul and Cesar Castellano's *MCI Church* in Bogota have stopped growing – as well as most of the top 100 classical Mega-churches in the world. And in most traditional Evangelical churches of the West, members are leaving faster than they can win new ones. Therefore, we need new answers, not new preachers of Churchianity.

Andreas Wolf, a German church planting researcher, attended a conference in England in 2006 that brought together several hundred of the most innovative church planters, pioneers, and emergent leaders of the country. This is what he wrote on his Blogsite afterwards:

"Hearing a lot about the latest cries, trends, practices, and 'successes' in church planting here in the UK, to be honest, makes me feel quite ambivalent. It's so much good things being achieved by so **great people** with godly passion and lovely servant's hearts and it's all good reasons for being thankful that church planting dynamics are really increasing significantly here in Britain and elsewhere... **and yet - I am bored.** Not that I am not challenged and enriched on a personal level through all this, but yet - it's still all 'doing church.' Doing more church. Doing church better. Doing more better. Doing better more. Doing, doing, doing. And it's all 'church 1,' probably meanwhile it's **'church version 1.7' but I keep desiring to see 'church version 2.0!'** It is generally acknowledged that we do not know yet what the shape of the church will look like nor do we actually seem to even have understood its DNA. What keeps frustrating me is that **we keep getting ourselves busy with the good things instead of hitting the brakes, stop 'doing,' start looking around us in utter helplessness, start crying out to**

**Busyness is
no sign of God at work.**

the ONE and then re-align thoughts and actions according to his guidance. Everything (!!!) else seems like an awful waste of time, energy and resources to me."

It is quite possible to be involved in classical Christianity and become a modern Sisyphus, endlessly pushing his rock up the mountain, only to see it tumble down again and again. "The Gods" in Greek mythology had obviously thought that there is no greater punishment for a human being than to do meaningless, aimless, and fruitless work – to work in vain. "Having lost sight of our goal, we doubled our speed," comments Mark Twain. What about us at this very moment? What is our aim, the ideal we follow, our blueprint? Which spiritual architecture are we following, and how original is our original, actually? Where did we find "the ideal church" that we carry in our hearts as our inner model for everything we do? In London? Seoul? Bogota? Chicago? Plymouth? Anaheim? Colorado Springs? Wittenberg? Or in the Bible?

The Bible knows two very different principles of building: 1) building according to God's pattern, and 2) building according to human patterns. Agreed, we humans have come up with a third solution: mixed versions of 1 and 2, and any variety of remixed versions of the already mixed ones. Let us first look at scenario 1:

When God builds

"The universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews. 11:3). There are a number of things in the Bible for which God was clearly the architect, culminating in "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "The builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything" (Hebrews. 3:3.4). Let's walk briefly through biblical examples of how it is when God builds.

Humans, man and woman, were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:29), according to an original in heaven: the triune God. As they are united in love and purpose, they are made into a reflection of how God is. This is a far cry from the notion of a mutated and cosmetically altered monkey.

Noah built **the ark** after a fairly detailed building plan that he received from God. God said: "Make yourself an ark of cypress wood, 300 cubits long, 50 wide and 30 cubits high. Make a cubit wide opening under the roof; put a door in the side; and make three decks" (Gen. 6:14-16). Here God is very specific, down to the size of the window, the exact proportions, the floor plan, where to put the door and even the material. Maritime history tells us that a ship that size (roughly 140 x 23 x 13.5 meters) was only built after 1886. Marine engineers will tell us that the measurements and proportions 300/50/30 are ideal for having a ship able to carry heavy loads in rough waters, able to ride two waves at the same time, and are excellent to prevent torsion. There is no report in ancient history of any such ship during that time, not in the Gilgamesh Epic, nowhere. How in the world, therefore, was Noah able to build such an extraordinary ship during his time that would have been a revolutionary invention even in the year 1800, and do so entirely without the Internet? I believe Noah was online.

"Having lost sight of our goal, we doubled our speed," comments Mark Twain.

He had, figuratively speaking, a wireless connection to www.heavens.tv, where he could go and download [ark.exe](#), a self-extracting file with the exact blueprint of the future ship. He worked together with his sons, a team under his supervision, for twelve long decades to see the ship completed, which happened when he became 600 years old, most probably in the face of ridicule and slander by the democratic majority: "Noah did everything *just* as God commanded him" (Gen. 6:22).

The vision of **the tabernacle** was given to Moses "on the mountain." "See that you make them according to the pattern shown on the mountain" (Ex. 25:40). On that mountain, Moses had a rare chance to access information stored in heaven. He saw what others did not see. Moses could do this "because he saw him who is invisible," says Hebrews 11:24-27. God showed him his blueprint for the tent of the meeting and even gave him expertly gifted men that God "had filled with the spirit of God with skill, ability, and knowledge, in all kinds of crafts," Bezalel and Oholiab, of whom God said, "I have chosen them." Even to the craftsmen God had "given skills to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of the meeting, the ark of the Testimony and all other furnishings..." And God repeats a key advice to the workers: "They are to make them *just* as I commanded you" (Ex. 31:1-11).

The Temple of Solomon was, again, built according to a heavenly vision. The priest in the Jewish temple, according to Hebrews 8:4.5 (and 9:24), "served at a sanctuary that is *a copy and shadow of what is in heaven*." David was given a printout of that copy. He says: "All this I have in writing from the hand of the Lord upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan" (1 Chronicles 28:19). God had obviously visited David, laid hands on him, and made him to write down the specific details of the temple project according to the insights that God gave him, some of which we can read in 2 Chronicles 3-4. God did not just bless David's creativity and allow him to go ahead as he pleased, but was very specific. However, the military man David is not allowed to build the Temple, so God said to him: "Solomon your son is the one who will build my house." David is the recipient of the vision that God gave "into his heart," but he gave that blueprint – the details of the plan – to another man, Solomon, and said to him: "The divisions of the priests and the Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command" (1 Chron. 28:21). Again we have a building project that was very specifically revealed to David, to be given into the care of a man God chose by name (Solomon). David was obviously very concerned that everything would go as planned, because he prayed to God for Solomon: "Give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements, and decrees, and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided" (29:19).

Solomon understood the size of the task before him and that it was super-human. He said: "Who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him?" Once he was made king, Solomon sent for help to Hiram, king of Tyre, "to send me a skilled and experienced man" as well as materials. The work itself

could not be given to just any craftsmen on the street, but to those *willed and skilled*. (1 Chron. 28:21). Only the best were good enough for the job, since some of the building materials were not ordinary stuff, but also precious metals like gold and silver. Therefore, it had to be a man of the caliber of Hiram, “a man of great skill, trained to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, experienced, who can execute any design given to him” (2 Chron. 2:13-14), whom God sent. Together with that, Solomon conscripted 153,600 men as carriers, stonecutters and foremen – interestingly enough all of them aliens in Israel according to the census that David had taken (2 Chron. 2: 17). And so the temple was built in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where the Lord had appeared to David, the exact same geographical spot where Abraham had gone “to worship” with his son Isaac and a knife, and the place where God had promised through him “to bless all nations” (Gen 22).

In a later event, we read about **the reform of king Joash** who decided to restore that temple of the Lord (2 Chron. 24). Rather than modifying the temple to fit the modern times, it says they were diligent to “rebuild the temple of God according to its *original design*.” They had obviously great respect for the divine nature of the blueprint, so rather than letting the latest architectural fashion dictate the project, they stuck to “the ancient path,” the ways revealed to David and executed by Solomon.

Lastly, how did Jesus – and later the apostles - build **the ekklesia**? Again, the Bible is clear that church is not a human invention at all: “Jesus went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not part of this creation” (Hebrews 9:11). This was specifically one of his apostolic assignments, which Jesus formulated like this: “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). He describes himself as the owner and builder, and only those who have a revelation-based knowledge of him will be useful for building. The principle here is: **Christology precedes ecclesiology**. Only if we know who Jesus really is will we be able to grasp what the church that Jesus is building really means. And we cannot get this Christological insight by information, searching through libraries, reading books, or going on the Web. It will not come through our human philosophies, political ideologies, or religious traditions, by flesh and blood. This “mystery of the church” has to be unlocked, decrypted by a password, a key that is called Jesus who needs to be personally received, not borrowed from a neighbor.

Jesus said to Peter as he had come to understand that Jesus is the Christ: “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in heaven” (Matt 16:16-18). For Christology, and therefore ecclesiology, to sink in, it needs revelation, not information. Plain human information, folks telling other folks what some folks told them, is not enough. And in order to receive revelation, there needs to be a process of seeking, knocking, searching, asking, visits in the night, sitting together afterwards, like the disciples did when Jesus had told another mystery parable. That’s the price for revelation; raw data all by itself is too cheap.

The entire ministry life of Jesus was one big revelation of the concepts laid out as foundations for his disciples to carry on. Speaking in parables, healing,

driving out demons, prophesying, carrying a purse, a common financial fund, very carefully and prayerfully selecting disciples, eating and staying in other peoples' houses, the concept of houses of peace, selecting twelve, later 70, sending them out to do the same: what was Jesus doing? Simple. He was laying out the "details of the plan" to his disciples – and to us - **revealing the blueprint for the ekklesia of God!** Again the same principles: Jesus did not act on his own, and even said specifically: "By myself I can do nothing," "I can do nothing of my own". He only did what he "saw his father doing" (John 5:19,20), and said what he heard the father saying: "What I have heard from him, I tell the world. I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me; I always do what pleases him" (John 8:26-29).

As this was the operating principle of Jesus – to look and listen up before he did or said anything down here – Jesus was executing a precise plan of action designed for him by his father in heaven. God obviously had a map, a strategy laid out for his son, and Jesus again and again asked: ***father, where is the red dot that says "You are here!"*** Jesus knew this and was obviously convinced that he had been able to lay out a pattern, a blueprint for ekklesia, for his disciples to follow, over a period of three years. He did not give them a book or a map, but his life and ministry was the blueprint, was the map, and so he told them: "Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). How did he command? Not only did Jesus say to his disciples: "As the father has sent me, I am sending you," but he had given them a detailed example, a pattern to follow, and a clear understanding of what being and building the "church" means.

Father, where is the red dot that says "You are here!"

There are some today (and have always been) who argue that there are no principles left by God to build the church, that there is no plan, no appendix to the book of Acts with a floor plan and a how-to manual for churches, and that it is therefore left to our will and creativity to follow this church pattern, that ministry model, or invent any number of concepts as we go. They would therefore wrongly conclude that structures "are not important", and that it does not matter if we choose to build flat structures, hierarchical structures, cell church, house church, emergent church, mega-church, meta-church, drive-through church, cyber-church, clusters, satellite church or multi-site, and that we are free to have a five fold ministry or one man show, popes, archdeacons, archbishops, top down management or bottom up, tithing, no tithing, denominations, congregations, conferences, networks, all the same.

Well, no!

If we take the Bible as a standard, then absolutely nothing can be further from the truth. Whoever says that "we are free to do church as we like" simply has not been on the mountain, simply has not been given access to www.heavens.tv, has not found the blueprint, and simply has not understood the most basic organizing and building principles of God - and therefore should not be involved in building anything for God in the first place in an architectural role, because he obviously lacks the most foundational insights and skills. Someone once said to me: "Structures are not important, love is." I said: "The heart said to the skeleton: 'You are not important!' You know, cults are made out of half-

truths. Maybe you want to start one, a love commune? The Hippies have done that before, and where love without borders and structures leads to, you can see yourself: single moms, wherever you look, and kids without dads. So why don't you just focus on the issue that burns strongest in your heart, love, and leave the structure business to those who are called to make it the center of their lives?"

If there is, like for everything else in life, a divine blueprint for the ekklesia, nothing shows our obedience to our divine architect better than to follow him down to the very structures that he modelled and laid out for us. And nothing shows our ignorance, disobedience and even rebellion more clearly than to declare boldly that structure is not important.

"Stay, Holy Spirit"

God's ultimate desire is to spend time with humans – togetherness, unity, family. Much time, long times, forever, if possible. He is not really interested in quick visits. I remember once asking some charismatic friends: "You guys are world champions in asking: 'Come Holy Spirit.' You sing it, pray it, proclaim it, dance it. But there is a prayer that I find much more intriguing. It is: 'Stay, Holy Spirit.' Say: do you know the biblical conditions for the spirit to come – *and remain?*"

There was no answer.

So I told them: When Noah finished building the ark, the Holy Spirit, the executive presence of God, came – and stayed for many months, this time as rain, convicting people of their sins. When the Tabernacle was finished, "the cloud covered the tent of the meeting and the glory of God filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of the Meeting because the cloud had settled on it, "a cloud in the day, and a fiery cloud in the night that was with them during all their travels" (Ex. 40:33-38); when the temple of Solomon was finished and declared open, that day "fire came down from heaven, consumed the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priest could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it" (2 Chron. 5:13 and 7:1-10), a time that went on for 23 days. As the disciples of Jesus had come together in oneness of mind after the ascension of their master and waited corporately for the gift of God Jesus had promised them, the Holy Spirit came in power – and did not leave after a few religious moments, but remained with them and confirmed the presence of Jesus on their missions. The principle here is simple: as a corporate body of people engage in long-time, collective obedience to the revealed pattern from heaven, God seals that obedience with his lasting presence. The Holy Spirit comes – and stays.

As the disciples of the disciples of the disciples of Jesus started to move away and became modernists, that is, they replaced the original design and heavenly blueprints of ekklesia for new ideas, the catch of the day, for the latest in the religious or philosophical markets of the day, not only did the original blueprint start to fade away, but also the manifest presence of God. Later, Christianity sold the entire inherited blueprint for the lentil soup of a government-recognized existence during the days of Constantine. Since that time of abandonment, such great spiritual drought has come on this world, that even the smallest occurrences of the Spirit's presence have been celebrated as a huge revival.

When God builds: scenario 1, in summary:

1) Everything that God initiates on earth, he builds according to a blueprint, a true original in heaven for a copy on earth (Heb. 9:24).

2) God selects a very small group of individuals (Noah, Moses, David, Jesus) and allows them access to that otherwise highly classified blueprint. Their work is then to function as a relay station, as an interface between heaven and earth ("the mountain") and to transfer that revelatory information and insight to earth and put it to work.

3) These people then go ahead, "down the mountain," and select a team of people, chosen by God, who appear to be willing and gifted in the very area of the work.

4) In a communal effort that often lasts for a long time, they work in a corporate, obedience-based effort towards the implementation of the revealed vision from God. The word for their motivation and mindset is: "holy fear" (Hebrews 11:7), meaning absolute respect for concepts and designs given to them by God for implementation.

5) Once the project is finished, the manifest presence of God invades that space, and comes to stay.

When humans build

Scenario 2 is when humans build. Let us look at some examples of people building according to human, not divine, patterns in the Bible:

Cain's Enoch. The first human described in the Bible as someone building anything is Cain (Gen 4). He builds a city that he calls Enoch. Cain had been cut off from the land, lost his roots, and became a soil-less wanderer (4:12), the first nomad, fleeing away from God. The city he built therefore had an important function: to replace the security that only God can give, and so the city becomes the first idol: to provide strength, identity, and security other than from God. Cain gives it the name that is most dear to him: his own future, his son Enoch.

The Tower and City of Babel. "They said to each other: come let's make bricks and bake them. They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said: come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower to reach heaven, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the earth" (Gen 11:3-4). They took a concept from earth: the city of Enoch, attached it to a self-made vision ("come let's build ourselves a city") and added to it the most awful, ugly, brainless building material the world has ever seen: bricks! The Bible passage seems to take special offence at it, mentioning it twice, as if to say: **listen to this: they used – can you believe it?! - bricks instead of real stones.**

Anybody normally would take solid stones, but this people's rebellion towards God had gone so far through the roof that they even refused to take God's building material that was all over the place; they had to go and make even the stones themselves! The next time we hear of bricks in the Bible is in Egypt, when the Israelites had to bake bricks in order to build the empire's pyramid structures for Pharaoh: "And the Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard

labor in mortar and bricks," quotas of bricks and more bricks (Ex. 1). Bricks must have been an especially detestable thing to God. In Isaiah 9:10 he has him say in a prophetic message: "The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with smooth stones," and in Isaiah 65:2-3 God cries out: "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations - a people who continually provoke me in my face offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks!"

Let's linger with these bricks for a moment longer. Bricks, at first glance, are very practical. They have 8 corners, are standardized and, in some countries, surely ISO 9002 certified. Bricks can be numbered, exchanged, they are copies of a copy of a human invention, ultimately a spiritual import from Babylon. They are symbolic of humans building in rebellion to God. Nothing, absolutely nothing that God ever builds needs bricks. The Tabernacle was made out of very special textiles, the temple of Solomon of hewn stones and wood, and the New Testament house of God is made of "living stones." Imagine a wall made out of living stones, let's say stones with 17 corners, that just at the moment when they are placed into a wall change their form and have, say, 13 corners? That is a humanly impossible endeavor. But there is an easy solution for this. We could take perfectly original, uniquely shaped living stones, put them under a crushing machine, grind them to powder, add some glue, water and straw, and have them come out of the machine in perfect cookie cutter style: 4 x 3 x 2, formed, compatible, unoriginal, industrial-strength stones.

The incredible advantage, however, of the brick system is that even architects who are no architects at all, anyone, really, can take a bunch of bricks and build something, at least something simple, even following an utterly unprofessional self-made blueprint. And here we go, take a church concept off the shelf, hire CAWKI (church as we know it) approved, cookie-cutter (Bible school) trained runners of more CAWKI's, assemble a working team straight off the streets, gifted, skilled or not, and then go about the business of taking beautiful, living stones with watermarks and vandalize them into bricks, where they lose all their originality beyond recognition, become pew-fodder, a number in our building plan, youth group or mission because they fit spot seventeen (the job description, the vacancy), and naively put brick upon brick after a fading copy of a self-made building plan. Then, we stand back and call the final result, can you believe this, a church!

And what emerged through those human building patterns? The storm shows it, any shaking and crisis giving it a new crack in the brick wall. We see many sand castles built by people who do not put God's word into practice, and therefore build on sand (Matt. 7) after ever-new versions or models of people "pursuing their own imaginations." (Today we call those people *innovators* and pay them license fees). We see a myriad of "*in*" designs fashioned in rebellion to God, his principles, and his ways, in his face! If Jeremiah lived today, would he not go stunned and dazed through this religious landscapes of ours, dotted with symbols and manifestations of selfish building projects, of religious competition and fragmentation, outlets of religious franchises often standing door to door, premise to premise, an abominable insult to God and man, advertising our apostolic incompetence on the streets? Would Jeremiah not go and say: "I know this. Here we go again; people worshipping what their

own hands have made. So let's uproot, tear down, destroy, and overthrow, and then build and plant?" (Jer. 1:9.16)

In the absence of the original, there is an inflation of the fake.

This is, of course, not only true for religious Christian buildings. We have witnessed entire cities wiped out like Nineveh, the 30 m statue of Nebuchadnezzar that was blown away like chaff from the threshing floor (Daniel 2:35), and "like smoke from a chimney" (Hosea 13:3), the Berlin Wall, the World Trade Centers, or Saddam Hussein's Dream Palaces. I believe the very reason why classical Christianity is so absolutely addicted to copying the latest in church-models and constantly importing and exporting new spiritual technology, is because it has completely lost the godly original, the access to the apostolic architecture. In the absence of the original, there is an inflation of the fake. And long tradition is not an equivalent for the godly original.

People are possessed with the notion and idea of the "perfect brick," the building block, stuff, material to build our dream church. The ideal member, co-worker, staff, team member. Square, practical, dead. And we have no idea of the immense pain in the heart of God watching us using people who were designed as an original by him, made for a very special and unique purpose, as they are crushed to powder in our CAWKI-101 courses, socialized beyond recognition. No wonder why only 2% of all church members today in Evangelical Christianity know who they are. Somehow those 2% must have escaped a machine that I believe is doing a great crime to humanity: stealing away the calling, originality and distinctiveness of individuals, people who are expressions of the creative genius in heaven, men and women who are grand and precious ideas of God. A machine that has been making them into copies of copies and clones of clones, telling them to mimic liturgies, ministries, and programs, until they don't know any better, forget any inkling of the idea of "That was it? There must be more! Help!!" and succumb to the religious routine, toil and earn, pay tithes and burn - and become another domesticated duck with clipped wings, standing in line for the pan.

This just cannot be of God; it must be of Satan, who, in the name of Jesus and with shouts of Hallelujahs, Glorys and Amens makes us stand up to welcome new members to the club, folks fresh off the machine, brand new bricks, still with some insecure smiles, but ready to sit, sing, and soak on seat 76 for the next 40 years. However, 98% of the time, our welcoming new members into Church-As-We-Know-It is a burial of gifts and callings. The Holy Spirit has said farewell to the brick. When will we do the same? If God does not live in temples made by human hands, why should we?

The Holy Spirit has said farewell to the brick. When will we do the same? If God does not live in temples made by human hands, why should we?

Scenario 2, when humans build, in summary:

1) Humans take a concept, an architecture or blueprint found on earth (out of the visible): copy it, modify it or invent it themselves.

2) When humans build, they do not wait for a heavenly mandate, but usually make it up, usurp, grab the initiative themselves (let's do it!), and take ownership. Successful ones sell licenses and start franchises of their inventions.

3) An inventor, pioneer, Guru or salesman attracts and gathers a group of people loyal to himself, and makes them part of his "vision" and plan, which usually starts by setting up a brick making machine in order to produce and fit the building material to their preconceived architecture. And so the group

frantically develops training, more “leaders” to run the programs, and systems to reproduce more clones (Bible schools, seminaries, workshops, courses, materials etc).

4) Corporate obedience is replaced by an appeal to individual consumerism, the promise of individual gain: what is in it for you, or the offer and status of joining the hottest (or, for the Brethren types, the coolest and most sober, emotion-free) church in town.

5) Human projects are usually never finished. They never reach the God-given goal because usually, there was none, or just a dream picked out of thin air to reflect the grandeur of the founders. If the founder/director/pioneer dies, the whole enterprise is usually inherited in a form of monarchic succession, where either the children of the spiritual monarch, or someone close, like an uncle, carry on dad’s legacy, ready or not.

Postmodernism and the Emerging Church Phase

The very idea of a divine blueprint handed down to us humans will be particularly hard to swallow for folks growing up in the climate of the fading Western phenomenon of postmodernism, and among those currently in the Emergent Church streams, and house church movements who are tempted to throw out the baby with the bathwater and reject each and every authority, any building principles just because; out of a frantic fear of control; out of hurts in the past; because of “dad,” their own experiences with a father who was less than perfect; out of a rebellious mindset; out of a phase of Christianity that never has grown up and just wants to remain as kids forever. I am guilty of all of this myself, so I will add a few personal lines as honestly as I can. As I was born in 1959, I fully imbibed the anti-institutional mindset of the day, grew up in the wake of the 1968 rebellion, was part of organizations that reflected that spirit, saw the effects of a liberalized society in media and education, and know full well what it means to stand up to the system, call for revolution and rebel against everything. I have watched it, grown up with it, and have initiated a few small rebellions and revolutions myself during my naughty boy days. I have even made front-page news in boulevard newspapers. But just being against any rule set is not the answer, it’s a symptom of a deeper issue.

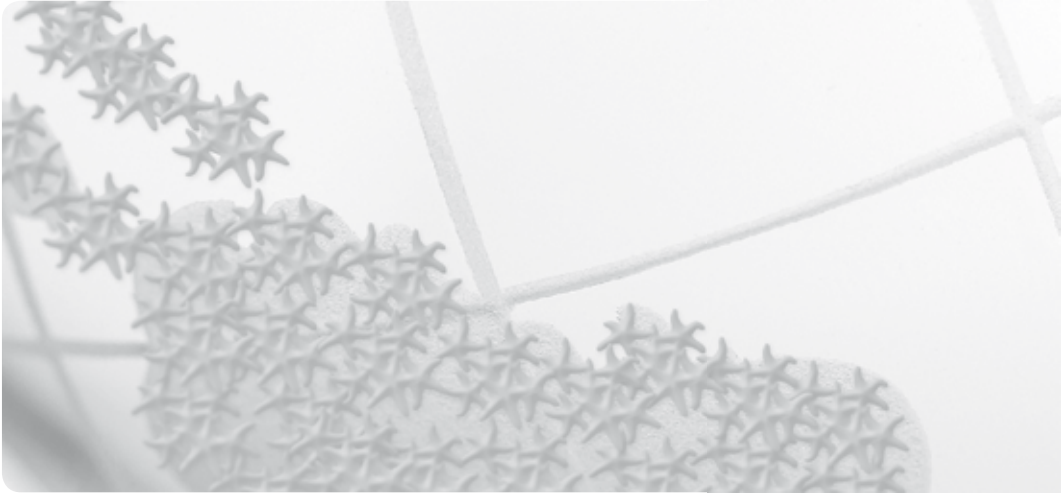
Having been there and done that, I am not really impressed by people who are forever locked into search mode, and sometimes violently reject the idea of blueprints, “concepts out there that I – excuse me! - have to acknowledge” as if it were a sacrifice of personal, individual freedom. Rejection of authority is childish, ultimately pharaoh-like in nature: “Who is this God that I would have to acknowledge?” as some Pharaoh told Moses. Well, the answer is that God, our maker, has both a place in his plan and architecture for each one of us; but if we reject both, we will keep searching until we die of old age. The rejection of absolutes is a result of the waves of rebellion against a pseudo-Christian, Western lifestyle. Those were the days when Marlon Brando would ride up in the film *The Wild One*, a kind of manifesto of the emerging counter-culture youth movement of the day, and be asked: “*What are you rebelling against?*” His answer was a classic: “*Whaddaya got?*” Reasonless rebellion as a sign of coolness was in for a while; but as the causes that folks have rebelled against have nowadays somehow receded, we need to ask a much more important question: *what are you for?* And if you are for intentional community, organic

values, and relationships, what keeps you from becoming part of an ekklesia of God that exactly manifests those values – even if you did not invent it?

That rebellion is a healthy way to freedom is a cultural lie of the 60s, 70s and 80s. And it is a result of a rejection of the fatherhood of God – complete with his rule sets and ways to enforce it. As the book of Hebrews teaches us, rebellion and restlessness go together, and restless people are basically disobedient people – including those who say there is no rule set to follow.

Any number of fundamentalist, nationalistic, and legalistic (it's essentially all the same...) Christian groups have probably done much more to push people into an anti-Christian-establishment camp than they think, and burned lots of trust by their inflexibility, stubbornness, and religious bigotry, refusing even to talk. However, let's not keep blaming everyone, but move on, press on. It will be important for all of us to overcome that deep hurt of fatherlessness in ourselves by addressing the traumas and wounds, by reconnecting with our father in heaven as well as with spiritual fathers here on earth. Our willingness to allow God to place us gently into the puzzle at the very place which has an empty space with our name on it will determine the degree to which we will be doing our part, making our contribution to the apostolic exploits of these days.

Otherwise, I see God simply bypassing entire movements for whom it is more important to search than to find, more important to hear and endlessly discuss the latest spiritual terminology, technology and philosophy. It is not very creative to define what you *don't* want, rallying one more time around a few gurus who catch the limelight, and at the same time being scared that someone might actually come up with answers. After being so used to only asking questions, the search itself can become such a core defining value of our identity that we might become Christian Buddhists for whom the way is the goal and the search is the answer. God is bigger than that and has room for both questions and answers. I see the emerging movement as a sign of great hope, as a generation leaving CAWKI because they have accurately seen something deeply wrong, and who now wander and meander through a maze and labyrinth of issues, questions, stories and examples. This is good, because searching is the prerequisite to revelation; those who seek shall find, and every labyrinth has an exit. It is open above.



13 The Empire of God

**...your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven. Mt 6:10**

13 The Empire of God

If God is the God of gods (Deut. 10:17) and Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords, it will be most fascinating to have a closer look into the sphere and nature of their rule, *the Kingdom of the King of kings*. And if we humans do not understand the essence of what the Kingdom of God is – and what the relationship therefore is between ekklesia and the Kingdom, we will be unable to work with Jesus as he builds his church within the larger framework of establishing his Kingdom.

As Jesus spoke 69 times about the Kingdom, and only twice about ekklesia, let us enquire what he meant when he introduced the subject statistically so close to his heart: the Kingdom. It was the very first thing he ever preached when he spoke in public: “Repent, the Kingdom of God is near!” and the very last subject he dealt with during his earthly existence. As we all know how much importance Jesus gave to the preaching and explaining of what he called the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God, do we know what it is? After all, if Jesus had chosen to have a 40-day retreat with his apostles on this very subject after his resurrection and before his ascension (Acts 1:3), it must have been a pretty central concept of his debriefing. And obviously, his disciples had thoroughly understood what Jesus was talking about, because their central question after all they had been through with their Master was not any longer “what exactly is the Kingdom?”, but “**when** will you restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)

It is overwhelmingly clear that the central part of apostolic Christianity, following the footsteps and values of Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our faith, is concerned with the Kingdom of God. “Seek first the Kingdom of God!” is one of Jesus’ central commands to his disciples. “In the days of those Kings,” prophesied Daniel in Daniel 2, speaking of the ancient Persian, Greek, and finally the Roman Empire during which Jesus was born, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed... and will endure forever.” Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this was the very message and theme that the early apostles preached and carried forward – and this will move on until that special culminating day when the angels will say: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15).

The diligent work of God towards establishing a Kingdom with himself as the King, and Jerusalem as the geopolitical headquarters, and the people of Israel, initially, as the subjects of his Kingdom, is a major theme in the Old Testament. The prophets speak of a literal, physical restoration of a Theocracy in Israel, with Jerusalem as its headquarters and the Messiah as the King. This is why the “Gospel of the Kingdom,” understood in precisely that way, was such good news to be preached to the Jews in the days of Jesus. He basically said to them: you are waiting for the establishment of Theocracy under your King, the Messiah, to be restored. Rightfully so. Well, it is happening right now, as I speak to you, and as I am living among you, the foundation stone is laid that, one day, will lead to the restoration of what you hope for. Join me now, and enter the Kingdom right now. Reject me, and watch me call those who originally were not the people (of God), the Gentiles, to come ahead of you, and as you watch them and become jealous, you can join me later.

At this time of a time-bound and special offer to the Jews, it is obvious that Jesus forbade his disciples to preach this Kingdom message to anyone other than the Jews. He said it directly: "Do not go to the gentiles!" (Matt. 10). It would not have been really good news to the Samaritans or anyone else to preach to them how God was making a special offer to restore the Theocracy in Israel right then. It would have either made them jealous (why them, and not us?), or made them shrug and say: so what! But once it was clear that Israel, in general, had rejected Jesus – the builders have rejected the stone (1 Peter 2) – and Jesus was crucified and later resurrected, the message of the Kingdom of God was freely proclaimed among the Gentiles, too. And through their acceptance the rejected stone became the foundation for the ekklesia, the Church that Jesus said he would build in order to see his Kingdom come.

The Church, mainly formed from among the Gentiles, would be a partisan movement of God for a while, establishing initial beachheads, multiplying house churches and a network of networks of house churches – pockets of God's uncontested rule in a sea of rebellion - guerrilla style, in each area and city of the kingdoms of this world. Those churches would then grow and grow until their number reached a culmination point, a critical mass, able to inspire, shift and even shape significant aspects of society and policy. Or, in the cases that those following Christ become a majority, they could even take over an entire region or city or nation for a while. This would pitch the Church in direct competition or conflict with the ruling governing system of whatever kind, and could have two possible outcomes: one is an acceptance of Christianity to become and be the official city/state religion (usually at the huge price of the church becoming a religious function of the State, swearing loyalty to a human King or system), or Christianity is rejected, persecuted, suppressed and is squeezed underground again – until it resurfaces once more. This process would be unstoppable, until all people of this world would be disciplined, and the "fullness of the pagans" (Rom 11:12, 25) would have come in.

This is when the Church, as an integral part and function of the Kingdom of God, would become a global entity, "a mountain that filled the earth" (Daniel 2:35), and in a global conflict would seriously challenge the rulers of this world for world governance. In a final showdown with the anti-Christian system of that day, this group, "the prophets, apostles, and saints" (Rev 18:20) will seemingly lose out for a while, but with the arrival of Jesus on the scene would be restored back as the Bride of Christ and usher in a period of Millennial reign with Christ as a physical King on earth, until finally, God will recreate (not restore!) a new earth, and eternity continues to unfold. But this is, of course, is only a broad sketch of what we see the Bible outline for the future.

Lack of Kingdom Experience

When I describe a part of the church as "functioning largely as an organic, extended family sharing life with each other and God in the power of the Holy Spirit," I usually get an overwhelming response. People immediately recognize this statement as in tune with what they themselves have heard the Spirit say. However, the problem in many countries of the West is that we just have hardly any practical, hands-on, working understanding of what we are talking about when we hear the word "extended family." To find out more, we either have to visit Scottish clans, the Amish, the gypsies, emigrants from Russia, or

the many Muslim families who live this. For them and many tribal or animistic societies, this is a daily reality; for many living in the West or those influenced by it, to live within an extended family is but a faded, distant memory. When I go a step further and say that the other dimension in which we have to grasp the nature of the church is the Kingdom of God, a political dimension, it draws another series of nods. But then again, what in the world is a kingdom? The word monarchy in Greek means the *rule of one*. Many of us have a theoretical knowledge of constitutional monarchies, but few might have a working knowledge of an absolute monarchy and know what a Kingdom, where the King does not only represent but factually rules, practically looks like. We see the Queen of England in TV, and some can even name the names of the current Kings in the Netherlands, Sweden, the Fiji Islands or Lesotho, and for a few seconds we glance at the faces of "royalty" in the tabloids that lie right next to the more serious newspapers we have come to pick up at a newsstand. Political science distinguishes between absolute monarchies, constitutional and parliamentary monarchies. Some of the last absolute monarchies on the planet are Liechtenstein, Qatar, Oman, Brunei, Saudi Arabia and Vatican City. A number of former absolute monarchies have now moved on to become constitutional monarchies like Nepal, Bhutan or Morocco. In the "days of democracy", few have – or even want – contact with a monarchic world that many consider simply part of the past. Today we live in a world that talks of democracy, freedom of speech and movement, spearheaded by groups like the UN. But is this the reality? The truth is that literally since Noah's curse, "may Cain be the slave of Shem," men have lived under the rule of other men. Inherently, men are to rule or to be ruled. More and more political elections on the globe seemingly have no clear outcome. After an extremely close call in the German elections (Schroeder versus Merkel), I wrote a small commentary on September 19, 2005. Here's an excerpt:

The German people are unified like never before in the fact that they are not unified. Germany is now – after the 19th Sept. 2005 elections - a country full of strong words, but void of a strong political party or a strong man – or a strong woman. The nation looks like a Dutch field of tulips – carefully trimmed to the same level, where no tulip is allowed to tower even slightly above the others, or its head will be cut off. No politician grants the other the slightest advantage. The media is full of contradictory and mutually exclusive political programs, and everything is garnished with childish leadership hassles, personality issues, and translucent ego trips. Everyone against everyone else. Just like during the biblical time of the judges, where everyone did as he pleased. A situation that reminds me very much of the present day Body of Christ...

No one who is a personal follower of Jesus Christ and who is not satisfied with nominal and cheap superficial sacramentalism of life as an insurance against any harm in this or the next world will be really surprised by this historic political stalemate. When the overwhelming majority of a nation democratically (demo-cratic = the people rule) ejects the sovereign God out of everyday life, the people themselves become "the sovereign," they become God. Such a Godless democracy will only lead into chaos, a state of the union that only demons would relish. "The sovereign has spoken – and we will respect that!" commented Free Democrat leader and "Christian," Guido Westerwelle,

and perfectly echoes this humanistic credo. However, the Word of God sees things very differently. The Bible knows four different forms of government. In order of their preference they are:

1. **God is King.** Before this ever happened, the idea was democratically rejected by the people of Israel in favor of a King “like all nations around us”.
2. **A good King** (like David)
3. **A bad King** (like Ahab or Nebuchadnezzar)
4. **Democracy**, possibly the worst form of government according to the Bible. This is where no one really rules; the people are in control of themselves – for an extremely high price: inbuilt mediocrity, constant compromise and becoming enslaved to one’s own strong opinions and ever-opinionated leaders. This ushers in the empire of ever changing political opinions, opportunists and their esoteric or short-sighted political concepts, and the constant discussing, fighting, and polite bickering that some call “the political process” which ultimately leads to a pre-programmed ungovernable condition. This, in turn, makes room for a mammon- and media-driven climate that “makes the world go round.” And, as the political stalemates grow unbearable because the unbendable opinions of political factions strategically neutralize each other, this paves the way for a growing call for a really strong man, someone charismatic, who can actually get things done, a messianic political figure, a benign dictator, if possible a new version of Christ... Does this sound like freedom to you?

With a history of the Kaiser, the Third Reich and Hitler’s Regime, the Germans have a sweet and sour relationship towards empires; today, an almost inbuilt aversion against empires prevails. They love “freedom”, which many like to call “democratic freedom.” But still, empires are our destiny, as a comprehensive and intelligent book called *Imperien* by German Professor Herfried Münkler explains. And, so the Bible confirms, empires are part of the way we subjects of God have been created. Freedom is not that we can do whatever we *want*, but the ability to do as we *should*. As **liberty** is a state of independence from a former oppressive rule, true **freedom** is when we step into our destiny and space within God’s economy. The greatest freedom never comes in the form of cheap independence, casting off all ropes, rules, and restrictions. It happens in two ways: 1) in a costly and close tie to the true emperor and King, Jesus Christ, and 2) as we take up our proper and ordained place in God’s kingdom.

Historically, whenever the people voted themselves, it led into chaos – or a fear-dominated neutrality or nationalistic ego trip. The people of Israel voted Saul to be their King – not God. The democratic majority rejected the prophetic visions of Joshua and Caleb – in favor of a more secure employment in Egypt – an allowance of garlic and onion included. As if more enslavement to work for any Pharaoh would usher in more freedom. Remember the result of this democratic majority vote? All died. Even Jesus had to listen to the cries of the massaging mobilizers of the public opinions of his day: “We don’t want him to rule over us!” And God patiently played with it for a while. In a historic move he released the enthusiastic freedom-lovers to themselves! “He gave them over to a debased mind, to do things which are not fitting” (Rom 1:28).

Now back to our subject. A kingdom, in a generic sense, has a jurisdiction that is a **defined sphere of influence**. Within this jurisdiction it has govern-

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ment, a set of general and specific rules (policy), and ways to enforce those rules. It has servants, certain elites, a center or various centers and an administration. Since there are striking similarities, before we continue to discuss the Kingdom of God, I would first like us to have a look at human empires.

Empireology 101

Empires have been with us since the begin of recorded history. And I suggest they always will be. Empires, other than mere Kingdoms, don't stop at national borders, but supersede them. They are transnational by nature. Imperial structures have developed the power to control areas, movements of people, goods, and financial capital. Recent examples for empires are Napoleon's France, Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany or Japan in East Asia, the British Commonwealth, the Soviet Union and finally the United States of America in its new global role.

Those empires that lasted longest were not the empires of marauders and raiders; they did not invade other territories and suck them dry, like the nomadic, horse driven empires of the Mongols, but those who invested into their margins and made them as interested in the continued existence of the empire as the empire's core. Each empire had an "imperial mission". The mission was either personal (e.g. Alexander the Great wishing to win the world), or in more recent times, issue-based. In the first case, it sprang out of an individual's insatiable hunger to reign, and therefore the imperial mission was to spread the influence and power domain of an emperor. Such Emperors were often seen as a viceroy of God, claiming a divine component, who served as a religious legitimization for mobilizing the forces of an empire to expand itself.

The mission of an issue-based empire may be to spread civilization, communism, democracy, human rights, peace. The imperial mission was always mandated and motivated by imperialism, the very *will to have an empire*. Very telling for an empire is the nature of power that drives it. Within an empire, the distribution of power usually follows the proximity principle: each person's status and power depends decidedly on how close he is to the Emperor himself, on the proximity to Number One, the very center of power. To move up on the power ladder means to move in closer to the Emperor or to his official or unofficial aids. For the outside expansion of an Empire, what kind of power establishes, energizes, and even promotes the Empire? Traditionally, the driving force of an empire has been either ideological, political, economic, or military power, or a combination of those:

Ideologically driven empires had overriding visions or ideas that were usually sanctified by accepted religious power centers. Russia's Czars in St. Petersburg received a Byzantine blessing. The transnational Empires of Karl der Grosse (Charlemagne) and others in Germany, the Spanish and Portuguese Empires were "blessed" by the Vatican (and, in the case of the Spanish, charged with the fanatic ideology of leading a counter-reformation). The British Empire was sanctioned by Canterbury and the ideology to spread civilization, and the USA finds itself sanctioned by the prayers of religious neo-conservatives ("God bless America") and the ideology of Globalization. The newest form of "sacred terror"-driven empires like Al Qaida ultimately are inspired by Mecca and every Muslim fundamentalist's dream of a World governed by the Sharia, Islamic law.

Political empires build on advanced and superior governmental structures, and expand through diplomacy, strategic marriages or alliances, and decisions about the expansive setup of political power, defining who decides about money, power, and policy.

Economy: If it is true that money rules the world, the one who controls cash flow, markets, and is able to translate technological and scientific breakthroughs into profitable industries, carries the advantage. Empires are costly, actually the costliest form of government, as you have to finance not only the daily political business; you also have to pay for the Empire's expansion, its defense, and the constant redefining of the ideology for the benefit of the masses. If an empire had a weak economic sector, the empire was usually short-lived. Imperialism and global market shares are intrinsically linked together. One of the main reasons the Spanish Empire failed in the 17th century was that Spain simply had no efficient banking system to cope with the economic dimensions of their Empire. Compared to the influence of the English Pound and the banking center of the City of London during the heyday of the British Empire, they were of no match.

Military: whoever ruled the art of contemporary warfare – metallurgy, horsemanship, mobility on water, land, in the air, and finally the strategic realm of outer space - was able to expand and sustain the empire, waging not only war, but “waging peace,” and to defend and secure the inner stability of an empire by military means. The nature of warfare is changing dramatically since the World Wars and the invention and initial applications of the atomic bomb with its potential for MAD – mutually assured destruction - to a much more subtle way of warfare. This is why military science is currently one of the main fields in which the future of empires are decided.

Martin van Creveld, Israeli War historian and government military consultant, author of the fascinating book *The Transformation of War*, points out that the new wars are no longer fought by two national standing armies pitched against each other in open, big-gun combat, but have long ago shifted to guerrilla warfare, smoldering conflicts that are about values and ideas, and are won or lost in entirely different arenas than a classical battle. Carl von Clausewitz, the well-known Prussian military general and his idea of “war as politics by other means,” is out. Van Creveld's main thesis is that the mightiest modern armies are mostly irrelevant for a modern war. Their significance is inversely proportionate to their modernity in today's typical low intensity, guerrilla type war that blurs the borders between civilians and soldiers.

Empires needed Barbarians: finally, an empire's mission is defined by its enemies, by the answer to the question: “Who, exactly, are the Barbarians.” Every empire has to paint “the Brute Others” on the wall, the horrible image of the man-eating and women-robbing cannibals out there that eat raw meat, drink un-mixed wine, probably blood-sacrifice their children, an image that makes the civilized member of the empire shudder with utter disgust. The existence of such vicious people out there – in numerous historic versions of George W. Bush's “Axis of Evil” - threatens the Empire, and therefore legitimizes its mission, and most importantly, its budget.

Decentralized Governing

By its sheer size, no empire can be reigned without an extensive spreading and decentralizing of governmental authority. This is the reason why most empires that lasted long attempted to set up provinces and areas over which they set regional governors who represented the imperial authority locally. One recent example is the colonial government of Britain in India. In his book *The Ruling Caste*, David Gilmour describes the function of the so-called India Civil Service. When England took over government in India as part of their colonial thrust, they faced the amazing challenge of how 100,000 expatriate English can practically rule a nation of 350 million Indians. One of the most successful strategies was that England placed extremely well trained and, in theory, highly reliable and incorruptible, English governors over clearly defined administrative districts as magistrates. These governors were the direct representatives of the English Crown and served the purpose to establish a legal and practical framework within which the English rule could be applied in India. Around 1,000 of these highly efficient governors were established in their various jurisdictions, and this, as the author calls it, was the **steel frame** on which the entire English dominion in India was built. These governors basically had, as we can see already now, an apostolic-like function in a worldly system. They were given the right of regional governance within a human monarchy. Similarly to this, the Kingdom of God is set up throughout this world in regional, governmental jurisdictions, what I call apostolic gardens, the "magistrates of God". More on this later.

Why empires must always be first

Each empire has an *imperial prestige*, says Max Weber, an inner drive to be - and remain - number one. In today's world, this is often defined by technological innovation, military actions, sports events, or even who rules space. During the Cold War period, when the Soviet Union had its first rocket and space breakthroughs, this led to the literal "Sputnik shock" for the USA. It was therefore first and foremost a military symbol for the US, when Neil Armstrong spoke of one big step for "mankind." However, did you notice: he did not place the flag of "mankind" on the moon, but another flag? Following the inner logic of each (healthy) empire, it was super-important for the US to re-establish "America First" in space. An emperor can't help but rule; this kind of imperial logic can be seen when President Bush said; "Who's not for us is against us," a much more *exclusive* statement than Jesus, who, 2000 years before, made the original, *inclusive* statement: "Who is not against us, is for us."

A comparative look at the role of the USA

As the British inherited the Spanish Empire from 1684 onwards, and the Americans basically inherited a global empire from the British after the 1920s, first reluctantly, but later more boldly taking over their positions, most people, after the Soviet Union went out of business in 1991, were convinced that Imperialism and the Age of Empire had gone forever. Empires, with their czars and dictators, God-Kings and Mahdis that believe they should rule the world, were considered a thing of the past. But they were wrong. To discard empires, believing we all have been educated beyond imperialism into so-called free democracies, would be to err gravely about the very nature of power, and the

disposition of humans to either rule or be ruled, as well as the historical political scenarios the Bible gives for the times in which we live and move into. There is no such thing as a free man; even if Christ has saved you from sin and the dominion of Satan, you are now called to be a slave of Christ; on earth you are always someone's slave, if not to a person or a political system, it is your bank, your boss, the demonic spirit of Mammon, or its symptoms: materialism, fear or greed. The best-case scenario in this world is to be a bond-slave of Christ, being bought by him on the slave market of sin by his blood, and now tied in close voluntary allegiance to the King who is a loving liberator, and therefore the one who offers the freest possible form of existence – and governance - available on earth.

Back to the US. The foundational and almost mythical story of the US is winning its independence from a colonial power. The US itself, however, is pre-colonial. Most European nations have had colonies all over the world, but have disbanded them long ago. Europeans are now post-colonial in their mindset. Colonialism was something they have done before, and now have gotten over it. When, after the 2nd World War, NATO was formed, its goal, in the famous declaration of Hastings Ismay, NATO's first General Secretary, was "to keep the Germans down, the Russians out, and the Americans in".

At this point in history, the USA is the only trans-global (including outer space) empire that would offer itself reasonably as the only possible core and base for a global governmental platform, with or without the UN. Especially in the age of the recent Islamic terrorist threats, the US has lately moved into a military mode, in the name of defending global peace and exporting democracy. Should the fallout that I expect to happen between the US and Israel come soon, the US could potentially form the backbone for a religiously motivated, money-driven, and military-based anti-Christian world empire.

In the name of fighting **Abrahamic Fundamentalism** (all fundamentalists who defer to Abraham as their father, that is, Jews, Muslims and Christians), and given the technological dispositions of the various secret services, the military, and the technological ties of the American military with communication and computer industries, this could theoretically create a global Big Brother scenario faster than you can say "no way!" The emergence of a global political power, a matured and evolved Babylon the Great, is what we see emerge prophetically in Revelation, chapter 13. Here we witness the emergence of a Beast (strong power structure) out of the sea (water and the sea is an often-used biblical picture for the nations of this world, and what nation is more cosmopolitan than the US?). This beast is blasphemous in nature (what can be more blasphemous than promoting a mammon-driven system in the very name of God, right on the money?), fatally wounded yet healed (maybe something that is foreshadowed by Pearl Harbor or 9/11), a clear global leadership position ("the whole world followed the beast"), incomparable, especially in the area of military power, and a Babylonian value system that is based on trade, "making the merchants of the earth rich from her excessive luxuries" (Rev. 18; note the 28 commodities in verses 12 & 13), something you can find at major stock markets, the most important being Wall Street in New York, as well as the unofficial slave market.

All these seven descriptions of The Beast do not accurately fit China, Russia, the EU, the Roman Catholic Church, or Osama Bin Laden's al Qaida vision. At

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this point in history, only one entity – America - could even remotely have such a political, economic, ideological, and technological status, backed by the right kind of budget and global military capabilities. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying that America *is* The Beast and will be the base for the Antichrist. As a Hungarian-Jewish German, I think I can honestly say that I have a genuine love for the American people and do what I can to serve them, since I see the blessing potential that God has through them for the world. However, this love for a nation should not blind us to see the obvious.

Just in case such a global empire would emerge as we speak, that, in whatever function, includes the US and Europe and other Western or westernized nations, it will have an absolute, uncontested power monopoly on the planet that will accept its world dominion one way or other, even if it means to implant a chip on forehead or right hand or not. Except for one defiant entity, a system that will never be swallowed up by this, and which, ultimately, will be the only serious competitor and contestant for world influence in the final days of the world. And that is the Kingdom of God, the mountain of God that fills the earth (Daniel 2), the empire of the one of whom the Bible says, "the increase of his government will not end" (Isa. 9:7). This Empire will not yield, ever, because it serves no earthly King or system, especially in its empowered form that is emerging in this apostolic and prophetic reformation we are currently witnessing, an Empire that is very accurately described in the book of Revelation as represented by "apostles, prophets, and saints" (Rev. 18:20). The word "saints" means those set apart for God, and *kadosh*, the Hebrew word for holy, speaks of people being cut off from the profane. The political disposition of "Saints" could therefore also be translated as *off the grid*, under the radar, out of the matrix, or, a decidedly disconnected part of a one-world government.

The Pentagon's New Map

A few years ago one of the New York Times bestsellers was a book by American security strategist Thomas P.M. Barnett called *The Pentagon's New Map*. "Barnett is maybe one of the most strategic thinkers of our time," says Michael Barone. Barnett describes how America is trying to overcome its own Cold War mentality, with all kinds of incredible (and amazingly expensive) technologies. He describes how America, the proverbial good guys, always had to fight: first they fought the Commies, then Nazi Germany, then the USSR – the "big, bold enemy of the American Way of life" — justifying astronomical military budgets as well as personal consumption of anything that was there to consume.

With the arrival of nuclear overkill capacity and MAD - Mutually Assured Destruction - the big nation-against-nation-war came to a ceasefire and ushered in a global bipolar balance called the Cold War. When the USSR went out of business in 1991, it left an enemy-less America, bewildered at what to do without an ugly enemy – pondering where to get the next one from. The Taiwan Straights incident in 1996 gave rise to the hopes of another peer big bold enemy on the horizon: China. But China turned out to be too nice or too slick. But thanks to the Al Qaida terrorist attacks on 9/11 in 2001, where a fundamentalist Islamic millionaire sitting in a cave in Afghanistan, equipped with a vision and a modem, kept the largest military power on the planet on its toes, the US has its enemy back. And its budget sanctified. Thanks to sacred terror.

Waging peace

However, they key problem, Barnett says, both in politics and Pentagon security circles, is **a lack of positive vision**: “America knows how to wage war, but not how to wage peace. We go in, topple a rogue regime of the Saddam types of this world, but after nation destroying, how actually does nation building work?” Barnett is looking for a new, post Cold War operating theory of the world. The answer that he comes up with is: **Globconnect** – globalization through connectivity. People who talk to each other are less likely to kill each other. The rules that define the stability of a global functioning core, as Barnett points out, are rightfully invented by the USA, since, as he contends, “America serves as the ideological wellspring for Globalization” – and ultimately benefits most from it. The good news of that good news is that it allows America to again have one big, bad, ugly and bold enemy: Nations that refuse to be swept into globalization - that economy-technology-and-security-driven process uniting the world into one big free market of limitless possibilities. Such nations Barnett classifies as disconnected societies. They are “the Gap,” globalization’s “ozone hole,” along the “axis of evil,” as George W. Bush so vividly puts it. “Eradicating disconnectedness therefore becomes the defining security task of our age, increasing peace and prosperity planet-wide,” writes Barnett. In short: a global America, at least in the Barnett’s clouded vision. NATO’s credo , as I have mentioned before, has long been “keep the Americans in; keep the Germans down, and the Russians out.” Today, the credo is: “Keep the Israelis strong, keep the House of Saud safe, and keep the fundamentalist radicals down.”

Make no mistake; I can absolutely understand Barnett; he voices only the simple imperial logic, which we have seen above. I sympathize with him even on a personal level – and it reminds me of many traditional church systems - when he describes his often lonely fight against a non-creative, brazen, fear-driven top brass that more often than not has a vision for war, not peace, for fragmentation and an ever new version of the Cowboy’s big bang theory (Is there a problem? Hit them with everything we’ve got). In a world of busy top government servants running from 15-minute brief to the next brief, constantly up to their necks in bureaucracy, unable to see the real big picture because they are busy trying to prove and sell their own small picture **to be the big picture**, or else the funding will be cut short, they simply have **no time** to develop positive vision. And old Navy joke says: “The U.S. Navy – 200 years of tradition unimpeded by progress!” Replace the Navy with traditional Christian evangelism agencies, and replace Pentagon with “Church,” believe me, I **know** what Barnett is talking about. However, there are three serious aspects missing in his “new working theory of the world,” a disastrous oversight that already now costs hundreds of billions per year of well meaning but ultimately ill-spent money in taxes and grants. Without (accurate) vision, not only do people perish, but also money. If we have – heaven forbid! - a wrong or yet-superficial analysis of the problem, we are bound to end up with solutions that won’t cut it. Solutions that are actually more part of the problem. Or, in Barnett’s own words: where “the cure may end up being worse than the disease.”

There is something that Barnett does not explain, and probably does not know how to explain. Where exactly does his **vision** come from? What – or who – inspired the thought of a US-led globalization movement? If America is the wellspring of globalization, where does the water come from? Barnett seems

Without (accurate) vision, not only do people perish, but also money.

to take it for granted that this is simply a good idea. How good or even legitimate is it for a planet of soon 7-8 billion people to be guided and governed by the values, goals, priorities, interests and rules of 300 million US citizens – comprising just 4.2% of the world's population? Are the values of the US really that valuable? I can understand that "freedom of speech and movement" and what the US calls democracy truly looks like a global seller, especially to oppressed regimes, but is someone hiding the fine print here? Look at these three issues:

Issue 1: Many have visited Uncle Sam at home; and the doctor says statistically Sam is not well. Whether you picture the average "Sam" as the pivotal "I made it!" US-Industrialist or Tycoon, Pop-icon or actor, or even as an upper middle class family man – or if you look at the increasingly fast-growing *wrong* side of town, to the poor working class, the unemployed, the incredible percentage of single moms trying to make it, yes indeed, Sam is mainly into making money, his credo being I buy, therefore I am! But privately, he is roughing it. Stressed, overweight, and on Vitamin pills and digestive drugs, rushed by both the fear of losing out and the antsy greed to control more *things*, by global standards he is extremely lonely – both desperately wishing for true friends he can trust, at the same time allergic to friends who are too close, worried to death what they would say or do if they only knew his little secrets. Given his no-expenses-spared fence, his neighbors don't know Sam well; statistically speaking, his second marriage is at the brink of divorce, his family dysfunctional, his kids are estranged and victims to ADS (attention deficit syndrome), having long understood that they are being sacrificed on the altar of their parent's business success (or struggle) and are being predominantly raised by TV and Uncle Nintendo. Sam says yes, he does live in the *Land of the Free*, but is quiet unaware how much he has become a workaholic slave (a mere two weeks off a year?) to consumerism and materialism. Pressured to compete and outperform all other lesser beings in the name of globalization, Sam finds himself surrounded by an amazingly complex, red-tape bureaucracy that astonishes even the Germans, and is secretly looking for a shrink who can keep his mouth shut, like Robert De Niro in the role of a Mafiosi turned soft in the hilarious film "*Analyze This*." But Sam looks amazingly transformed and good in church, on film, and in books.

Issue 2: America may be informed, but is it inspired? There is a real-world spiritual intelligence network out there that has an un-hackable PIN code protected access to a top secret and classified pool of highly sensitive and future relevant information that goes far beyond figuring out political scenarios; instead of doing re-search – looking back at how others looked back - it can actually *pro-see*, and so enabling others with whom they share this privileged information to take a proactive and truly prophetic choice of actions – with highly superior long-range outcomes, ROI and return on involvement. In today's Inspiration Age, Barnett and his colleagues may be well informed; *but the key is to be well inspired.*

Issue 3: Why play second league if there is a first league? There is an empire on this earth, alive and well, for which even America and any Alliance of the Willing is no par, not even a sparring partner, but a mere pawn on its drawing board. This is what the biblical prophets and Jesus talked about and started to install; an empire not of men, but of God. At the end of the ages, the Bible

indicates, there will be only two significant empires existing. One is a spiritually Babylonian, mammon-driven, global empire, a *Mammocracy*, an economic/financial/military behemoth controlling much of the financial and information streams of this world. Pitched against it there is another empire that finds its expression in the term “apostles, prophets, and saints”. The citizens of this empire are profoundly unconnected to Barnett’s Core, because they are part of something for which, obviously, apostles and prophets are key. I speak of people whose passports read “Citizen of Another Kingdom – the Empire of God.” In the ultimate showdown, the final clash of these empires, two things become abundantly clear. Each of these empires is not only informed, it is *inspired*. But by different sources. And only one wins. The Book of Books talks about this in its last pages.

What, then, is the Kingdom of God?

God, from the very beginning, intended to be a King among his people. But constantly, sin and demonically-inspired, depraved humanity backed away from a redeemed, ongoing relationship with their Creator and King. With the people of Israel, God had clearly proposed himself to be their King before any formal monarchy was established. As in every good and freewill election, the Father God’s amazing political manifesto (Have you seen the five books of Moses as such yet?) was out there for discussion among the people of Israel. But when the first election day came, God was voted down and lost to the other guy, Saul, a man who was a head taller than others, who became king in God’s stead. The people of Israel rejected God and wanted a king like everyone else, looking to their neighboring Kingdoms for blueprints of monarchies. But God’s Kingdom is not like human kingdoms, although there are similarities. Let us look briefly into what the Kingdom of God is not.

What the Kingdom of God is not

“The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” defines Paul (Rom 14: 17). “My Kingdom is not of this world, not from here,” says Jesus to Pilate. There are four grave and commonly accepted misconceptions about the Kingdom of God that have plagued and disfigured Christianity beyond recognition in the past. Let us take a short trip into this labyrinth of devastating heresies of what the Kingdom is not:

1. The Kingdom of God is not heaven. Many Christians are made to believe and behave as if the Kingdom of God is heaven itself. The essence of this heresy goes: Once we die and enter heaven, then, and then only, are we entering the Kingdom. Down here, outside of heaven, there is no Kingdom other than the kingdoms of this world, and everything worldly we touch makes us unclean. Therefore, closeness, contact, or even engaging with this world is to be avoided in the spirit of “touch no unclean thing!”

If it were true that the Kingdom of God is heaven itself, this would lead to an escapist mentality, a kind of monastic Christianity that hopes to escape from this evil world by creating an airport waiting hall, Christian ghettos, religious bubbles where people assemble and basically wait to be taken up and away by God into heaven. The world here and now is to be rejected as bad, corrupt,

A wrong understanding of the Kingdom dismantles the gospel by preaching about a life with God after death – not before.

and evil, and there is nothing we can do about it except wait for heaven, for the rapture to take us out of here. Many, if not most, Evangelical Christians have accepted exactly this concept for all practical purposes. Such Christians often sing, clap and dance with a naïve vengeance inside church buildings until they sweat, but amazingly, lack enough vengeance to even lift a finger to change their personal environment. Non-involvement with this world is seen as a proof of personal holiness. Embracing this world, using its educational system, hospitals, business, or media, is seen as essentially bad and contaminating. This mentality makes Christians into impoverished outcasts, social misfits who prove through their worst possible clothes, pitiful cars, and neglected education that they are not *worldly*. It is also clear that such a misunderstanding of the Kingdom prevents people from engaging with this world, invading it, changing it. And finally, it dismantles the gospel by preaching about a life with God after death – not before. A Christianity that falls for this heresy becomes “disengaged from life, an irrelevant entity,” as Anderson Williams calls it. The Kingdom, however, is bigger than heaven.

2. The Kingdom of God is not Israel. As much as it is true that Jesus will come back one day and set his feet on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said in John 18: “My Kingdom is not of this world.” Israel, the first love of God, has a pivotal role to play in God’s economy and plans, but that does not mean that Israel is, at this point in history, the only beachhead of God in this world, the only expression of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Christians who believe that the Kingdom of God is Israel have been influenced by the Jewish understanding that God, in a future time, will intervene to restore the nation of Israel, and return to rule over them. Then “the Kingdom of God” would start, not before. Again, as people believe this, it would postpone our involvement with this world to a later time, and Christians could not do much more than be passive and watch Israel. As the dominion of God’s rule, the Kingdom is bigger than Israel.

3. The Kingdom of God is not the Church. Jesus never preached: “Repent, for the church is at hand!” But still, an age-old heresy goes: “Once saved, you are in the Kingdom because you are in the Church!” But that is not what the Bible says. It is absolutely possible to be in church and not be part of the Kingdom for two reasons: 1) Many churches as a whole simply do not align themselves with the most basic principles of the Kingdom, and clearly function outside of the government of God, having established their own government. 2) You can be an individual who is part of a church that actively aligns itself with the Kingdom, but, through disobedience or pride, be operating, completely, outside of the Kingdom. Jesus says it is even possible to prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles and then hear the verdict from him: “I never knew you, you evildoers!” “Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only *he who does the will of my father*” (Mt 7:21).

Entry into the Kingdom requires that “a man is born again, otherwise he cannot enter the Kingdom.” But when a child who grows up discovers his own will and decides to live outside the parameters of his own family (for example by running away), he leaves the family context behind and lives on his own. This is exactly what happens to many Christians, who have been given a false

description of the Kingdom. If the church is the Kingdom, and if you remain a faithful member of this church, they are told, you are safe and secure. Many who have believed this lie will face a rude awakening. As much as it is true that the ekklesia is supposed to be a function of the Kingdom and a recruiting and governing agency of the Kingdom in this time, the Kingdom is much bigger than the church.

4. The Kingdom is not Dominionism. Dominionism or “dominion theology” is the belief that God wants to rule the earth through earthly means, by the influence of Christians in politics, business, or even the army. Dominionism believes that Christians have a call and commission “to have dominion,” to rule both over those who obey God, as well as those who don’t, Christians and Non-Christians alike. That is why dominionism dreams about Christian politicians, Christian mayors, Christian nations, and desires to extend the Kingdom of God by extending the economic, political or even military influence that Christians have. In its extreme forms, this has led to the so-called Crusades, fueled by the heretical teaching that God’s Kingdom is pushed forward by a great human influence on the earth.

At the heart of dominionism is the belief that God has established all authority (which he has; Romans 13), but that God’s rule establishes itself *within* human rule, God’s government manifests itself *through* human government, be it in business, politics, or in military ways. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it like this: “The rule of mankind is an illusion, if we do not receive it from God but take and usurp it ourselves. Then we will be dominated by powers we think we are dominating.” The heresy of dominionism or, another version of it, “theomists” with their reconstruction agendas, is rampant among many conservative and politically right-winged Christians who, in the absence of an apostolic understanding of the church, have turned to nationalism and neo-conservatism to be their security and saviors. Such a belief says “theocracy uses democracy”, and it ultimately leads to an unhealthy take-over mentality that assumes that the only way the Kingdom of God can be extended in this age is by Christians to take over positions in government, business, media or even the army. This leads to idolizing political systems, economic strategies and human structures as if God is only able to extend his rule through them.

It is true that God can do a lot of good on this earth through a godly King, or an ethical businessman. But having a “Christian company,” for example, does not mean that we establish or even extend the Kingdom of God; it only means that we remove obstacles and create an open space for the gospel to be presented or some of its values to be demonstrated. Removing obstacles to the Kingdom is not the same as the establishment of the Kingdom. It is true that God wants justice to rule, and wrongdoers to be punished by the “authorities who are God’s servants,” (Rom 13:6), but that does not mean that doing good and acting justly is actually establishing or even expanding God’s Kingdom on earth. A godly King can open up the legal space for the Kingdom (allow Christian TV, for example), but that in itself is not yet the establishment of God’s rule over people, but only a platform from which to advance the Kingdom.

If the Kingdom of God is the realm of God’s uncontested rule, then it cannot be pushed upon people who contest it, who don’t want it. The Kingdom of God only expands where people give up their contest and rebellion against

God. Living in a country whose president or King is a Christian does not mean the Kingdom of God has arrived in Nigeria, Zambia, the US, Burundi, Benin, or Switzerland. The Kingdom of God is bigger than that; it is where God establishes his government, not through earthly governments that we are called to alter and adjust. It is our role to adjust to them, use them, fit into them, but function within those structures as a testimony, witness, change agent, as salt and light towards a much bigger reality of God's rule that is called the Kingdom.

Redefine reality

The biggest all-time question for humanity is not only "what is truth?", but what is real. Historically, many have tried to explain reality with a number of philosophical, religious and ideological master-plans – the grand visions of mankind. Today I watch people get increasingly tired of this. We have heard it all; but did it really change our lives for good? The great battles between Communism and Capitalism have not only seen many millions die for a dream, but left many with straw in their mouths. Most have become plain bored of the never-ending bickering between "the political Left" and "the political Right", and hardly anyone notices the exact political difference on practical issues between a majority of political parties anymore. Its all about personalities today, not political programs. Tired of more rhetoric, tired of voting, even tired of democracy many people wait for something they don't know, *for someone else* to explain the reality of life to them. Insert the Kingdom. It is the task and purpose of the Kingdom of God to redefine reality for all to see. Demonstrating that faith in the unseen is more real than analyzing what we can touch and smell (Hebr 11:1), the Kingdom teaches anyone that we should not depend on our natural senses to see into the eternal realm of the Spirit. The Kingdom teaches us also that we don't have to capitulate before what we see – an amazing motivation to not remain bound by fear of the elements and situations around us. The Kingdom transcends all of life. And this is why no political or philosophical or even religious entity on the planet can deliver what the Kingdom can: to truly redefine reality and redesign life in an authentic, tangible and liberating way. Anyone whose plough touches something in his field may look down and find a treasure, a pearl of great price; once he digs it out, looks at it and discovers what it really is, he will go and sell everything else – for he has found what he has been looking for all his life.

If, for example, the Kingdom of God is the domain of God's uncontested rule, then the end of contesting and debating his rule, the end of our human rebellion against God, is the very cutting edge of the Kingdom.

Upside down Kingdom Values

In the Kingdom of God, in the sphere of his uncontested reign, other things are considered more valuable than in human Kingdoms. In fact, God does not only see things a bit differently, but he has an entirely different value set. What the world considers good might be extremely bad in the eyes of God. If, for example, the Kingdom of God is the domain of God's uncontested rule, then the end of contesting and debating his rule, the end of our human rebellion against God, is the very cutting edge of the Kingdom. Fresh and new obedience is the actual place where the Kingdom advances. It makes progress when formerly disobedient people become obedient to God. If we pray "Your Kingdom come!" we actually pray: let obedience grow, because obedience adds spheres to the Kingdom that previously were not in alignment with God's will. As more

people become obedient to God and unquestioningly accept his Kingship, they themselves as well as their own sphere of influence are added to the Kingdom of God. This is why obedience has such a key value in the Kingdom that it can be called the essential entry condition: No one will even enter the Kingdom “who does not do the will of the father” (Matt. 7:21), says Jesus.

That is why in God’s kingdom, children are great examples (Matt. 18:1-4): “Change and become like little children!” says Jesus. A little child is completely dependent and, in normal societies, completely respectful and obedient to parents and other authority figures. A child does not argue with authority, but simply and humbly follows it. Human military can teach aspects of this, too. Once, a Roman centurion who sent for Jesus to ask his help for a sick servant explained his understanding of authority. “I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one ‘go’ and he goes, and this one ‘come’ and he comes. I say to my servant: ‘do this’ and he does it.” The centurion actually believed that Jesus could just speak the word – making his own words like a servant – and things would happen. He had understood the core principle of the Kingdom: people following the authority of the King without question. This is obviously such a key value, that Jesus was amazed, it says, and exclaimed: “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel” (Luke 7:1-10).

Remember football (a.k.a. soccer), the most popular game on the planet? It can be played officially – on clearly designated football fields with the FIFA rules in operation, 22 players, a referee and goals that count, or unofficially, outside the stadiums, on the parking lot, on the beach, or, as my sons do, when Mom isn’t looking, in the kitchen. Both forms of the game are fun and exciting, but only one version counts. Imagine a football-field with four clearly designated lines that have names: sex, money, power and God. If the Kingdom of God is the realm of God’s uncontested rule, both are possible: to play inside the field, according to the rules, obeying the norms and principles of the Kingdom, and receive God’s blessing, or to play offside or even outside the legal framework of God, a life in transgression and rebellion. God would still love those illegal players and shower them, as it is his nature, with gifts of grace. But one thing he will not give to them as he is bound to his own word: his blessing. Let me portray this by a few of the classical issues that are off-limits in the Kingdom:

Money

- stealing
- coveting
- serving Mammon
- not sharing what you have
- worrying

Power

- dishonoring parents
- murder
- false testimony
- abuse
- disrespecting authorities



God

- have other gods/idols
- misuse Gods name
- disobey the King
- worship the works of our own hands
- build “our own” church

Sex

- adultery
- illicit sex/fornication
- immorality
- homosexuality
- orgies

Declaration of Dependence

Reducing the invitation to become a citizen of the Kingdom of God to simplistic repeat-after-me-prayers to “invite Jesus into our hearts” at Christian rallies has had a devastating effect: if people are only told “to call upon the Lord” for the forgiveness of their sins, for the solution of their manifold problems, and not to place themselves from now on under his Lordship and command and be the legally bought, loyal subjects of the King, they, at best, enter the Kingdom as crippled problem cases, forever focusing on what they were told is the main thing with God: that he is our problem solver.

Obedience and humility are probably the two central values of the Kingdom. Compared to this world’s values, Jesus preached an upside down value pyramid: the foolish are wise and the wise are fools, the poor are rich and the rich are poor, the sick are much closer to the doctor than those who consider themselves healthy. Add to the Ten Commandments the entire list of Be-Attitudes and values that Jesus presents in the “Sermon of the Mount,” Matthew 5-7, and you have the *Magna Charta*, the foundational value system of the Kingdom, **the Declaration of Dependence on God**, the political program regulating Kingdom Life. As you connect with them, you become part of “the Core of God,” part of the good ones, part of the solution. You disconnect, disobey, and decide to live as you please, and you are part of God’s “Gap”: then you are part of the bad guys, evildoers; not the solution, but the very problem.

**The Kingdom of God is
the area of God’s
uncontested reign.**

The essence of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is the area of God’s uncontested reign. It is that segment of creation – including humanity – voluntarily arranged according to God, accepting his rule and kingship. Whenever the people of God were liberated to be with their God, they needed to be given clear rules, laws and commandments to govern their relationship with God and with each other; otherwise they would fall into ecstatic lawlessness and confusion, making them an easy prey for other laws and idolatry that offer quick but false recipes for life. This is why the liberation out of Egypt was immediately followed by God issuing the Ten Commandments. Otherwise, the people of God would have fallen into chaos. Reigning without rules is like playing football without boundaries and rules of the game. That is why the Kingdom of God has absolutely clear boundaries, values, rules and goals, it is indestructible, constantly growing, and is the main message of Jesus and the apostolic church. The Kingdom is the legal, political framework within which Church is being built. If the Kingdom is compared to an earthly nation, state, or a country, the church is the family structure within the country from which the politicians, those concerned with establishing policy in the Kingdom, are being recruited. Out of the church – the grassroots – people are elected and called to be a royal priesthood. That means that upon each member of the Kingdom, God bestows nobility, royal blood, kingship, because we are a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9), “Jesus has made us to be a kingdom and priests” (Rev 1:6). In the words of Paul to the Romans he writes: “How much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17).

“The Kingdom of God is righteousness”, and therefore needs a governmental department, a cabinet, a ministry, a parliament, and practical ways to justly implement the very values, policies, and principles of the Kingdom to empower

all areas of life to the degree that they are voluntarily accepted. These are values like love of enemies, marriage, family, truthfulness, honesty, humility, respect, morality, modesty, meekness, transparent finances and tax laws, justice, fatherly servanthood, and others. As we humans show a consistency of accurate decisions based on Kingdom values in this world, this leads to the establishment of personal and corporate integrity and gives a prophetic manifestation in the here and now of the yet unseen eternal patterns and principles of the yet invisible King.

This is how Christians are “salt and light and a city on the hill” in this present darkness. As Christians are to love one another, this reconnects with all other Kingdom principles. For example, to love one another truly involves the removal of selfishness and the deliberate abandoning of personal agendas towards the establishment of community and the advancement of God’s corporate plans. Towards this “Kingdom Parliament” people are taken out of the community, join the parliament as representatives of the community for the very sake of empowering the community, and from now on merely exist to empower others. This is exactly where the Church and, more specifically, the so-called Five-fold ministry comes in, as we later see.

At this point in time, the Kingdom of God can only be opted-in by declaring our obedience to the rule of Christ; *individual* obedience to God is the entry point – *corporate* obedience is defining life and policy in the Kingdom. All this is voluntary; you must *want* to be part of it. Membership can be applied for, only through repentance and conversion (this is the application) and spiritual rebirth (that’s the acceptance) and the sealing of the Holy Spirit (that’s the passport). Life in the Kingdom is governed by clear policy (that’s the Bible) containing eternal Kingdom principles that dictate accurate existence in the Kingdom. Within the Kingdom there are individual local families that provide a home as well as decentralized, flat authority structures (that’s the Church) that provide connectedness and Kingdom impact in the demonically governed realm and in the world. The church is the vanguard of the Kingdom, the evangelistic arm of the kingdom, the receptacle of the newcomers into the kingdom, the operation bases and the mission, the construction department of the Kingdom that blazes new trails into the jungle and builds new roads to unlock new territories of the world. Ekklesia fits therefore into the Kingdom of God, not the Kingdom of God into the ekklesia.

The Kingdom of God has already begun to grow now, with the establishment of Jesus Christ himself as the foundational stone during his life on earth, from the very moment that the first humans have declared him to be their Messiah. As Jesus came to assume his role as King, he taught us in the most famous prayer ever offered to pray, “your Kingdom come!” Our human confession of his Kingship, our Credo “Jesus is King!” is the alignment of our human, formerly rebellious will with the will of God, and thus becomes the very foundation of the Church, which is evident from his statement to Peter in Matthew 16:18. In my words, Jesus said to Peter: “On this stone, the fact of your enlightened statement that I am who I said I am, I will build my church.” Our human confession of his divine reality is the foundational start. As we accept him as King and savior, we commoners, undignified humans, become born again and become, by the impartation of the spirit of sonship, nobility, the sons of the King – and therefore royalty ourselves.

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Our human confession of his divine reality is the foundational start.

The moment you and I experienced that, the Kingdom of God expanded: it gained one more citizen who has voluntarily accepted membership in the Kingdom, and thus enlarged its scope and influence by the level of jurisdiction or influence that you and I have or are being given in this world. This is why, immediately after his statement to Peter, Jesus said: "I give you the keys to the Kingdom" (Matt. 16:19). As the Kingdom of God is not of this world but operates in this world, Jesus is going to give Peter (and later give to the unified apostolic community of believers, the Church, see Matthew 18:20) access (keys) to realms previously completely closed to men. ***It is the power to synchronize earth with heaven.*** Jesus said: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven," saying that whatever decision is made here on earth by those carrying these keys will have everlasting and final consequences in the invisible and eternal world. "And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This is a power beyond mere political power, where God is putting unlocking governmental authority into the hands of man hitherto unheard of. Anyone in his corrupt, power-hungry, and unredeemed state of mind would be simply intoxicated and drunk with this almost unlimited power, and would definitely try to usurp it, no matter what. No wonder Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ (Matt. 16:20). Only those who seek shall find. If the entire foundation of the Church is based on this very revelation, that he is the Christ, it is not a cheap thing to be given away to folks who don't even know how to ask the question.

This is why it is important to note that the Kingdom of God absolutely cannot be defined as divorced from the world. The Kingdom can only advance in direct, physical contact with this dirty world, just like a kernel of wheat cannot die and multiply if it avoids the soil like the plague. It cannot die and multiply in a clean laboratory, singing pious songs of glorious multiplication far away from nasty dirt. This is what Jesus meant in his kingdom parable of the weeds (Matt. 13). The son of man, Jesus, is the sower; the field is the world – the dirty, nasty, unlovable, defiled soil which we have to embrace and be in direct contact with in order to die and sprout; the good seeds are the sons of the Kingdom (disciples); and the harvest is the end of time, the harvesters being the angels. So, it is not a quick success story that we need to expect to reap ourselves, but leave this up to God. As Jesus sows you and me into this world, we as the sons of the Kingdom invade every aspect of life, penetrate every matrix of society and confront and upgrade every ungodly system with the alternative realities and solutions of the Kingdom – they take it or leave it.

There will be a time when the Kingdom of God is going to be the compulsory governmental system in this world, when Jesus will, if necessary, reign the nations with an "iron rod" (Rev. 2:27; 19:15). And for this, the role of Israel, the chosen people of God, is central. To dismiss this is to miss a priority in God's heart that would be cutting ourselves off from key aspects of redemption – as well as the Kingdom.

The Kingdom and Israel

I have a significant portion of Jewish blood in me, and even without that, what is dear to God would be dear to me. And as he loves Israel like the apple of his eye, I want to be empowered by God's Spirit to do likewise. But for this

subject, let me quote Arthur Katz (1929 - 2007), a Jewish disciple of Jesus and an apostolic father-figure who has wrestled with many of these issues all his life, and has been ready to accept the helpless ostracism and arrogant disgust from the religious establishment that he has often attracted for his messages. He writes in *An Apostolic Manifesto*:

“The gifts and operation of the Spirit have got to be seen in the context of an apocalyptic and eschatological faith. By this, I mean a radical anticipation of an end, a consummation and a conclusion of the age, the coming of a King, the establishment of a Kingdom here on earth from a literal Jerusalem. Any body of believers that has laid hold of this faith, the only valid faith, will be marked by the powers of darkness as a body to be feared, resisted, and opposed. The powers will see them as a threat to their whole prevailing religious establishment and will ventilate their anger and spite against such a body. The operation and benefit of the Spirit, His instruction and guidance, will be a critical factor for a body that is experiencing opposition from these powers of darkness. They are compelled to take notice of any body that consciously and willfully understands, and takes to themselves, the purposes of God by which the age is to be concluded.

Such a body will find itself at odds with the world. It sees the world in its systems, with its false values, and it consciously repudiates them and does not lend itself to them. Therefore, to whatever degree that such a body is free from the influence of the world and its false values, it is already a harbinger and statement of a “Kingdom come.” It is already a foretaste and foreshadowing of the great freedom that will be in the world when the King Himself reigns, where all that is false will be brought to nought.

The issue of authenticity and reality that the powers of darkness alone are required to acknowledge is the issue of the truth of our consecration. When it is only a shallow series of mindless altar calls and a few crocodile tears, they yawn in our face. They know when a consecration has been made where the life is laid down ultimately and totally before God. Such a people are living consciously and sacrificially as being the appointed salvific agents of God toward the people Israel. This is intrinsic to apostolic comprehension of what the church is. The church that fits the description will itself comprehend and recognize its calling toward the restoration of Israel in her last days’ tribulation. It will certainly dismiss any thought that it is going to be raptured away at the time when its presence is most radically required, for its presence means salvation for Jews in their soon-coming ‘time of Jacob’s trouble.’ This is not an appendage for the church; it is central and primary to the church’s own consideration of itself and what its purposes are in God.

Israel’s restoration is the issue of the King and His Kingdom. God is not restoring them because they deserve a homeland after long centuries in the Diaspora, but their restoration is the coming of the King so that ‘law might go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem’ (Isa. 2:3), a redeemed and restored nation. That is why the powers of darkness will be in such a fit and frenzy of opposition to anything that pertains to Jewish rescue, salvation, and redemption in the last days.

The issue of Jewish restoration is the issue of the Kingdom of God, and the powers of darkness are the false usurping rulers of this world and do not want to relinquish and forsake that usurping activity, which they have enjoyed in an unchecked and uncontested way since ages. It is the coming of the King as the One seated on the throne of David in the holy hill of Zion, with the redeemed and restored Israel that marks their end. We need to know this final drama, or we will not understand the frenzy and the rage that will be poured out upon Jews in the last days. The powers of darkness, in their corrupt and perverse wisdom, recognize that the only way to avert the threat to their false rule is by annihilating the Jews, whose return would terminate them. The church must recognize and accept the ultimate requirements of such a task and willfully adopt the coming times as central or primary to its whole purpose for being. We must consciously be aware and take hold of these tasks for ourselves, *willfully*. You do not come to this through osmosis. We need to recognize what these last days mean as they pertain to the people of Israel, as well as the role and function of the church toward this people. That one choice, that one conscious deliberation, that one taking of that mandate to ourselves, has the potential to transfigure the church."

Comparison of Empires

As we have seen, the Empire of God is not of this world, but it can be compared in the area of its sources of power (ideological, political, economic, military and proximity) with worldly empires. In this little chart I compare the two. The exorcising function is clearly "the military arm" of the Kingdom: "As I drive out demons, so the Kingdom of God has come," says Jesus.

	Empires of this Earth	Empire/Kingdom of Heavens
Power source	ideological	prophetic vision
Governmental system	Political	apostolic structure
Financed by	Babylonian Economics	Kingdom work and finance principles
Offensive	Military	Exorcism
Influence	Proximity to No.1	Intimacy with No. 1

What does this mean?

First, the current fragmentizing and polycentrism of the church is a logical consequence of the rejection of the practical rule of God, the emperor. CAWKI has been ready to accept Jesus as savior, but not as King. He was allowed to deal with issues of sin, but not to govern life. As a result, Jesus could not work with the Church towards expanding his Kingdom, but the Church has used God to build their kingdoms, in the form of denominations of every shape and kind. As God wants to build his Empire, this is why denominationalism (specifically: the spirit of denomination building) is probably one of the core enemies and preventives of a true Empire of God. As we build our paneled houses – remember Haggai 1? – God's house remains a ruin. Later in this book – and more importantly, in the reality of ministry - we will therefore have to establish a better and more biblical alternative to the past denominational setup of the Church, where the Church is properly repositioned within the Kingdom of God and its principles.

And secondly: as the Church has rejected God the King, it consequently has rejected its own nobility, the fact that God wanted us to share in his royalty in his Kingdom. And so, the royal priesthood has become a religious priesthood, and has refused to take on governmental authority in life. This is how Christians have become enslaved to the worldly kings and demonic rulers and the governmental systems they promote. This is one of the elements of the current apostolic and prophetic reformation, that the church is being restored into her proper place.

Recall the prophecy by Erich Reber of a poisonous cloud over the US as a result of a terrorist attack? He described that "since humanly speaking there is nothing that people could do, in utter fear and frustration many will cry out to God, feeling like the people of Israel trapped between the army of Egypt and the Red Sea. God will answer, as he did to Moses: 'Why do you cry to me so loud – stretch out your hand and use your rod!'" And as people would pray in royal authority, God will have the cloud cast into the sea. The issue here seems to be the rediscovery of the royal priesthood, abandoning all forms and phases of the past religious priesthood, where a few clerics ran the religious show and everyone else attended and went through the rites in dumb and slavish wonder.

Here are a number of practical issues that I believe we need to embrace in today's world before we can become part of God building his Kingdom with us and through us:

Dealing with our Anti-imperialistic Mindset

I grew up in a political climate that grew weary of the Cold War. America invaded Vietnam; one African nation after the other celebrated its independence from their European colonizers; Fidel Castro was on the radio, Ché Guevara on the wall, flower power and free speech movements on the streets. Many times, when visiting relatives, I was stuck for hours crossing the border from West-Germany into the former German Democratic Republic, witnessing a perfectionist oppressive system in full action. Freedom, we grew up to believe, is independence from those who suppress you. Freedom, we thought, is that you can do as you want, when you want, where you want. This developed a mindset that rejected authority in general, and the bigger and more oppressive of personal and individual movement a system was, the more it was hated and rejected.

However, I later realized that this was not freedom we celebrated, but independence. Independence is defined by *what we are not*, from what we have broken away from, what we have cut ourselves loose from. Liberty is one gigantic step further. It is the deliberate step into that dependence on God through Jesus Christ that allows us to grow into what we ought to be. I remember preaching this at a pastors' conference in Bombay, India in 1998, as India celebrated 50 years of independence from England. I spoke about how India must move into spiritual independence (from spiritual colonizers like the Germans, the English, the Americans, etc.), but it should not stop there but move on to spiritual freedom. Independence is only the antithesis of dependence, but liberty is one step further: to stand in one's God-given destiny and mission and be inter-dependant with other free nations or people groups that do likewise.

One homework assignment, therefore, that I had to do – and maybe you, too – is to bring my own anti-imperialistic mindset to God, reject the fact that I have rejected authority in general, and ask God for a healed and healthy understanding of his authority structures that I could willingly and happily fit into.

Overcoming the Rebellion of the Fatherless

Prof. Georg Huntemann, a prolific author and probably one of the most outspoken persons on biblical ethics on the planet, a German version of Tony Campolo, identifies the core problem of mankind as a rebellion of the fatherless. If people experience rejection – and this is what happens to all of us one way or another on this side of heaven – this may quickly lead to a rejection of the father in general, complete with rules, values and traditions. This includes the rejection of a church that has done little to express fatherhood or parenting to its children. However, rebellion is not a good architect; it may come in handy to tear down, but is has little to offer how to build, other than to say: we can do what we want.

Rebellion as a mindset always leads to spiritual anarchy, licentiousness, the absence of rules and order that govern us whether we like it or not, know it or not, accept it or not. It leads to the inability to submit to authority, and, curiously, enslaves people in the long run into rebellious leadership structures. Rebellion does not lead anyone into freedom. Have you ever visited a rebel camp or heard reports? The rebel leaders typically act like Gods, small absolute monarchs over their little band of rebels, warlords, masters over life and death in their small, temporary hideout and social bubble.

Both a rebellious, untreated mindset and membership in spiritual rebel-groups (like the latest, newest Christian church in town) severely disrupt our ability to follow Jesus whom we may be quick to call our Lord and King with our mouths. Again, the greatest liberty is found in our greatest voluntary attachment to our liberator, greatest freedom in becoming and remaining bond-slaves of Jesus Christ, and greatest maturity in living within clearly defined borders – the acceptance of something that ultimately culminates in the words of Jesus himself: “not my will, but your will be done.” If this is true, let me ask you: *how free are you today?*

Accepting Globalization and the Pax Americana

If it is of God, and part of the unfolding of salvation history that Globalization is happening at the current pace under the clear leadership of the US, we as loyal subjects of Jesus should not adjust it, fight it, be Anti-American in our minds or criticize the Washington administration for its every move. Politicians are humans; and yes, so what if administrations make political mistakes once in a while? They are like us all: less than perfect. The overriding issue is: God has always used political powers as his agents of government, judgment, wrath, and blessing (Rom. 13). He told Habakkuk to “watch the nations and be utterly amazed, for I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if you were told.” What was the amazing thing? The specific unleashing of the Babylonians as agents (servants!) of God’s judgment to punish “the wicked that hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted” (Hab. 1:4-6).

The overriding issue is: God has always used political powers as his agents of government, judgment, wrath, and blessing (Rom. 13).

Today, even without the recent political fact that with the invasion of Iraq the US de facto occupies the throne of Babylon, God is using America (and other nations) "to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right" (1 Pet. 2:14). This would include "US sanctions and actions" against Hitler's Germany or Hussein's Iraq. If this is the case, then let us commend the US and stand with them in a job they themselves often do not understand. Many politicians are not at all aware how God is using them, sometimes like a pawn on his chessboard, for moves that no human understands – other than those who prophetically see the ways of God unfold.

In principle, we should "submit ourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men" (1 Peter 2:13). I am not a nationalist at all. But I have decided to stand with America as a nation just like I will with Germany, or Israel, or Hungary or any other nation that does not violently oppose God for that matter, and seek its welfare and its best. Non-Americans need to realize that probably one of the toughest jobs today is to be a genuine, ethical Christian in America. And I don't mean a happy-clappy consumer of religious services, treating church services as spiritual filling stations on the road to the real important things, which is to make money from Monday through Saturday. That is easy. But to live in an atmosphere of **enforced individualism**, humanism, blatant consumerism, and in a church that has more often than not conformed to exactly these values and packaged itself for easy consumption ("sit back and relax, and enjoy the service!") that means living in a spiritually toxic climate. To demonstrate Christian integrity and character, to consistently live out the values of the Kingdom of God – personally and corporately - will fly in the face of the private American dream of glorious independence from anybody (technically made possible by the service of Mammon) pursued by many Christian and non-Christian American citizens alike. Therefore America – probably more than any other nation - needs love, and, based on this love, needs to be treated like a naughty child, with almost brutally direct calls to repentance, the dying of self, the crucifixion of the flesh, the forsaking of personal goals towards the corporate pursuit of community. Remember that most so-called revivals or awakenings in the United States, like the ones around Jonathan Edwards or George Whitefield, had a fierce preaching at its core, literally "scaring the living hell out of people." Every year on the 4th of July, America celebrates its "Declaration of Independence," something that has gone deep into the marrow and bones of the nation. I suggest a new dimension to it: to celebrate a "Declaration of Dependence" on God and each other.

But there is another reason why I believe a correct understanding of the role of America is important for the last leg of church history we have entered into. It was during the **Pax Persia**, the Empire of Babylon, that Cyrus, King of Persia, was "given all the kingdoms of the earth" by God. Cyrus said he "has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:3), and issued a decree, a political resolution to rebuild the house of God (Ezra 5:13), throwing his entire political weight behind an apostolic development that was tied to Israel. This had been prophetically declared by Isaiah (Isa. 41-45) who spoke about "Cyrus the anointed," whose governmental position God would use as a political framework to re-establish Israel and specifically endorse the rebuilding of the temple. God "has handed nations over to him and subdued kings" (Isa 41:2), a biblical way to distinguish empires from kingdoms.

It was during the time of **Pax Romana**, the “peace” (often not much more than a superficial truce) within the political, cultural, economic, and military framework of the Roman Empire, “that the God of heaven set up an eternal kingdom.” The *kairos*-time, the opportune time for God to have Jesus born and installed in this world, happened when Greek and Latin were commonly used and generally accepted languages – providing a baseline of understanding. Roads were built (and fairly safe), so that people, goods, news, and ideas, could travel quickly. Lines of communication through letters and emissaries were functioning, and the cosmopolitan mix of people throughout the Roman Empire had cracked open century-old ghettos of isolated people groups, city-kingdoms, and tribes totally focused on themselves, through introducing a climate of moderate acceptance of new ideas and innovation.

All of this opened up space into which the gospel of the Kingdom could pour and travel quickly, much faster and more efficiently than it would have if Jesus were born in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, or even 500 years later into the beginning turmoil and confusion, the absence of order that we call the dark, Middle Ages. The similarity between the **Pax Romana** then, and the emerging **Pax Americana** today, is striking. English has become the global language of trade and exchange of ideas; the Internet has opened up lines of lightning-fast communication around the globe, travel of persons and goods are easier than ever before; and globalization has created a certain shared value base that helps to communicate with even the most remote tribes and cultures.

Even the Hollywood film industry is churning out films and stories that serve as communication platforms for the world to talk to each other. The open return to nature worship, neo-pagan animism in the West, driven mainly through American New Age ideas, has created a climate and mindset within which – much better than during cold materialistic and agnostic modernity – the driving out of demons and other supernatural elements of the Kingdom of God are grasped much more easily and have a larger and more accepted impact on life. Rather than fight it in ignorance, let’s therefore see this positively as God building the context and stage for a final phase of his Kingdom expanding itself through the rapid multiplication of New Testament churches. This is another *kairos*-time, a time like no other ever before. Things are possible now that were unthinkable even 30 years ago. As we return to the principles and practices of apostolic and prophetic Christianity of old, we will find ourselves prepared for another and last explosive harvest and Kingdom in the years ahead.

Conclusions

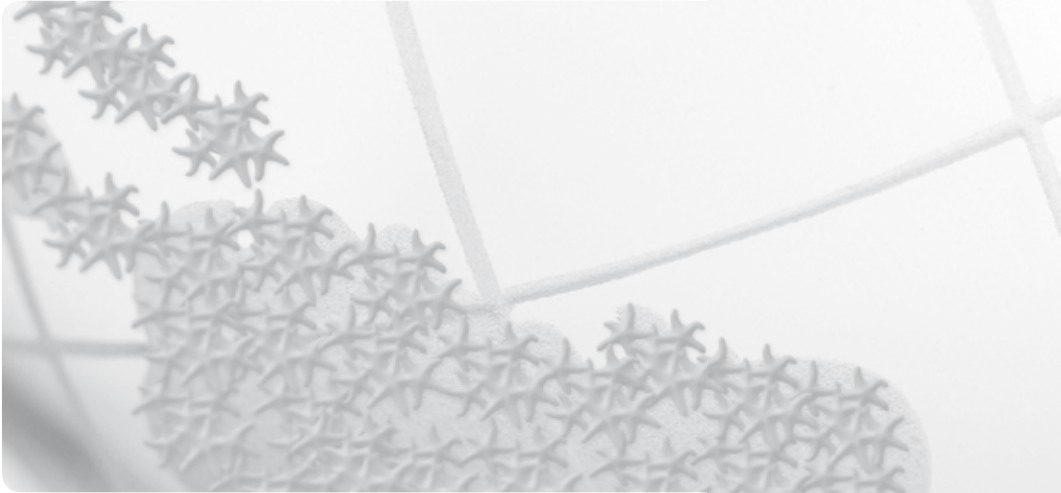
The Empire of God, the domain of God’s uncontested rule, is the defining entity that the arrival of Jesus has commenced and launched. He has given the expansion of this Kingdom into the hands of the ekklesia, by establishing and reclaiming apostolic jurisdictions within the nations and kingdoms of this world, geopolitical, ethnic and economic spheres of influence that have yet to become synchronized with the rule set of the Kingdom of God to the degree that is possible. And that is exactly one of the central tasks of an apostolic Church: to establish these jurisdictional borders and to create systems of effective Kingdom government to align life on earth with heaven.

Non-apostolic and traditional churches trapped in denominationalism, frozen in institutionalized rebellion to God’s revealed blueprint, functioning

outside of God's rules, are loved, but unblessed. In the language of Thomas P.M. Barnett, they are *the Gap*: non-integrated countries that fail to align themselves with God and therefore constantly generate problems. Theological wars, strife, debate, competition, backbiting, and an endless succession of theological provincialism are the order of the day. However, as the Empire of God is a trans-national, or more accurately, trans-global sphere of influence of God the King that is experienced in areas which deliberately decide to submit to God's rule, each person, each group of humans that chooses to give up rebellion and align themselves with the Kingdom of God, augment and enlarge the influence of God's uncontested rule.

And so, former authority-free zones and rebel territories like you and me – as well as entire churches, denominations, and organizations – are swept up with the Kingdom, and thus come online and are infused with God and his apostolic, core kingdom purposes. All that God requires from us is to give up our contest for self-rule, and declare and live our individual obedient love for our King Jesus and our covenant with him. We must let him be not only savior, to take care of the sins of this world, but also Lord and King, and take care of everything else. As we do this not only individually, but corporately, together with others, not any longer we, but only heaven is the limit for what will happen.





14 Ekklesia: The Kingdom visible around Tables and in Stadiums

Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? Lk 13:18, 20

14 Ekklesia: The Kingdom visible around Tables and in Stadiums

Having established the vital concept that the ekklesia of Jesus must be a legal part of the Kingdom of God and must therefore be properly understood in the wider context of the Kingdom, let us go on to discover the meaning of the term, and develop a practical understanding of church that may possibly be new to many, although, as I will show, it resembles, in principle, the original outworking of ekklesia during the times of the early apostles. As we can expect, the meaning of ekklesia, that we too quickly translate “church,” usually meaning the gathering of the elect, has been distorted and clouded by its religious use and traditional manifestations beyond recognition.

In these recent years there has been a fierce search for “church 2.0,” as some call it, borrowing a term from the world of computer programming. Version 1 of a computer program will usually see a lot of minor updates that carry numbers like 1.1, 1.3 or 1.9. If a major breakthrough is achieved that lifts the original program to an entirely new level, computer programmers give it the version number 2.0. It is my conviction that with the emergence of healthy and biblically sound apostolic and prophetic ministries in our days, there will be a resurrection of a new – and possibly age-old revelation of church. It may be so very old and ancient, buried under centuries of layers of traditionalism, debate, and theological arguing, that many of us may have to make a deliberate attempt at unlearning, discarding, and burying nonfunctional or purely inherited and unexamined concepts of church, that would otherwise stand in the way of our own involvement in the church that will carry the future.

Should you have sworn your life to a certain expression of church, by way of a lifelong commitment, sealing your own financial security to it or if a particular church is the only career path that you can see open to you at this time, I would not be surprised if you would have to unmake that covenant with such a human, inherited ecclesiological system first. Otherwise, you may find a powerful mental blockage barring your entrance into realms of understanding that you probably desperately desire, because your present or previous religious experience and heritage deny the very truth for which you search. Again, if you can, let’s start with stopping with church-as-you-know-it, and allow God to open a fresh chapter of understanding and revelation in your spirit.

Ekklesia – a political term

The *Koine* Greek word *ekklesia* is not a religious expression at all, but a political one. In his book *Ancient Greece* John D. Clare describes the Athenian democracy and writes: “In Athens, male landowners who qualified for citizenship decided for themselves their political matters, meeting on a hill in Athens called Pnyx, where they voted by a show of hands. The citizens’ assembly, the ekklesia, met from 30 to 40 times a year. It was supposed to meet early in the day, and every citizen over 20 years old was supposed to attend. The meeting started with the sacrifice of a black pig, followed by prayers. Everybody had the right to speak. If you supported a speaker, you called him a *rhetor* (orator), if you opposed him, you referred to him as *demagogue* (mob leader). The histo-

rian Thucydides described how such a man might stride about the platform shouting, waving his arms, and slapping his thighs... The ekklesia elected, for example, generals and the meetings were organized by a council whose 500 members were elected in various *demes*, or districts, of the city."

The people in the days of Jesus understood the term ekklesia very well; it was part of their secular vocabulary. It first and foremost meant "legal assembly," a governmental term. An ekklesia was, far beyond Athenian democracy, a gathering representing the city or a region, very much like the term we use for a "house of representatives" or a city or state council, where the elected elders of a city or region, the "politicians," came together to discuss policy, settle issues, decide and pass laws, in essence: to reign. In the New Testament, the term is used like this in Acts 19. After the riot in Ephesus over the Diana issue that touched the economic nerve of the city, the city clerk quieted everyone and said: "The courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further that you want to bring up, it must be settled in the legal assembly (*ekklesia*)" (Acts 19:38-40).

Sometimes the disciples of Jesus took quite some time to grasp things, and quickly developed the habit of asking Jesus about anything they did not understand. When Jesus (who used the term ekklesia only twice: Matt 16:18 and 18:17) had spoken about building his ekklesia (church) for the first time, not one of the disciples came to Jesus afterwards and said: Jesus, what do you mean with this strange word, ekklesia? They understood the term perfectly. They understood that Jesus, who promised to bring in a Kingdom, had started to make plans for his legal assembly, his parliament, that soon would replace the rule of the Romans and set up his throne in Jerusalem.

Peter had understood that he was going to be on the short list for Jesus' cabinet, probably getting an important minister's post in the Kingdom of God, as there was quite some bickering among the disciples about who would be the greatest, who would sit to the left and who to the right of God. This political understanding of ekklesia as a local or regional governmental function of the Kingdom of God that God will establish was the prominent way people during the early apostolic days used the term. Only later was another, second meaning added to the term ekklesia: "those who are called out," from Greek *ek-kalein*, to call out of, and it started to describe the fellowship-oriented gathering of those who had been called out of the world into the Kingdom, the community of the saved ones.

The core Kingdom-principle that Jesus explained again and again in many different ways is that people are called and saved out of the world to come to him. And as they join him, he transforms (disciples) them, and in turn starts to send them out to repeat the process: to again call more people out of this world to join Jesus, be discipled and be sent out again to repeat and re-repeat the process with even more people. I call this never-ending process of gathering, discipling, scattering, gathering again, discipling again, and scattering again, **The Wheel of the Kingdom** – something that keeps turning over and over until the world is invaded, filled and changed by the sons of the Kingdom and the church they bring with them as the very instrument of gathering, discipling, and scattering.

In the parable of the weeds, Jesus begins by saying: "The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Matt 13:24). Later he

explains to his disciples, who didn't get it: "The one who sows the good seed is the son of man (me, Jesus); the field is the world; and the good seeds stand for the sons of the Kingdom (you, and the ones you will later reap, disciple and scatter) Matt 13:37.

One of the key dynamics of the work of Jesus, both high priest and apostle, therefore, is to **gather** (attract, call out), disciple (model, teach, and transform) people, and to **scatter** them again, that is, to throw them out like seeds into the fields, the world, where they are to do what all seeds are supposed to do: get in contact with dirt, darkness, and uncomfortable situations, and to die, in order to produce more grain, that then can again be gathered, disciplined, and scattered 30, 60, or 100-fold. As 30, 60, or 100 times more seeds are available for the next harvest season, the new seeds (the newly converted sons of the Kingdom) are again disciplined (taught, trained, and transformed) and sown out, and the process repeats itself in exponential ways. That is the theory. The instrument where this reproductive process is happening, the vessel, is, of course, the church.

The apostolic and prophetic ministries – not so much the pastoral or teaching or administrative ones – are specifically designed by God for the scattering aspects. Scattering has a certain violence to it, a deliberate removal of people out of their comfort zones, something that an institutional pastor usually abhors. Jesus asks his disciples and apostles-in-training to pray to the Lord of the harvest to fling out – literally *expel* – workers into the harvest (Luke 10:2). The word for flinging out – Greek *ekballein* – is normally used to describe the process of driving out demons. To translate it, as in most Bibles, with "send out," is a gross misunderstanding, totally misrepresenting its meaning, a needlessly watered down version of an actually very dangerous apostolic act, thrusting disciples out of everything they feel safe with. Only as people are **flung out** into apostolic mission, will they ever influence the world like leavened dough, change things, turn cities upside down (Acts 17:6) and expand the domain of the rule of God.

The disappearance of the apostolic understanding of Church

In the apostolic days of the church – when apostles and prophets were still in their rightful place – it was the political meaning of *ekklesia* that was prominent in Christianity. They obviously understood themselves as the spearhead of the New Kingdom of Jesus, who will soon be coming again. They met in revolutionary cells called house churches, the decentralized bases for their guerrilla mission to go find more houses of peace everywhere that they would then convert into more bases for the King.

As these house churches interacted and formed regional expressions of the church, they took on the identity of the very city or region into which they spread; the larger expression of church, consisting of the sum total of all house churches in a region or city (The Church in Antioch, in Rome, in Ephesus, in Corinth, etc.), would develop into a new regional *ekklesia* in the sense of a political council or parliament of the Kingdom of God. These were responsible for decisions that pertained to their task of saturating their region with the "yeast of the Kingdom until it worked itself through the entire dough" (Matt 13:33). The *ekklesia*, in this apostolic sense of the church-in-its-mission – was the forefront and carrier of the Kingdom, establishing beachheads of the Kingdom wherever it went.

This original understanding of ekklesia was only later joined by the Christian add-on meaning of “those gathered together,” those called out, and finally as the physical place where gathering happened. Let’s recall that the original task that Jesus set up for his disciples was threefold: gathering, discipling, and scattering. These tasks need to be understood in the framework of the expansive mission and advancement of the Kingdom. But the catastrophe happened. The apostolic Kingdom perspective of ekklesia was lost. And Kingdom history turned into Church history. Visionless and out of its defining context, the church started to huddle and fall back on itself. The Christians gathered, gathered some more, and gathered again, until gathering was the only thing they did. Such a church became just like any other religion that ultimately performs rites to bless the civic status quo of its settled adherents. The two main aspects of ekklesia – Kingdom Parliament and house churches, the large and the small, needed to be seen in tandem – forever yoked together, inseparable. To lose one half of the meaning would be a mortal blow to the entire concept, leaving the other half meaningless.

However, within a few decades of the death of the Apostle John, apostolic and prophetic ministries had all but vanished from the scene. Wherever apostles and prophets resurfaced throughout church history, they quickly had to go underground. They suddenly found *themselves* to be the ones that are being scattered and sent off by a non-apostolic church that wanted to do one thing and one thing alone: to gather and celebrate religious rituals. A church that only understands itself as a gathering will simply refuse the cross. It does not want to die to self, and will reject the idea of being thrown out into the cold world as cruel, preferring to enjoy the warmth and cozy fellowship of the church. Inevitably, as church history unfolded, the gathered aspect of ekklesia grew phenomenally in importance, and the political, governmental and apostolic aspects of ekklesia as a legal, regional Kingdom assembly to change the world for God withered and faded away. As the building boom set in and churches started to meet in cathedrals and basilicas, the word “church” started to take on an even more exotic meaning: it started to mean what it absolutely never meant in the first place: a bunch of bricks, a church building, a holy space, a “sanctuary,” a physical place where religious meetings are conducted.

Fast forward to the present age. In today’s world, go to any average Evangelical church, look around in the building and you will usually find, with extremely few exceptions, the most politically uninvolved, uninformed, non-representative, and harmless people in town, folks who would usually not even dream of understanding themselves as the revolutionary party bureau of a heavenly Kingdom bent on changing life – education, media, business, politics, economics, etc. - in their region. If you ask anyone on the streets what a church is, the person usually will talk about a building, bells, an organ, stained glass windows, and a parking lot that needs repair, just like most of the cars parked on it. If you ask most traditional Christians about what a church is, they usually start talking about “if two or three are gathered in my name,” or mention their Sunday worship event, immediately jumping to the least important, me-oriented, gathering-focused meaning of the word.

The two main aspects of ekklesia – Kingdom Parliament and house churches, the large and the small, needed to be seen in tandem – forever yoked together, inseparable. To lose one half of the meaning would be a mortal blow to the entire concept, leaving the other half meaningless.

So, when people today talk about new expressions of church, what most of them actually mean is new ways of old gatherings, new cultural expressions and contextualizations of a completely distorted picture in the first place. Entire libraries have been filled with discussion about: do we need 20 or 30 gathered members for it to be a real church? Do we need a constitution, bylaws, and is it a legitimate church without an organ? Or when was the last time you asked the church-question and someone said promptly: "Oh, you mean the legal assembly of God, the place where God's Kingdom reformers of the region meet to discuss and plan stuff like reshaping the economic and educational system in the area?" Someone has robbed the church of its own passport, given it a new, fake one, and has done it so thoroughly that the church even thinks this was their own idea!

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But let us have a closer look at how this worked in the early-church reality. If we see the life, ministry and teaching of Jesus as the foundation-laying process of ekklesia and Pentecost as the day when all the various pieces came together, then the first time we see the church in full action is Acts 2:41-47: "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added daily those who were being saved."

In this description, we immediately see the two vital dimensions of the life of ekklesia: the small and the large meetings, the private and the public. Some things obviously happened in larger assemblies, in the temple courts, a place that could easily fit several thousands of people. Some other things happened in homes. Some things may have happened both in the small and the large, like prayer, praise, apostolic teaching (Acts 20:20), conversions, signs and wonders.

In their homes, the "house churches," people were sharing life in the way of an extended family. Just like every healthy family, each house church had elders, spiritual parents who had the exact same role in the house churches that parents have for extended families. As I have written much more on this level in *The House Church Book* (the updated version of *Houses That Change the World*), I want to be very brief here on this. When Christians came together at the house church-level, they focused mainly on four things:

- 1) "Meatings":** they ate together and celebrated the Lord's supper
- 2) Koinonia and diakonia:** sharing and distributing; they shared life with each other and had everything in common
- 3) Word of God:** they read, discussed and shared the word of God including personal teachings and experiences
- 4) Interaction with God:** this was the place for intimate prayer and prophecy.

In the public place, the large gatherings that usually happened at city or regional level, these were the main five things that happened:

1) Exposure to apostolic teaching: “They devoted themselves to apostolic teaching.” The word translated devoting (Greek *proskartereo*) is actually a much stronger word meaning to lean or crane forward to hold on to something. I like the way Peter Wenz, an apostolic man in Stuttgart, Germany, once put it: “They deliberately exposed themselves to the bombardment of apostolic teaching”.

Apostolic teaching was not geared to pleasing people, dispensing personal encouragement or introducing people to individual religious experiences. It was geared to shifting the entire church further into the purposes of God, recasting them constantly into the framework of the Kingdom, gathering them in order to scatter them. It was the generals briefing the army on the next move, the continuation of the teaching ministry of Jesus. Jesus, the apostle of God and author of our faith, was the subject, the author, and the goal of apostolic teaching. When Jesus taught, it was very different from the rabbinical teaching: “He taught like someone with authority” (Matt 7:28.29). People were amazed, “greatly astonished,” stirred, excited, they exclaimed things, and were moved to action.

Apostolic teaching, like the ministry of Jesus, was highly explosive; experiencing Jesus’ teaching was like a bombshell, it blew your mind one story at a time. It exploded myths, rattled the cages, shook up the sleepy, utterly confronted the religious bigotry of the Sadducees and Pharisees, fascinated the listeners, and realigned their lives for mission. It truly was a bombardment, an encounter with truth, never a nice little speech that made people applaud politely with their fingertips, say nice things afterwards, and put a dime in the offering bag.

Because of this, it was also **highly divisive**: you were either with it, or against it. If you were bored by it or not challenged to make a stand, to go either left or right, you probably had not experienced apostolic teaching. It was not *touching* the heart, but *cutting* to the heart: either it “cut to the heart and they said: Brothers what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37), or, as in the example of Stephen, it cut to their heart so that “they were furious, gnashed their teeth, covered their ears, yelling at the top of their voice, rushed at him and dragged him out of the city to stone him” (Acts 7:54-58). This is why people needed to make a deliberate choice, needed to make a willful decision to “lean forward and voluntarily expose themselves” to this, because they would regularly come out of apostolic teaching experiences with their values, perspectives and lives turned up-side down, their life and value systems put upside down, freshly bewildered, but empowered and charged for the job ahead, and ready to be scattered.

2) Expression of Unity: “Peter stood up *with the eleven*” on Pentecost meant there was tremendous unity among the apostles, and therefore also unity among the people of God. The Church came together as one. This had amazing consequences, because a display of oneness in an utterly divided world where everyone quarrels with his neighbor speaks of a different quality of life

that the unsaved person simply does not have. When people saw twelve preachers with one message in a society where everywhere you looked you saw factions, factions, and opposing parties, you knew that twelve miracles have happened in the lives of these guys, and that made you crane forward and beg to know: What is their secret that made them one? What do they have that I definitely do not have? It reminds me of the famous African saying: "One donkey carries one ton, two donkeys carry 27 tons, and three donkeys move a mountain. Imagine what 12 donkeys can do..."

The house churches had a very important role in this, too. The home of the believers was, among other things, the place to authenticate the public message of the church, the shopping window of God, where outsiders and bystanders could check: *do they live privately what they preach publicly?* The congruence between a life in private and a life in public is one of the strongest convincing points that the church can and must make. It shows reality, gives hope, displays a quality of focused unity politicians don't have, and it dispels the fog of hypocrisy. If someone lives two lives – one in private and one in public – and they are very different from each other it implodes the message. This is why disunity, where twelve preachers have thirteen messages and opinions, where Christian factions of "Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ" exist anywhere (1 Cor. 1:12), is absolutely devastating for the gospel, in public and private, and prevents and contradicts the very message of Christ.

Disunity implodes rather than explodes the truth, and therefore needs to be confronted at every level. United we stand, divided we fall. Yes, in many parts of the world the church has been seeking to develop a "divided we stand," "agree to disagree," "unity in diversity" stance, where people have attempted a public show of unity based on compromise and a lowest common denominator. Did it work? But where the church has, in all honesty and truthfulness, pursued a public and a private life, in the fear of God who looks into both, dedicated itself to the same rule set of the Kingdom in the small and the large, where no show is put on Sunday and an entirely different game is conducted Monday through Saturday, there is consistency, truthfulness, authenticity, integrity, and therefore there is God.

3) Conversions: Not only do people recognize this immediately, but public unity and a clear, unified message has something to it that makes the "Gates of Hades" (Matt 16:18) crumble and releases their prisoners to life. As much as disunity is satanically devastating to the Gospel, Christian unity is a devastating message to the demonic realms, the place where the empire strikes back. This is why during expressions of unity of the church, the demonic gates crumble – and prisoners are released and come to Christ.

Of the few times that *ekklesia* is mentioned in the New Testament, only two verses speak of a specific *function* for the *ekklesia*. And, will you be surprised that both of them have something to do with the invisible world, not the marketplace, the visible public? This function is to challenge the rule of the current demonic spirits, and the situation that Paul describes like this: "The god of this age has blinded the eyes of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel" (2 Cor. 4:4). Next to personal sin clouding the mind, the main reason why people do not see the gospel is that their spiritual eyelids are closed shut by demonic beings under the authority of Satan, the "god of this

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The church is not only meant to be irresistible for people, but irresistible for demons!

age." If the church can do something to neutralize the eyelid-shutting action of the demonic, it should do it.

Here the two verses that mention a specific function of ekklesia:

- "I will build my church, and **the gates of Hades shall not withstand it**" (Mt 16:18). The church is not only meant to be irresistible for people, but irresistible for demons! They simply can't handle it. This verse indicates that the church has an offensive, military role in attacking the "gates of Hades," to break open systems of demonic captivity that hold people captive and obviously free them. This is when they come to Christ, their liberator. This verse, interestingly enough, does not speak of the gates of *Hell*, but the gates of *Hades*: a life-long concentration camp guarded by demonic powers whose assignment is to keep people in a permanent state of spiritual death (Eph. 2) until they experience physical death, thus making their status permanent. If not intercepted by the gospel before then, people move from Hades to Hell.
- Paul writes that the "manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church **to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies**" (Eph 3:10). Again, the devil and his demonic forces are the addressees of this, and this attaches a proclaiming or publishing function to the church: **to make known** God's wisdom "and bring to light what is the administration (the economy) of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God" (Eph 3:9). God has hidden a secret from the devil, and the church publishes that secret in his face: **Unity is possible, devil, go have a look at the church!**

Unity is possible, devil, go have a look at the church!

But of course this is not only impressive to the demonic realm, but also for the general public. Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35). And it is love for each other and love for the unlovable, expressing the goodness of God to those outside Christ, that leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4) and therefore to deep conversions. When people encounter this, they encounter Jesus – and that is why it says: "the Lord added daily to their number".

You might have noticed that I did not even mention the word evangelism here. It has come to mean a series of human programs, "outreach" projects and the activity of Christian public relation agents geared to the conversion of non-churched outsiders. The early church did not do evangelism because it was apostolic. Being comes before doing. Only as the church lost its apostolic DNA did it become drunk with human activities and methods geared at making members.

4) Signs and wonders: Human words *convince*, the work of the Spirit *convicts*. Conviction is a much deeper work than convincing someone with logical and rational arguments. Yes, words spoken in the power of God can convict too, but, to misuse a quote, "a picture is worth 1000 words." It can be easily proven from scripture that the combination of the proclamation of the gospel with the demonstration of God's power was always a key to the rapid advance of the Kingdom. I made an extensive study on this in *Supernaturally Natural: The role of signs and wonders for the advancement of the Kingdom* (in German only), and have documented that of the 186 various supernatural events recorded in the gospels and the book of Acts, 119 of them have a reaction or a

result reported in response to such a sign; all of them have demonstrated and advanced the Kingdom.

The signs, wonders, and miracles that Jesus did in public clearly testified to the fact that he was the Messiah, and demonstrated the reality of the goodness of God. The miracles acted as unmistakable signposts to the authenticity of his message. Jesus fully expected his disciples to move in the same authority to drive out evil spirits, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to walk on water, to walk through prison bars, to speak in new tongues, and he gave them both the authority as well as the mandate to do so. Most of the miracles that Jesus did happened in public, in the squares, and on the streets, and the same is true for the apostles: "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people" (Acts 5:12). Paul describes his message as not consisting of "persuasive words, but with demonstrations of the Spirit's power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

As a young believer, I was once thrust into such a situation. Standing under a never ending blanket of dark clouds in the middle of pouring rain on the streets of Basel, Switzerland, with an evangelistic team I led, I was approached by a mocking group of young men who ridiculed the message. Before I knew it, I told them: "What if I pray right now and right here for this rain to stop within 60 seconds? Would that help in the discussion?" They agreed, giggling in delightful anticipation as to what silliness would come next. I prayed a simple prayer, and within less than one minute, the rain stopped, the umbrellas folded, and the nature of the discussion changed dramatically. I had not planned this, but it helped me to understand the difference between convincing and convicting in a drastic way.

5) Diaconia: Loving without words is a message understood in any language, and speaks to the heart, not the head only. "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need" (Acts 2: 45) was a demonstration that these peoples' lives had changed beyond measure. Onlookers had to think that they were either crazy – or holy! The believers had crucified the spirit of materialism head on, had overcome Mammon and had found a place in their new and very extensive family – and therefore security, equal to our social welfare systems in the West (pension, insurance, social security, etc.). Therefore they did the unthinkable: they started to do the very same thing that God had been doing for thousands of years: they started to give themselves away, to dispense themselves to others, and stopped holding on to their possessions because all of it now belonged to God, just like themselves who were bought by the blood of Christ to become God's possession.

Giving was therefore not a new law at all (to speak of tithing ten percent of a monthly income as a New Testament requirement for Christians simply is an uninformed, non-biblical insult to this), it was a natural outflow of a new life: "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had – so there was no needy person among them. All those (the NIV translation for all, Greek *hotis*, with "from time to time" is hilariously wrong) who owned lands or houses, sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (Acts 4: 32-35). The deacons, those Holy Spirit administrators selected by the people of God and presented to the Apostles (Acts 6), became a crucial factor

in the careful dispensing of the goodness of God among the people. Their job was not only need assessment (if help was given according to need, then someone had to ask and assess those needs...) and distribution, but also to be an interface with the needs of the city. We will discuss this later in the chapter on apostolic diaconia and messianic work and finance principles.

These were the main nine aspects of the ekklesia, what happened in their small and/or large gatherings, which was, by the way, not a weekly meeting on Sunday morning at all. It was a lifestyle, 24-7, an ongoing experience, and it happened "daily." Let us now have a closer look at the people whom God used for this larger, public, political aspect of ekklesia.

House of representatives

"A group numbering about 120" met in the upper room, comprised of disciples, relatives of Jesus, and the women. Among "those brothers," Peter stood up, after being constantly together in prayer and oneness, and basically led everyone in an election process for the vacuum that Judas had left behind. This group cast lots and chose Matthias to be "added to the eleven apostles" (Acts 1). In other words: a smaller body made decisions that affected the larger body.

Peter and John had been captured and jailed for a day, then questioned and forbidden to preach in this name. "On their release, Peter and John **went back to their own people and reported**" (Acts 4:23-36). This group – "their own people" – a group that John and Peter reported to – was the group that obviously did not comprise all the 3,000 who had come to Christ on Pentecost, but was a group that fitted in to one room or house, because it says "the place (Greek: *topos*) where they were meeting was shaken" (4:31). In other words: there existed an ad hoc council, a place of reporting, that did not involve every Christian. Again, we find a smaller body representing the larger one.

Money was brought to a spot called "the apostles' feet." The plurality of apostles meant that there must have been a center of sorts, a house, where the apostles used to be together. When Ananias died, it was "young men" who came to carry him out, the same youngsters who later "came in" through a door to carry out the dead body of Sapphira (Acts 5:10). If they came in, that meant they were previously out, not inside the same room that did the hearing and judgment on Ananias and Sapphira. In other words: there was a group that not everyone had access to, at least not the young men. And it was this group that handled the larger aspects of money.

In Acts 6 the number of disciples was increasing, and this led to complaints about the Greek widows who were being overlooked at the daily distribution of food. This led to a meeting: "The twelve gathered all the disciples" (which means: not all the believers. The NT does make a distinction between them both, which we will examine later), asked them to choose "seven men from among you" to whom the responsibility of *diaconia* – which included "the waiting on tables" – would be given, so that they can focus again on their apostolic tasks of "prayer and the ministry of the word." This must have been a special meeting that exceeded the size of a house church, but did not involve absolutely every believer in Jerusalem and the region. Again: apostles and disciples formed a council that organized certain aspects of ministry.

In Acts 13 we find ourselves in a fasting and ministry meeting. It could have been either a rather small gathering of just the four men mentioned here, Barnabas, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul, or a city-wide meeting of the Church in Antioch which these four men also attended. The Bible leaves this question open. These four men mentioned by name were not ordinary believers; they are described like this: "In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers" (13:1). In other words, here we find a small group of people, representing aspects of the 5-fold equipping ministries that we later see described in Ephesians 4:11-13. Since Barnabas and Paul were called apostles (at least from the very mission that started in Antioch onwards, see Acts 14:14), the other two – Lucius and Manaem - might have been a teacher and a prophet. It was to this multi-ministry-group that the Holy Spirit spoke that they "should set apart Barnabas and Saul" for the work God had for them. This was a Church-embedded mission council that was fully capable of receiving a prophetic missions directive from the Holy Spirit and responding swiftly. It was actually on this first apostolic mission that Saul changed to be named Paul for the first time (Acts 13:9), signaling that his transformation was complete, and now he was doing what he was destined to do.

In Acts 15, we find an apostolic council in Jerusalem, comprised of "apostles and elders" (Acts 15:2.4.6.22). They were a problem-solving group, a think tank that came together because of an acute issue confronting and challenging the entire Church. Some legalistic believers from the cult of the Pharisees had stood up and started to impose false and constricting teaching on others (Acts 15: 5) by demanding that circumcision should be mandatory for every Gentile to be saved. Here we see a combination of elders – representing the local house churches – and apostles – representing the wider work of God in and beyond the region – working out this issue together. Again, this was not discussed or decided among every single believer, but "Paul and Barnabas were appointed, together *with some others from among them*, to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this".

Note that obviously the Church in Antioch did the appointing and selected "some from among them" (the NIV translation "some other *believers*" is wrong; it does not speak about believers in the Greek original at all, but about "some *from among them*"). Suffice it to say that it was a legitimate expression of Church to come together as representing the small and the large and to solve pending problems. Once they had solved the issue, they obviously took one more step before making their decisive new policy: they informed and explained this to the "whole church," and only with the consent of "the whole church" did their resolution become policy. So it was not an elite cardinals' meeting discussing a new Pope in their exclusive enclave, but a select and trusted problem-solving group that was commissioned and appointed by the church in Antioch beforehand (Acts 15:2) for this task. "Then the apostles and elders, together with the whole church, decided" (Acts 15:22).

In summary: here we witness a dimension of ekklesia that is neither an individual house church nor a citywide gathering of all believers, but a special and select group as a place to report, discuss issues, make decisions, elect or reject, respond to crises, issue decrees, and start missions. All of these examples mentioned above transcend the jurisdiction of an individual house church. It describes activities of the governmental dimension of ekklesia, in the form of

board meetings, councils or conferences. This involvement is *not open to everyone*, but consists of “select” people. The New Testament speaks of the priesthood of all believers, but it does not proclaim “the elder-hood of all believers” or much less “the apostle-hood of all believers” (1 Cor. 12).

These two aspects and dimensions of ekklesia – the small and the large, the house churches and the apostolic/governmental, Kingdom dimension of ekklesia – were also evident in the lifestyle of Jesus. He met in ordinary homes of people, where he did exactly those four things that house churches would do later: eat, share life with them, teach/discuss and pray/prophesy. And in between, Jesus met with his group of disciples to talk strategy, explain questions, have in-house meetings, and take them on retreats. Just like in real life, in addition to the private (family level) sphere, there is a need for government, and therefore, there are larger assemblies for festivals, celebrations, sporting events, political rallies and so on. And, in most societies, for these larger, political purposes that pertain to the entire community, trusted people have been selected from among the people to represent them for these tasks and to perform them on behalf of the entire community.

Kingdom Politicians

Therefore, could it truly be that, if the ekklesia is a political function of the Kingdom of God, that there is such a thing as “Kingdom Politicians,” those who dedicate their lives to the policies and daily business of the Kingdom of God?

The Body of Christ has a painful history of divisions between clergy and laity, a religious elite and a dumb, powerless, religious mob, typically arranged in top-down, hierarchical modes. I am, and remain, one of those strongly advocating the eradication of any status-driven hierarchies and any notion of positional authority. Our various tasks and responsibilities within the Body of Christ are based on the functions and callings that God gives us within the wider Body, and are always *influential*, not *positional*. However, that does not mean we can afford to ignore the fact that the Bible does speak of spheres of influence that God gives to some, that are different from others. Not only are there different levels of faith (Rom 12:3), but the gifts of the Holy Spirit are different from each other, and we are to respect that. The prophetic, pastoral, apostolic, teaching and evangelistic ministries as well as administrative/deacon work or the tasks of an elder differ in scope, and their levels of influence are measured out to them by God alone.

Looking at the biblical base for a special involvement in the larger, governmental, apostolic dimensions of ekklesia, it is clear that this is not a task for absolutely every believer to carry out as he so pleases, but is a task given to a special group of people within the church. It is possible to do this in a way that does not fall into the clergy-laity trap or create power structures. One way is to recognize how relationships in the Kingdom are organized in general: by mutual voluntary submission. “Submit yourself to each other” is a key principle of the New Testament, that allows for great diversity to happen within the organic Body of Christ and under the sole headship of Jesus and no one else, without degenerating into organizational flow charts and top-down human kingdoms.

Our various tasks and responsibilities within the Body of Christ are based on the functions and callings that God gives us within the wider Body, and are always influential, not positional.

Let us now proceed to see how this would look practically. Christians meeting in your region or city would again meet in two places: 1) "From house to house," decentralized in many house churches, and 2) meeting repeatedly at a really big and central place, a modern version of "Solomon's colonnades," a big hall or stadium. In the houses they would authentically share lives together, live organic fellowship and thus be a true shop window of God for their neighborhood. In the large citywide or regional celebrations they would mark their unity in Christ, express the fact that they belong together, have a big festival together and allow as many house churches as possible to click together for the big vision and take on the shape of a regional trans-denominational Kingdom movement. Just like it did before, that will truly turn whole cities and regions upside down through the gospel of the Kingdom of God. And nobody could deny that "you have filled Jerusalem with this teaching" (Acts 5:28).

Authenticity in real but private life will again be matched with public authenticity in a synergy of house church and regional church. Organic communities and extended family-type communities in houses (or wherever people's lives gravitate) demonstrate that on a private, small level. The large, public, and regional level are regular or irregular huge meetings of Christians, who overcame all small-minded barriers and understand that they are one in Christ and also one before the eyes of the world.

I would like to point out the four levels on which Christianity expresses itself today: 1) the house, 2) the one-pastor-church (the traditional congregation), 3) the regional dimension of church (City-church, celebration), and 4) trans-regional or national networks of churches, the denominations. (I assume everyone is in agreement about the existence of the universal Church, the Body of Christ on earth, which, technically, would be level 5). Here I want to briefly highlight each of these four levels:

1. The smallest entity is typically the church in the house, usually between three and fifteen adults in size. Here people can live in real, close relationships and therefore disciple each other. Most house churches function organically – their members are in direct, natural contact and share their lives with each other.
2. The congregation (one-pastor church) is of "medium" size and typically has more than sixteen members. The congregation functions more formally and planned than an organic house church, is more organized and usually has a pastor, staff, common worship services, and different programs. This type of church often works parochially and serves members of a specific geographical area, and nearly always uses special church facilities, a "sanctuary" or "church building" serving special religious purposes. The members usually do not have a direct and natural contact with all other members anymore; they are simply too big for that, and the structure of a Sunday-morning-worship-service-oriented church does not allow too much organic fellowship of all its members.
3. The regional celebration is a really big gathering of Christians, who gather by the thousands within their city or region to document their unity in Christ, celebrate what God has done for them, and who actively expect and

prepare together for the return of Christ. Such celebrations can happen outdoors, in stadiums, conference-centers, or other large halls. For those attending these meetings, it is impossible to be in touch with all others, and most just happily drown in the crowd.

4. The Denomination is usually a national (or international) group of churches (usually level 2 churches, CAWKI) with a common bond, such as the network of all Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Mennonite or Pentecostal churches etc.

The New Testament “two-stroke model” of Church

In the New Testament we expressly find only two of these four levels of the contemporary church: the house church (level one) and the regional celebration (level three); the church “from house to house” and the citywide corporate community called “the saints throughout Achaia,” “the church in Antioch” (Acts 14:27), the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:4), which met for a while in the colonnades of Solomon in the temple. The “Church of Antioch” was nothing else than the sum total of all house churches throughout Antioch – not the sum total of all denominational congregations, since there simply were neither denominations nor congregations at that time.

The house church, who often meet daily or at least frequently (more than once a week), offer healthy family dynamics, a *private* home and true nest for each person, an organic space of the church in the community, where Christians share their lives together, are accountable to each other, and **do** but **be** the church exactly at the place where they spend most of their time: in their houses, tents, apartments, or on the roads, squares, offices, and cafés.

The regional church was the public dimension of church, where all Christians of the city or the region came together regularly or irregularly for large celebrations, mostly breathing quite an electric and grand spirit of the occasion. This might happen daily during exciting harvest times, as in Jerusalem, or spaced months apart, depending on the circumstances. The celebration was the place where the house churches could click and connect with the rest of the Body of Christ, see and become part of the big picture, find their place in the net, and experience apostolic teaching and prophetic vision. This unfailingly leads to a certain vortex-effect, making it difficult for large sections of the society not to see what is happening here. Traditionally, some of the dynamics of a regional church could be observed for a fleeting moment in one of the evangelistic rallies or large conferences most of us know.

Geographical identity

The church in the New Testament was named after its geographical location, not carrying the label of a denomination. The church of the region or city was the sum total of all house churches in a city or region. The Church of Ephesus, Antioch, Jerusalem or Corinth consisted of all born again believers of the city. Paul wrote his letters to “the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Corinthians,” the corporate identity of the Body of Christ in the various areas. If God looks at your city, what does he see? The church in the Rhine Region, Spokane, Houston, Hamburg, Taipei, Buenos Aires, and Johannesburg? Do you see what he sees?

I believe that it is very probable, as German missiologist Eckhard J. Schnabel points out in his excellent resource *Urchristliche Mission*, that Paul worked out a geographic strategy that was prophesied in Isaiah 66:19, a scripture he definitely knew by heart: "I will send some of those that are saved to the nations - to Tarshish, to Pul and Lud...to Tubal and Greece and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory" (Isa. 66:19). If Tarshish is Tarsus, Pul - Cilicia, Lud - Libya, Meschech - Mysia, Tubal - Bithynia, Javan - Greece and Macedonia and the distant Islands – from the position of a Jerusalem-centric map – speak of Malta, Sardinia, Mallorca and Spain, then Paul has simply followed a geographical outline for his very own apostolic jurisdiction, the area measured out to him for work.

This also explains, says German theologian Rainer Riesner, why Paul had planned a trip to Spain, but not to Gallia. James Scott has suggested that the apostles have divided the world according to the geographical borders of the descendants of Noah given in Gen. 10, and Paul simply had taken, so the theory goes, the "area of Japheth," whose descendants are traditionally believed to have mainly settled in Asia Minor and Europe. Whether this speculation is accurate or not, it is a fact that the early apostolic mission followed geographical and ethnic patterns, and the church that was subsequently planted naturally took on the specific geographical or ethnic identity. There is no reason to believe that the apostolic principle of regionalism has changed during the course of time, and therefore we would be well advised to carry on following God's patterns in our days too.

Overcoming Denominationalism

In the course of church history the congregations (level two) formed associations of churches called denominations that have a common "denominator." They trace themselves back to a certain teaching (the Anabaptists, the Baptists, Pentecostals), a method (Methodists, Presbyterians), a founding person (Lutherans, Calvinists, Mennonites), or to a place (Moravians, Anglicans) or they carry a confession statement in their name (catholic, orthodox, independent).

Today there are around 40,000 different denominations in the world. What would Paul say to that? Paul had heard from the Corinthians that they say: "I follow Paul; another, I follow Apollos; another, I follow Cephas; another, I follow Christ." In modern day language, this would read: "I am a reformed Christian; I am a Baptist; a Pentecostal; a Methodist." Paul's reply? "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:12-13). The obvious answer is no. Paul does not mince words for denominationally oriented Corinthians. "I follow Paul, and another I follow Apollos – are you not mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:4). In other words: Paul asks: "Are you acting according to the spirit, or according to the flesh?" Paul goes on to say that this mentality of fragmented thinking leads Christians to stand still, drink only milk and cannot digest solid food, because they are "mere infants in Christ." Then he goes on to point out the only solution for this dilemma: the cross of Christ.

At the cross of Christ there is the only real answer for the fragmented body of Christ: self-denial, the crucifixion of our pride, to let go of selfish interests and repent of the preaching of self, and humbly submit ourselves to each other. Shall the unity of the Body of Christ remain a romantic dream, a distant vision, a cry or an empty phrase of diplomatic church politics for the next 2000 years? Or are there disciples of Christ anywhere on this planet who fear God more

than men, who are radical and committed enough to obey the clear standards of the word of God and conform themselves into the apostolic architecture for which God designed them? Until today, Sunday morning is probably the most embarrassing hour for Christianity, the hour in the week when all of Christendom is blown apart by an invisible wind into all directions, Christians leaving their homes and hurrying off to their different preaching centers, often enough brushing past each other on their way. The time for this kind of Christianity is over, its hours are numbered, because it neither glorifies God, nor is it biblical, nor can it truly fulfill the apostolic tasks and mission to which God has commissioned the church today. It follows the "men who divide you, who follow their own natural instincts and do not have the Spirit" (Jude 18-19). In practical terms, there are three organizational forms of ekklesia recognizable today, and I am thankful to Anderson Williams who has conceptualized it like this: denominationalism, pastoral fraternities, apostolic networks. In my own words:

1. Denominationalism, by which I mean not the **structure** itself but the **spirit** that drives and motivates that structure. Usually denominations start as a beautiful thing: a new initiative to correct an error, to restore some lost virtue or truth. It begins as a relationship to build bridges between likeminded churches, and to establish a form of accountability, order, structural oversight, financial integrity, or a legal status in the eyes of the government. However, usually very soon, the empire strikes back, the spirit of denominationalism rises up and shows the flip side of the coin: unity becomes **uniformity**, a pressure to conform to "the system". In order to speed up things and make them easier to manage and communicate, it helps enormously if people are like-minded and accept a certain form of conformity, whereby no one should be too different. Soon the constitution and by-laws of the institution, usually stored in a headquarters and guarded by a controlling superstructure, starts to rule everything. This brings with it a certain possessiveness, and people start to feel as though they have been hired by a company for a religious job, as well as a growing immobility, whereas in the early days of a denomination, spontaneity, uniqueness or creativity was celebrated as the very fountain of the movement. A denominational paralysis sets in that starts to consider "anyone who asks too many questions," individualism, discovery, quest, creativity, or just a healthy pioneering spirit as a threat to "the system." It starts to invalidate uniqueness, disregards creativity and pioneering, people who want to do what no one has ever done before, because it is now a much higher value for the denomination that people would fit into a manageable mould.

In this sense the spirit of denominationalism takes on a socialist or even communist role, that mindset that robs people of their power to create for the sake of conforming to the system. This has an almost anti-Christian quality to it, where Satan as the anti-creator hates all uniqueness and innovation and the creation of new systems that might threaten his grip on things. In the name of protecting the old, denominationalism then starts to attack the new, just because it is new; and such denominational traditionalism thus becomes the archenemy of prophetic and apostolic ministry by default.

2. Pastoral networks and fraternities, usually the local and very loose network of CAWKI-church and ministry leaders that come together for pastors

breakfasts, prayer meetings, and sometimes rallies and conferences. This is usually a reaction to oppressive denominationalism, born out of the fear of being bought into a system, and it results in loose, friendly, but non-committal relationships that look good from a distance, but are useless to truly build something together. Such networks usually become platforms for otherwise unorganized ministers, a sort of church-club or a religious chamber of commerce, and are characterized by the absence of a strong corporate vision, typically employing even a rotating leadership model. Everyone usually attends to his own paneled house (Haggai 1) and is sucked into the programs of his church or his or her ministry, super-busy to raise, establish and promote structures of stand-alone, independent churches and ministries. Inevitably, most of those who do this fail to have the time or energy to truly do something about “building the house of God together,” because everyone has to run back to his own little office and extinguish - or light - his own little fires, depending on the season. Such groups usually talk of unity, but by their very spirit and structure prevent it. These are usually the groups that have taken the so-called City-Reaching agendas, unity issues or transformational agendas under their wings, but their very set-up and mindset typically buries anything substantial that would ever happen. Because if something truly would happen, the entire loose and non-committal set-up would need to change drastically – and that is exactly what everyone in such a situation wants to avoid like the plague, mainly for financial and accountability reasons, where running one’s own business just seems so much safer.

In this regard, such pastoral networks have two possible futures. Either they mature, make a very deliberate choice based on the Kingdom principle of apostolic and prophetic foundations, intentionally invite the regionally available apostles and prophets to do their unique work and so develop into a healthy apostolic framework, or they carry the potential of becoming another very direct threat and obstacle to apostolic and prophetic developments. This almost becomes humorous: with apostolic reformation and citywide transformation written all over their flags, such groups literally *prevent* the emergence of an apostolic church. This is sometimes difficult to spot, because many such fraternities seem to use the right language, have all the catchy phrases, have invited the right speakers and done conferences on unity and city reaching, have all the right hugs and kisses, coffee and prayer meetings, but their entire set-up and DNA screams, in our faces, of individualism, non-commitment, market-drivenness and, if we are truly honest, rebellion against God and his building principles.

3. Apostolic networks. Such networks are usually established by the foundational ministries of apostolic and prophetic people in a given jurisdiction, usually of a regional nature, sometimes, however, focusing on discipling a dispersed people group like the Gypsies, Nomads or other migrating people or even age-groups. These networks, working in synergy with the other equipping ministries like the evangelists, pastors, deacons and teachers, clearly define apostolic and prophetic callings, commit themselves to God and each other, and work towards establishing the apostolic architecture of ekklesia until their region is filled. Here the gardeners of God have matched with their respective garden and started working.

If all of this is the case, then there is a huge change of structure needed, a structural reformation that has to take place.

Changing the Tracks: from 2/4 to 1/3

I previously stated that biblically ekklesia is at home on two levels, one and three. In another picture we could say that Church is like a train running on two rails forming one track: rail one (the house) and rail three (the city or region). This is where Christian loyalty and accountability is expressed most healthily, which can also be seen by the fact that money is collected on those very levels. Today most churches have sought their identity on level two (the one-pastor-congregation) and level four (a special denomination). Most Christians are so taken up with their own set of programs and activities within their church (level 2) plus the occasional involvement through denominational agendas, that they are, in practice, effectively isolated from the rest of the body of Christ in a city or region. Many simply cannot afford to fellowship with Christians in their own neighborhood, because the denominational churches to which they all belong run separate programs and effectively create parallel universes they feel obliged to stick with. The result is nothing short of institutionalized inefficiency and the death of synergy. Many also suffer from a drastic kind of spiritual malnutrition through long years of focusing on a small fraction of the large church of God. As a result, they develop an unhealthy and tribal clan mentality and potentially even show symptoms of spiritual incest - plus they might well develop a feeling of superiority similar to the Corinthians of old. They might feel "privileged" to be watching over a unique spiritual heritage or tradition, or feel outstanding because of specially treasured insights, experiences, or special alliances with extraordinary servants of God.

The good news is, however, that God is changing this set-up, and many Christians – especially those of the younger generations - simply no longer accept this as an unchangeable fact of church life. They instinctively know that something is very wrong with the denominational systems of "two by four;" and that God never created church to be that way. If it is the hand of humans that did it, it is legitimate to allow God's hand to undo it again and let the great restorer of truth, health, and life also restore his own body. It is not only globalization that drives Christians to look beyond their boxes and to seek fellowship with other Christians in their region and neighborhood, who long to share lives locally and celebrate together in citywide celebrations. It is God's Spirit who is doing an extraordinary thing in our time that will bring us back to life, unity and apostolic efficiency - that which humans have so utterly man-handled and divided.

Time for a prophetic-apostolic fusion

There was a time when I believed that we will see a fusion of Christians – groups and whole churches – who recognize that they have the same spiritual genetic code, and who would like to live and work much more closely together in their neighborhood and city or region, because they feel this is what the Lord wants them to do. In a growing number of cities and regions of the world, many churches already see that what they share is infinitely more than that which seems to have divided them in the past. They have a powerful common denominator, a common vision, very similar values, and the same heartbeat - because they quite simply have the same Lord.

At times, God seems to be luring, enticing, and testing their theoretical or perceived unity by offering them a really big building, auditorium or ground, a

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modern day version of “Solomon’s porch” of the early Church in Jerusalem, so that there will be a place to convene as the regional church.

In many nations, however, I have witnessed such unity projects ending in disaster. Various traditional churches attempt to own and run a common facility, but it usually ends up with one of the larger traditional churches taking charge and owning the big place, initially renting it out to other churches, but soon discovering that things get done so much more efficiently “if we just run the whole thing.” The corporate business culture and set-up of a CAWKI saying it wants to achieve apostolic ends becomes the main hindrance and the very obstacle to seeing it achieved. This is why I have little faith left for such projects to be initiated by ministry leaders firmly established in CAWKI. I am convinced that true unity under the headship of Christ requires all of us to wholeheartedly embrace Church As God Wants It (CAGWI), including the Kingdom principle of apostolic and prophetic foundation laying. “If the kernel of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, it will remain alone. If it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). Without a serious dying to self, where the kernel of the wheat of CAWKI falls into the ground and dies, there will be no seeds that truly produce the unity of an apostolic church, conformed not to denominational traditions, but to the building patterns and blueprint of God, and filling, saturating, and invading every space and matrix of the entire society in their respective regions and cities with the presence of God.

The results will be striking:

- We will more fully use the God-given gift potentials. Everyone will be able to work within the exact range of his gifting, calling, and anointing (like Eph. 4:11), understanding that they do not have to be “everything to everybody.” Many gifted Christians are literally divided by their “ministries.” This deadlock, as well as denominational glass walls which have hindered true cross-fertilization and cooperation long enough, would tumble down. The constant clash of available dates and the collision of separate interests would be dramatically reduced, since those serving full time will stop living in their own small world driven only by their own set of agendas, programs – and endless appointments.
- A new chapter of local church history would start and might well become a prophetic model for other areas and cities.
- Christianity, which has been divided into ineffective small fractions would gain a dramatically higher “visibility” and a voice in the city which would be difficult to ignore.
- Through the pooling of resources on the city level there will be an immediate increase in the quality level of ministry in areas like children’s ministry or biblical teaching.
- “Seek first the kingdom of God” – not building up your own church, ministry or empire, would be a common denominator and foundational value of everyone involved.
- The use of city-level buildings/auditoriums could easily be financed together, because ten or twenty medium-sized halls/church buildings are more costly to maintain than one rather big auditorium.
- Discipleship, multiplication, and integration of new believers could happen in the house churches on the neighborhood and village level using citywide or regional resources.

- Sunday morning preaching tourism will be reduced greatly, saving money (fuel!), time and embarrassment.
- More effective church discipline will be possible: black sheep can be disciplined on a regional level much more efficiently and will find it increasingly difficult to hop churches without changing their lives. This will, in a healthy way, increase the fear of God and counteract the lifestyle of spiritual licentiousness of “loose cannon” believers just not wanting to obey God.
- By setting up an ongoing regional dialogue, an apostolic council of “apostles and elders” can again function accurately, because the proximity would allow for quickly getting together for special occasions, reports, or ongoing conflict resolution. As there will be always problems and new challenges facing the ekklesia, we will have a group of people ready to face these issues whenever they arise, and deal with them accordingly.
- By setting up apostolic finance structures, where again the main cash flow from the harvest goes to the “feet of the apostles” who work together with the deacons, we will again be able “to put our money where our mouth is” and channel the financial streams again in apostolic directions, as done by the early church.

To summarize this chapter: the ekklesia is both a political Kingdom structure as well as the family of God. As in every Kingdom, there is a private and a public sector. The private sector is made up of flat, extended spiritual families structured in regional networks of growing and multiplying missional house churches. The public sector ekklesia, as a parliament of God’s Kingdom, was started by Jesus, and is growing to fill the earth like the mountain in Daniel’s vision. As the word “mountain” often symbolizes government (as in Isa 2:2), this will not be an underground entity – like house churches – forever. Reaching a certain critical mass, it will raise its head and start to redefine, influence, change and upgrade life in region after region by invading all aspects of private and public life with the essence, power and values of the Kingdom, until the yeast of the Kingdom has worked itself completely through the entire matrix of the systems of this world.

God will give the growth to this organically, from within, following growth patterns that respect spiritual age, maturity, skill levels, and faith and jurisdictions, areas of responsibilities that God is measuring out to his people. It is not being organized by artificial scaffoldings imported from the worlds of religion and business. As in the vision I had in Toronto about God rearranging his army, God has a very specific place reserved for each disciple in his army, an exact spot where he should be and act, and even with whom to connect, and when to do so.

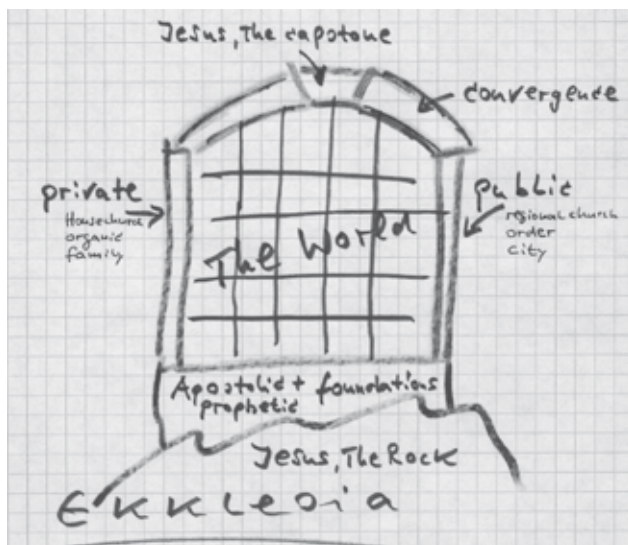
Within the framework of the Kingdom of God, the ekklesia is built on the rock, Jesus Christ himself, the “living stone” (1 Pet 2:1-4). Upon this rock stands “the foundation of apostles and prophets” upon which the church is established (Eph. 2:20), and on top of that foundation we could describe the church, the “temple made of living stones” (1 Pet 2) as having two pillars, the private and the public. To crown it, the last stone installed in this architecture is the capstone, the triangularly shaped stone that holds everything in arches together, and without which the entire structure would crumble.

This is why Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the author and perfecter of our faith. One of the central pieces of furniture in house churches are the tables – where the family meets and eats. And in the absence of Solomon’s Temple court, the place where in the days of the early church, thousands of Christians came together in Jerusalem, other modern venues are available today. For example: there are the temples built for the god of football – stadiums! This is probably the only piece of architecture that has the capacity necessary for when the church grows out of its present denominational factions and the costly luxury of independence from each other. She will be called together by mature spiritual fathers and mothers of the region and come together as one body from time to time. You never believed that stadiums were built for football in the first place anyway, did you?

Ekklesia on a napkin

Imagine that we both are sitting and talking about this in a restaurant. I would probably try to draw a little sketch, a rough draft on a napkin about the general architecture of ekklesia that, with my hopeless drawing skills, would look like this:

Left pillar
House churches
tables
small
private
organic
family



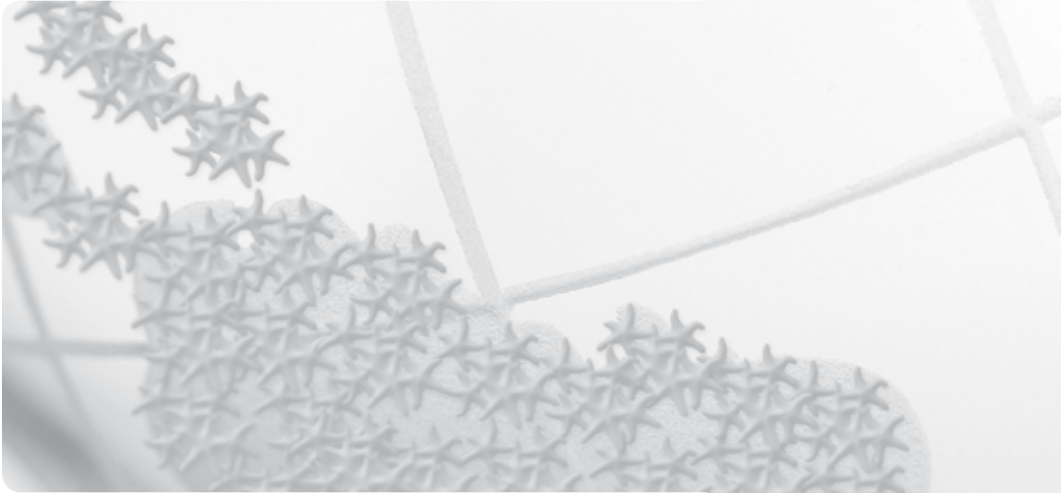
Right pillar
regional church
stadiums
large
public
order
city

In the Middle

The world, representing the entire matrix of society (education, health, business, politics, media etc) which needs to be delivered from behind its bars

The ekklesia is that part of the Kingdom of God that includes humans. It includes both Kingdom families as well as Kingdom politicians, the private and public dimensions of Kingdom life. The ekklesia is not something humans can build on their own. And as the ekklesia is designed by God to make a statement to the demonic realm that watches it with unmerciful scrutiny, what kind of people would God invite to be his collaborators and builders in such a vital enterprise?





15 Apostles – The Master Builders of God

How do you recognize an apostle when you see one?
You don't.

15 Apostles – The Master Builders of God

After having looked into apostolic architecture, the blueprint issue, the nature of the Empire of God and finally the ekklesia, the expression of the rule of God over humans here on earth, let us now come to a core question: What, then, is an Apostle? In many ways, this will be the “meat” of this book, the subject that I believe will be vital to capture for a healthy development of the ekklesia in the future.

Art Katz introduces the subject in his book *Apostolic Foundations* like this: “I have a very special respect for the word apostolic. To lose its meaning threatens the loss of the faith itself. It is an ultimate word, that needs to be resuscitated and delivered of its pale descriptions and meanings that religious people gave to it, or we will not have a church worthy of that word. It is a word that has rusted and must be restored - which will cost us a hefty price. And: not we will find its meaning, *it will find us*. An apostolic church is a band of people, whose central motive and impetus for life is only one thing: a radical and total jealousy for the glory of God. As we rediscover this, may something come into our spirit and the marrow of our being that henceforth will never let you go.”

The Greek root of the word apostolic is *apostolos* and means *the sent one*. That which has not been truly sent by God will not achieve the purpose for which it was sent. How sent is the church we have come to know? How sent is what we engage ourselves in today? How apostolic is it? If we look at the fruit of what churches and mission agencies have been doing over the past decades and centuries, what do we see that truly carries the handwriting of God and has left indelible marks in the sands of history? And even what we see with our natural eyes – numbers, figures, names, budgets, events – does it count? Is not the apostolic, like most things of God, a reality invisible to the naked eye trained to look at the world as its model?

Mustn't we therefore see in the spirit, not in the flesh, something that no flesh and blood could reveal? Only by the Father in Heaven would this revelation be given to whomever the Father in heaven desires - just like the nature of his very own son, Jesus, the original apostle, whose true identity was finally revealed by God to Peter (Matt. 16:17).

Visiting a few of my friends in Cairo, Egypt, I will never forget popping into the large church hall of Kasr El Dubara Church and listening on to a seminar on leadership by a fairly well known Christian author from England. He was giving a lesson on 30 identifying factors of a Christian leader. A Christian leader should pray for hours, never lie, be impeccable, transparent, humble, and the list went on and on. With each new item on his list I could see the heads of the audience lower an almost unperceivable notch. In effect, he lifted the bar so high, to such a standard, that for all of us lesser beings in the room this seemed completely out of reach. The picture was so perfect that I could read the body language of my peer attendees as: I don't qualify, and if it is that complex, I should give up even trying, right now. Actually, because of our time as a family living in England, I am fairly well acquainted and consider myself somewhat

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initiated in black English humor; and so I listened on, dead sure the speaker would break out in a big laugh at some point saying: "No, no, no, I am joking, that's the German version, a perfectionist engineer's view of things." But that laugh somehow never came, and, after dutifully jotting down 30 lines, many left at the end of the seminar with a deep sigh.

This story illustrates how we usually do the very same thing when we address the question of "who is an apostle." And, again, Germans have probably set the highest standards not only in engineering cars like Audi and Mercedes, but also in having an impeccable list of what exactly are the 30 or 60 qualifications for true biblical apostolic ministry. And if ever someone should find only one item on the list to be missing or in doubt, that person, we Germans would be 100% sure, should be considered a false apostle.

Plus, in the absence of a tangible apostolic ministry in the church (or should I say "in the absence of the church from the ministry of the apostles?"), many have developed "an apostle's complex," where the absent hero in our colorful imaginations has taken on almost messianic forms and spiritual superman dimensions. Do not just chuckle and forget that this was exactly why the Pharisees and Sadducees, the theological experts of their days, did not recognize the apostle of all apostles, Jesus, walking among them, even as he had sat down with them to eat fish in their own houses. Their expectations had risen into the surreal, into utopia, blocking out their recognition of the very one they said they were dying to receive, even when he was sitting on their carpet sipping tea! Their contorted standards were the problem, not Jesus.

David Hogan, a firebrand Texan evangelist working in Mexico told us once that no one in his network would ever be able to be an elder without having raised someone personally from the dead. I respect Hogan's passion and can understand his personality, and I hear with a thrill his reports that more than 400 persons have so far been resurrected from the dead in the years of his ministry. But the standards for leadership he sets are additions, not accurate biblical requirements. This does not mean that God will not use him. He does, in ways I sometimes wish God would many others as well.

In another instance, I was once talking to a Christian lady in Switzerland who explained to me in all seriousness that all those whom she knows who feel they have an apostolic role absolutely cannot, never, ever, be apostolic, because they are slightly overweight. "How can there be an apostle with a belly?" she exclaimed, technically placing an extra-biblical insight as a measuring rod on a very crucial concept. However, in retrospect, I think she has a point, although the issue may have less to do with apostleship, than with how Christian leaders deal with loneliness, frustration, rejection, or with acceptance and the pampering that goes with it, all those constant invitations for special meals all the time, especially in countries where the culture says it's impolite not to finish your plate...

Let's face it, there is no such man on the planet who can fulfill all those human expectations, or even all the biblical "qualifications" that expectation dictates or people say "a real apostle" should have.

Let's have a look at some of these claims that are out there: An apostle should have personally seen Jesus and have been a witness of his suffering; an apostle should raise the dead, drive out demons, plant churches, strike folks

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with blindness, if necessary, write heavy letters, his handkerchiefs should heal the sick, as well as his shadow, he should have all the answers, bring peace to the churches that fight, oversee the churches, give structure, empower everybody, impart gifts, kick out heretics, give government, lead the church out of bondage, receive fresh revelation directly from God, must have been beaten and persecuted, move in and out with Kings, walk through walls like Peter, walk on water (also Peter), be constantly on the move (like Paul), pray more than everybody else, preach on any subject anytime anywhere without notes, and so on.

In other words: he is an updated version of Jesus, Paul, Peter and John, all morphed together into one superpower, Terminator, Hollywood sized apostle, who can do what even God cannot – or better would not - do. With all his authority, though sinless and full of the power of the Holy Spirit, even Jesus faced limitations. In some areas he could hardly heal – because of the unbelief of those who lived in certain towns. He had a specific brief, a life's mission that made perfect sense as we look at the overall purposes of God. This is what we should expect from today's apostolic people, too. They will all be smaller than we expect, limited, unique, with various briefs. And all apostles start small. They start as apostolic babies, making mistakes, going through testing and desert times in their life, slowly maturing as they go, until they reach a level of maturity that allows God to call them into action.

How do you recognize an Apostle when you see one?

The quick answer is: *you don't*. As Jesus, the very apostle and high priest of God, stepped into this world, these are the words that describe the circumstances: "Though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him" (John 1:10). "He came to his own, but his own did not receive him" (1:11). John said to the religious people of his days: "Among you stands one you do not know" (1:26). Even John the Baptist admits: If it were not for the fact that he had been specifically been pointed out to me, I would have missed him. God told me (1: 33). He was, as Peter writes, the Living Stone, "rejected by men but chosen by God" (1 Pet 2:4), a stone "that builders reject" has become the capstone.

Jesus later said at a meal in the house of Pharisees, a theological elite group that was supposed to know about the One who is to be sent by God: "God in his wisdom said: I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute" (Luke 11:48). So if Jesus himself, who (unlike other humans after him) was expected, prophesied, his birthplace foretold and known, announced by a star and angels, was not recognized, not received, almost overlooked, and rejected even by the prophetic and theological elite of his day, what can or should we expect today? How should we handle the question of how to recognize apostles?

One simple way would be to turn our typical expectation patterns completely around and expect the unexpected, look for what no one looks for. Take, for instance, today's prophetic and theological elite, those well known Christian leaders that regularly appear on the platforms of the current and typically un-apostolic mainstream church, those in power and in the limelight, and ask them: who are the top five church rejects out there? Of all those names out there, in your esteemed opinion, who surely can't, won't, and shouldn't be, of

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all people, apostolic? Their answers may give us excellent clues. Or to be a little bit more graphic: if one of the ways established religion treats true prophets and apostles is to have stones thrown at them, as Jesus says, let us look for heaps of stones! It obviously will never be a fool-proof way to spot healthy apostles or prophets, but the chances are high that if we see a leg protruding from under a heap of stones thrown by well-meaning, "expert" Christians with a name, and we pull on this leg, a person with prophetic or apostolic character and calling might emerge.

The reason for the default, typical non-recognition of the sent ones of God – his prophets and apostles – has always been religious pride, the blindness that comes with the conviction that one is definitely already in the center of the religious world, in the right church, the right denomination, safe in right doctrine or in the shadow of a great religious name. If God is God, he just cannot and would not afford to ignore, bypass, and do anything significant without - us! That is just incomprehensible, unthinkable. Well, why? Only pride and ignorance would think that way, fueled by the unspoken fear of being bypassed and rejected by God. So, if fear and pride blind our eyes to see the things of God accurately, let us look in faith and humility. "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, the lowly and despised things, so that no one can boast" (1 Cor. 12:27-28). If the Church does not recognize the prophetic and apostolic, it has begun to see and act like the world, think like the world, and judge like the world. This worldly vision prohibits them from seeing the things of God the way God sees them, and by default they miss the picture. We should "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, because what is seen is temporary, what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18), writes Paul.

Sometimes I feel it is part of my own ministry to be in certain countries and simply find those who are apostolic. In the year 2000 I was visiting the African country of Uganda, which had gone through a tremendous time of turmoil during the dictatorial regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Healthy, prophetic, and passionate prayer movements had sprung up and began to minister with clarity and power. The country had experienced a tremendous turnaround, with repentance and reconciliation, as the prophetic was allowed to be on the stage for a while. Religious tourists from the West were already swarming the place, having seen videos and heard revival reports, looking for spiritual nuggets to take home.

In the middle of this hubbub, I was devastated and perplexed, and cried out to God: "Where, God, are your master builders, the apostles? I have not found a single one!" Then one Sunday I was invited by my hosts to visit a traditional church in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, and prepared myself to endure a traditional church service. And it started just exactly the way I had feared. The pastor went over the top to explain in detail why he needs all the money of the members to build a bigger building now. If anyone knows me – and reading this book you would now understand – this was possibly one of the worst and most boring situations that I would care to find myself in. In the middle of this, God surprisingly spoke to my spirit and said: "Watch the one making the announcements. He is an apostolic man. Go to him afterwards, give him your book, and tell him he is normal!" And sure enough, a man I would not even

have noticed stepped up just to make a few announcements, said a few words, and I knew in my spirit: "Yes, that's the true frequency, this man is apostolic!" I went up to him afterwards, and we have been meeting since then, to find out that yes, absolutely, he was an apostle being prepared by God for his work. He had been on the brink of thinking he was crazy, because he just so absolutely did not fit in the religious picture. Someone needed to come all the way from Germany to tell him he is normal.

In what state is a church, that desperately needs the apostolic ministry, and all it does is to allow the only apostolic man around to make announcements about the parking lot? It makes me weep.

Apostolic Fruits

Let us move on now to discover the nature of apostolic ministry. What is the core and essence of it, what is it about? I am sure many of us have gone through extensive Bible teaching on issues like this before, and it may or may not have helped. I would like to address this issue from the practical side, symptomatically, and look at the *fruits* of the apostolic ministry. After all, the Bible says: "You shall know them by their fruits." I am not at all saying that all of these fruits must be evident in anyone who might be apostolic, but that these are the things that typically are the outcome of apostolic ministry – which often enough is a corporate venture anyhow, that is, the sum total of ministry done by "Barnabas and Paul, Peter and the Eleven," by a group or team rather than a one man show. Looking at individuals, for stars, gurus, and top names, is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Each one of us only knows in part, and typically has just one piece of the puzzle to offer. But, the right piece in the right place at the right time in connection with the other right pieces is powerful. What follows are twelve symptoms and fruits of biblical, valid, and healthy apostolic ministry.

1) The Impossible is Possible

God is impossible for humans. His thoughts are as high as the heavens are above the earth, his nature incomprehensible, so we might as well give up trying to understand him with our human minds. His plans for mankind are absolutely "beyond us," and so the natural reaction of the human mind is always: "No way; that's not possible!" Our human responses to God are usually spiritual versions of the grave statement of Lord Kelvin, President of the Royal Society (1895): "Machines that are heavier than air can not possibly fly;" or, quoting Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, (1899): "Everything that can be invented already has been invented." And so, through the entire history of God with man, we always had two camps: one, the democratic majority that would see, like in the story of the twelve spies Moses sent out into the promised land, the fortified cities, the giants and remember the onions of Egypt; and two, the other camp, Joshua and Caleb, "on whom there was another spirit," who saw all this - plus God! Jesus, the apostle, saw what God saw: the possibility of healings, conversions, movements, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, and the discipling of the entire planet.

Apostles specialize in the impossible; what they bring to this word is the faith, message and challenge that the impossible is absolutely possible. However, they bring one more thing: the clarion call for the practical preparations

for the impossible to happen. They start cutting trees for a ship that is build on dry land which will not float for another 120 years – yet will absolutely save the planet. They dig ditches in the desert to be filled with water, without a cloud on the horizon. We can easily say, with God, anything is possible. However, the apostolic contribution to this is to start packing, arranging, organizing, and preparing for the time when the seemingly impossible has started to happen. By this, they create faith and impart vision, lay down a foundation of healthy excitement and expectancy, and open up a space for the impossible to be considered possible by others. Just like a visionary architect, an apostle can receive a plan from God and go about implementing it. He does not see what is, but what will be, and is empowered with the ability to mobilize anything necessary to complete the vision he has laid hold of.

2) Apostles are Gardeners: they retake, tend and defend the Garden

God created the garden as the meeting point and interface between himself and mankind, the place where humans walk with God. Men invented the city, initially in rebellion against God, in order to make a name for themselves, and out of fear of neighboring tribes.

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and gave them two main tasks: “To work it and defend it” (Gen 2:15). This double task, which Adam felt unable to do alone and looked for a helper, included “husbandry” – making sure everything grows according to its maker, the protection of the forbidden things (the two trees), and the naming of animals. The second task was a defensive one: to protect the garden from outside threats. The Hebrew word *schamar* does not mean “to take care,” like rendered in many translations, but has a much more active, almost military meaning. *Schamar* means to defend, to protect, to guard. The cherubim of God guard (*schamar*) the garden and the tree of life against human intruders with flaming swords (Gen 3:24); the Levites are charged to “guard the gates” (*schamar*; Neh. 13:22), and Joshua, in the vision of the prophet Zechariah, was challenged to guard the commandments of God (*schamar*; Zech 3:7).

The enemy, against whom Adam and Eve were to defend the garden, was quite obviously no one else than Satan and his demons, not any of the (then) 100% benign animals or other humans who at this point did not yet exist on earth. Adam and Eve did fine in task No. 1, but failed terribly in task No. 2. Instead of ruling out the demonic, they yielded to the satanic wit of doubt and seduction, and they acted against the express decree of God, taking fruit from the forbidden tree in order to “be like God.” This was an act of faith based on the word of Satan, and that was how Satan gained dominion over men.

One of the many devastating consequences of this Fall was that the crucial order of land-rights was revised. God had given Adam and Eve basically three rights in the garden: the right of land or the title deed for Eden, secondly, the right to water, and thirdly, the right to harvest the land and eat of its fruit. This constitutes richness, because the amazing power of multiplying seeds of God’s creation was for them to enjoy. Knowing that these three things – **land rights, water rights and harvesting rights** - would be central to man’s existence with God, this is exactly where Satan attacked – and won. Before the fall, Satan and his demons were at the bottom of the list, powerless and landless – because nobody obeyed them. But just exactly as the Kingdom of God grows by

humans' pledging their allegiance to God, the dominion of Satan is extended by humans agreeing with Satanic values, wisdom and information. As they place themselves under the directives of Satan and obey what he says, they, and whatever they have – money, power, land – fall into the jurisdiction of Satan.

Let me illustrate the legal shift in rights in this table below. Note that basically after the fall, Satan exchanged places with humans, took their legal place, and the exclusive rights God had given humans, Satan now claims as his own:

Landrights	Before the Fall	After the Fall
Position 1	God, the creator, owns it all and leases it out to	God still owns it all but leases it out to
Position 2	Adam and Eve, the landlords	Satan, who gives it to
Position 3	Landless: Satan and his demons	"whomever he wants"

In the discussion between Jesus and Lucifer during the time of temptation in the wilderness, "the devil led Jesus to a high place and, in an instant, he showed him all the Kingdoms of the earth. And he said to him: I will give you all their authority and splendor, *for it has been given to me, and I give it to anyone I want*. Worship me, and it is all yours" (Luke 4:5-7). Jesus does not contradict this far-reaching statement, and silently consented to its legal implications. Satan, at the Fall of Man, had gained not only ownership over the land and had become spiritual landlord, but had also gained the legal right before the throne of God to temporarily lease it out to people he likes. The result of this was that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

As Adam and Eve had been cast out of the garden, they had become squatters, people without land rights, who toiled with sweat to make a living. This was even aggravated by the fact that sin has the power to stain land, especially "the blood that cries out to God from the ground" (Gen 4:10). In other words: as the fall of man had sealed the initial deal between God and Satan, namely that Satan would inherit the land rights, water rights, and harvesting rights from man, the sins of man, committed on his ground, strengthened and empowered Satan's claims even more, as injustice cried out to God from the ground. Land itself can become corrupted (Gen 6:11.12). This is why land that is toxic and corrupted with sin has to be cleansed before it can be used for God's purposes, as we see in the case of Israel taking possession of its promised land under Joshua and Caleb.

God said to Cain: "When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a soil-less wanderer on the earth" (Gen 4:16), "driven from the ground" (4:11). Later God realized that the evil in the world had taken over, and he decided to wipe out mankind through the flood, making a fresh start, however, with the family of Noah, "a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time." And, strikingly, the first thing that God says about Noah as he came out from the ark and stepped onto a cleansed earth was: "Noah, *a man of the soil*, proceeded to plant a vineyard" (Gen 9:20). The soil is back in the hands of men! In other words, God allowed a fresh start. Noah had been given land and obviously the right to enjoy the fruits of the land, so much so, that one evening Noah became drunk with wine, which could rather be a sign of victory (we have won back the harvest rights!) than defeat (drinking one too many).

As salvation history moves on, this is why it was so crucial (and an amazing slap in the face for Satan, who owned all the land) that God started to breach the system and to give a beachhead of land back into the hands of mankind in the person of Abraham. He said to him: "Go to the land I will show you. To your offspring I will give this land" (Gen 12:1.7). This was a revolutionary statement of God, giving back a land title to someone who had been found to be just and righteous, the very reason that Abraham was given the land. God gave him "well-watered land," and repeatedly assured him: "All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. Go walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (Gen 13:14-17). To hammer home the point, God repeated this statement four more times (15:7-8; 15:18; 17:8; 26:3, to Isaac).

This is such a revolutionary time in the history of salvation, that mankind cannot be told often enough the implications of the fact that God overrides Satan's general rule of the earth and gives Abraham –and Israel in him - an *Erez Israel*, a promised land. More than that: after Abraham had been tested for his fear of God, his loyalty and motives by his readiness to sacrifice Isaac, God called out to him twice after the sacrificial worship time on Mount Moriah, and finally made this fascinating statement: "I swear by myself, that your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, for you have obeyed me" (Gen 22:15-18).

God basically says to Abram: You are Abraham, and on this rock I will build my Kingdom, just in a similar context that Jesus said to Simon: "You are Peter, and on this rock will I build my church." Humans in their *approved* status of God, *after testing* (note the change of names God gives in this context), are becoming the apostolic foundations for the Kingdom purposes of God. On the foundation of Abrahamic faith, God is going to later establish a physical Kingdom in Israel, and on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus is building his church (Eph. 2:20; Matt. 16:18).

Allocation of Promised Land

When God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land under Joshua and Caleb, the part of land taken by each tribe of Israel was carefully prescribed by God; the allocation process was not at random, but followed exact geographic descriptions. As natural borders for these settling grounds, God typically chose rivers, mountains, the sea, and desert; so the map of Canaan from the perspective of the various land divisions looked like a patchwork of cloth fitting into each other like a huge puzzle. Each piece of land was to be taken individually, and it was OK for the tribes to help each other in land-taking. It followed a simple pattern: God gives, but mankind must take. This included, in those days, ethnic cleansing, and only then settling down. Israel was not really thorough in all this, and did not take these prescriptions of allotment by God very seriously. God had told them in Exodus 33:2: "I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites." And, in Exodus 34:24: "For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God."

The Israelites did not understand that there is a good reason for this: the spiritual cleansing of the land from the defilement of sin, the corruption of the soil that results from pagan idolatry and the spilling of unjust blood. God was very particular about this: "You shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images, and demolish all their high places; But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live"(Numbers 33:52 & 55).

However, there were always those who simply did not obey God, no matter what: "They did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers" (Joshua 16:10).

Sometimes Israel had to do battle with militarily advanced enemies: "The hill country shall be yours. For though it is a forest, you shall clear it, and to its farthest borders it shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots of iron and though they are strong" (Joshua 17:18). And there were incidents where they were only partially successful: "Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots" (Judges 1:19).

The Bible meticulously lists the failures of the tribes to drive out the inhabitants, underlining the importance of that oversight. Here is a taste of this: "The sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob. Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath."

These uncleared pockets of resistance became later truly "pricks and thorns" for Israel, as God had told to Moses: "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides" (Num. 33:55; see also Deut. 7). It is interesting that three areas in particular that Israel chose not to clean up stick out in this: "Gaza, Gath, and Asdod" (Joshua 11:22). Simson had his eyes gouged out and was taken to **Gaza** (Judges 16:21). He literally had experienced Gaza to be a prick to his eyes, and, Gaza being what it is to Israel up until today, this prophecy of God has definitely been fulfilled. In 1 Samuel 5, we read about the ark of God being taken into the temple of Dagon in **Ashdod**, and as Israel, under Saul, was faced with the Philistine army, Goliath of **Gath** slandered the name of God, being a prick and thorn in Israel's side (1. Sam 17:4).

Nations Tied to Israel

One of the spiritual laws of the created world is that God, the lover of Israel, has created the world in direct connection with Israel as its center— with practical consequences for the entire world. Not only has God promised to Abraham and his descendants "to bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you" (Gen 12:3), but he considers everything north of Israel North, east of Israel

East, west of Israel West and south of Israel South. On God's map of the world, Israel is at the center.

How did it come about that the nations were dispersed across the face of the earth the way they are now? Beginning in Babylon, a great migration of people started moving into all different directions, until they found the areas, valleys, and spots where they started their original settlement.

In Genesis 10:25 we find a certain Peleg (meaning division), because "in his time the earth was divided." I find it believable that after the flood, great tectonic shifts let the continental shelves drift apart far faster than the hundreds of millions of years that some of today's scientists assume. Ruling out a global flood – against growing evidence otherwise – they extrapolate the extremely slow movements of today's continental shelves into the past. So chances are that it was during the time of Peleg that Latin America, originally attached directly to West Africa, withdrew, and the original vast landmass of one gigantic continent unfolded into the earth as we know it today.

About the sons of Javan, son of Japheth, son of Noah, Genesis says: "From these, the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations" (Gen. 10:5). Deut. 32:8 says: "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the peoples **according to the number of the sons of Israel!**"

In Acts 17:26.27 Paul explains: "From one man, God made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; **and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.** God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him." The word *nations* (Greek: *ethne*) does not mean our modern nation states, but refers to ethnic people groups and their settling grounds after the great migration times were over. Today's modern national state or country borders, containing a great mix of various people groups, are hardly the result of God establishing these nations. This is only what our nationalistic feelings might make us believe. And for many who do not know how to find refuge, identity, security, and destiny in God, it is their nation, in absence of a personally known God the largest entity familiar to them, that is giving them cheaper and much less eternal versions of identity, security, and destiny that only God could give. The enhanced version of this, Nationalism, a form of collective egoism and we-are-better-than-them-ness, can quickly border on idolatry, replacing God in heaven with our nation on earth taking the place of God, violating the first commandment: you shall not have other gods before me.

We have to remember that, more often than not, today's political borders are a result of centuries of strife, war, religious fights, diplomatic marriages, political deals, and colonial bickering over turf like the infamous Berlin-Congo Conference in 1884, where twelve European Nations cut up Africa like a cake and distributed it among each other for colonial purposes, cutting with the unnaturally straight lines of a ruler used on a drawing table through natural tribal areas and traditional ethnic homelands alike, causing artificial separations among the people groups and their turf, which led to wars and acts of ethnic clashes until this very day. This is hardly an act of God, but the world fragmented according to man. But my point here is this: it is not an accident that we live where we live. God had a redemptive purpose with creating geography, and as we recognize and respect that, we will be able to understand the geographic dimension –

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and build apostolic Kingdom architecture according to the patterns of God, not man.

Apostolic Jurisdictions

Just like playing football without a football field can be a lot of fun – but does not really count under FIFA regulations - being involved with Jesus in building his ekklesia without respecting the proper boundaries God has designed for that can be an enterprise in futility. This is God's building project, after all. Jesus did not say he is building **our** ekklesia, but his. And therefore, proper and legitimate building will happen in accordance with the architectural rules that govern this process. Jesus had a very clear understanding of the regional. Although he had a global mission in mind, Jesus, looking for world-class leadership, recruited all his twelve disciples not from all over Israel, as you might have expected, but from the small region of Galilee, an economically backward region of fishermen and peasants. As if he wanted to say: to change the world, you don't need the elite of this world from the top universities and the metropolitan hotbeds of humanity, but in every area of the world, no matter how remote and backward it is, you can find men and women of the caliber who can turn the world upside down. Even after the resurrection, the group of disciples are seen and addressed by the angels of God as "men of Galilee" (Acts 1:11).

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Jesus had a **regionally focused** ministry: his recruitment and early ministry happened in Galilee, and only later did he tour most of Israel. In starting to delegate his mission to his disciples, Jesus made a clear distinction between regions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or any town of the Samaritans" (Matt. 10:5,6), but stick to Israel. In Acts 1, he lined up a geographical succession of mission fields: "Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The development of the ekklesia followed geographical, territorial patterns: "The church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria grew in numbers" (Acts 9:31). Later the church spread throughout the areas of Antioch, and became known as "the church at Antioch" (Acts 13:1). Other areas the Bible mentions are Iconium, Lystra, Pamphylia, Cyprus, Cyrene, Phoenicia, Ephesus, and Pisidia. In later apostolic missions, Paul is called to Macedonia, speaks of work in Illyricum, modern day Albania, and has plans to go to Rome and Spain. Paul reports they were denied entry by the Spirit of Jesus in Mysia and Bithynia (Acts 16:7). In other words: there are areas that are off limits, for reasons that are not always explained to humans. We cannot go where we want to go and do apostolic work at our own will and whim wherever we feel, but we have to learn to respect the territoriality of God's plans.

Paul later explains to the Corinthians the geographical dimension of his apostolic ministry when he writes: "We will not boast beyond proper limits (Greek: **metron**; meaning measure, border), but will confine our boasting to the field (Greek: **kanon**; limits, area, sphere) God has assigned to us (literally: meted out to us), a field that reaches even to you... We do not go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work done in another man's territory." (2 Cor. 10:13-18). Paul clearly establishes that apostolic work

is measured out by God according to geographical territories, a mission field, a “man’s territory,” magistrates, a parish in this sense of a geographical sphere of influence. I call these apostolic jurisdictions, an area of legitimate apostolic function. And just like human governors or the police have only delegated authority in certain political districts, and even demonic rulers and principalities (Daniel refers to them as the Prince of *Persia*, the prince of *Greece*, obviously demonic spirits that are set over special territories; Dan 10:20), the same is true for spiritual work of the Kingdom of God. It follows specific geographic or ethnic borders as it is meted out by God (and never by a human) to certain people in order to become their *kanon*, their legitimate field of work, their turf.

The New Testament makes it clear that these territorial gardeners of God are first and foremost apostolic people with the specific brief to establish the spiritual foundations and governmental framework in those regions, so that Jesus can build his ekklesia there. Church history tells us that all the apostles of God ultimately did end up in their mission spheres, unless it was their duty to stay in Jerusalem. In his book *Martyrs in all Ages*, F.L. Potter summarizes this, describing that almost all apostles died an unnatural death as martyrs and followed Christ even in the way they died: Philip, after a revival happened in Phrygia, was imprisoned, bound and hanged there. Matthew was reportedly martyred in Ethiopia. Andrew was preaching in Asia, and ended up crucified by order of Algenas, proconsul of Achaia. Mark was sent to Egypt, planted a church in Alexandria, and was dragged to death, says Eusebius. Peter, according to tradition, died in Rome, crucified head downwards. Paul died in Rome, and Jude, some early writers say, was crucified in Jerusalem. Thomas allegedly died a martyr in India, killed by a spear. Luke was probably hanged from an olive tree in Greece; Simon (the Zealot) preached in Africa, and was later crucified in Britain. John, as an exception, died a natural death in Patmos at the age of 98. Timothy, bishop in Ephesus, was martyred, Barnabas killed by Jews in Syria.

“Ask of me the nations”

Psalms 2:8 speaks of Jesus and encourages *him* (not everyone else): “Ask of me the nations, and I shall give them to you as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession.” This task, to ask God for the people groups as an inheritance, is not for everyone, but for people in whom that spirit of Jesus wells up to boldly ask before the throne of God for entire realms, people groups, to be given to them. We see that spirit throughout history in people like John Knox, the Scottish reformer who reportedly prayed: “God, give me Scotland, or I die!” The readiness to die for a people group, the kind of intercession that is ready to pay the ultimate price in theory – and often enough in practice – to see a region or territory come under the rule of the Kingdom of God, the passion to ask for permission to gain entrance before the very throne room of God and ask him, in the presence of Satan and his demons, who have access there, too, to be given back the spiritual land rights over a region, is a holy task, something that we dare not seize cheaply.

I believe such a far-reaching petition before God must be earned by demonstrating love, dedication and the readiness to pay any price for the privilege, including the kind of tears that Jesus wept for Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Because if God grants us nations as inheritance, we must be willing not only to ask very seriously for this, but to stand up to our own pledge and take the

The readiness to die for a people group... is a holy task, something that we dare not seize cheaply.

governmental responsibility that is involved if God is going to trust us with nations or cities.

When Jesus describes how the Kingdom of God advances by the driving out of demons (Luke 11:20), he is speaking about the process of unseating the demonic rulers and governors who have been allotted the rule over an area by Satan, who can, as we have seen, give out leases as he wants. In today's world, it is no longer "ethnic cleansing" but "demonic cleansing" that needs to happen. It is no longer the pagan people of the Canaanites, Jebusites, or Gibeonites, who need to be driven out of the land before the people of God settle in, as in the days of Joshua and Caleb, but legions of demonic soldiers who usually are under a demonic general, a principality or ruler, a "strong man," who has the right before God's throne to govern an area – until those demons are challenged in court. This court is the only place on earth where land rights are held, where the title deeds for the "nations" are kept, the place of ultimate decision, the High Court of God, the place before his very throne.

And so I believe it is possible and necessary for people, made without blemish by the blood of Jesus and legitimized by their tears, their passion, and their apostolic commission for a people group or area measured out to them – their *kanon* – to stand as righteous challengers before God and ask of him the title deed, the land rights, water rights, and harvesting rights, just like it was as they were given to Adam and Eve in the original Garden of Eden. This is the process of both asking and petitioning God for this, and, should he grant our request, we can boldly stand before the demonic rulers and demand back the right to govern an area.

This process, I believe, is what Jesus referred to as he spoke of the need to bind a "strong man, fully armed, guarding his own house, so his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his spoils" (Luke 11:21.22). Here we see demons doing what Adam and Eve were supposed to do in the Garden, to tend and defend (*schamar*) their turf against intruders. So as long as we are not "stronger" than the demonic rulers and have the ability to overpower their demonic governance, we'd better stay at home. Demons have a certain understanding of the laws of the spirit that are accepted before the throne of God, the place of ultimate justice. And one of the rules is that they can rule spaces for which they have a spiritual rental contract, a lease that allows them to reign. So, even if we stand up to them and say "be gone in the name of Jesus," and have not taken care of the rental contract, the legitimate reason why they are there in the first place, there might be some uneasy shifting in the demonic world, but ultimately the demonic rulers will be back. "Demons are like rats," says anthropologist Charles Kraft. "They feed on dirt. You can drive them away, but as long as the dirt remains, they will come back." The problems, therefore, are never the demons themselves; it is always "the dirt," the legal reasons they are there in the first place.

I believe it is specifically a prophetic and apostolic ministry to ask entrance to the throne room of God and basically ask God for the title deeds of areas to be given back as an inheritance, and then to start building the ekklesia in partnership with Jesus as the cutting edge and forerunner of the Kingdom of God. It is not enough just to ask for the spiritual land rights, we must be willing

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to shoulder the governmental responsibility that comes with it, and that is a classical apostolic and prophetic role.

In the past, during a phase of high emphasis on “spiritual warfare,” especially in the 1980s and 1990s, it was fashionable for many Christians to claim, proclaim, bind, and loose, cast out, and call in. And thousands of times areas, wells, streams, mountains and whole cities have been anointed with oil, and in so-called prophetic acts people have poured out salt and wine almost to the degree that it has become a charismatic liturgy, “the thing to do.” The reason why this often did not lead to the desired results, but often even increased the level of spiritual oppression (and I agree here with George Otis), was that the asking itself was illegitimate, naïve, without proper understanding or respect for the spiritual laws of God, and therefore often, but not always, led to well-meaning Christian people stirring up a spiritual hornet’s nest. When the demonic magistrate struck back and wanted to take revenge on their churches, marriages, and personal lives, many were simply unprepared.

As I watch developments in this area, I observe that God, who in his wisdom has given land and areas to specific people groups, assigning them to where they should live, has a special ear for those disciples of Christ who have a legitimate spiritual heritage in the area, for those who are the descendants of the original race inhabiting a territory. This is, for example, why the role of the Inuits in Greenland and Northern Canada, the Red Indians, the descendants of the Indians, the Maoris in New Zealand or the Aborigines of Australia, the Laps in Finland or the Adivasis and the Rajputs of India have a special privilege and role to play in the asking of the spiritual title deeds of their land, a role that no missionaries, churches that are imported from abroad, or well-meaning fly-by evangelists, can usurp and take from them.

Saturation Garden Planting

Apostolic jurisdictions, the *kanons* measured out by God today for apostolic purposes, can encompass geographical areas, often with natural borders like deserts, rivers, seas, lakes, valleys, and mountains, or can encompass an ethnic group like the Banjaras in India, or the Gypsies, no matter where they live. There are people in the Body of Christ with the ability to do historical research and prophetic spiritual discernment, who can define spiritual borders, who recognize when they cross a spiritual boundary. As in the early garden of Eden, which I believe was an archetype, a foreshadow of things to come, we today also have gardens of God, areas mapped out by the finger of God, that are there for the taking.

In my own private map of the world, the planet looks like a patchwork of such “Gardens.” Some of them are spoken for, some are orphaned and others are not yet spoken for. “Spoken for” means that they have been claimed by apostolic and prophetic people before the throne of God. These people have demonstrated, beyond prayer and prophetic acts, the willingness and abilities to lay foundations and establish an apostolic governmental framework within which the Kingdom of God can be established in the region, with the church being its cutting edge. However, more times than I wish to remember I have seen properly gifted but immature apostles and prophets, who were deceived into using their unusual anointing and giftings to establish in their area not the

Kingdom of God, but personal empires. The resulting denominational structures, pyramidal hierarchies and one-man shows by their very nature simply defeat any healthy apostolic purpose. Often trapped by their own success and praised by success-minded clergy of smaller churches as their role model, they have settled for having the largest church in the region – and sold their apostolic regional task, inheritance, and birth rights for the lentil soup of temporary church growth and personal success. These are failures we need to learn from, and move beyond, in greater maturity, integrity, and understanding.

My own desire is to see every Garden of God on the planet spoken for by the legitimate apostolic and prophetic people to whom that task is measured out and given as their jurisdictions, according to the laws of the Kingdom that God gives. In such a way, the strategic task ahead is to move from saturation church planting, something that has become known through the DAWN strategy, to “saturating garden planting,” the strategic discernment and reclaiming of entire regions, apostolic jurisdictions, and in humility and holy fear build according to the pattern shown to us on the mountain, in corporate long-term obedience according to the revealed blueprints of God. This is what I believe the Bible shows us to be a prerequisite for the Holy Spirit to come – and stay!

True: it is one thing for apostolic and prophetic people to take up their gardening task; however, it is another for the rest of the people of God to align themselves with their regional master builders and follow them in corporate obedience. Otherwise, we would have a beautiful choir that chooses to ignore the conductor, and both will be frustrated.

In summary: the reclaiming, tending and defending of “The Gardens” of God, apostolic jurisdictions, following the regional or dispersed settling grounds of people groups, is a classical apostolic task in the advancing of the Kingdom of God.

3) The ministry of impartation and blessing

In Rom 1:11, Paul “longs to impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.” The Greek word for impart (*metado*) means the sharing or giving of something from one person to another. The Greek word translated “to make you strong” is *sterizo* and means to strengthen, make firm, establish, fix, set up. To the Thessalonians, Paul writes: “Having fond affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives” (1 Thess. 2:8). To Timothy, Paul writes: “I remind you to fan into flame the gift (Greek: *charisma*) of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6), and he tells the Romans of his desire to come “with the full blessing” (Rom. 15:29). In other words: there is something that the apostolic ministry brings that goes beyond words and affection.

Just as Jesus “breathed on his disciples” and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit” and Peter and John, coming in after the Evangelist Philip to Samaria, laid their hands on people “to receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:16), there is a spiritual impact, a transfer of blessing, an empowerment, a spark of God that jumps across, a transplantation of *pneuma*, a spiritual transfer that is best summarized in the word “impartation.” Many times, in my own travels as a cross-cultural missionary, I have observed that in pagan religions, especially those with an animistic background, people believe in some kind of ‘holy substance’ which can rub off, transferring spiritual energy from “holy men” and witches to the pagan

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“laity.” If we understand the principles of the spiritual world, we know that the demonic is infectious; it moves into any space that either actively invites its presence or passively allows demons to be present. In the Kingdom of Darkness (Col. 2) there is a clear practice of spiritual energy transfer, a charging with demonic presence, an infestation with evil that is transpersonal, that can move from person to person. This spiritual infection happens either at portals and “hotspots” for this, so-called places of power (pilgrim spots, holy sites, etc.), in connection with spiritual initiation rites or recurring festival with religious backgrounds, or as people ask pagan clergy to perform rites and rituals, to “bless” them. The bottom line of this is that the persons seeking spiritual power and protection literally come home more demonized than before, having received an upgrade of demonic presence in their lives.

In the Kingdom of Light, the generic spiritual laws are quite similar, but, of course, the motives, the values and the character of things are entirely different. Paul praises God for the “Spirit of fatherhood” that God has given us, and it is this fatherly heart that is the inner motive for compassionate love towards spiritual children and brothers and sisters that drives apostolic ministry.

In the words of Steve Schultz: “One of the key questions that I believe needs to be addressed in Paul’s life is, What motivated him past persecution and suffering to bring him to a place of sacrificial giving and living? In other words, ‘Why did Paul so anxiously desire to visit regions and churches which were going to be established or had been established by him and also show such willingness to endure hardships?’ I believe this man had a revelation of apostolic *depositing*. He understood the dire need for churches and individuals to receive apostolic *downloading*. Paul was an apostolic resource whose lifestyle, words, attitudes, and actions continually helped download and thereby *upgrade* the lives of those whom he ministered to. This man was built by God to cache truth and then dispense that truth wherever he was sent. Today, we need men and women who are not only able to access divine revelation and manifest it; we need apostolic figures who are willing to give away (impart) all that they have received from God. This is why it is important for Christians to knit their hearts to an apostolic resource open to them.”

Entire old and new cults have been established on the selfish and improper use of this principle. Anything that gives people power over other people can and has been used to manipulate, control, and abuse other people. The cult of “New Apostolics” has established the false teaching that sins can only be forgiven in a properly ordained church that has had a proper apostle sanction it. This has led to a cultic elevation of the apostolic function far beyond its proper limits, and it is sad to observe that even in some Christian circles a hierarchical and uncrucified understanding of apostleship has led to elitist apostolic gurus functioning literally like indispensable, unapproachable cult leaders who dominate and fleece their ever-naïve sheep. But this should not lead us to throw out the baby with the bathwater and dismiss the importance of apostolic impartation. If the Bible describes this as a vital and core aspect of apostolic ministry, then that is exactly what it is. If we take Romans 1:11 as a standard for this, one of the healthy results of an apostolic ministry will be “firmly established” believers and churches, churches with sound foundations, and disciples of Jesus who know who they are and what they are doing.

One of the healthy results of an apostolic ministry will be “firmly established” believers and churches, churches with sound foundations, and disciples of Jesus who know who they are and what they are doing.

4) Synchronizers between Heaven and Earth

Jesus prayed and taught us to pray: "Let your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." In all of what God does, there is a closure built into it, a divine, ultimate goal: the convergence of all things under the complete rule of Christ. Think of the astonishing experience of Nehemiah; he knew that the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was an important part of restoring the city in the will of God. In an amazing organizational effort – without the latest project planning software and management tools – Nehemiah managed to divide the work of the various families in such a way that family built next to family next to other families that the entire wall was finished on the same day. That was an enterprise in "*synteleia*", the Greek word for finishing something together. The very same word *synteleia* is used in several ways in the NT, to describe the corporate finishing aspects of the work of God, as in Philippians 1:6, 2 Corinthians 8:11 and Romans 9:28. The coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth, the evolving of the purposes of God, will only happen when there is a **strategic synchronization** between heaven and earth, a time-specific togetherness, a co-incidence, when the *kairos* in heaven (God's ordained time) invades our *chronos* driven world and therefore things that happen in heaven simultaneously happen on earth. This is why we as a church simply have to learn to be online with heaven in order to synchronize earth. If we are offline, we would immediately fall back on our own traditions and will become unable to properly align ourselves with heaven and its current agendas. This is one of the core apostolic tasks: **to bring the church into a congruency with God's eternal and current intentions and revelations**. This is why the early apostles describe "prayer and the word of God" (Acts 6) as their own key role. The word of God is the map; prayer allows them to find out where they are on the map, and into which direction they should move to reach their final destination.

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When a person sleeps, he is oblivious of the world around him. He can neither recognize what is going on, nor respond to it. When the church sleeps, the interface between God and humanity is out of action. Such a person, in biblical language, "lost connection with the Head, from which the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow" (Col 2:19). To use computer language: the wireless LAN router for aligning the church with God's purposes is non-operational, and the entire system goes offline. To synchronize computers they need a set of programs and a connection – an interface – between each other to be able to compare notes and synchronize data – to make sure everything is at the latest level of information. The same is true for the synchronization of a choir – the art that everyone sings in tune and in time. It requires a simple system: strict discipline, having the same notes, a conductor, his stick, and eye contact. The conductor is the one who helps to recreate the original song again, and again, using a simple but effective system to do that.

In order to synchronize something complex and to bring it to a final conclusion, someone must develop **two systems**: first, a system of exchange, how the two worlds communicate with each other, and how the reality in world No. 1 (Heaven) can be translated and manifested in world No. 2 (this present world); how the Kingdom comes **on earth as it is in heaven**. And second, there must be a systematic plan, a way of making sure the goals of God are being reached, that they are moving towards their destination, and nothing is over-

looked in the process, a concept many mission thinkers have described as a **closure mindset**. This is a principle that, for example, the DAWN movement has called "**end visioning**," the corporate working together towards an ultimate long-term vision.

Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our faith, had a clear goal in mind: the conclusion of the final mission of the father. This is why he was very specific in what he did and what he directed others to do. In other words: Jesus was a **systematic synchronizer** between heaven and earth. And he did have the two systems in place that are mentioned above:

1. Since he knew the real plan and overall strategy is in heaven with his father, his system of interchange, the process to translate the will of the father into action on earth, was simple and very effective: **seeing and hearing the father before doing or saying anything**. Jesus would not do anything on his own, unless he saw the father doing it (John 5:19,20), and would not say anything unless he had heard the father say it (John 5:30; 7:16-18; 8:26, etc.). This was his system of discernment, telling him what came next – his way of accessing **prophetic intelligence** before moving into apostolic action.

2. Jesus was systematic in his work: he chose 12, sent out 72, made the 5,000 sit down in groups of 50, sent his disciples two by two ahead into every town he would visit, was particular about where he went, when and with whom, and was in no way erratic, confused, nor exchanged a lack of direction with overdoses of speed to become workaholic or burned out in the process. Because Jesus was purposeful, he was systematic, and this systematic behavior and strategic thoroughness, therefore, will accompany all those who are commissioned by Jesus to carry on his apostolic mission to the very end. The early apostles had understood that the heart of the matter, for the systematic fulfillment of their mission, was "to pray and obey." The task was simply much too gigantic for any individual or group to comprehend or even attempt to accomplish on their own. They knew therefore that hearing God, along with individual and collective obedience towards what had been heard from God, would define their ultimate priorities, and "prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) would therefore be more important **for them** than waiting on tables. Again and again, they demonstrated a strategy under God (Acts 13, the initial apostolic journey; Acts 15, the apostolic council and its implications, etc.) and were found to be systematic in their entire approach.

As we encounter apostolic people today, we will find them consumed with visions of systemic change from their early stages of maturity onwards, busily inventing ever new delivery systems of truth and developing plans to implement God's purposes around the globe, complete with a healthy obsession with maps, benchmarks, or anything that a purposeful mind would need to assess advancement systematically. This is what I call **apostolic architecture**, a system designed to fulfill the apostolic mission of God to mankind, where form follows function and the entire building of the ekklesia reflects that apostolic spirit.

5) Master Builders and Architects

The building of things that God has inspired – to take something from a heavenly blueprint and translate it into its earthly reality – requires **building skills**, the ability to recreate something after you have laid eyes on the origi-

Because Jesus was purposeful, he was systematic

nal. God himself built man according to his own image – a truly apostolic act, sending an amazing image of himself on the road to fulfill the purposes he wanted. Bezalel and Oholiab, under the direction of Moses, who had seen a prophetic vision on the mountain, proceeded to implement the visionary architectural plan and realized it according to the vision Moses had seen. Other builders the Bible mentions are Hiram, “wise to build”, or master Hiram, “a wise man who knows how to build” (2 Chron. 2:6 and 12:13).

The principle is simple: God reveals a plan or blueprint, and he looks for specially gifted people to grasp the plan and be able to implement and build it. Inspiration, in other words, is one thing; to translate inspiration into action is another. To use black and white language: while prophets see the vision, apostles **build the road to get there**. Zerubbabel, in the book of Ezra, for example, was busy building, while the prophets kept inspiring. The concept of a builder or even the term “master builder” is a frequently used term for the apostolic ministry. Paul says it like this: “I am a wise architect” (the greek word **archi-tekton** literally means top builder, accurately translated “a wise master builder” in 1 Cor. 3:10). This term describes a person who is there before the building actually starts. He produces the plan, initiates it, and makes sure everything goes according to plan.

While prophets see the vision, apostles build the road to get there.

Apostles, therefore, are a key ingredient in the church: they give the ekklesia the supernatural ability to build itself. If apostles are absent, we can therefore correctly expect spiritual buildings, erected in the absence of apostolic grace and building capacity, that are defunct, derelict before they are finished, built on shaky foundations, complete with crooked doors, leaky roofs, mismatched walls, and only of temporary significance; in short, spiritual buildings that are a disgrace to God. The ultimate fire test is quality and time: if someone builds on this foundation “wood, hay, or straw, fire will test the quality of each man’s work” (1 Cor. 3:12-14). And “if what he has built **survives**, he will receive his reward” (1 Cor. 3:14). History knows of countless spiritual “one man shows” that have come and gone and simply died out when “the great man” retired, with entire movements disappearing either into oblivion or into worshipping their own glorious but faded past.

That is why truly apostolic building is always **continuous** building, the supernatural ability to recognize genuine apostolic quality in the architecture of a movement of God – and continue to build on it. Paul declares this in 1 Cor. 3:10: “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, **and another is building upon it**. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.” Paul does not expect others to lay a new foundation and build next to his foundation, but to build **on** it, carrying on the work that he started, in a spirit of apostolic continuity.

A new apostle does not need to start a new foundation; he can carry on where the former one has stopped, and keep on running with the apostolic baton for another round. Paul says (1 Cor. 3:6): “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” Apollos carried on building on something Paul had planted. This is important to understand, since the Corinthian church obviously did not get it. They believed, as a result of the complete confusion caused by false apostles and their teaching, that each of the ministries of Paul, Cephas, Apollos and even Christ were of a different nature, just as if all of those would be building four different houses, and not the one and the same. Misunder-

standing this is one of the roots of denominationalism, the inability to accept another man's building work as worthy to be continued in the following apostolic generations.

The apostolic gift is a building gift, an architectural ability that God gives to some people in the Body of Christ for them to give away to others (Eph. 3:2). If those others accept it, they benefit from it and the entire system builds itself up towards completion. If they don't, they end up in confusion and that state of spiritual incompleteness and immaturity that Paul calls "infant" Christianity (1 Cor. 3:1-3), the very basis of denominationalism. If we allow "infants" to become the builders, and with their childish immaturity and a desire to please people at all costs establish ecclesiastical policy while gleefully running around with fragments of truth, the result will be a playground full of different individual sandboxes with yet another title or label on it that yet another spiritual child has established in an attempt to express his immature religious preferences. If now is not the time to do away with this child's play and to overcome it, once and for all, then when is the time? The very way to do this, and to overcome that wretched and shameful fragmentizing of Christianity that destroys the unity of faith in the process, is to return to biblical and healthy apostolic building principles, and let the builders build again.

6) Code breakers and mystery solvers

Jesus spoke in many riddles and mysteries that often not even the initiated disciples understood. It was part of his communication strategy, his way of filtering response, to make sure that only those who seek shall find, and so that the pearls will not be thrown before the swine, and the true gems of spiritual understanding would not be trampled under by consumerist and non-inquisitive tourists on a religious must-see package tour. God has hidden himself out of plain sight since the time in the garden with Adam and Eve, but he has made himself – if we look into the Old Testament – accessible in a very limited way to those whom he allowed into his presence. Only "Moses went up to God" (Ex. 19:3) – and those whom God specifically allowed into his presence, like Abraham, Joshua, and many of the prophets.

The Bible, in general, speaks of many mysteries. The meanings of mysterious dreams were revealed to Joseph and Daniel. In God's famous discourse with Job (Job 38-42) he gives Job a long list of questions and asks him if he knows any of the answers to God's secrets. Jesus came and spoke about the mystery of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:11), and presented many of the hidden things of God in parables (Matt. 13:38) "to those outside" (Mark 4:11), but to his insiders, his apostles, he explained and decoded it all. That is how the apostles of Jesus became bearers of secrets, the carriers of otherwise strictly classified information; they were security cleared for the top-secret stuff of God. As they were commissioned by God to reveal their insights to others, Paul, for example, became a kind of apostolic code breaker: he was allowed to break open age-old seals that locked in crucial insights and information, including things that God had "sealed up until the last days" during the time of Daniel (Dan 12:9).

Apostles are "servants of Christ entrusted with the secret things of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). This is why Paul could boldly say: "Behold, I tell you a mystery" (Rom. 15:51), and went on to speak about things like the mystery of the partial hardening of Israel (Rom. 11:25), the secret wisdom of God (Rom. 2), the mystery

of the resurrection of the saints at the time of the last trumpet (Rom. 15:51), the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3), the mystery of the co-inheritance of the Gentiles with Israel (Eph. 3: 6), the mystery of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32), the mystery of “Christ in you” (1 Cor. 1:26), and the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7). Later on, the apostle John speaks of even more mysteries, like “the mystery of the seven stars” (Rev. 1:20), “the mystery of God” (Rev. 10:7) and “the mystery of Babylon the Great” (Rev. 17:5).

The early apostolic age saw God dispensing old truth in a totally new light. Paul had experiences like his visit to the third heaven that he never fully discussed. There, he was given insights into the nature of the gospel to the Gentiles, and said he received it by revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12). I believe this is, until today, a classical apostolic function: **to reveal insights into mysteries** which were not “made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.” Now, Paul says, it is his job to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make plain to everyone the administration of the mystery (Eph. 3:4-9). The Greek word for “making plain” is *photisai*, literally to enlighten darkness and bring light, like the bearer of a torch to a dark cave. If this torch-function is an ongoing quality of apostolic grace, it would also mean that apostles of all ages have the ability to “cut through the crap,” remove the fog, dispel confusion, like the endless discussing of fables, genealogical lists, and other issues that divide the church.

Historically, as we will see later, the apostolic ministry has been discarded, abandoned, and forgotten, after the first few centuries in the life of the church, and replaced by pale, tamed, and substandard substitutes of the original apostolic function: monarchic bishops, popes, metropolitans, and plainly fantastic ecclesiastical superstructures and any other human reinventions of God’s wheels. As a result, we could expect, in the absence of apostolic clarity and their ability to break codes, enlighten darkness, and solve seemingly impossible parables, that confusion and darkness has set in over almost any debatable issue.

However, many core issues of God, his **mysteries**, are not going to be solved by “flesh and blood,” by debate, or even through sober theological reasoning and systematic scientific research. If the mysteries of God are **unsearchable** (Eph. 3:8), then who are we to declare them suddenly **searchable**? Just because we have entered a modern, research-based, post-modern, and now post-post-modern age with scientific breakthroughs every day, where some scientists are finding new insights into the nature of the DNA and we now can clone sheep, horses, and soon humans, this does not mean that we have decoded life itself, or made the mysteries of God painlessly and cheaply searchable in a Google search engine over the Internet. The nature of our human existence as a creation of God is a code that needs to be unlocked by God himself – and those whom he authorizes to do so. In other words: God’s mysteries are going to be solved today the way they always have been solved: by prophetic revelation and apostolic teaching.

The church has seen phenomenal historic splits over issues like the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, or the inability of non-apostolic people to understand the mystery of incarnation of spirit into flesh. The early Church councils, like the ones in Nicea (325) or Chalcedon (451), split hairs over classical myste-

ry-issues. As such, they found themselves unable to reconcile the Church with key truths of God, and, as a result, typically forced the issues, often enough to fit the political or religious agendas of the day. Rather than admitting their own ignorance and their need to sit with Christ, restore the apostolic and prophetic ministries, and be enlightened again to enlighten others, many of these councils became the seedbed of monumental and historic divisions that plague Christianity until today. The real reason was that they had lost their apostolic grace, their apostolic-prophetic torch-function, and it was often those un-apostolic historic church councils that marked and accompanied the swift descent of the Church into unbelievable darkness. This is why I believe that as a part of this present reformation, we will witness the removal of centuries of accumulated darkness, the solving of some age-old riddles and mysteries that in turn will liberate the Body of Christ from its substandard existence. As we measure the strength of light scientifically in *lux* or *lumen* (as $lux \times m^2$), probably the key distinction of the Church in the future will be the amount of light present among it. Do we “see” with our natural eyes (and therefore remain blind to the mysteries of God), or are we welcoming prophetic revelation and apostolic teaching that decodes the key mysteries for us – and make the light of the world, the city on the mountain, shine strong again?

7) Fathers who adopt and initiate sons

Fatherhood is at the very center of what God has chosen to reveal about himself. One of the most central themes of the history of redemption is that God created a place for his children to enjoy his goodness, but they choose, rather, to disobey and run away from him. A bad father, being done with such rebellion, would end the story right there and go mind his own business. A good father would go through the pains of seeking a way to restore the community with his runaway children and love them even if they don't love him back. To demonstrate, live, and promote fatherhood for renegades in the face of their ongoing adversity is the ultimate test of love. And therefore it will not surprise us that God was always looking for people who would echo and model his own spirit of fatherhood to others, so as to entice humanity back to him.

In biblical history we encounter men who became fathers to their own tribes, the patriarchs of their own biological descendants. However, the person of Abram becomes a watershed personality for fatherhood. God says to him in Genesis 17:4-5: “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram (exalted father), but your name shall be Abraham (father of many); for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.” Humanly speaking, many would strive to be or become an “exalted father,” a cherished patriarch, the man on the top of biological lineage. But to become the father of those who are not our biological descendants, and therefore not naturally part of our tribe – to father orphans, widows, strangers, and even other nations – requires a different and, frankly speaking, superhuman quality and dimension of fatherhood. It requires selfless rather than selfish fatherhood – fatherhood that is not only interested in immortalization of oneself, but the propagation of humanity.

Should it surprise us, then, to see this kind of new fatherhood of Abraham very seriously tested, as God soon asks him to go sacrifice his own beloved

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Isaac, the promised son, on Mount Moriah (Gen 22)? If we are not ready to let go of our own cherished Isaacs, God knows we will not be able to father anybody else, let alone “many nations.” Abraham, however, passes the test of ultimate allegiance and, having worshiped on the mountain, equipped with a knife and his son instead of just a guitar and a songbook, God calls out to him and swears to Abraham the fulfillment of the original prophecy: to bless all nations on earth through him.

History is full of Abrams in the sense of exalted fathers who did not pass the test, people who were pictures of self-praising, egotistic fatherhood, as in the distorted and megalomaniac grave structures of Egypt with its literally pharaonic proportions, or the grand estates, costly toys and ridiculous entourages of the Big Daddies in today’s societies that promote human grandeur, the picture of ultimate selfishness and glaring immaturity of a big man being big just by and for himself. That is why God intervenes specifically as a different father and literally invades humanity with an entirely new picture of fatherhood, a fatherhood that loves the unlovable, dispenses itself freely to the undeserving, graciously restores the renegades, mercifully adopts children beyond natural blood lines, and gives his inheritance intentionally to those who formerly were not cared for by anybody. This is why divine fatherhood *beyond* natural fatherhood – the impulse to care for our own – is a key hallmark of the things of God, literally the spirit that shapes the Kingdom of God, the church, and everything it does in this world. This is also why the theme of *adoption* into fatherhood and the raising of sons who biologically and humanly speaking are not our sons is absolutely central to the heart of God – and the church that he commissions into this world. If the church healthily reflects the spirit of fatherhood by essentially being a model family for those yet outside the family of God, one of its central missions from God is to restore fatherhood to a fatherless world. And those who carry a central part of that mission, people called to an apostolic role, need, more than probably anybody else, to demonstrate and reflect that spirit of divine fatherhood.

As God finally sent his own son, Jesus, to restore his lost sons and daughters back to him, he was starting to adopt people into his family, giving them the most precious thing in this world: “The *right* to become children of God, children not born of natural descent or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12.13). In the words of Paul, “In love, God predestined us to be adopted as his sons in Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5). Jesus then carries on his mission not just to recruit ever more children for his father in heaven (or as members of his church on earth, like modern day church leaders misguided by a partial understanding of Church Growth often do), but to pass on and delegate the very theme of adoption *through the multiplication of fatherhood!* If it is a natural goal for every boy to grow up into manhood and ultimately fatherhood, and for every believer to grow up in maturity and spiritual parenthood, should we expect anything different for Jesus, the son of God? Is it therefore thinkable that Jesus, in his obedient maturity, should depart from this world utterly childless, a mere man, excelling in manhood, but not fatherhood? How can he truly “show us the father” without ultimately *being* a father? In John 17, Jesus speaks to his father and says to him: “I have *completed* the work you gave me to do” (v. 4). As he could speak of completion even before the cross and his ultimate suffering and resurrection, very obviously he speaks to his father about a central role

that he had already fulfilled. This role was not only to raise more children, but to raise people into divine fatherhood themselves, so that they could now be entrusted with the apostolic mission that Jesus was given himself. And sure enough, this is exactly what Jesus goes on to conclude in this conversation with his father: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (v. 18).

As we have seen earlier, the apostles, thus charged with carrying on the mission of the father in heaven placed into their hands by Jesus, went on to do exactly that: to reproduce this very mission again into the next generation of disciples. As a disciple is defined by Jesus as someone who leaves behind his natural things (see Luke 14; it mentions everything that a natural man or father would just never leave precisely because he wants to be a good father in earthly terms) in order to embrace a new father, a new family, and a new mission, every new disciple will ultimately have to pass on that very baton of fatherhood into the next generation – otherwise, the mission will dry up. And it will dry up in the way the world has shown us to do it: with famous patriarchs who have failed to initiate their own sons in time, as the geriatric figureheads of dead tribes. One of the ways divine fatherhood is carried on in this world is to be constantly raising new sons and parenting them into fathers themselves, charging them with the ultimate task of repeating the process endlessly. This is the essence of discipling. And it is clear that the apostolic call and mission carries this as one of its central themes.

In many ways, the essence of the apostolic reformation of today, is first and foremost a reformation of fatherhood. This is where the rubber hits the road. We have many apostolic patriarchs, apostolic teachers, apostolic directors, apostolic Abrams, but we need apostolic fathers. People with brilliant apostolic skills and gifts, and colorful conference personalities just will not be enough; that which will accomplish the apostolic mission of God is the demonstrating and passing on of apostolic fatherhood to the next generation. And this will not be done in the false apostolic model of electing a new pope in a conclave of cardinals by the casting of votes, or the pseudo-apostolic ordaining of Christians craving for significance after applying for membership in one more elite apostolic club and demonstrating financial loyalty to some "senior apostle". Fatherhood can only be watched and caught in real life by rubbing shoulders with fatherly role models, by imitation in close proximity, and by the echoing of a spirit of fatherhood and by passing endless tests, especially in dealing with obnoxious children.

This is also why church discipline – the setting and enforcing of healthy boundaries – is a classical apostolic task, since it needs to be done not in the spirit of legalistic enforcement of rules for the sake of rules, but lovingly and consistently removing obstacles for the overall apostolic mission, marking bad examples efficiently so that one bad apple does not spoil the whole basket, in the spirit of fatherhood. God the father set the standard for this throughout the entire Old Testament: a fatherhood that is both loving and just, that deeply cares for the individual but still never loses sight of the bigger pedagogical picture of the model that Israel and the Church have to play for all nations. Jesus carried this on in his passionate, whip-cracking, temple-cleaning and stern

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judgment on the false, fatherless religion of the Scribes of his day, and passed it on to his disciples in his clear principles and commissioning on church discipline (Matt. 18). Peter and other apostles demonstrated this in the case of Ananias and Sapphira and of Simon the Sorcerer, Paul with Bar-Jesus in Cyprus and later with Hymenaeus and with Alexander the blacksmith. Disciplining is a natural part of parenting; to bring up children without boundaries – or without enforcement of these boundaries – means parental failure and sets a wrong standard for the children to carry on once they have become grown-ups themselves. That is why apostolic people will, yes, have a disciplining rod, usually very deep down in their deepest pockets, hidden and stowed away and hopefully never to be used. Their usual pedagogical style is teaching, modeling, pleading, asking, even begging. But if nothing else helps, and either individuals behave like spoiled children or the entire basket of apples threatens to go foul, they will not hesitate to go and search for that disciplinary rod, and use it decisively. Church discipline is dirty work, and nobody would really want to do that but sometimes it becomes a necessity. But, just like in real life with children, discipline has to be done, and therefore God gives this responsibility to apostolic fathers who, with the long-term missional goal clearly embedded in their vision, will have to handle the rod. Of course, he also gives it to anyone within the church who reflects that spirit, being an elder or functioning in any other parental role in the body.

One of the natural things apostolic people do is to adopt. They adopt children and raise them into fathers, and do not stop there. They “take care of the poor,” since the heart of the Father in heaven is particularly concerned with the widows, orphans *and the poor*. If orphans are left fatherless, this seems to be more painful than being motherless. God seems to be much more concerned about children being fatherless than children without mothers, as terrible as that is. Apostolic people naturally go on to adopt cities and whole people groups to reproduce fatherhood in the largest possible sense, within their jurisdictions and their gardens. They, like Jesus with the original apostolic batch, constantly initiate new sons into manhood, and later into fatherhood.

However, life does not go by the book, and things go wrong, requiring the fathers and mothers to be constantly alert for “whatever is next.” Therefore, what has gone wrong with God – that the people he created became renegade, stubborn, egoistic, obstinate, and rebellious – will be the daily bread of anybody involved in normal parenting in this world. Everyone who has children or raised them knows exactly that this is basically an impossible thing – without the grace of God. That is why tears *for others*, the readiness to be walked upon all over again and again by our own children, and the love to just never give up loving and fathering, is one of the hallmarks of apostolic Christianity. This is also why I sometimes describe apostles as *weeping fathers*, ready to be trampled on and finally overtaken left, right, and center by kids who, in their immaturity, want to prove they are faster than Dad, or even that they can do without him. Reading through Galatians, we almost can hear Paul weep for the foolish and legalistic Galatians to finally become Christ-like and mature. We can hear his broken heart for the ridiculously immature but charismatic Corinthians, just coming home from one more grandiose and costly conference with another false apostle, who have rejected Paul even though he actually was their spiritual father. We can see him passionately writing to his spiritual son, Timothy,

in a spirit of fatherhood, constantly concerned that the children would move “from milk to meat,” from immaturity to maturity, and finish the healthy apostolic food that is on their plate, and not constantly be tickled by the sweets of cheap heresy, the ice cream of false prophecy and the ever-present chocolate of false apostolic teaching.

If sin is a separation from the Father God, then fatherless spiritual as well as physical orphans would constitute the central symptom of a sinful world. Therefore it would be a natural impulse for an apostolic church to father the fatherless, to make sure, for example, that every house church looks into adopting not only spiritual children (new converts), but at least one true orphan from the millions of suffering, traumatized parentless children, and to move on to see entire fatherless villages, cities, regions and nations to be fathered. A classical non-apostolic solution to the problem of fatherlessness are orphanages, those terrible ghettos for parent-less children that could only be conceived by superficial, need-driven people in complete ignorance of true fatherhood. Which father in his right mind would put *his kid* into such an institution? True fatherhood is never impersonal, distant, mass-marketed, but personal, close and highly vulnerable. If we encounter *that* spirit in a person, church, or movement, we can be sure to have encountered true apostolic substance. This is the spirit that urged Paul to give his own eternal life for the salvation of Israel, the spirit that can cry through John Knox “God give me Scotland, or I die!”, and this is the spirit that, in true descent from Abraham, can ask God for the neighbors and the nations.

8) Foundation layers

God himself is the great layer of foundations; he laid the foundation of the earth (Job 38:4). Those who were laying foundations of cities or the temple of Jerusalem, like Zerubbabel, were of special significance and received special attention in biblical history. God’s son, Jesus, is the foundation for the church in person (1 Cor. 3:11): “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Jesus goes on and establishes that those apostolic people, Simon Peter being the first one in time who recognize him as the Messiah, shall become the “rock,” the bedrock-foundation on which the church is built (Matt. 16:18). This is a principle that later Paul puts into writing like this: The household of God, which is the church, is “built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

Paul describes himself as a foundation layer: (1 Cor. 3:10): “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it.” He is careful to respect others who laid foundations, as he says in Rom 15:20: “I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man’s foundation.”

The foundation laying ministry is clearly a ministry that the apostles cannot and should not do alone - they are meant to do this along with the prophets. Prophetic ministry, therefore, is absolutely and decidedly implied in this birthing process of new foundations, and when I speak here of apostolic foun-

dation laying, I want to underline that I see this as a dual task of the prophetic working with the apostolic. We will revisit this vital subject of apostolic and prophetic cooperation further on.

If it is correct to say that apostles and prophets today – not only the first twelve apostles – are truly meant to be foundation layers of the church today and in the future, what does this mean, practically? I believe this means four things:

a.) They pioneer. By assessing and following (typically a prophetic) lead, they (usually in cooperation with prophets) ascertain a new building site for the *eklesia*, dig in their shovel, break up the ground, and begin the work. Doing this, they open space, create an apostolic environment and define a starting point, a foundation for a new work of God.

b.) Foundational placement. As the church is a spiritual house made of living stones (1 Peter 2:5), these individual living stones need to be put exactly into the spot where they were designed to be and function by God. For this, it is extremely vital to discern, perceive and assess the individual missions and roles of the people of God and help them to match with their destined place within the wider Body of Christ. Let us be careful not to confuse calling with mission. We have all been called to Jesus, who in turns sends us out into missions. Our mission is not our calling; Jesus is our calling. In order to live according to our calling, four basic questions need to be answered:

- a) *What* are we sent out to do, that is, what is our mission (individually and corporately)?
- b) *Where* are we sent out to do it (the geographic dimension)?
- c) *With whom* are we cut out by God to work together, and be “yoked together” (the relational question)?
- d) *When* is our *kairos*-time, our cue for getting started? (the time question)

Nothing is more powerful than a person or a movement of God’s people who are living their mission. However, we can be the right person working in the wrong area, with the wrong people. Or everything can seem right – but the timing is wrong. For example, although the spirit of God is preventing work in “Mysia and Bithynia” at this time, we could ignore this and squeeze ourselves into work that we are not yet ready to do, for whatever reason. Paul hints of this in his charge to Titus to “bring to order the unfinished task and to appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5), or in his discourses about charismatic gifts (1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12; Eph. 4) with the general idea that each member of the body has an exactly defined function and therefore should obviously “be let” to work accordingly, that is, to be placed to function exactly as God has designed for him or her to do.

c.) They establish foundational values. In order to reach a far-flung goal, it is necessary to start the process by laying foundational and essential values that lead people to an enlarged capacity so that they may finally embrace apostolic vision. Jesus did not start the education of his apostles by telling them the punch line, to go and make disciples of all nations, but took three years of painstaking foundation laying, building values into his people, and created what we today call a shared-value process. This is a shared functional understanding that enables people to get on with a corporate task.

For example, if everyone can understand the term *house church* whatever way he likes, the result will be confusion, everyone doing as he likes and

the result would be a devastating spiritual orgy of individuals trapped in their own limited understanding. Therefore it is an apostolic task to define terms, identify key beliefs, and lay “elementary teachings” as foundations (Hebr. 6:1-2). It is necessary therefore to establish and reestablish, again and again in each generation, a foundational working basis, a common understanding for the apostolic tasks of our times.

d.) They guard the DNA. If apostles are the layers of foundations, they also will be the watchmen of the foundations, jealously guarding the original work, the historic, Christo-centric roots. They will make sure the “holy faith delivered to us all” is kept pure and is not tampered with, and that people “do not go beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6). In this they become the jealous guardians and custodians of the church’s original DNA, their apostolic “genetic” code, because they know that if the church leaves its original foundation it will quickly lose its function. In the Bible we find both apostles and prophets reminding, and relentlessly re-reminding, the saints of their original calling and holy role, because they know how easy it is for the sheep to go astray and end up in the wrong garden.

There is a sense in which the original twelve apostles have a unique function: as original apostolic foundation layers in time, and also as the last ones remembered. Because of this, the wall of the New Jerusalem will have twelve foundations, named after the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:14). Because foundation laying is a core apostolic task, we can expect to find stability even in great turmoil. If a spiritual work can easily be shattered, or is more like a raft that is tossed about by the waves of the sea and the winds of ever-changing teaching, we can be sure there is an absence of healthy apostolic ministry. Without apostolic foundations (and prophetic reasoning), not only will the church be full of visionless, confused people who are insecure and clueless about their very calling and role, feeling spiritually misplaced as the right people *generally* doing the wrong job in the wrong place at the wrong time, but there will be an overabundance of new experiments, a strong focus on the latest insights, super hip spiritual fads and a general selling out to the Zeitgeist. And there will be little stability. An exciting movement of today that flashes through the Christian media will become a fossilized dinosaur fondly remembered as a thing of the past within only 20, 10 or even 5 years, failing the test of its very apostolicity: multiplication of itself and the reaching of the apostolic goals of today, thus proving that it was never sent by God in the first place, but that it basically sent itself. But where apostolic and prophetic foundations are laid in a region or area, we can expect a shared value process, no matter how long it takes, that will build an apostolic people, a generation of finishers who ultimately will accomplish and finish the job God has sent them to do.

But let us not be too romantic. Let’s have a look at the other side of the coin of foundation laying. Apostolic work may very well include the tearing down of false and unhelpful, non-apostolic foundations as well. This uprooting, tearing down, destroying, and overthrowing – in balance with carefully building up – seems to be more a function of the prophetic ministry (Jer. 1:11) than the apostolic. But if someone wants to build a functioning apostolic foundation in a given region, it will be important to examine the foundations that have been laid before and test them for stability, before a large establishment is built on

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it. It is therefore a classical apostolic task to dig through the sand, earth and broken shards of history, to uncover century-old prophetic wells and apostolic foundations, clean away any dust and dirt that has settled on it, and seamlessly continue to build where others gone before have or were stopped.

9) Meridian Gladiators

Paul explains that “in the church God has appointed first apostles” (1 Cor. 12:28). Before we look at this statement of apostolic “firstness,” there is a very real sense in which apostles are last. “Many who are first will be last; and the last, first” (Matthew 19:30). After sending many servants to the unfaithful tenants of the vineyard (Mark 12), Jesus, the very own son of the owner of the vineyard, was sent in as the last effort. I believe this is a picture for the nature of apostolic ministry, something that comes in when everything else fails. Paul picks up this idea in 1 Cor. 4:9: “For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display **at the end of the procession**, like men condemned to die in the arena, a spectacle to the whole universe.”

A person at the end of any procession is usually the least honored. In the everyday language of his time the picture that Paul is referring to more specifically is the gladiators, men who address the person in charge with “we who are about to die, salute you!” in an arena watched by other people as a sort of blood sport. In those bloody arrangements, gladiators, who were usually more or less trained slaves, were pitted against wild animals or each other, in every possible manner, for the obscene entertainment of the clientele. Those spectacles usually started in the morning, given the heat of the Mediterranean sun and the absence of modern stadium lightning systems, and ended around noon, when the heat became unbearable. The audience had seen any amount of bloody carnage all morning long, and, just before lunchtime, the organizers had to come up with ever new twists of cruelty and innovation to keep the attention span of the patrons. Therefore, they usually played a last trump card that made even the most bored audience one last time to sit up and get to the edge of their seats: when they introduced the so-called *meridian gladiator*, the one introduced just before the sun reached its meridian, the last act in the procession of events, the finale of the whole bloody choreography. This is when, for example, a ridiculous weakling or dwarf without any serious weapons is pitched against three lions, five giants and one elephant, when a mismatch of power of such gross proportions will make even the most seasoned spectator, who has seen it all, get up one more time from his slumber and watch in amusement how that defenseless clown will be mowed down and ripped apart in seconds.

Paul likens this well known tradition from the ancient entertainment industry to the nature of apostolic ministry, as if he is to say that we can expect apostolic people to come in when all seems lost, at the end of the show, when people start to doze off and nothing other than a ridiculous spectacle can win back the attention of the crowd. Paul, in defending his apostolic ministry to the Corinthians, speaks of this again when he describes that “our weapons are not of the world, but have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:1-5). An apostle will not fight with natural artillery, with things that the natural eye easily accepts as powerful (money, titles, staff, influence, media presence, great political connections etc.), but “in weakness, fear and much trembling” (1 Cor. 2)

with the seemingly ridiculous tools of the spirit, like David and his pitiful pebbles against Goliath. Such apostolic meridian gladiators may use as their tools convicting words, demonstrations of the Spirit's power or wisdom that the wise and experts will simply find foolish. You could almost by default expect them to come in hilariously under-funded and strategically ill-equipped, from the wrong part of town, lonely, without staff, left with a few remnant Timothys – but, amazingly, accomplish the impossible, because God himself is empowering their work and fight. So, to the utter astonishment of the spectators of “the whole universe and the angels as well as men” (1 Cor. 4:9-13) these homeless, slandered fools for Christ, this scum of the earth, the refuse of the world, in all of their weakness, will accomplish the thing everyone else has already given up on. And will do it in such a way that none later will brag and be able to point out to powerful funding, the overabundance of spiritual technology and “worldly influence,” but it happened against all odds. In many ways, this is the sign of a true calling from God: for people to enter into areas of healthy spiritual competence that are in no relationship with our natural giftings and experiences.

A farmer walks with a boy through the fields. The boy asks him: “Sir, tell me what amazes you.” The farmer says: “Do you see that cow there, grazing on the field? That is not amazing.” “But then, what is?” asks the boy. “Do you see that bird singing in the tree? That also is not amazing,” answers the farmer, adding to the boy's frustration. “But sir, what then is it, that would amaze you?” he gasped. “Well, if you see a cow sitting on the branch of a tree and whistling, now that's amazing!” answered the farmer. In other words: if we encounter a work of God where the outcome is in no sensible relationship to the investment, where there is absolutely no natural explanation that would make any sense to the naked eye, chances are very high that we have stumbled on the trail of apostolic work, the sign of a meridian gladiator of God doing his job.

As Church As We Know It with all its manpower, financial billions and media influence, property and equipment, has so clearly failed to fulfill its original apostolic task in these days, and the angels may have slumbered in watching our boring and predictable religion, maybe we have reached that meridian time in history when the gates of the arena suddenly open, and a couple of bewildered, wild-eyed, unkempt misfits stumble into the sand, and, blinded by the limelight, scratch their heads and fumble with their toys to the tune of comical uproar and hysterical laughter of an audience that has seen it all. If this is a true description of healthy apostolic ministry, then a time of stripping away of all earthly power, influence, finance and a total disqualification by all standards of the world must take place first, before a new bunch of unlearned fishermen, ex-theologians, political activists together with former prostitutes, a group smelling of fish, perfume, and revolution, will step into the ring to do their thing. And should they win against all odds, everyone will know that this was not of their own doing, this just must have been God. And exactly because they dared to do the ridiculous, God did the impossible.

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10) Defenders against Wolves

“After I am gone, wild wolves will come in and will not spare the flock” (Acts 20:29), prophesied Paul to the elders of the Church in Ephesus. Jesus prophesied the same when he said: “I send you as lambs among wolves” (Luke

10:3). Who are those “wolves”? Jesus indicates explicitly that they are false prophets: “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15), and Jude, brother of James, dedicates his whole biblical letter to warn of godless men who change the grace of God into a license for immorality, self feeding shepherds blemishing the love feasts of the church, wild waves of the sea foaming up their shame, grumblers and fault finders, boasting about themselves and flattering themselves to advance their cause. When wolves come near a flock of sheep, the result is panic and the scattering of the sheep in a hundred different directions. Wolves not only devour, but also divide the flock. That is why Paul writes to Titus (Tit. 3:10): “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him again. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

The Bible, however, is very clear that it is ultimately never “flesh and blood” against which we fight, but demonic rulers and powers of this dark world: demons. The real wolves, therefore, are never people themselves, but demons driving people. It is not false teachers or prophets alone who are the problem, but also demons (1 Tim. 4:1): “The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” Jesus did not send his disciples as literal lambs among literal wolves, but obviously the wolves he warned them about in Luke 10 were demons, as the disciples came back after their successful short-term mission and reported that not only the false teachers were tamed, but “even the demons submit to us in your name” (Luke 10:17). Jesus was not at all surprised by this report. He expected it. After all, he is the one who said: “If I drive out demons, the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 10:20).

How do apostles defend the sheep against wolves? I believe in two ways.

1) By establishing a safe parameter, a fence of truth by apostolic teaching, declaring to them “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), laying down the original truth, the founding Mega-story, the meta-narrative of God, in the greatest possible clarity so people can easily identify not only the original, but also the fakes. And

2) By driving out demons, and train others to do so.

Healthy apostolic teachers, Jesus being the prime example of this, would slowly guide people from clarity to clarity, like a wise designer who designs a tunnel. Towards the end of the tunnel he will first start with a few lights, then some more, and even more, before people enter the bright, blinding sunlight. The apostolic “sonlight,” to use figurative language, is a high intensity experience, meat, not milk, as Paul calls it. It requires highly digestive abilities of people to *stomach* apostolic truths. That is why it is not possible to give apostolic truth in a nutshell to each and everyone, but pass it on portioned, in doses, so people can handle it. Rather than attempting to drink from a fire hose and blowing everyone away, the water needs to be given in cups, one at a time. Paul knows this very well when he writes: “I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters, for some say his letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive...” (2 Cor. 10:9.10). Paul knew how to be content with “unimpressiveness,” how to deal with people who said: your letters, yes; but your person, my goodness, no. And so, in the spirit of fatherhood, apostolic teaching will not only offload heaps of great teaching, but also

take into account the learning stages of those who are exposed to it.

In this sense, apostles are “stewards of grace,” the *oikodomos*, and the guardians of the household of God (Eph. 3:2). Apostolic ministry is not only a charisma, a gift of God, but also requires stewardship of this gift, its “gift management.” And if gifts were stolen, then they could not be managed anymore. It is clear, therefore, that someone has to protect the household from the goods being stolen “by wolves” or any other thieves.

In the long historic absence of healthy apostolic ministry in CAWKI, wild wolves have done their job with amazing thoroughness, and the result is staggering: fragmentation, rampant immaturity, self-appointed UFO style ministries (UFO: Unidentified Flying Objects) dropping out of the sky and disappearing again without any transparency and accountability. This is an epidemic infection with every possible false teaching and heresy, and a successful equipping and “maturing” of the church into the exact opposite of apostolic, pioneering Christianity. It is consumerism, selfishness, and a religious market catering to working class settlers who believe they have the liberty to pick and choose their theological diet according to their perceived needs and the itches of their curious ears. In such a climate and circumstances, apostolic teaching has the effect of opening a few windows in a room full of stale air. It blows away the cobwebs, clears the air, separates the necessary from the unnecessary, gives healthy guidelines, and makes it very difficult for wolves to do their job. In addition to its refreshing function of constantly reinitiating people into their own destiny—the preaching of apostolic purpose—it has a protective function: keep the wolves away, or drive them away. The driving out of demons seems not only to be a constant by-product of the ministry of Jesus, but an essential part of his mission: to remove the bloodsucking demonic occupants from the turf that he is invading and drive them back, so that the peace of God can spread.

If the role of the church is “to make God’s wisdom known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 3:10), then the apostolic ministry will have to be constantly in the business of “defending the garden,” by confronting the demonic beings and defusing one of their widely used strategies which is the introduction of demonically twisted teaching, that, disguised as good business sense, administrative logic or sensational new insights, stun an immature audience into a demonic stronghold of the mind. They will then accept as impossible what God clearly wants to do, and replace it with the cheap substitutes of organized religion. One of the chief carriers of wolfish teachings, as Jesus has predicted, are false prophets, but we also see Paul radically aflame with jealousy against any falseness even in God’s legitimate apostles, as in the case of Peter (Gal. 2), let alone his stern warnings about false apostles.

Mature apostles and prophets will know that whatever they say and bring to a stubborn church, there will always be rejection, because people are used to rejecting God in favor of self-made or demonic religion. They need to be, therefore, *praise-proof*, supernaturally able to do ministry unerringly not in order to be heard, praised, accepted or even funded, but to please God and carry out his commands. Immature apostles and prophets, having to deal with people’s general rejection of God’s messages and still in need of learning not to take it personally, will constantly be tempted to stun people with their apostolic or prophetic insights, which absolutely can be brought on with a bang. It is easy

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to stun religious people into becoming a subservient crowd, huddling with glee in the powerful shade of Brother Anointed. But many so-called apostolic networks are nothing else than the organized audience and fan club of a spiritual stunner that likes the feel (and let's be honest, the cash flow) connected with it. This is where immature prophets and apostles became false prophets and apostles, wolves, against which healthy and legitimate apostles will have to stand up and protect the flock. This may even mean that a wolf arriving at the local railway station or airport needs to be met and turned back as *persona non grata*. Why would anyone with a passionate heart for an apostolic jurisdiction allow someone with a dangerous disease, carrying a deadly virus, allow free access into his house and infect the unaware and immature sheep?

Not only are apostolic people consumed with their concern for accurate building and the purity of the gospel in their area, but for the protection of the region from spiritual viruses, from intruders who disturb the work. Paul mentions in his writings not only to “watch out for the dogs, men who do evil” (Phil 3:2), but mentions names of three people he expressly warns the church about, and has their names published in the most widely read book on the planet: Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Demas (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:10). John warns of the many individual “antichrists” (1 John 1:18) and specifically warns of a fellow by name of Diotrephes (3 John 9). This would be comparable to a blacklist on the Internet that warns everyone publicly of dangerous teachers, people who are to be avoided. Any good father would do the same for his beloved family. And it is this kind of regional responsibility that keeps the healthy teaching in and the bad teaching and teachers out – a mark of apostolic spiritual fatherhood.

There has been a time – and it has not ended yet – that it was fashionable for immature prophets and self-appointed apostles, or those who function as emissaries of illegitimate pseudo-apostolic networks, to come to regions where I live and work, and eagerly start to anoint, ordain and commission typically quite immature people in the region hungry for significance to be “apostles and prophets” – obviously with disastrous results. This demonic and artificial disturbance of God's healthy, organic, development needs to be confronted head on, again not seeing the false or immature prophets or apostles as the real problem, but the demonic wolves behind them.

11) Plant self-multiplying church planting movements

One of the signs of a true prophet is prophecy fulfilled; one of the true signs of an apostle is churches that are multiplying themselves. When Paul had done his job of planting a self-multiplying church-planting movement in Ephesus, pretty soon the new disciples took care of the rest. The process went through the organic, natural stages of growth from believers to disciples to multiplying churches, so that it could be said that “all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10.26). If our records of apostolic history are correct, this is what happened in all those regions where the original, biblically-mentioned apostles went. First we saw new believers developing into disciples, and finally “the churches grew daily in number” (Acts 16:5).

When the apostolic ministry after the first century was first glorified, then mystified, and finally replaced with non-apostolic substitutes, the church at large had, under the guidance of demons, effectively cut itself loose from

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its essential apostolic resources. The first thing that died in the process was blessed reproduction, the God-given ability to multiply itself. This happened because the viral apostolic DNA had been exchanged for theological schools and their debates. They endlessly broke already fractured pieces of the whole until even the most potent truth was preached to death. This ripped the truth out of its apostolic context for the sake of orthodox legalism and because of an immature desire to be safe in the presence of correct doctrine, rather than in the presence of a loving father. The result was monumental stagnation, and, if at all, the church grew by addition (making members, not disciples), employing completely painless membership-recruiting strategies like child baptism, “colonization,” and sometimes even hostile takeovers of tribes and lands by pseudo-Christian empires in the name of “Christianization.” Since then, every healthy apostolic movement on the planet has had to fight first not the demons “out there”, but the demons “in here”, battling with the very issues that have made the church non-apostolic, as we can read in Roland Allen’s classic book, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. The cry of mission thinkers in recent centuries for the self-propagation of the church was actually nothing other than the healthy cry for the apostolic quality of self-multiplying church planting movements.

12. Make the Jews jealous

There is one last but not least symptom of healthy apostolic ministry: **to make the Jews jealous**. The whole concept is laid out in Romans 11:11-26, and prophesied by Moses in his final song in Deuteronomy 32:21, where God speaks to Israel: “I will make you envious by those that are not a nation.” God had intended for Israel to be his model humanity, his global shopping window. All earth should be able to look at Israel and see for themselves how it is when people belong and believe in the only one living God. All idolatrous nations should stand in awe and jealousy looking at how blessed and unique it is to be a nation in community with its creator and God.

But Israel became a renegade bride, jumped into bed with other gods, although the Father’s love burned with passion for her. God warned, punished, prophesied, even decimated his people, using every trick in the book to make her see his love, and even ended up sending his love to Babylon, into a state of utter shame and disgrace, the very opposite of being a model society, a nearly hopeless case hung out to dry, left to be purified and cleaned from all idolatry. But to no immediate avail. Israel returned back to simply build up its own faded glory, reestablish itself, and failed to understand even the slightest notion about its own apostolic mission to the world: to be the city on a mountain, the Zion that the whole world watches, observes and finally decides: “let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his path.” They were to say: The law goes out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2). But Israel was unwilling to comply, and remained stubbornly selfish and rather consumed the words of the Lord for themselves, in their own culturally closed religious revival, endlessly and proudly bathing in the abundant waters of truth God had revealed to them for the blessing of themselves **and others**, while the spiritually arid nations around them watched in amazement with dry mouths, thirsty for water, but no one would give it to them. Their options, according to Israel,

were minimal: they either could finally become Israel's slaves, circumcise and become proselytes, or simply go to hell and join their gods there. When God finally sent Jesus, prophesied about in hundreds of ways to Israel, the nation was so bloated with religious self-importance, so much run by self-righteous, blind theological tribes, that they simply had no categories anymore, no eyes and proper understanding to receive the messianic apostle that their own eternal lover had sent – and in an orgy of ignorance swiftly took him and nailed him to the cross, accompanied by shouts of religious zeal, while being in bed with the Romans and the idols of theological self-righteousness.

Once again, Israel misunderstood the hour of its reckoning completely, and was utterly unable and unwilling to live God's dream: to be a prophetic people that make other people jealous of his love and entice them to seek him, too. And so God transferred a vital part of the original call and commission of Israel upon his son Jesus – and the church that Jesus was building. His body on earth should now go and be that very model society, the shopping window of God, where other people yet outside of God could see how they loved each other, and therefore know that these people are God's disciples. They should do what Israel has failed to do, and "make disciples of all nations," teaching them to obey all that the one that came from Zion has to say.

When Israel, though totally uninterested in anyone else but themselves, watches this "in a spirit of stupor with unseeing eyes" (Rom. 10:8) through loopholes and little gaps in the veil that covers their minds (2 Cor. 3:13-15), there will be a time when "the hardening" (Rom. 11:25) will soften, and suddenly it will sink in, and some will start saying "Look! These guys are doing what **we** are actually supposed to be doing. Look at the miracles; wasn't this prophesied to **us**, but it happens with **them**? Look at all those nations turning, well, to **our** God because of them! Wasn't that supposed to happen through **us**? Look at this explosive mushrooming of communities who say they have a Jewish King called Jesus! Look at the quality of their prophecies; it reminds us of our own old prophets! Look at their radiating lifestyle: they seem to already be living in a sort of Messianic Kingdom... could it be what simply can't be, that they have found the one we have been waiting for all our lives? That what the Christians have claimed all along was actually the truth, hidden from us Jews by their religious Christian bigotry, their spiritual powerlessness, their crusades, their fighting, and their very churches and lives that have traditionally been so sub-standard to our normal Jewish religion?"

The Bible is clear that there will be a time when it will be jealousy, if nothing else, that will penetrate the veil and the hearts of the Jewish people. And this jealousy will not be ignited by CAWKI, but by the Church As God Wants It (CAGWI), an apostolic-prophetic church that has repented from the very same sins of self-righteousness, idolatry and theological consumerism that Israel has demonstrated to the world for thousands of years. This will be the starting point for "all Israel to be saved," for them to wake up and hear and understand what they have heard and seen before, but without understanding.

Paul describes two conditions for "all of Israel to be saved": a) the *pleroma* of the gentiles, their full number, to be brought in; and b) a jealousy, an envy for the apostolic ministry.

How does the envying work? I believe in four areas:

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a) through the **supernatural dimension** that confirms the presence of God. “Jews demand signs,” and apostolic-prophetic Christianity experiences more signs than even the most obstinate and stubborn unbeliever can handle in the long run.

b) Superior integrity and character. The level of dedication to the values of the Kingdom of God among his loyal subjects will have to be simply more powerful and convincing than the very high moral of the Jewish race. Double standards and the sexual, financial and moral licentiousness of the past and much of present day Christendom will simply not suffice. Only an apostolic and prophetic upgrade, an entirely new dedication to live a sacrificial and consecrated life separated for God will do. And this life has to be proven and made plain: it needs to be shown in transparency, in real life, not hidden under the bowl of church buildings or simply written or sung about in dreamy language.

c) Kingdom economics. Apostolic finance principles, the economic dynamics that Jesus brought to us and that are supposed to be the financial engine of the Kingdom, are simply better than anything this world has to offer in financial terms, even better than the accumulated banking and investment wisdom of Jewish families working in the financial sector. Once the church allows the apostolic and prophetic ministry to mold it and starts living the financial and economic part of the Kingdom, this will cause great consternation and bewilderment, but also jealousy, among the Jewish people, especially as they are going to be blessed out of their socks financially by this apostolic reformation. An apostolic financial reformation will prove that yes, you can count on God, he has paid work for you, and he pays for what he orders. It is possible to live by faith, and not be forced to live by calculation forever, and therefore, financially, we can fly like a butterfly, rather than follow the crevasses of the earth like the caterpillar of conventional financial wisdom of this world – of which, I believe, the Jews are clearly the world champions.

d) Healthy and legitimate apostolic ministry. Like nothing else, the apostolic ministries among the gentiles as well as those sent to Israel and raised and matured within Israel, will demonstrate the authenticity of all this to the Jewish eyes. Paul literally praises his apostolic calling (Greek: *ei pos paradselos*, in order to make jealous) with the definite expectation of making the Jews envious. There they see how the people groups, tribes, and nations of this earth are won and gathered to embrace their very own Messiah by another movement that carries out that singular and monumentally important task that God originally had for them: to see all nations blessed.

If so much hinges on these developments, we can understand why Israel and its role is so intensely controversial; why the supernatural dimension is so bitterly rejected by many churches, why issues of morale and character (including church discipline) have been so taboo in many circles; why there exists so much utter confusion about Christian finances, and why the apostolic has been so incredibly contested. ***The salvation of the world literally depends on it.*** And the devil and his demons often know this better than anyone else. But all the evidence shows: the good guys are winning. What is happening globally is a monumental struggle and birth, a fight to regain the very lost dimension of original Christian existence, for which the regaining of a healthy apostolic and prophetic set-up is paramount. As these ministries emerge and start their

work, a new type of ekklesia is born that is very much like the very old one. Like the dead man thrown into the grave of the prophet Elisha who came alive after touching the prophets bones, by touching its own apostolic and **therefore** truly Jewish roots, we seem to have entered the final lap of history, where, I believe, it is a matter of only a very few decades to see us all run through the finish line of God.

Where are we in this development regarding Israel today? If you are a keen watcher of Israel, you will see that after the re-establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948 we saw the slow emergence of messianic congregations and that which has been called messianic Christianity. Historically speaking, this movement is strongly inspired by largely charismatic American values and practices. Initially, a few hundred and by now a few thousand Jews have found Jesus in the US and have since migrated to Israel, often meeting in the pattern of a typical non-denominational pastoral church air-lifted from the US to Israel. In these meetings, modern day Jews, who have found Jesus as their Messiah, seek to express their faith in Jesus in the cultural and often religious ways of Judaism. If statistics tell us anything, the traditional, and specifically the religious Jews of Israel have been profoundly unimpressed by this form of imported and only marginally adapted Western Christianity. Religion does not impress religious people. In fact, there has been – and still is – a steady stream of Evangelical and other Christians into Israel that come either as tourists, or to be refreshed and reinitiated into their faith by “connecting to the vine,” by which they either mean Messianic Christianity, or Jewish religion and traditions. They return home often enough with Jewish prayer shawls and stoles around their necks, instead of calling him Jesus they now call him Jeshua Hamashiach, begin and end every E-mail with Shalom, carry more stars of David on their body than we might think possible, having planted trees but not a single church in Israel. Instead of making the Jews jealous, the very opposite has happened: non-apostolic Christianity is jealous of “Jewishness.” And it has every reason to be: the level of religious knowledge, the morality, the dedication, upbringing, standards and consistency and fervor of the average Jewish family, although strongly waning under the onslaught of Globalization, is beyond the quality of your typical Evangelical or classical-Christian family. Rather than making the Jews jealous, they have become jealous of the Jews – their own non-apostolic “rootlessness” and lack of foundation makes people crave for Israel’s apparent safety inside its geopolitical borders, and its physical connection to the historic sites of their faith. But that is a fake security. We are either safe in God, or not safe at all.

Israel has already started to envy the apostolic, in a very interesting way. However, it is not through denominational church-transplants from outside, not through more Jewish immigrants from Russia, and also not through the so-called messianic congregations. My friend Ray Register, having worked almost all his life as a missionary in Israel, has written a fascinating church planning history of Israel called ***Back to Jerusalem***. In it he relates the story of how some young messianic believers in 1975, after reading the book of Acts, rediscovered authentic house church as a legitimate form of ekklesia and started to experiment with it in a little village. News spread through the grape vine, and people from all over started to come and watch and join this new venture.

Instead of making the Jews jealous, the very opposite has happened: non-apostolic Christianity is jealous of “Jewishness.”

However, a nearby Jewish Rabbi saw it and said, in a prophetic way (and I will use my own words here): "This type of Christianity we know. All those other imported versions of Christianity are fairly harmless to us Jews. But this house church thing we know; that is dangerous. It has been here before! If we permit this to come up again in Israel, it will be the beginning of the end." And with this amazing clarity, he hired a bunch of thugs to smash up the place, stomp out the dangerous fires and prevent a disaster for Israel-as-he-knows-it.

As I read these pages in Ray's book in an Egyptian hotel room, I stopped, pondered and prayed: "God, if you would allow me to meet these guys from that village and of those early house church attempts in 1975, I will try to encourage them to go back to their original dream, and to see that Rabbi's prophecy come true: the end of an Israel cut off from its God, and the conversion of the entire nation to its Founder and age-old heavenly lover." Amazingly enough, through a series of events God had set up, he allowed me to connect with those very people, who, 25 years later, had almost completely abandoned the original vision, although I found a flicker of the fire still alive. May it so be, even as they read these very lines in this book, that this original fire is supernaturally rekindled, and God will blow on them and through them again, for the very sake of Israel.

Apostles in the Bible

Having looked at apostolic fruits in an attempt to discern the essence and nature of apostolic ministry, let us now define the origin and biblical history of apostolic ministry.

In Luke 11:48, when Jesus said to the Pharisees that God has sent "apostles and prophets, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute," it implies that this describes a lineage that existed "since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah" (v.51). The history of the apostolic ministry correctly starts with God himself going out after Adam and asking: "Adam where are you?" He "sent out himself," and later sent others in his stead. This mission of God, which theologians have referred to as the *Missio Dei*, his impetus to search out lost mankind and reconcile man to God, is the foundational nature of God. God is not static; he is on the move, actively out there to pursue his loving and ultimate goals with humanity.

Throughout the Old Testament, we find this mission in various forms: the wisdom that shouts on the streets and was there when God laid the foundations of the earth - see the book of Job - or in the long succession of names of people who had apostolic tasks and roles: Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, the Judges, Deborah, Bezaleel, Oholiab, David, Solomon, Hiram, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel or Zechariah. In many ways, the role of the few godly kings in the days of Old Testament in Israel was an apostolic role: to establish godly government and a framework of healthy stewardship of "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2) that God had entrusted to the Jewish people.

In the New Testament, the term apostle is used for Jesus himself, "the apostle and high priest of our faith" (Heb. 3:1-2), and the twelve first disciples of Jesus (Matt. 10:2-4): "These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew, James son of Zebedee, and his brother John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector, James

"This type of Christianity we know. All those other imported versions of Christianity are fairly harmless to us Jews. But this house church thing we know; that is dangerous. It has been here before! If we permit this to come up again in Israel, it will be the beginning of the end."

son of Alpheus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." But this was not at all the end of the apostolic circle. At least twelve further apostolic persons are mentioned in the New Testament: Matthias was the first but not the only apostle added to the eleven, by the casting of lots (Acts 1:15-26). The others are Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5.10), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), James, the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19), Andronicus and Junia (according to most language specialists clearly a female name; Rom. 16:7), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silvanus "Silas" and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1.1; 2,6-7) and two other apostles not specifically named (2 Cor. 8).

Apostolic roles and functions

With the sending forth of Jesus, God's own son, we see, in comparison to the time of the Old Testament, an intensification of sending-out, an increasingly "Apostolic Age." God had sent out people before, as well as his word, but now he sends out his word in person, Jesus the Christ, and, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist stood at the threshold of this, between an age of the law and the beginning of the age of grace. Noah saw both the old and new world; the two were separated by immersion in water. John, like Noah, is also a watershed person, separating the age of the prophets from the age of the apostles. Prophets wrote nearly all of the books of the Old Testament; the New Testament writers were primarily apostles. As Paul later says, that the church is built on the foundation of "the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20), it is clear that he not only means the apostolic and prophetic persons, but also their writings. One of the apostolic functions that we need to mention here is that apostles wrote down most of the words of God in the New Testament. The spirit of God inspired them to write in order to equip the people of God for the work of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), something very similar to the function of the so-called five fold ministry in its entirety (Eph. 4:11-13).

We have already looked at some of the special functions of apostles, and let us not forget the unique roles of the early twelve, the "apostles of the Lamb", as their names are written on the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem and their future involvement in "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28), an activity related to "the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). We have also looked at the apostolic fathering aspects, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 4:15: "You might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers." That is why specifically in Paul's life we see him in a fathering role in at least four ways: he fathers new believers, fathers others to be raised and released into ministry in general, fathers entire (regional) churches and fathers others into apostolic ministry.

Let us focus on three more key functions of the apostolic ministry that we see in general in the Bible: Establish a spirit of mission to create an apostolic environment for others; Be the *schaliach* (viceroy) of God (One who rules as the representative of his or her king); Be *protos* in the church.

1) To establish and constantly reestablish the sent-ness of God, the *Missio Dei* among God's people, infecting the entire Body with this spirit by receiving the apostolic baton and passing it on to the next generation until Christ returns is a clear function of the apostolic ministry. They are responsible that the Mission goes on, sent ones who are charged with the very continuati-

on of the sending and who mold the climate of the propagation *of* the church, not only *in* the church. In this sense, they are empowered under God (and only in cooperation with the Holy Spirit) to send others on missions. This means that apostles are not the exclusive missionaries of God, but the entire Body of Christ is a missionary, sent out by God to accomplish the tasks of God, simply because everyone is baptized by the same apostolic spirit of God into the Body of Jesus Christ, the ultimate apostolic missionary.

This also means that those who are not designated by Jesus to be apostles can and should still function in an apostolic spirit, in a framework that is apostolic, and clearly have their absolutely vital role in apostolic mission. Not all disciples were apostles, but all apostles were disciples. Apostles were called out of the group of disciples around Jesus, and there was only one reason that qualified a disciple to be called out to be an apostle: **Jesus wanted him!** (Mark 3:14). The 72 in Luke 10 whom Christ sent out to do as the Twelve did, although not specifically called apostles, clearly functioned in apostolic authority, because Jesus, the apostle, had sent them out to do his bidding on his behalf. They functioned in an apostolic spirit, something that is a foundational model for the entire Body of Christ. This means, in practice, that we will be able to be evangelists, pastors, deacons, church planters who work in direct cooperation with apostolic people and are therefore apostolic evangelists, apostolic pastors, apostolic deacons or apostolic church planters. Otherwise, we will either ignore or even refuse to link up with the apostolic people in our area and, as a result, will function off the grid of apostolic coordinates, outside the parameters of apostolic ministry. This leads us to another, vitally important function of the apostolic:

Not all disciples were apostles, but all apostles were disciples.

2) They are the Schaliachs of God. The Greek word for 'apostle' has its Hebrew/Aramaic roots in the word *schaliach*. A *schaliach*, in Jewish tradition, was a messenger who was legally entitled to act on behalf of the one who sent him. He was a viceroy whose words and letters were as legally binding as the one on whose authority he was acting. The concept of *schaliach* was a well-known and firmly established legal institution in everyday life of ancient times. In business or even in one's own marital engagement one could be represented by a *schaliach*. In today's world, it would be equal to a representative, a lawyer acting on behalf of his client, an ambassador representing a country or kingdom, someone with authority vested in him that is larger than his own personal authority. A schaliach was as important – but not more important – as the one who sent him, as Jesus explains in John 13:16, and he carried the authority (Greek: *exousia*), of his sender, the right to act, like an attorney of the State has "the power of attorney." The question asked from a *schaliach* was not "can he personally deliver like the one who sent him?" "Is his character or personality sufficient for the job?" (as if that were the point), but "is he legally entitled to act on behalf of someone else's authority?" He carried the weight of his master, and his own weight, so to speak, was of no consequence. The issue is legality, not personality; the only important issue was whether the *schaliach's* sent-ness was legitimate or not. In our individualistic age, we would first jump in to scrutinize the messenger, every aspect of his life and personality, to fit our own impossible standards.

And as we humans need humility to respect any authority, we are inclined to find as many hairs in the soup as we want, and, as we reject the messengers

as inadequate, we are in grave danger of rejecting the message as well as the sender. The Bible puts the emphasis not on the personality of the messenger, but on the personality of the sender. The messenger is but a servant, a function and emanation of the sender. In a very real sense he is nothing, but the one who sent him is everything. A good *schaliach* "no longer lives" (Gal 2:20), but lives for the one who sent him. The issue for the *schaliach* is therefore not ability, but license.

Jesus was empowered to be the *schaliach* of God. This caused a scandal, especially as he started to act it out, for example in forgiving sins, something only God can do (Mark 2:5-10). Jesus passes on this authority of a *schaliach* to his apostles through the generations: "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me" (Matt. 10:40). This authority to speak on behalf of the *schaliach* of God is amazingly not confined only to the early twelve apostles, but specifically given to the 72 faceless and nameless sent ones (Luke 10:16): "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

After the resurrection in John 20: 21-23, Jesus addresses his *disciples*, using that summary term of both apostles as well as those disciples who were not called apostles: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you... If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." The forgiveness of sins is probably *the* central aspect of a person on earth acting on behalf of God in heaven; nothing else so clearly makes the statement that a human acts as a *schaliach* on behalf of God.

Acting as a *schaliach* needed authorization, letters of introduction, the seal of the King or the word of a trusted mouth. The biblical term for this is *exousia*, a legal power vested by God in somebody, like in the story of Eliakim son of Hilkiah, mentioned in Isaiah 22:20: he was given authority, and as a sign, he was given a big key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open, which of course is a prophetic typology to what Jesus did later to his disciples in Matt. 16:19-20, giving them "the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Classical Evangelicalism, in its practical rejection of a modern day function of the apostolic and its understandably apologetic disposition towards Roman Catholic theology and practices, has tried to claim and assign all of the specific apostolic functions to "the disciples" and, usually not differentiating between disciples and believers, even the church in general. But again, that is neither true nor practical, because, yes, every apostle is a disciple, but not every disciple is an apostle (1 Cor. 12:29). This becomes specifically interesting in "the key question," as Jesus has given the keys of the Kingdom, no, not to everyone, but to the apostles. If, like non-apostolic Protestantism and later Evangelicalism proclaimed, everyone has a key, why have keys at all? Keys for all are not keys at all.

In summary: modern day *schaliachs*, apostles, are Kingdom key holders, acting on behalf of royal Kingdom authority that the Father has vested in Jesus, Jesus has vested in them, and they, in turn, confirm that vested authority in others whom they encounter. This means that apostles do not have the authority to ordain others into apostleship. They do not have the right to

choose apostles at their own bidding at all. This is still a job totally and completely under the monopoly of Jesus; he still chooses those who he wants. The only thing that apostles can do as they encounter those who are called to be apostles by Jesus is to **recognize** this calling and either “give them the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9), or brand them, after testing, as false apostles.

Even in the choosing of Matthias as a follow-up apostle for Judas, the apostles looked at two who fitted the bill, and then allowed God to ultimately choose one of them by the casting of lots. They did not ordain Matthias, but proposed him and asked God who knows everyone’s heart to show them which of these two **he had chosen** (Acts 1:23-26). In that sense, yes, there is an apostolic succession, an initiating of ever new apostolic people into their apostolic role of a **schaliach** of God, and those who already function in this role have the role, humbly and carefully under God, of assimilating new apostles into their ranks, never to assume and usurp the role of God himself of choosing and ordaining apostles. Wherever this happens – humans ordain others to be apostles – it marks the beginning of cults. But where we keep our humility in the choosing of apostles and recognizing them according to the obvious grace God has given them, the fruits of their ministry and their Christ-like character, we remain on biblical ground.

3) Protons in the church. “And in the church, God has appointed first (Greek **proton**) apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, those having gifts of healing, those who help others, those with the gift of administration and those speaking in different kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). In the order of God, the way he has established things to be in the church, according to the laws of the spirit, apostles are first. What does this firstness mean? As the New Testament clearly rejects the hierarchical systems we see in business and false religions, it defines firstness totally differently from our success-driven hierarchical world. The world defines firstness by rank and authority, importance and significance. A No. 1 is above No. 2, in “pyramidal,” top-down pecking order where 4 answers to 3 who answers to 2 who answers to 1 who answers to no one. In the Kingdom of God, other rules apply. Here **firstness is defined in terms of servanthood, “lastness,” and priorities:** the last are the first; “whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave; who wants to be first shall be last and the servant of all.” Firstness also means that first things come first: seek **first** the kingdom. In this way, apostolic firstness means **putting first things first**, like architectural reasoning before a building project is started, as Jesus says in Luke 14:28: “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not **first** sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Or to sit together in strategic council before a war” (Luke 14:31)? “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not **first** sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”

Apostolic firstness also means **firstness in suffering** before any glory (Luke 17:25): “But **first** He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” In a very real sense, healthy apostles suffer exactly the same fate as Jesus: they are rejected, persecuted, stoned, and killed, since they represent the King and a government of this King whom sinful people reject, whether inside the

The only thing that apostles can do as they encounter those who are called to be apostles by Jesus is to recognize this calling and either “give them the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9), or brand them, after testing, as false apostles.

church or outside. That is why apostles are not crowned by triumph, but with suffering. Paul, in an attempt to explain his apostleship, feeling the need to boast to the Corinthians who were absolutely steeped into the success language of the word, needed to tell them about some of his apostolic triumphs and breakthroughs but felt foolish in doing so (2 Cor. 11:16). The real mark of apostles, he goes on to say, is their suffering for Christ.

If we build a building, the foundations, the basement, comes first in the building process, not the roof. That is why we need to be suspicious of any "apostle" clearly and happily visible on the rooftop of a church and ask him how come he is not in the basement any longer.

In their firstness, apostles also **feel the need to always go back to Square One**, to the foundation and roots, and put first things first, constantly realigning the values in the church, specifically in the areas of finances, as this expresses priorities probably more than any other sphere of life, with Kingdom values.

There also is **a clear firstness in the entire building process**: Apostles come in first and establish the building site, prophets come in second, and, as they prophesy, the work goes on smoothly (see also Ezra 5:1-2). Teachers come in third and establish sound walls for a firm house; miracle workers come in fourth, break up the hard ground around the new building site with the supernatural dimension they carry; healers come in fifth and help fill the house with many healed people who now want to join the church, and as those new people need lots of help in their new life, helpers, sixth, come in to do exactly that at the time when it is necessary. As the whole movement swells up, the need for godly administration arises more and more, and this is when administrators come in seventh, exactly when they are needed in the process. And when they do their job well, there are no human words left to describe the joy unspeakable that is rampant in the new house, and this results in people speaking every type of tongues, eighth, the utterances of the spirit of God filling the air (see 1 Cor. 12:28).

How amazing it is to see the *diabolos*, Satan the great tumbler of things, put this entire intelligent building process on its head. There was a time when speaking in tongues was the ultimate experience people sought after, the first thing that was seemingly important in Christianity. Administration and especially money-matters was the second priority, diaconia and helping third, healers and miracle workers became more and more unimportant. Teachers were sent to seminaries and monasteries far away from the church; prophets were relegated to the Biblical times, or else stoned or ostracized, and apostles declared to not even exist. God in this time is restoring divine order in his house and will, wherever necessary, turn the entire church value system on its head, so that again, first things are first. And this means that apostles can again venture out, take their tools, and start digging.

There is even a firstness among those first apostles: Jesus made distinctions within his circle of Twelve and had an even smaller circle of three around him: Peter, James, and John (Mark 5:37; 13:3; 14:33, etc.). This led to several quarrels and jealousies among them (Luke 9:34; 22:24), but remained the order in the church even after Pentecost, as Paul describes those very three, James, Cephas, and John, to be "pillars of the church" (Gal. 2:9). This is only a problem if, again, we see firstness through worldly glasses and immediately think of rank and pecking orders. In Kingdom terms, their firstness is mainly defined in closeness

Apostles are not crowned by triumph, but with suffering.

to Jesus, and all those three experienced first hand the persecution, two of them even martyrdom, in their servanthood towards Christ and the church.

Are apostles still necessary today?

This question, after all that's been said, is of course completely superfluous. So let me just point out that quite obviously, the church has neither yet entered into the full and mature adulthood, the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," nor fulfilled its apostolic mission on the planet just yet, with a mere 10% of the global population claiming a personal allegiance to Christ. That alone is reason enough for the continued need for apostles until God's purposes are fulfilled and his goals are reached. There has been a historic process in the church substituting the apostolic role with almost anything else. So we should not be surprised, therefore, either at the plain ignorance, the twisted foolishness, and the scoliosis of the church, that in the very absence of a desperately needed apostolic ministry, finally explains it away. This is not only the case in the so-called dispensational schools of thought, but in many other branches of Christendom that, as we will see, came into existence mainly because they denied the validity of apostolic ministries in their days, or misinterpreted it so grossly that they became cultic, with destruction built into their own foundation.

Different types of Apostles

The Bible does differentiate between "Apostles of Christ" and apostles of the churches. Apostles of Christ were selected by Jesus himself during his earthly times, although Paul also called himself an Apostle of Jesus Christ, since he was met and called by the risen Christ after his earthly days. To say that there are no apostles anymore today because Christ does not walk this earth anymore and cannot therefore call out new people into apostolic ministry is not only misinterpreting the present ministry of Christ who is *still* calling out apostles from among his disciples, but ignoring the very nature of Paul's calling. Apostles of churches are those who *represent* churches who sent them (2 Cor. 8:18-23). If we agree that no church can exist without the spirit of Jesus present in them, a church is a legal representative, the Body of Christ, on earth, through which Christ can still call out and commission people to continue apostolic work.

Looking at the various apostles whom Jesus called out, we see a similarity in calling, but differences in the way they managed or administered that calling. The charisma is the same; the administration of that charisma can vary. Peter, for example, was married, most probably had children, and the Bible knows no incident where Peter actually planted a church outside Israel, other than being part of the apostolic church planting team in Jerusalem, the apostolic follow up of Philip's mission into Samaria, and his church planting activity in the house of Cornelius. Peter probably did not carry a frequent flyer card, and was a fairly resident apostle in Jerusalem. James, the elder of the Jerusalem church, a pillar in the church, had probably even fewer miles on his card: he had a very vital voice in settling arguments in apostolic councils with the special wisdom that God seemed to have given him. Paul, as we know him, was not married, quite obviously had a diamond frequent flyer card and was often and extensively gone. He functioned in a revelatory dimension that we do not find in most other apostles. He taught things Jesus did not (yet) teach in per-

son, describing, for example, in detail the principles of the demonic systems. John was the apostle with probably the strongest prophetic dimension, who was not only at the bosom of Christ during the earthly days of Jesus, but also afterwards, as the book of Revelation he wrote suggests. He did not seem to have a specific apostolic geographical jurisdiction, but was an *apostle of issues* like unity, intimacy, or the last days.

Dick Scoggins, a church planting teacher and mentor from the US, says this about “Pauline and Petrine apostleships:” “If we read Galatians 2:8-10 as portraying two types of apostleship we see some compelling ramifications. In this passage, Paul states that Peter recognized his (and Barnabas’) calling as apostles to the Gentiles, while Paul and Barnabas recognized Peter’s (and James and John’s) apostleship to the circumcised (Jews). So we see that there is an apostolic ministry to the unreached (the Pauline), but there is also an apostolic ministry to the existing people of God (the Petrine). For me the clincher was that Jesus is, of course, the forerunner of both, but the bulk of His apostleship was to Israel. This means that much of the New Testament is about Petrine apostleship. So what does Petrine apostleship look like, and why is it important today?” Dick goes on to apply this to the challenge of the church West like this: “Western Christendom is in a key transition, perhaps undergoing as large a cultural shift as occurred during the Reformation when I realize that a last great era of Petrine apostles brought the Church out of medieval forms and into modern forms. But now we are entering a new time. What would the ministry of Petrine apostles look like today? Such pioneers would not be called to make further adaptations to faltering models, but rather, like Jesus, Peter, James, and John, call God’s people to move on from old formulations and journey into the new. Such a journey will be every bit as radical and terrifying as it must have been for those early Jewish believers who watched the destruction of their nation and traditions. Today’s Petrine apostles will bear the same primary mark of apostleship – persecution, for their ministry is bound to be misunderstood (at best) by existing churches.”

How do we recognize false Apostles?

Now that we have looked at the original, let us deal with the false; with apostolic charlatans. The Bible knows two versions of apostles: real ones, and false ones. 2 Cor. 11:13 says: “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” Jesus himself speaks prophetically about the need to test apostles to the angel of the church in Ephesus in Rev. 2:2: “I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.” Paul speaks, in 2 Cor. 11 of those who are *hyperapostolos*, a Greek term aptly translated super apostles, “trained speakers” who basically preach another Christ (2 Cor. 11:4-6), and have a *hyper* or *super*-dimension to themselves.

False apostles come in three forms: charlatans, real apostles gone either sour, and those genuinely apostolic but who work in illegitimate ways not in sync with the principles of the Kingdom. Before we look at that, we need to mention one of the crucial questions about apostleship: *who gave them their mandate?* Did God give it to them and truly called them “according to his will,”

or did they call – and ordain – themselves, more or less violently usurping something of God that can only be given as an undeserved grace? This is what Paul refers to in his letter to the Galatians, when he makes it clear that he is an apostle “sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1).

A typical symptom of man-made apostleship is the calling of each other, a human ordaining into apostleship, where people are ultimately “sent from man and by man,” even if this concept has become very institutionalized and became traditionally acceptable under the title of mission agencies and organizations that attach a label of divine “sentness” to those wishing to work for them. We will not find any healthy apostle in the Bible who legitimizes his apostleship by the fact that he is a card-carrying member of an Apostolic Club, an apostolic coalition or network, and that by the mere fact that he is a member in a human organization he is therefore to be regarded as the real article. That would be an entirely foreign concept to the Bible –and exactly the kind of thing false or illegitimate apostles would brag about even before you ask them.

False apostles come first as charlatans, apostolic impostors, people who say they are apostles but are not, DIY (do-it-yourself) apostles who have gotten an apostolic title on the internet or out of thin air, and use it like a business opportunity on the religious market. Their main hallmark is that they legitimize *themselves*, whether asked or not; people who scream into our faces that they are Apostle so and so, and we’d better fall flat to the ground in holy reverence in their presence. These imposters are dangerous deceivers, but will ultimately create not much more than confusion, division, or religious soul-ties. They usually end up as cult leaders, washed ashore by time at some point as one more oblivious person saying about himself what he really was not. Such DIY apostles are a nuisance but harmless compared with the two other kinds, real apostles gone sour and immature apostles that deem themselves ready before they are ready.

There are those who have a genuine apostolic calling, but the wrong character. They have the right content, a true calling and commissioning, but are not exactly earthen vessels. Rather, they are living out their apostolic role in immature, illegitimate or wild ways, and as a result they function outside the legitimate principles of the Kingdom, become UFO-type apostles. They usually start either top-down ministries with themselves as the widely visible figurehead – where the apostle is on the roof, but not in the basement – and become trapped by their own success and significance in a sort of golden cage that they will find increasingly difficult to get out at some point (as it typically happens if they are leading a CAWKI-denomination or a classical Mega-church). If they go really sour in their search for an audience, they can start plain personality cults or end up having an important role in the sectarian or cultic movements of today like the Mormons, the New Apostolic Cult or the Jehovah’s Witnesses. This goes right up to the startling statement of John that “many antichrists have gone out *from us*” (1 John 2:18-19).

As Jesus was a true apostle, the Antichrist will come as a false apostle. This could mean, that the coming Antichrist, singular, is a former true apostle turned into a false apostle, an apostolic reject that, yes, does come out of the church. But because he could not handle the trauma, constant rejection, and

marginalization that yesterday's, today's and tomorrow's non-apostolic church is now, and will be, dishing out to the apostles, he might receive a diabolical offer he will not be able to resist, and decide to switch sides and come out real big, as the Antichrist in the service of Satan. I will not be surprised if this is exactly what is going to happen, and I can easily imagine a satanic counterintelligence coup of global proportions, taking one of the church's most gifted apostles, dressing the wounds he received by the church, promising him money, fame, and a real dent on history.

Bernard Sanders points out that it will be a typical diabolical strategy to put up a smokescreen of the false in order to veil the true – to burn the ground with ever new fake versions of the apostolic so much so that the believers, confused and disappointed, finally give up trying to identify it, and throw out the baby with the bathwater. This has happened before and is still happening in many ways, but it should not really deter us from pursuing the healthy original because there are false versions around. I personally do not believe it is advisable, healthy, or even biblical to hunt down false apostles, confront them directly and parade them. It will be enough to warn the Church of them, and allow those who want to believe in them to do as they please. This also is very practical. Not only will we avoid many unnecessary wars, but in the days ahead we will see a massive increase in the harvest, and, as harvest workers of Jesus, we will need all our attention on bringing in God's harvest. What we all don't want and need is more religious people standing in the way of the work, blocking the way, stealing our time with endless discussions on useless issues, forever pursuing significance through religious works. Let us count it a blessing in disguise if such people are swept away into religious churches, false apostolic movements and cults, who serve as a kind of spiritual vacuum cleaner, attracting the religious nerds, consumers, the whackos and weirdos, and suck them out of our way. This means we will not have to deal with them, and our path is free to focus on the apostolic tasks ahead. Plus, if we constantly pick a fight with the ever new false expressions of the Kingdom, we might be found, as in the parable of the tares, not only uprooting the tares, but also the wheat (Matt. 13:25-29). Let us just give them calmly into the hands of the living God and his harvesters, the angels; he can ably deal with them in his own ways, and we can better get on with our job.

But let us still briefly characterize the false. It will suffice to say that false apostles of all kinds, the impostors as well as those who are the real article clothed in false motives, characters, ambitions and structures, will be recognizable by **not** being what true apostles are. Instead of creating an atmosphere where the impossible is possible for the church, they create an aura that basically says that everything is possible as long as people stick with them. **They make life without themselves impossible.** Rather than retake the gardens, they take other people's gardens, trample across apostolic fences with ignorance or relish, and declare the world – or at least their nation – to be their garden. "Apostolic" impartation and blessings will be, yes, absolutely available, but at the expense of a hefty fee. They will not synchronize heaven with earth, but preach their fan club into obedience at their whim and will, just like an obedient choir. They are not master builders of God's temple but the spider on their considerable-sized webs. They will not be code breakers but mystery

makers, creating abstruse and occult teachings as they go, and make these heresies the jealously guarded and amply copyrighted centerpieces of their apostolic business. Far from being fathers of others, they clearly will be modern day Abrams, exalted fathers, One-Man shows, in the form of Big Daddies or Africa's ever present "Big Elephant," the tribal leader and judge over life and death. Rather than building on the foundation of Christ and those apostles who have gone before, we will recognize them by their motto: "Church History starts with us!" And instead of protecting the sheep from the wolves, they are ***the wolves themselves***, wolves in sheep clothing, gathering a sizeable flock of sad and hungry souls around them that they can fleece and milk financially, emotionally and often enough sexually.

Rather than being meridian gladiators, they will come onto the stage with a bang, as God's Atomic Bomb, powerful and triumphant, offering membership cards to their elite apostolic club against a humble payment of "apostolic dues" (I am not kidding; all of this is happening, including groups that seriously give out cards and ask for "apostolic dues"). Rather than planting self-multiplying centrifugal church-planting movements, they start centripetal mega-churches with themselves as the indispensable and basically non-multipliable core, and their morality and personality contains nothing that would make any sober Israeli even look up, let alone jealous.

In addition to this, we can recognize them legitimizing and ordaining themselves by success and triumphs, and often enough will see a replacement of a true power ministry with symbols of power that this world knows, complete with media presence, toys and a behavior like an all-important president. Again: if genuine apostles are unrecognizable to the naked eye, we can recognize false apostles by making themselves recognizable to those easily impressed. I meet many people who are not able to do any significant ministry "at home," wherever home is, and are tempted to escape to any amount of exotic ministry locations, where there will always be simple souls to be impressed, enticed to join a conference, or, if money is involved, even to be ordered around. In other words: a paradise for the religious zealot without a proper jurisdiction, a place to feel important, wanted, powerful. This can become not only an escape from life lessons that God has for us at places where people speak correctively into our lives (which a spiritual home base needs to be), but a form of ministry addiction.

I suspect many who are not functioning in a legitimate apostolic, evangelistic or prophetic way at home are actually "out there" in their various "mission fields" not really out of a passion for others and a healthy desire to further God's kingdom, but to satisfy their own desperation to minister somehow or other. They literally preach themselves, or, the collective version of this phenomenon, their mission agency, their church, and the priorities and theologies of their donors. These unhealthy or even false ministries can easily be recognized by the vigor in which they claim the churches and movements that they speak into to be their own children, whom they firmly clutch to their breast as their prized possession.

Other acid tests of their legitimacy are: do they badly **want** to be apostles, or does God want them to be? Anyone in his true state of mind who has understood even the least bit about the nature of apostolic ministry, its suffering, the marginalization that goes with it, will simply not want to have it. He will only

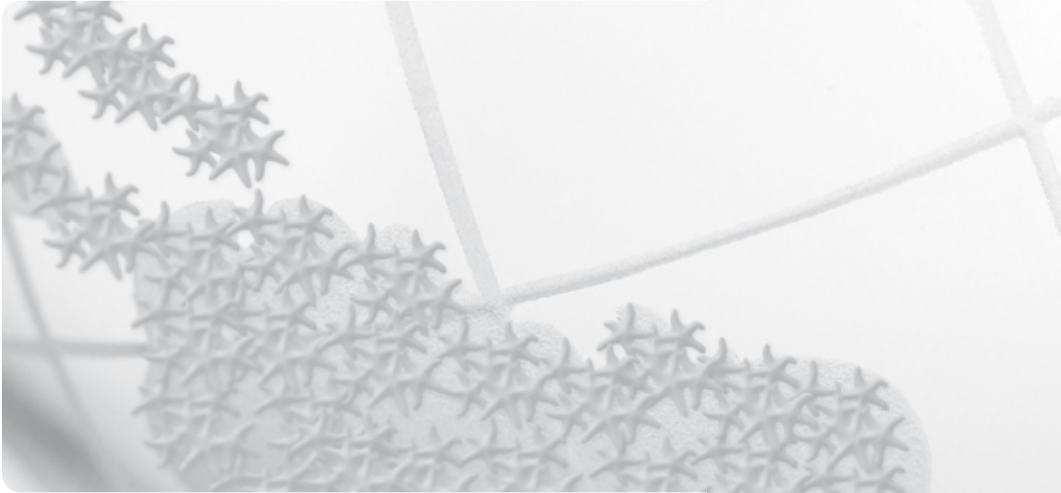
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be an apostle by the grace of God, not as a slick religious career move. Maybe it goes without saying, but false apostles will usually not allow you to visit them at home. They feel not only far too important for that, but their private lives are usually a mess, financially, morally, sexually, and they are usually not accountable to anyone. Imagine Paul, who decidedly moved in a much higher dimension of revelation than Peter, who even confronted Peter once publicly, but still would submit to him. Now that is integrity! The last thing fake apostles can afford for their ongoing success is to be found out, and the quickest way to do that is a surprise visit at home, if they have one at all.

Another important indicator is the quality of the people around them. True apostles, following the path of Jesus, usually start strong and end weak, while false apostles typically start weak and end strong. Weak apostles who, like mothers of many children, have invested and poured all their lives energy into strong saints around them, have a much better standing in the kingdom than strong apostolic superstars who are surrounded by an army of yes-sayers, a horde of uninitiated and passive members who do as they are told.

And finally, the desert or Tarsus test: Are apostolic people shy of pain and suffering, are they able to handle long periods of spiritual dryness without becoming cynical; are people able to handle with gentleness the multitudes of stones that are being thrown at them, not becoming bitter and fighting back; are people able to speak of their frustrations, weaknesses and lost battles as openly as they speak about their triumphs? Are they, ultimately, dead to self, to their own ambitions and desires? Are they ready to allow God to put a crown of suffering on their head - and have them praise God for the privilege of being allowed to partake in his suffering? Are they convinced they do not really qualify for the job naturally at all, and God had better have someone else step in for them? If they can say that, and are *disqualified* in their own eyes, we can take this as a healthy sign that we have met the real thing.



16 History of the Restoration of the Apostolic

Can Babies be rescued from the bathwater?

16 History of the Restoration of the Apostolic

To understand how we proceed from here, it is helpful to look back and discern how we got here in the first place. Apostolic history is not at all the same as missions history. This has to do with the fact that Church As We Know It (CAWKI) has been the basis for its own mission and missionaries rather than letting apostles of Christ do their job. Many (but not all) missionary workers have been much more emissaries and even employees of churches and mission agencies in the last millennia. If non-apostolic churches attempt to replicate themselves, because Malawi, Myanmar or Mexico still lack a local version of denomination XYZ and is a white spot on their map, this does not constitute a legitimate mission mandate, let alone a healthy apostolic endeavor. As God, however, changes CAWKI into Church As God Wants It (CAGWI), this will mean a complete reformation of missions: a reshaping not only of churches into their original, missional design, but also a forging of their cross-cultural ministry contribution more and more into original apostolic work. As the sending base changes completely, so does the mission, and we will see an entirely different, post-denominational and post-organizational blueprint and DNA of ekklesia replicated in an apostolic way. This means a complete reformation of MAWKI – Missions as we know it – as a result of God restoring divine order in his own house.

Today's classical missionaries, Christian folks getting on a plane from A to B to replicate in B what they have decided or been commissioned to do in A, are not necessarily congruent with New Testament apostolic ministries at all.

In the absence of many healthy apostolic ministries, we have seen Churches and denominations replanting themselves abroad, or mission agencies seeking and finding a ministry niche of every possible kind. We have even seen theological debates, doctrinal conclusions, and methodical inventions of which people have become messengers and “apostles,” like the false health and wealth gospel, or “apostles” or colporteurs of spiritual technology and methodology, be they bad or good. This might include cell groups, dominion theology, dispensational teaching, end time subjects, the Toronto Blessing, House churches, finances, Alpha courses, G12, Willow Creek, 24-7 prayer, prayer altars, healing rooms, or banner and/or flag weaving and waving. The reason I say this is to make the point that today's classical missionaries, Christian folks getting on a plane from A to B to replicate in B what they have decided or been commissioned to do in A, are not necessarily congruent with New Testament apostolic ministries at all. There may be a minimal overlap, but if we truly see an apostolic reformation of ekklesia in our days, this new ekklesia will redefine apostolic mission in ways entirely different from what we have been used to.

The nearly perfect crime

In his excellent book *The Nearly Perfect Crime* (published 2005), about how the Church almost killed the Ministry of Healing, Francis MacNutt describes the wild history of physical healing and deliverance. Healing, one of the core engines driving the expansion of the early apostolic church has been all but extinguished. Well meaning and sincere Christian leaders who thought they were purifying Christianity and putting the brakes on wild excesses have typically overshot and have become the policemen of the church. In trying

to keep ecclesiastical order, they shut the door to the wind of the Holy Spirit who blows where he wants, not where we want, especially in the area of healing and driving out demons. There were monks who considered it simply too holy to pray for the sick and instead they fled the world into asceticism. We read of Church councils and their dramatically false conclusions about the divinity of Christ during his earthly days. The biblical ministry of healing was attacked by spiritualization (for example to say what Jesus was *really* doing was healing spiritual blindness, not real blindness...), and false perceptions of God's Kingdom (if it is heaven, why heal now?). The church embraced idealistic perceptions of suffering and false theologies like the ones spread by the young Augustine (of which he recanted in his book *Retractions* towards the end of his life). We know that the ministry of physical healing and exorcism has been systematically poisoned, weakened and nearly killed.

One of the most bizarre ways to forbid disciples to heal people was the little known "Royal Touch," the amazing belief that was held for more than 700 years in England that only the King, proving that God had truly ordained him, was legally allowed to perform healing services in churches, putting the ministry of healing completely out of reach of anyone else, so as not to compete with the divine King.

What has happened to the ministry of healing and exorcism has happened to a much more dramatic extent to the apostolic ministry. As I wrote before, the apostolic ministry, after the first century apostles had physically died out, was first glorified, then mystified, and finally replaced with non-apostolic substitutes. The demonic strategy used here was similar: first glorify and lift up the apostolic ministry to such holy levels, that people would only refer to St. Peter, St. Paul, St. This or St. The other or any other *Saint* with hushed voices and a holy shudder, as something far out of reach of ordinary humans. As time went by, real apostolic stories became tales, the apostles themselves became patron saints and started to be misused as idols, and finally everything apostolic became a myth.

Apostolic substitutes

Into this tremendous apostolic vacuum, in the absence of governmental stability, apostolic teaching, fathering, and foundation laying, the church looked for substitutes – and found them in amazing measure. If we lose the real currency, because it is no longer backed up by gold, inflation sets in, and fakes or astronomically inflated denominations of the currency become rampant. In the absence of the real, substitutes thrive. The apostolic function was initially replaced by monarchic bishops, people who, rather than being humble and flat-structured elders who work together in their respective regions with the apostolic, prophetic, and other itinerant ministries whom God has ordained, became the guardians of salvation. Having the power to forgive or retain sins, the power over eternal life and death, for example, started to corrupt some folks, and such bishops began to be revered far beyond what they deserved. The problem was that such bishops began to accept the helpless reverence of their sheep, and, in the absence of corrective ministries that simply would have sent them home, they started to ride a wave of unchecked rule and became spiritual monarchs, religious kings and episcopal, territorial spirits. They dominated their turf, the "bishopric," a sort of episcopal parish (a distorted and fake

**In the absence of the real,
substitutes thrive.**

version of true apostolic jurisdictions and gardens). Later we saw the rise of the "Church fathers," people like Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, or Ambrose, whose influence was based on their rhetorical ability and apologetic or doctrinal teachings. As they gave a form of theological security to the sheep, they were considered to be their fathers, and this marked the beginning of the entire church replacing true apostolic ministries with the theological teacher, later developing into an entire theological teaching industry that assumed apostolic roles without having them.

Very soon there were rivalries among bishops, and the age old question "who is the greatest among the disciples" went unchecked. Usually the loudmouths or those closest to key political figures won the day and became archbishops, or, probably more important because of the financial aspects involved, archdeacons. This led up to the development of Metropolitans, spiritual heads of entire church spheres based in the metropolitan centers of their day, and ultimately to the proclamation of the first pope. The concept of the Papacy goes back to Paul and Peter being martyred in Rome. The bishop of Rome was, therefore, in a special way (given also the fact that Rome was the political center of the known world), a vicar of St. Peter, and was later called a Vicar of Christ. This would have been theologically correct if we were describing biblical apostolic ministry and if we remember the *schaliach* function of apostles. Marcellinius, who became bishop of Rome in 296, has been the first man to be (inofficially) called a pope. Leo, a Roman aristocrat, was the bishop of Rome from 440 to 461, and sometimes he was called "The first Pope" or "Leo the Great," being a leading figure in the centralization of the government of the Church and the defense of the crumbling Roman Empire against the Barbarian Hordes in the form of Attila the Hun in 452. Officially, the title Pope was first used by the Roman Synod of 495 to refer to Pope Gelasius I. Monopolistic papacy, that is, a pope who has no equal on earth, must by definition lead to a pyramidal hierarchical structure, and this is exactly what happened: Popes reigned over cardinals, who reigned over bishops, who reigned over priests, who reigned over the people, complete with an amazing amount of middle men and an elaborate color and dress code. Even if a man working as a pope in the organizational framework of the Roman Catholic Church was a true apostolic person, the entire structure within which he found himself was an increasingly religious and non-apostolic ekklesial structure. It had developed into an insurance agency selling insurance against hell to its members and into an instrument of "blessing" the unblessable lives of the biblically illiterates rather than an apostolic Kingdom movement. In this, the Roman church became not only the guardians of the so-called sacraments, but ultimately succeeded in a Church sacramentalizing itself. If their leader has no equal, the church that he leads has no equal. Roman Catholic understanding of itself as the only true church, of which all others are "separated brothers" or heretical offspring, something of which it has never recanted, is directly linked to the monopolistic apostolic role the pope has in it. A key ingredient to healthy biblical ministry has always been the existence of peer apostles, apostles in the plural. Once the plural was gone, biblical balance was gone, and a man alone on the top of an agency has never been healthy.

In such an atmosphere, the only thing a Pope had to fear was the Emperor, the representative of political, earthly government and military power. This is

why some call Constantine, Flavius Valerius Constantinus, born at Nis in today's Serbia in 280, who became Roman co-emperor in 305 and later emperor of Rome, "the first pope." In order to assure unity of the official State Church that Constantine declared within the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire in 321, Constantine assumed a clearly directive, pseudo-apostolic role in maneuvering the entire church into the doctrinal directions he preferred, especially in the areas of Christology. This was politically expedient for him. He was the convenor of the Council of Nicea in 325, a few miles outside Constantinople, today's Istanbul in Turkey. He functioned clearly as the "presiding apostle" over all the bishops present, without ever being one.

Let us summarize so far. Apostolic ministry has been displaced by a succession of things: the sanctification of apostles by holy reverence for the deceased "Saints," monarchic bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, the ministry of theological teaching, and finally the singularization of apostolicity, the papacy, and finally the state itself in its expression as a religiously interested king or emperor. In the 4th and 5th century, the notion of valid, contemporary apostolic ministry was as far removed from the church as the earth from planet Neptune, and, without healthy apostolic foundations, directions and structures tumbled mission-less through the centuries into ever starker expressions of error and religious self-preservation. Rather than the apostolic church being the plumb line against which everything was being measured, a non-apostolic, static church system that increasingly conformed itself to the patterns of the world became the norm, the plumb line and the new blueprint, with patterns, values, and procedures light-years away from its own apostolic origin.

The un-apostolic Church becomes anti-apostolic

However, I believe that the apostolic ministry itself has never been really dead. It was and is directly linked to the now risen Christ who still calls people out to continue the work he began, and which he wants to see finished. And as the apostolic ministry is essentially a *mission* given by Christ and never a title or a status, as long as Christ lives, it lives. Apostolic ministry was therefore very much alive through the entirety of church history in individuals and personalities that sometimes we know of, most often we probably don't. The church had been tricked into opting out its own foundation layers and cutting itself loose, like a gigantic version of the Corinthian problem. And so it separated itself from its own spiritual fathers in exchange for fake apostolic models, its values and DNA, and completely changed – became not only non-apostolic, but *anti*-apostolic in its attempt to sustain and defend itself against all change.

Most church history books display the development of the church like a tree: from its origin and root as an apostolic church, we see heretical branches spin off into Montanism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Donatism, etc., whereby the Roman Catholic Church usually is painted as the stem of the church, carrying it through the ages, with the splits of papal schisms and later the reformation and its renewed flurry of more branching off the old stem. I believe this is essentially a wrong picture. There has been an apostolic church, and it existed throughout the ages, although hidden many times in the basement or even the jails of the acknowledged churches of the day, excommunicated and labeled as heretics or any other convenient term. It will be an interesting piece of theological science to rewrite church history, mar-

king the existence and the work of healthy apostolic ministries as the baseline and root, the stem of the church-tree, and identify and describe the various church aberrations and spin-offs as specific non-apostolic divisions caused by “men without the Spirit” (Jude 19).

As it was never really the apostolic ministry that divorced itself from the church, but the church that divorced itself from apostolic ministry, most apostolic ministry in history was happening in exile by those either on the fringes of traditional Churchianity, marginalized people who called the church, at least partially, back to its roots and calling, or its most outstanding missionaries, fruitfully establishing the church on new ground. And so it is not surprising that apostolic ministry can be traced in the lives and ministry of outstanding people in church history, people like Priscillian, Columban, Patrick of Ireland, Boniface, Ramon Lull, the driving men among the Friars, or the Bogomilians, Petrobusians, Patarenians, Waldensians or Lollards, or Anskar, Francis Assisi, Jan Hus, Wycliffe, John Bunyan, and others. In them we might still touch something of apostolic ministry through history, although of course colored and molded by the times, ecclesiologies and cultures of their day.

In the days of the protestant reformers like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, we see an apostolic dimension, at least in its Petrine form, in many of them, as well as in the men they worked with, like Caspar Schwenckfeld, the reformer of Schlesien, a classical Pauline apostolic man who lived from 1480 to 1561. Essential rediscoveries were made, the Bible was restored to the hands of the common man, and great insights into grace and salvation by faith propelled the protestant church into the right direction. But Martin Luther would have more than frowned if someone had called him an apostle. In his great and emphatic rejection of the Papacy as a false apostolic structure, he threw out the apostolic baby with the reformation bathwater, and the Bible itself, as well as biblical teaching and preaching, clearly assumed the central apostolic function in emerging Protestantism. The Bible and protestant doctrine became the “Paper Pope”. That is, biblical preaching itself was given the central (apostolic) role in early Protestantism. Since then, fueled by the rejection of gross biblical distortions in the Roman Catholic system, the role of theological academia and theological teaching has practically replaced both the need for Protestants to embrace apostolic ministry as well as their desire for it.

If we have the Bible, why do we need apostles? John Calvin (1509 -1564), essentially a brilliant Bible teacher, taught *Cessationism*, the belief that supernatural healing ceased, ending with the death of the last apostle, John. And as Calvin had no theological tools to comprehend an ongoing apostolic ministry through the ages in the church, he concludes, in his book *Institutes*: “Healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the new preaching of the gospel marvelous forever.” Calvin’s teaching has profoundly affected Presbyterians, churches of the reformed tradition, like almost all of the Baptist movements.

In later days, faulty Bible translations and brilliant but often simply non-apostolic Bible teachers like John Darby (1800-1882), the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, in their desire to systematize the world and the history of salvation, came up with the idea that all of history falls into dispensations, spiritual eras like the age of innocence, the apostolic age, and, with the arrival of the biblical canon, the postapostolic age of the Bible. This teaching, called

Dispensationalism, made popular by Bible commentators like C.I. Scofield or Dwight L. Moody, has influenced large parts of Protestantism and basically explained away the need for apostolic ministry, or, for that matter, any power ministry, “because we now have the Bible and do not need anything else.”

This is how a healthy war cry like “The Bible only” can blot out vital concepts contained in the Bible, as, in the face of religious distortions and the powerful manmade “Traditions of the Elders” in many movements of the day, the passion to restore the Bible itself back to its proper place took precedence over anything else, let alone a sober reconsideration of what apostolic ministry meant. This obsession with a “Paper Pope”, the replacement and substitution of the apostolic function by the very ministry of the “teaching of the word,” is to this day one of the greatest challenges for those emerging from a protestant legacy into an apostolic age.

The Tradition of Elders is a term used by Jesus to denote how “neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men” (see Mark 7:5-8 and Matt. 15:2), describing man-made additions to God’s word, first augmenting, then replacing it, as well as church practices turned into church policy. In my observation, *legacy*, the sum total of the traditional teachings of a church family, the theological mortgage it carries from generation to generation, has replaced apostolic ministry as the structure and skeleton-giving entity, and that is why most traditional churches hang on to their legacies for dear life, until they realize they cleave to an idol, something that has essentially substituted real apostolic fatherhood with faded memories of great old days. Those memories, since they have the tendency to fade, need to be kept alive in memorial services again and again, and this is where traditionalism itself becomes a new papacy, one more form of blotting out healthy biblical apostolic ministry in the name of apostolic tradition.

Revivalism as an apostolic substitute

The ministry of Jonathan Edwards, a famous holiness preacher, led to a large revival in Massachusetts, USA, in 1734 with masses of people coming to Christ from his strong preaching against sin. Revival became known as the calling back to God of backslidden Christians in meetings with strong, Christ-centered, repentance-oriented preaching until “*it*” happened, *it* being a sudden felt presence of God, a holy atmosphere, a tangible breakthrough of the divine, overwhelming everyone with deep conviction of sin and the desire, from now on, to lead a good life. Revivalism basically preached the absolutely correct truth that, as we turn to God, God turns back to us. I am in complete agreement with some of the basic insights of revivalism, however the problem is not what revivalism preaches, but what it omits. Jonathan Edward’s revival had, like most if not all “revivals,” an astonishingly short shelf life. His revival died out basically a year later.

George Whitefield started to stir revival again in 1739, preaching strong messages of personal repentance. That, together with Edwards’ ministry, has come to be called *the First Awakening* (1730s – 1740s). A second “Great Awakening” (1820s-1830s), with precursors in the so-called Camp Meetings in Cane Ridge, Kentucky (1801), happened because of the rootlessness and the shortage of authorized “houses of worship” that had led to a spiritual hunger in

many. It was a second wave of revivalism in the US. One of its features was the “protracted meetings” of two or three weeks duration, most often associated with the so-called “new measures” revivalism of Charles Finney (1792-1875). The Congregationalists in New England and the Methodists set up missionary societies to evangelize the West, and those new missionaries and circuit riders – horseback riders preaching on a circuit, a sort of missionary turf, a methodist version of apostolic gardens – not only acted as “apostles for the new faith,” but as church planters and educators. The social activism inspired by the revivals became a founding element of American culture, and is one of the reasons why many Christians, particularly in the US, still believe that the great evils of society will find its cure—in more revival. This was not only a period of the birth of some of the bigger religious groups in the US, but also the atmosphere that gave birth to the Mormons and the Seventh-Day Adventists. American history knows a Third Great Awakening (1858-1908), associated with names such as Dwight L. Moody.

Revivalism believes that God will one day, somehow, come down and revive and change everything, melt all the hearts, convict everyone of his or her sins, and a sort of religious paradise sets in, seen in a kind of church gathering on steroids: never-ending meetings with endless sermons, never-ending singing, never-ending praying. This revivalism usually has not only little or no apostolic dimension to it, but has been essentially non-apostolic and downright anti-strategic. Because any human activity, especially strategic planning, is fiddling with God who does it all, we should basically just shut up, pray more, sing more, wave more flags, have more meetings, and keep on waiting until God does *it* again, and somehow, miraculously, changes our lives and those of the communities and cities around us. In this way, revivalism is a sort of spiritualistic dream, ignoring the basic principles of the advancement of the Kingdom in its direct involvement with the world, and typically dismissing the role of apostolic ministry as the master builders and architectural functions of the church, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Arthur Wallis, a participant in the last historical regional revival in Europe on the Islands of Lewis (1949-1953) under the ministry of Duncan Campbell, describes in his excellent book *In the Days of Thy Power* the nature and essence of revival. I remember meeting Mary Peckham, one of the ladies who participated in that revival who gave us an account of it. I believe Wallis is expressing apostolic and prophetic truth in his message, however it was clothed in the limited understanding of church and the theology of revivalism of those days.

Remnants of Revivalism

Today, revivalism still lives on, however mostly in altered forms, expressed in terminologies that are coined as we move on in Church history. I want to mention four of the most common children of revivalism: evangelistic crusades, prayer and intercession movements, transformation movements and charismatic conference revivalism.

Obviously the most well-known one is **evangelistic “crusades”** and **“revivals,”** understood as a meeting with a powerful servant of God delivering the word of God as straight as possible, and Christians and (at least desirable) non-Christians alike come together to hear the man of God, meaning, the Evangelist, with the hope and expectation that God will powerfully come down and visit

humanity again. Its success is seen as evident in three numbers: how many people came to the revival, how many raised their hands and were “saved,” and for how many days the revival went on. One of the core problems of revivalism has always been, says my friend Jim Rutz, “to overemphasize the ascension gift of the evangelist while giving short shrift to all other gifts”. Plus, Jim points out, “evangelistic rallies often simply dump their converts into spectator churches instead of open churches, so the converts never learn to talk and are hardly disciplined.” In modern days this has been with us since the formative ministry of Billy Graham and the tens of thousands who have copied him to this day. An Evangelist, that is, a front line communicator of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, has an easily self-legitimizing ministry (people are saved; so this and the whole setup supporting this type of outreach must be right). His work, ministry and message is basically beyond questioning, and has usurped the place of the pioneering “apostolic” ministry for many decades. Of all ministries that exist, I believe that the evangelistic ministry will find it by far most difficult to accept the apostolic role and function and humbly realign its own ministry to function within apostolic architecture. As there is an unhealthy drivenness in most modern evangelists, feeling so very much needed everywhere, fueled by the near-complete failure of non-apostolic churches and the gaping closed-mindedness of CAWKI-churches, most of them believe they simply have no time for strategic considerations. One of the most well-known Evangelists of our time, Reinhard Bonnke, told me after we sat down to discuss some of this, that he basically agrees with what we spoke about, but, “as he is booked out solid for the next seven years, he would simply have no time to give this more practical thought.”

One of the current examples of how Evangelists, by their very role of assuming national leadership, have supplanted and thus prevented apostolic ministry, was the revival atmosphere that was clearly led by evangelists in the so-called Argentinian revival, made popular in the West mainly by American Missions and Church Growth teacher C. Peter Wagner and the Argentinean Evangelist Ed Silvano. Argentina, facing a national crisis after losing the Falkland/Malvinas war with England in 1982, was desperate for a new way forward, and gifted Evangelists like Carlos Anacondia, Hector Gimenez or Omar Cabrera stepped into the gap and held large rallies and churches that, in essence, functioned like weekly evangelistic rallies. However, there was hardly any apostolic ministry active in Argentina at the time, for which, please understand me right, I am not blaming the Evangelists at all. They did what they felt God asked them to do, in tune with the mainstream insights into the nature and function of church of the day; and the mainly weak and non-apostolic Argentinian church was swept with them into a time of hectic gatherings, meetings, rallies, and ever more rallies. A research conducted by the DAWN movement in 1996 found the growth of the national church at a staggeringly low 3.16% per year. Among others, it was Argentinean Christian leader Alberto De Luca who asked those outside Argentina thereafter to cease talking about a revival in Argentina. “We don’t have revival; we need revival,” he pleaded. Knowing Alberto, I can say that what he truly meant is that Argentina needs healthy apostolic ministry. The evangelistic ministry, even in its most powerful and dynamite forms, is simply no substitute for the foundation laying and strategic ministry of the apostles. Evangelists have a vital role, but, even in partnership with the most pioneering of all shepherds and

pastors, both focused on the gathering, not the scattering aspects of ekklesia, they are never the true pioneers of the church. Even Philip's ministry, the only evangelist mentioned by name in the Bible, in Samaria (Acts 8) was not complete without the foundational work that the apostles Peter and John did.

Should Evangelists today carry on assuming a direction-giving, pioneering leadership role in the churches, they will be shocked to learn some day how their seeming success has been leading the church in circles, keeping them immature but busy, while they move from one fantastic evangelistic breakthrough to the next – but never help the church get out of the desert and settled into the promised land. For apostolic tasks like this, Evangelists simply do not have neither the calling nor the anointing. Substituting apostolic with evangelistic ministries, therefore, is a key mistake we have to learn to overcome.

A healthy and biblically balanced cooperation between the evangelistic and apostolic ministries will usher in a time of missional multiplication of unheard of proportions, when evangelists will go in to plow open new fields, and partner not with pastoral, but with apostolic people in their area of work to build on multipliable foundations that make their own fruits not only last, but grow exponentially over and beyond anything they have seen alone.

Another child of the revivalist movements today is the **prayer or intercession movements** that have appeared and grown over the last few decades. Much of what only apostolic and prophetic ministries can achieve has been packaged in recent years into a call for more prayer, fervent prayer, ceaseless prayer, prayer walking, boiler-room prayer, fasting prayer, healing room prayer, prayer altars, prayer journeys, prayer centers, prayer conferences, concerts of prayer, prayer caves, prayer rooms, or prayer mountains. Don't get me wrong; I am in total agreement with our need to pray, and pray ceaselessly, and I count myself close to many of today's prayer and intercessory leaders. However, wherever we see that any of those prayer and intercessory movements remain basically divorced from apostolic ministry even after repeated challenges and pleas to link up, those movements seem to start to circle around themselves, and become prayer methods and finally prayer institutions that fade out after some time. Let me say this even stronger: could it be that many prayer movements simply disobey the most foundational Kingdom building principles, see no longlasting result and therefore spiritualize the situation by more praying, rather than actually obeying what God has revealed? If this were true, then it would be plain disobedience fuelling a false religious passion for prayer and yet more prayer. Sadly such initiatives often leave behind a bewildered group of formerly fervent and passionate prayer warriors with heavy hearts (Prov 13:12), because their hopes and expectations have been set so high; but the hope deferred, the revival did not really come, and *it* never seemed to happen.

Again, it is not what the prayer movements teach that is wrong, but *what they do not teach*. It is simply neither scriptural nor practical to invent the new ministry of an "intercessor" or keep on praying God down, without us getting up and organizing ourselves into the apostolic patterns, the principles for Kingdom advancement, the spiritual blueprint of ekklesia. One example to be watched in recent years has been the "24-7 prayer movement" (see www.24-7prayer.com) founded by Pete Greig, a visionary young Englishman and a student of revival. Pete was inspired both by God and the story of Count Zinzendorf in the German

village of Herrnhut, where “the Moravians’ 100 years of prayer” that started in 1727 marked the beginning of a missionary movement. How the 24-7 prayer movement – and many other prayer and intercessory movements like it – will succeed in connecting to the apostolic resources of their area and day is yet to be seen. But once that happens, I believe that an “*It*” is going to happen that by far surpasses all **Its** of the revivalists’ past.

Thirdly, one of the current revivalist movements that traces itself directly to the prayer and intercessory movements spawned by the former AD 2000 and Beyond movement is the **Transformation movement**, partly generated by the writings, teachings, and video series of George Otis Jr., a prolific author and director of the Seattle-based Sentinel Group. Originally, the initiative demonstrated how prayer leads to revival, understood as God coming down and changing things. Pointing out some “transformation stories” in Kenya, Uganda, Guatemala, and other nations that were, for those familiar with the localities, however, of a more transient and temporary nature, the news and prospects excited many tens of thousands of Christians to ask God to do *it* locally, after they were presented these incidents as repeatable models of revival. There is absolutely no doubt about God being willing and able to change things and to answer prayer – even regarding the healing of tribal relationships as well as poisonous waters and the coral reefs around the Fiji Islands, as told in some of the Transformation videos or the book *Fiji* by David Newby. The danger is that transformation without a healthy return to the apostolic foundations and patterns of the New Testament becomes a fiction, a new dream in the sky, that will, for a while, excite many who will attempt to copy the experiences set as examples before them. But who will be there for them when the dust settles, soberness sets in and many are left with straw in their mouths? They eventually will recognize two things: those transformational revivals were mainly well-meaning snapshots, a still picture or two out of a film of a much larger, more complex process, and second, that they were, yes, given a vision of hope, but not the proper apostolic road to reach that vision. I believe that apostolic reformation, one that absolutely includes the recapturing of Evangelism, prayer and intercession in their original, apostolic-prophetic dimensions and as lifestyle of the church, will lead to something far bigger than transformation. It will lead to an apostolic reformation that redefines and changes the very patterns of life itself on the planet. In many ways, talks of a holistic gospel and the goal of social or political transformation have taken on such a prominent role today that they have literally become false apostolic visions and patterns, where a good idea is exchanged for God’s idea, and human dreams become substitutes for God’s vision and purposes. A small piece of a puzzle is not yet the whole picture! And even if a prayer-answering God does miracles, parts the Red Sea, heals coral reefs or makes bitter water sweet, we dare not linger staring at the miracles and say: “Do it again, Lord, but now in 1,000 places!”, without grasping the far greater dimension of God wishing to establish his Kingdom. To isolate a partial truth of God and declare it to be the whole counsel of God - and even turn it into a repeatable methodology - is to create a factory for heresies. When and where such concepts are dangled like carrots before the donkey of christian audiences worldwide, they become powerful heresies, false apostolic visions leading millions into dead-end roads with terrible disappointment built into the system. As I believe the majority of mainstream

The danger is that transformation without a healthy return to the apostolic foundations and patterns of the New Testament becomes a fiction.

Christianity has been already deeply infected by these false apostolic teachings and false prophetic visions, we will look into this in more detail in the following chapter on false apostolic patterns.

If the ekklesia gets involved into a movement of synchronization between heaven and earth that conforms no longer to the “pattern of this world” (Rom. 12:2; Col. 2:8,20), but morphs and transforms into the patterns and blueprints of God, continuing until we are all, as much as possible, conformed into the image of Christ, individually and corporately, then we will reach an ultimate expression of the Kingdom of God this side of the parousia, the physical return of the King himself. It will be not the fullness of the Kingdom just yet; that is for a later time. At this point in history, the rule of God is still heavily contested, limited by the presence of evil and of a global Babylonian empire. But even in that context we will, in sync with apostolic and prophetic foundations and patterns, see the unstoppable development of God’s ekklesia into the fullest possible expression of a liberated, blessed and upgraded model humanity under their true King, Jesus.

The abundance of the Holy Spirit almost seems to have been replaced by an abundance of conferences.

Lastly: since 1900 and the beginning of **Pentecostalism**, and from the late 1960s, **the pentecostal** and later **the charismatic revival conferences**, we have seen a revivalist structure emerge within which many dream that when there is an outbreak of healing or while the audience is lost in worship and captivated by anointed preaching, **it** will happen again, and again, and again. In the charismatic and pentecostal experience, things usually happen in “tarrying meetings” and conferences while an anointed person preaches, the choir sings and the tears flow. And so we should not be surprised if this has generated a culture of expectancy and almost an addiction to charismatic revival meetings. The abundance of the Holy Spirit almost seems to have been replaced by an abundance of conferences.

In charismatic terms, **it** is a renewal of what already exists, new life in old systems, new wine into old wineskins, almost as if this were written in the Bible. Revival here is seen as a rekindling of a dying flame by the Power of the Holy Spirit. No matter what the question or the problem of a given church is: the charismatic answer is always the same, and is usually given even before the question is asked: what you all need is more of the Holy Spirit, so go get filled up some more. This dangerously omits the need of every person to be obedient to God’s blueprints, to die to our religious self and function within the apostolic mission that God has sent out his church to accomplish, which has church planting and multiplying church planting movements at its heart. It is exactly this activity that plants the presence of Jesus in the form of his Body on earth into every locality. Getting ourselves just filled up “with more Holy Spirit” without allowing ourselves to be shifted, propelled, and scattered into the harvest is a dangerous dream, because it says it gives room to the Holy Spirit, but denies his very mission as an apostolic spirit.

An acquaintance of mine, a German charismatic evangelist, once arranged a 72 hour worship night in Germany and basically believed, as Christians sing and pray continuously for 72 hours, God will come down and do **it**. When I asked him what role that Jesus has in this meeting who said “I will build my Church,” and whether Jesus would be allowed during this stadium gathering to call people to build and plant and multiply churches, his very own body,

he shook his head in bewilderment, as if I were asking the strangest possible thing. Recent histories have seen short outbreaks of such revivalism in Brownsville, Pensacola, Toronto or Lakeland, and found their succession in so-called “soaking prayer groups,” reconciliation prayer meetings, Spiritual fathers’ meetings, and others.

However, charismatic (meaning Holy Spirit given) or Pentecostal spirituality without charismatic and Pentecostal ecclesiology simply does not work on the long run, as many are finding out the hard way today. Charismatic and Pentecostal groups, since they are by default to be open to the work of the Spirit, are today probably plagued more than any other stream of the Body of Christ with unhealthy, illegitimate and immature prophetic and apostolic people on their never ending conference trips. However, as movements and groups from within the Pentecostal and charismatic revival culture press on and learn to embrace and welcome healthy apostolic and prophetic ministry and, most importantly, rearrange and reposition themselves around them, rather than trying forever to incorporate apostolic ministries into basically non-apostolic thought and building patterns, this will bring great joy and a great wealth of experience with the spiritual gifts into the apostolic reformation of our day. And as charismatic spirituality matches with charismatic architecture, it will be a celebrated romance, greatly furthering God’s plans in this world, that go so very much further than what can be expressed in meetings in churches and conferences.

Money as a false apostolic tool

In many ways, apostolic ministry defines policy and strategy, and definitely, as we see in biblical history, it defines the budget and therefore the values and priorities of the Church. However, in a very significant way, Jesus warns that we cannot serve “both Mammon and God” (Matt. 6:24), and Paul speaks of the fact that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim 6:10). The money of the church, the way churches deal with money, and the role of those in control of this money have, in many cases, become a vital policy-making function in churches, very comparable to the role that the apostolic ministry is supposed to have. If apostolic ministry is called to design architecture, lay foundations and define the values, mission and policy of the church, then we are faced with an abundance of evidence that this ministry has been replaced by the **“finance ministry,”** the financial department of the church. This is not to say that those who have functioned and now function as financial administrators and deacons in churches and organizations are wrong; but it is to say that the entire ecclesiastical system has been repositioned and redesigned according to Mammon and Babylonian ways rather than functioning according to apostolic financial principles. Financial behavior has always been the quickest thermometer of healthy spirituality. If we link sober financial behavior with solid apostolic ministry in the church, it does not come at all as a surprise to encounter the grossest possible distortions of church life in the areas of work and finances. Let me illustrate some of this in a few statements:

- In most churches, money, not God, is the limiting factor for missions, in direct violation of Luke 10:2
- “Tent making,” from being a temporary financing solution in the Bible, has become a long-term strategy (Acts 18:5)

If apostolic ministry is called to design architecture, lay foundations, define the values, mission and policy of the church, then we are faced with an abundance of evidence that this ministry has been replaced by the “finance ministry,” the financial department of the church.

Financial behavior has always been the quickest thermometer to healthy spirituality.

- Tithing, never a financial system in the apostolic church, has almost universally replaced apostolic finance principles in theory
- Currently, 1/1,000 (or 0.1%) of the entire money of the church is actually used towards healthy apostolic ministry today. Given some of the facts that Prof. David Barrett has collected, the entire Christian endeavor spends 286 billion dollars per year, of which roughly 300 million flows towards church multiplication.
- Forgiveness of sins has been heavily paid for in cash, estates, and other gifts and has established the fabulous wealth of a number of Churches
- Money is no longer laid before “the apostles feet” (Acts 4:35), but apostles have typically ended up, throughout church history, lying in the dust before rich people, trusts, foundations, and church and missions committees, begging for support, as the wages of the harvest workers have cried out to God throughout the ages (James 5)

We will come back to this in chapter 22, so let it suffice to say that the ministry of administration, the group that defines policy, planning, budgeting and controlling in the church, currently has exactly the same function as the apostolic ministry should. And where this task is not done in direct cooperation with the apostolic ministry (as in Acts 4 or Acts 6), finances take on a life of their own, and in the absence of apostolic defenders from “wolves” the finance department seems utterly defenseless against an invading spirit of Mammon and religious self-preservation. That this can lead to the worst possible scenario, that “the purse” is in the hands of a false apostle as in the days of Jesus, when Judas ran the accounts, only shows how familiar Jesus must be with the problem. And if he is familiar with it over the last 2000 years, I trust that he knows how to handle it.

The Apostolic in Cults

It is interesting to see that almost all truly growing cults have, as one of the bases of their philosophy, rediscovered and reinstated the apostolic ministry as its core function. The Erzoherlenker (arch-leader) Friedrich Rittelmeyer was the apostolic founder of the **Anthroposophical Society** envisioned by Rudolf Steiner in 1922, who acted as a prophet of the cultic movement. The Mormons, in a sort of apostolic revival themselves, have recently (2002) sent out two, Dallin H. Oaks and Jeffrey R. Holland of the members of “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” as “apostles”. According to their own website this was “the first time such senior leaders have lived and presided in an international area of the Church for nearly half a century. Assignments of Church apostles to reside in international areas have not been a practice in that Church for some four decades. Ezra Taft Benson, who was ordained an apostle in 1943, presided over the European Mission in the mid-1960s.” The Mormons have a “Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” an apostolic council directing the policy of the cult.

A formative development that led to a general rediscovery of the apostolic of sorts in recent church history was the “Albury Conference.” Henry Drummond (1786–1860) was an English banker, later a Member of the Parliament. For five years beginning in 1826, he gathered a group of laity and clergy annually at his home in Surrey to examine the prophecies in the Scriptures. Out of these meetings, sometimes called a “school of the prophets,” grew the organization of

the “Catholic Apostolic Church.” Together with Edward Irving (1792–1834) they became the founders of a movement that named “the first European apostles” between 1832 and 1835, and started a mission to plant Catholic Apostolic Churches. By 1900 there were about 70,000 members and the movement had grown branches in the US and Germany. However, the twelve apostles of the movement did not make any preparations for successors, as they strongly believed that Jesus would come back during their lifetime. Alas, the last of them died in 1901, and even before that, a split in Germany led to the formation of “**The New Apostolic Church**” (NAC) in 1863, initially by starting the “Allgemeine christliche apostolische Mission” in Hamburg, Germany, under the leadership of “apostle” Fritz Krebs (1832–1905). Prophets in Germany were the ones that called out a new generation of apostles again. After that, the movement saw a relatively phenomenal growth, with today more than 500,000 members in Germany alone, more than all Evangelical churches together, and worldwide close to nine million members. In 1897, the NAC established the ministry of a so-called “root apostle” (Stammapostel), a *primus inter pares*, a presiding apostle among other apostles, their own version of the papacy. Not only the liturgy and the worship of Mary in the NAC-churches, but also the hierarchical structure shows their lineage to the Roman Catholic System. Interestingly, many of their new members are not coming in as former non-Christians, but Christians who have heard that the NAC has legitimate apostles.

One of the most interesting phenomena in recent history is directly linked to the rediscovery of the apostolic and prophetic ministry in the **African Inland Churches** (sometimes also called African Indigenous Churches). Breaking away from colonial and imported forms of Christianity, these movements, typically around a local prophet or apostle, started their own gatherings that quickly swelled up to an enormous river, numbering up to five million members in Africa.

The rediscovery of apostolic ministry

In the 19th century, there were a great many Christian leaders who rediscovered at least aspects and pieces of apostolic and prophetic ministry, although it was usually not called apostolic or prophetic, but clothed in the religious language of the days. In 1840 in Basel, Switzerland, for example, Christian Friedrich Spittler started the *Pilgermission St. Chrischona* as a mission school, with the idea of planting churches (chapels) in the suburbs of Basel and other cities to reach the poor with the gospel. This strong city-reaching emphasis, which we would today, no doubt, label apostolic, remains until today, with the existence of “Stadtmissionen” (City missions) in many towns and cities.

Fritz Berger (1868–1950), a Swiss pioneer, started in 1909 the *Evangelischer Brüderverein*, Brethren Churches, and looking into his life, it simply bears many of the hallmarks of a valid apostolic ministry. The most significant movement that was silently rediscovering many “apostolic dynamics” as missions principles, however, were the host of modern missionaries who were sent out, usually from Churches in the West, to plant churches cross-culturally. As much as it is a tragic misconception to translate the Greek word *apostolos* as “Missionary,” because it lifts the expansionist and often self-important mindset of churches and religious organizations to pseudo-apostolic levels, we will not overlook the fact that still, under the grand heading of missions, many things happened

and still happen today that were clearly initiated by God. Among the 450,000 Christian missionaries active today there is a percentage of true apostolic and prophetic people, who were “not sent from men, nor by man,” but by God. Through the ages, their thousands of individual stories are, in many ways, fascinating accounts of how people truly called by God were rediscovering apostolic truths, even if it was in bits and pieces. Through them, the diabolically shattered pieces of the “apostolic mirror” I mentioned in the beginning has been pieced together, one by one, until we have come to a point in history where what we see makes sense, and we start to see the bigger, apostolic picture again. Among those whom God clearly used towards this, to note a very few, are Hudson Taylor, William Carey, E. Stanley Jones, John R. Mott, or Bruce “Bruchko” Olson, or some of the world’s foremost mission thinkers and strategists, like Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, Roland Allen, David Bosch, Donald McGavran, Patrick Johnstone, Jim Montgomery, or Ralph Winter.

Progressive Revelation in Missions

If church is about mission, and if God is the true author of mission, it is highly relevant *for missions* what the Spirit says at various moments in history to the churches. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches,” admonishes us the book of Revelation (chapters 2 and 3). As Paul says that we all “know in part,” I observe a progressive recapturing of the revealed truth of God in our recent global missions history. It is as if God is opening new doors of old revelation again and again, maybe even allowing us to break biblical seals guarding age-old mysteries until the end of days. Those who are inquisitive enough to enter these doors find themselves in new realms of understanding, see new things, and are so given a new vantage and rallying point from which to re-interpret – and re-challenge – current Christian leadership to move into the prophetic directions of the day.

In an age that has been termed **the Age of Modern Missions (1780-1945)**, starting with William Carey, the Western Church exported and translated the Gospel to other languages and cultures, complete with its own belief, Episcopal, and financial systems. The results were mainly foreign, transplanted national church-beachheads and imported denominations with HQs mainly in the UK, US, Germany, and Italy. It created both an acceptance as well as a rejection of a Western imposed religious system. Much of this age came to a grinding halt at the end of the second World War in 1945, as the main missionary sending nations, the missionary superpowers of the world, were involved in a gruesome war, throwing bombs at each other in plain sight of a pagan world.

From 1945 onwards, I observe six distinct pieces of revelation that the Spirit of God seems to have dropped into the church. Each of them has generated a new era, a new phase that, like steps on a staircase, led up to the next level. Each phase brought something vitally new to the table, and after the era was gone, it does not mean the emphasis was gone and the movement faded, but that a new emphasis was now on God’s agenda, a new class was on, whereby the last emphasis of the Spirit of God was to be solidly built into the entire equation.

Here is a quick run-down of those six important phases of missionary revelation until today. Each one had its own forerunners, organizations - and even fakes, distortions of the true original that were able to burn some of the ground be-

fore the real thing even came onto the scene. Each phase had a few original **voices** and pioneers – and thousands of healthy **echoes** and followers. The five phases, which overlap each other again and again, are:

1) Age of Evangelism (1945-1978)

After WW2, ideologically driven by personalities like Billy Graham, evangelistic (“parachurch”) organizations like OM, YWAM, Navigators, CFC, YFC, etc., emerged, that greatly molded the shape of Christian ministry and mission. In an age of church apathy and self-concern, evangelistic firebrands carried the torch of reaching the world, “one soul at a time.” The main methods and means for this were crusades, tracts, door to door visiting, and evangelistically used media within a concept of evangelism & follow-up, or “outreach and in-drag.” As this was a clearly modern and highly packaged, individual, and compartmentalized approach to missions, its influence began to wane and ceased to be the cutting edge in the mid-70s. However, it served as a great wake-up call of God to a sleepy church, and where people were not challenged by the evangelists’ dramatic messages, they at least felt the tug of the Spirit of God in some areas. And if some churches did not respond positively to the evangelistic challenge that was laid at their doorstep, they at least were forced to look into it for another reason: many churches were both drained of their most enthusiastic people and, probably most worrisome, a significant amount of money that went away from the churches’ budget into evangelistic “things.”

2) Era of Church Growth (1955-1990)

Donald McGavran was one of the pioneers of a revolutionary new approach that soon would mold the thinking and policy of many old and new movements of God: Church Growth. His books *The Bridges of God* (1955) and later *Understanding Church Growth* started a new school of thinking: how to win, keep and grow people into a large church; and how to organize a church for growth. This became later one of the core aspects of the “Fuller School of World Missions” in Pasadena, California, and led to the emergence of national, continental and global church growth societies and the worldwide propagation of growth-oriented church models like those by David Yonggi Cho and others. Technically speaking the era still lives on in the form of the more church-health oriented *Natural Church Development movement* developed by my friend Christian Schwarz, and some rather superficial remnants of this movement as so-called seeker-oriented church models and some **emergent** church developments. Although the physical growth of existing churches is not really the way to win the planet, and can lead to churches suffering of “membership bloating,” being trapped in their own success stories with all the hype that goes with it, growth is an important Kingdom issue to grasp. And as such, the Church Growth movement has been further plowing the ground, preparing the global church for the next message of the Spirit of God to the churches.

3) Age of Church Planting (from 1980 on)

The move from *addition-oriented* Church Growth (“how can I grow my church?”) to *multiplication-based* church planting was only logical; however, it required a huge step for many. For most Christians, the concept of putting new wine into new wineskins required a new paradigm and a new interpretation of

tradition, methodology, training and outlook. The word Church Planting itself is a relatively new term that can be associated with the original pioneering Baptists, Mennonites and Methodists of old, and, more recently, to people such as Bob Logan or English church pioneers Roger Forster, Terry Virgo, Gerald Coates, the early days of John Wimber and others. In the 1980s Church planting was popularized by C. Peter Wagner's catchy quote, "the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches." Writers like David Garrison recently made it abundantly clear that church planting is far bigger than a new evangelistic method, but literally the only way ever to see the Great Commission fulfilled.

Aided by both the retreat of colonialism and the development of new and mainly charismatic independent churches, church planting became the new cutting edge. However, it quickly ran into a brick wall: the inbuilt inabilities of the hierarchical command structure and spiritual architecture of classical denominations, with its traditional Bible school, pastor/teacher-based approach of leadership development, complete with its obsession with church buildings and consumer and program-oriented finance concepts. This severely crippled the original huge expectations and served as a healthy reality check, especially in the early 90s. But one of the developments which then put church planting on steroids, so to speak, was the **Saturation Church Planting** movement, most tangibly through the DAWN movement after 1984. Jim Montgomery and the Dawn movement he started were addressing the question of whole-nation church planting projects (the greek word *ethne* – peoples – of Matt 28:18-20 being interpreted mainly as "nation states"). Based on empirical missionary research and intercessory prayer this led to corroborated, denominationally based national church planting strategies. Church Planting here was not an end in itself, but a means to fill and saturate whole nations with the presence of Christ as it was expressed in local churches. The Dawn Movement found its echo in almost all nations, and strongly influenced many of the young leaders with both an end vision mindset (rather to finish the task of discipling all nations in our time than to build your new Megachurch) and a missional mind: rather than thinking centrifugal (expand the own church empire around a small pope), think centripetal: only a viral, multiplying movement will ever be able to finish the task Jesus has given us.

4) House/Simple Churches (from 1996 on)

Historically developed in areas specifically outside of a direct Western missionary jurisdiction (like China and Vietnam) a new phase of missions started when God began to reveal, mostly simultaneously to a number of people worldwide, that our historic and axiomatic assumptions about CAWKI being CAGWI were wrong. We need to go back to the Book and rediscover New Testament forms and patterns of Church, which were mainly networks of house churches, by which I mean much more than CAWKI-meetings temporarily happening in homes. One of the questions that drove this movement is: **what kind of churches** would not only sacramentalize (christen, baptize, give communion, enroll, reserve a space in the churchyard...) but would truly **disciple** a population? This quality-question connected with the missional challenge of today and invited the seemingly lost potential of millions of Out-Of Church-Christians – people who leave the traditional church in search for God. Prophetically

foreseen by Erich Reber and described by writers such as Robert Banks and Met Castillo, it was in 1996 when probably the first intentional house-church planting movement outside rather closed nations like China, Vietnam or Cuba, was initiated by Dr. Victor Choudhrie in North India. In later years, other initiatives followed, initiated by IBRA Radio, a Swedish Pentecostal Radio ministry, which started a new house church planting ministry in the Arab World, or apostolic persons like Bruce Carlton, inside, but clearly on the fringes of existing mission agencies like the Southern Baptists' IMB (International Mission Board). First greatly ridiculed by traditional churches in almost all nations, the house church movement has grown to many hundreds of thousands of churches in an amazingly short period of time, and is, at this point, not only the main harvesting tool God seems to use in Muslim nations like Bangladesh, Pakistan, or Indonesia, but making its presence felt in many Western nations as well. Apostolic church planters like Neil Cole or Tony Dale, Bernard Sanders and Guy Muse, Victor John and David Watson, Peter Wenz or Jonathan Pattiasina are leading the way, and many in traditional churches who were watching are not laughing anymore. By now (2009) we know of at least 500,000 newly planted house churches (outside China), and, if George Barna is right in his predictions, published in his book *Revolution*, it will take but a few more years for house churches to become not only an extremely vital harvesting instrument of God, but quite simply the new mainline church, replacing CAWKI with something introduced to the mindset of most Christians only a few years ago. Aided greatly by the "flat world," the borderless-ness created by the digital media of Internet-based communication, house churches have first been embraced by pioneers, then early adopters, those who needed a new idea to be sanctioned and accredited by "respectful people," and soon will even be embraced by "late adopters," those who take on new ideas only if they are the new law.

5) Apostolic-Prophetic Reformation (from 1999 on)

With the emergence of indigenous leaders who did not fit the mold of traditional Christendom (and its missionary expressions) at all, a new and very radical return to the principles of New Testament Christianity emerged that suggested not only a gradual *Evolution* of Christendom, but a full-blown revolution. Typically started outside existing CAWKI-Structures and classical Mission setups, this revolution – typically led by apostolic and/or prophetic people – wanted far more than the renewal or reformation of what already existed, but called for a return to authentic Kingdom principles altogether without accepting the existing religious Christian status quo as a given. For those that watched this development from within traditional church and Mission systems, this revolution inspired a call for a *Reformation* of their own constituencies back to apostolic roots, values, foundations, and principles. The prophetic movements of the 1980s have been somewhat of a Samuel-type forerunner of this, prophesying a new apostolic future for the church, and sometimes even speaking this into the new Davids of God, those apostolic people in preparation, in "Adullam situations" as the "System Saul" was still going on. Prophetic people like John Paul Jackson, Andrea Xandry, Rick Joyner, Martin Scott, Michael Sullivan, Scott McLeod, Erich Reber and others have seen it, spoken of it, but many, almost like looking into the promised land from their own respective mount Nebos like Moses of old, were never really able to enter it without the help of apostolic

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people who were, however, only emerging on the scene at that time. Around 1999, just before the turn of the century, it was, as some are referring to it, as if God suddenly switched on the light and the whole apostolic issue was placed in broad daylight before the church. Apostolic forerunners like Watchman Nee, Arthur Wallis, Arthur Katz, and John Wimber have ploughed the ground for this before, and as this entire book is dedicated to the exploration of this present apostolic-prophetic reformation, it is not necessary to say more about the content of it at this point. However, it will be vital to understand some of the initial attempts that have been made more recently to grasp, understand, and even to make instrumental the newfound apostolic dimension from the perspective of CAWKI. Not all of these attempts were mature; many were simply expressions of the spirit of the time. So rather than look down on people who made mistakes in dealing with the apostolic (which we all probably have done), I much prefer to appreciate the various aspects and pieces of the puzzle people have discovered in dealing with the subject, because we can learn even from folks who have found a diamond, but thought the very best use of it was to cut glass!

6) Kingdom Economics (from 2008 on)

Many who wish to hear what the Spirit says to the churches today agree that He is definitely talking about economics, wooing the Bride of Christ to return to the principles and practices of finance and work the King himself introduced when he walked the earth. If it is true that most everything we have heard in church about “church” was wrong, how much more everything we have heard in church about money and work was wrong as well. Deeply intoxicated by a fear-based, Babylonian and Mammon-driven mindset the Church has demonstrated how it can strategically break every financial rule in God’s book and boldly declare its own fantastic and self-serving principles to become the new rules. From having the State collect “church tax” to the “tithing” 10% of a monthly income to some “church” to neo-legalistic giving techniques or to not giving at all, the financial area is the largest minefield of CAWKI today. Countless millions of believers have their personal financial horror stories to tell *after they had come to Christ*, have been milked and massaged into giving to dubious causes with an audacity that defies belief, while Christianity has been turned into one gigantic religious market. Could it be that Jesus, one more time, is going through his father’s house with a whip, overturning the tables, flushing out the Ananiases and Sapphiras of today, and restoring divine order in the economic realm? Many have started to teach on Biblical Finance principles, “business according to Jesus”, but often enough much of today’s financial teaching is unapostolic and nonprophetic in its nature and geared mostly towards the so-called “financial freedom” of an individual rather than a return to economic Kingdom accuracy. However, once apostolic and prophetic ekklesial structures and Kingdom architecture emerge once again, the very first thing this will mean, just like Nehemiah (chapter 13) returning from his last trip to Babylon, is restoring divine economic order in the family of God on earth. This process has already begun, and it will require all our maturity and obedience, as this will end an era of amazing financial lawlessness and licentiousness amongst Christians that many have thought is normal.

**Nothing is more powerful
than an idea whose time
has come.**

We all know the statement that nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. Being in the right place at the right time with the right message is crucial, if we don't want to be found trying to persuade God to bless what we are doing, but rather, to start doing what God is blessing. This is why relatively few people and relatively few and predominantly small organizations that make themselves available to be the spokesmen of a relevant message from the Spirit of God to the Churches during a given window of time can have most far-reaching results and be of truly global significance. However, once the Spirit of God moves on to the next emphasis, and asks us all to move into the next phase, we can quickly get tied up in a mission of the past, hang on to our past roles and identities, and start being absolutely the right person with an outdated message, or even find ourselves in a ministry or organization whose sell-by date has passed. In that case we would begin to live backward-oriented rather than forward, becoming reactive instead of prophetic, and, far from being part of the solution, we become part of the problem.

This is exactly the moment when it shows whether we are truly fathers, or just ordinary men: can we happily give over the baton to the new generation and release and bless them for their new adventures climbing the next few steps, or do we wish to remain the men in command, non-fathers, non-releasers, who ultimately become aging control-freaks whose hands will have to be literally pried from the steering wheel of their respective organizations or churches, usually when it is far too late to release anyone into anything? The prevailing immaturity of even very senior Christian leaders in exactly this aspect – combined with a lack of understanding of this progressive revelation in Missions - is precisely the reason why most new waves of the spirit find their fiercest opponents in the last wave. But it does not have to remain that way. Why not break a huge *taboo* and do things differently from now on – like retiring early, making every effort to connect and bridge the dots of recent salvation history in an inclusive spirit, and for each new phase of the Spirit, bless both the former one as well as the one to come?

Apostolic ministry co-opted by CAWKI

One of the biggest, but foreseeable mistakes made so far in engaging with the apostolic is the simplistic belief that this ministry and calling could be easily integrated into traditional forms of churches, denominations or ministries, just like all the other spiritual gifts. The charismatic renewal movements, for example, have attempted to integrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit into existing church systems of all kinds, with very mixed success. And so it is no surprise that as the church in general started to discover the apostolic ministry, there were numerous attempts made to integrate the apostolic ministry into historic forms of church, to explain it as the real drive behind unusual or new types of church, or even to instrumentalize it for the furthering of CAWKI.

As an example of the latter, David Cartledge, working with the Australian Assemblies of God, has written a book called *The Apostolic Revolution*. This book, symptomatically subtitled "The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia," is a classical example of misinterpreting the very nature of apostolic ministry. Apostolic ministry is not primarily sent to reinvigorate the existing church, but to plant the future one. The very goal of apostolic ministry is to plant the church in areas where it does not exist, with

the valid exception of the “Petrine type” of apostleship Dick Scoggins has suggested, that is, steering traditional churches to new horizons. But to assume that apostolic ministries can be used like oxen put before a cart that is somewhat stuck in the mud, as some sort of spiritual AAA road service, ready to help pull the cart out and put it back on the road again and then simply trot off, would greatly misunderstand the scope, nature, and calling of apostolic people. Their main calling as architects and master builders is to design missional systems to finish the task God has given us. To call such people into systems that have not been missionally designed in the first place will typically cause a system conflict. Because apostolic people, following their calling and gifting to synchronize earthly systems with the Kingdom, will go from the basement to the roof through the entire set-up, DNA, value and priority system of a given structure, and attempt to align it with the Kingdom. If they find enthusiasm and the readiness to change in a given set-up, I believe they will be able and willing to work with it for a while. But should there be persistent resistance and ongoing objection to the apostolic directions, I believe that most apostolic people will have little patience to hang out with a crowd of people who basically decide to cling to their past rather than to the truly eternal God who resides not only in the past, but in the present and in the future as well.

Most attempts in recent years to describe the apostolic ministry have been done from within the perspectives of traditional church or mega-churches, complete with their non-apostolic trappings and shortcomings. One of the first to attempt this was Ulf Ekman, founder of “Word of Life” in Uppsala, Sweden, a controversial, traditionally strongly top-down structured church in the tradition of the so-called faith churches. In 1991 Ekman was starting to put together a seminar on the apostolic ministry, but never went so far as to question the very setup, structure and style of his own church, leadership, and ministry, neither in his book *The Apostolic Ministry* nor in his own work so far. Another example of this is Kenneth Hagin’s book *He Gave Gifts Unto Men*, published in 1992. Hagin, an Evangelist and later leader of the classically mega-church-structured Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, describes his new insights into apostolic ministry in classical faith style, mainly as a result of a visitation of Jesus in 1987. Never in his book does he go so far as to apply typical apostolic questions and challenges to his own ministry, and Hagin makes it look as if apostolic ministry basically condones and invigorates the classical one-man shows so typical of the various faith movements of the past.

There are a number of contemporary church leaders and authors of a true apostolic calling who, in spite of working from a classical CAWKI-background, try to explore new ways ahead, which I deeply appreciate. Among them are David Cannistraci, USA, who wrote *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement*; Jonathan David (Malaysia), author of *Apostolic Strategies Affecting Nations*, Noel Woodroffe, Trinidad, as well as Anderson Williams, both from Elijah Center, who have a considerable teaching role on the issue of the current global apostolic reformation. C. Peter Wagner, former missionary to Bolivia and later Professor for Church Growth in Pasadena, had a special role in the recent global apostolic discussion since 1996. Because of his many writings on the subject, he is one of the more well known voices globally on these issues. Let us examine his approach more closely here.

John Wimber and C. Peter Wagner

John Wimber (1934 - 1997), a former jazz Musician, was converted in 1963, and soon after led hundreds to Christ. In 1974 he became the founding director of the Department of Church Growth at the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, and directed the department until 1978. During this time, a house church was established in his home that combined the four unique elements that John Wimber's message and mission was all about: an emphasis on the Kingdom of God, arts and worship, signs and wonders, and church planting. Wimber had been widely and quickly recognized as an apostolic man by many; however, after leaving the house church situation to move into a bigger venue, rather than multiplying the mushrooming house churches, he became a widely sought after speaker, particularly for the stagnating charismatic movements. For this particular audience, at this point in history not at all interested in church planting, he kept the church planting issue, as well as the house church matrix, very much on the back burner. Paul Cain, a prophetic but tragically lonely man born 1929 in Texas, once told how he was sent specifically by God to work with John Wimber, after God had shown to Cain what the true intent of the emerging Vineyard movement was to be globally. It was clearly an apostolic role, which was to be warned not to fall into the trap of superficiality, pursuing healing without holiness, and be sucked into the renewal agendas of stagnating and dying churches. I spoke several times with John Wimber to encourage him to stay true to his original calling, but it was a sad experience to watch this movement become just one more charismatic free church movement that, yes, had an apostolic beginning, but, in my observation, did not finish as intended.

John Wimber had a profound effect on C. Peter Wagner, as he was not only a friend, but a symbolic figure and token for the research issue that Wagner was dealing with at the time: the role of signs and wonders in Church Growth. Peter Wagner, a professor for Church Growth since 1971, had taken over from Donald McGavran as the head of the Faculty of Fuller School of World Mission (Pasadena) in 1981, and describes himself as a *teacher* in his book *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. Having observed and worked with Peter Wagner myself in several areas, I can completely agree that he is a very uniquely gifted teacher, with an extraordinary capacity to identify, analyze and conceptualize pressing and often prophetic issues facing the church. After focusing on the supernatural, later on the issue of spiritual warfare and prayer, in 1996 Wagner led a conference at Fuller Theological Seminary ("National Symposium on the Post-Denominational Church") that led to what was to be called "the New Apostolic Movement."

In his subsequent books *Churchquake* or *The New Apostolic Reformation*, Wagner correctly identifies something radically new in so-called post-denominational churches, but makes, in my estimate, a far-reaching mistake in labeling some of the most successful mega-church movements of the day as "apostolic." Many new independent churches that had been planted in the 1970s and 1980s around the world had grown to sizeable churches and, firmly established outside any traditional framework of known and so-called main-line denominations, had gone on to start networks of churches they either had planted themselves, or had grown by allowing existing, individual, independent churches to join their network. By way of example, one of them is

the “Living Water Church” started by Stanley Ndovie, an apostolic man from Malawi, whose network grew quickly to about 900 churches in a number of nations.

But the result of *apostolic giftings in traditional vessels* was, technically speaking, simply more new denominations: just because they did not stick with traditional denominations, this did not mean they left the denominational mindset behind; most of them simply went on to start new ones. Just calling an association of a new set of traditional churches with a headquarters, a corporate culture, common values and, therefore, soon a common tradition, an “apostolic network” does not do justice to the word apostolic at all.

Peter Wagner was the convening initiator for the 1996 symposium on “Post-denominational Churches,” which soon were called new apostolic churches. It will not surprise us to hear that soon after, Peter Wagner first accepted the title of a “convening apostle” for this emerging movement, and by 2000 he had publicly declared that he was the “presiding apostle” of the *International Coalition of Apostles*, together with John Kelly, Chuck Pierce, and Doris Wagner. In Wagner’s words: “I gradually came to the realization that God had given me the gift of apostle, and that certain spheres of the body of Christ were recognizing that I had the office of apostle as well.” One of the ways that Wagner explained his new role was by the introduction of the terms *vertical* and *horizontal* apostles. **Vertical Apostles**, he says, are planters, those that put something into the ground, have direct authority over other leaders they have raised up and released for service in specific churches and para-church ministries. Paul would then be a biblical example of a vertical apostle, building straight down. Contemporary examples of this would be *ecclesiastical Apostles* – those who oversee church networks, like Chuck Smith and Bill Hybels, *functional Apostles* – those who oversee para-church ministries (like Loren Cunningham’s former role in YWAM and Bill Bright’s former role with Campus Crusade for Christ), and *congregational Apostles* – those leading mega-churches. **Horizontal Apostles**, says Wagner, have significant spiritual influence over other leaders without being organizationally linked to them. James, the brother of Jesus, fits this role in the first century. Under this category, Peter Wagner includes *convening Apostles* – those who can sound a call that gathers men and women of God for divine purposes; *mobilizing Apostles* – those who rally God’s troops for war; and *territorial Apostles* – those who exercise special influence over defined geographical areas.

In addition to the fact that all of this does not really do justice to the biblical teaching on apostolic ministry and introduces more extra-biblical categories of apostolic ministry than probably even the Roman Catholic Church, such a dissection of apostolic roles simply introduces far too many levels and aspects to remain practical. I consider this attempt to be part of the positive and intense struggle of the larger Body of Christ to come to grips with a ministry dimension that we will never come to grips with; to understand something that ultimately is a mystery; to find a reality that ultimately will find us. The sent-ness of God, his *Missio Dei*, as expressed in apostolic ministry, will always elude us, and the more we compartmentalize and try to understand it, the more it will probably escape us like a fish that slips out of our net. However, encouraged by a host of pastors, evangelists and apostles-in-the-making searching for networking, cooperation, and some seeking significance, the “International Coalition of

Apostles” went on to grow considerably in recent years to around 500 members, and it is not uncommon in my experience to come to a country and be introduced to - or stumble over - a “Peter Wagner accredited apostle.” In a May 2000 article in *Charisma Magazine*, Peter Wagner explained what this new apostolic movement meant in practical terms. Wagner, now called a *convening* and therefore “horizontal apostle,” goes on to point out that from now on, every pastor in every city was to be aligned to his citywide apostle, and answerable to him. However, to whom were the new apostles to be answerable? The article makes that very plain: to Peter Wagner! This conclusion is both logical, simple, and in complete alignment to Wagner’s Mega church-centric Church Growth history. Soon after that, many Christian leaders witnessed the “calling” and ordination of several people to be official apostles over entire nations and transnational regions, some appointed by Peter Wagner himself, some by emissaries, and some by usually very well-meaning but ill-informed and naïve prophets or prophetesses who appeared in areas, nations, and cities and proclaimed certain people to be the new apostles – with an amazing instinct for the wrong ones. Even if some of those named to be “territorial apostles” truly were in the making by God to arrive at such a role later, if they were picked out too early, in immature stages of their development, this would have devastating results for them, shortcutting important maturing and refining processes and telling people that they are ready before they actually are.

I am quite familiar with some of those sad stories, as there always has been and always will be a never-ending quantity of people looking for significance (or a mere certificate of value, of graduation, of ordination), and there were those who would be ready to give an arm and a leg to become a “Peter Wagner accredited apostle” over a certain region. Many went on to demand allegiance, obedience, or even finances from the Christian world around them, now that they are solidly accredited apostles, and the bitterness, rejection, splits, and the damage to the entire apostolic issue that has resulted out of this has been considerable. But not beyond repair. In my estimate Peter Wagner has never ceased to be what he always was and what I still appreciate in him far beyond all those issues I do disagree with. He was and is a brilliant, strategic, mission-minded *teacher* in the body of Christ. I see five key areas where Wagner has simply not broken from non-apostolic traditions of thinking. He is, as he humbly admits himself, church-wise, very conservative. And maybe this is more true than even Wagner realizes. So it should not surprise us that he never went so far as to truly challenge the concept of CAWKI, the traditional pastor-centric model of a congregational church itself. Secondly, he sees denominationalism as a healthy form of church government. Thirdly he accepted the counsel of those around him that, as he was teaching about the apostolic reformation, he was one of its leaders, which led him to accept the role of a “convening apostle,” although remaining essentially a well-known and therefore influential teacher. Fourthly, he accepted, at least for a while, a fairly heavy-handed, top-down role in assigning people into apostolic functions. The ordination of “territorial apostles” over Western Europe, South Asia, etc. dangerously reminds us of the false practices of the cult of New Apostolic Churches to install a *Stammapostel*, root apostles, who are *presiding* apostles over a group of lesser beings, which is essentially a form of papacy. Lastly, and probably most important in my view, Wagner seemed to have ignored the role of apostles dying to self, relin-

quishing their own agendas, the whole process of apostolic migration, and has therefore opened a space for undead, uncrucified, ambitious religious leaders to swarm into a pseudo-apostolic role and establish their little empires, denominations, and one more “apostolic network” around the globe, truly believing they are doing apostolic work, not knowing that they are not knowing what they are doing.

Theologically speaking, Wagner has been vulnerable to a top-down hierarchical approach of leadership from the beginning. It is therefore only a matter of being truthful to his own guiding values if he, in recent years, has publicly embraced a “health and wealth” theology and, most recently, dominionism, which is reflected in the title of a recent book, *Dominion!*, Wagner writes: “Our theological bedrock is what has been known as Dominion Theology. This means that our divine mandate is to do whatever is necessary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to retake the dominion of God’s creation which Adam has forfeited to Satan in the Garden of Eden. . . . Our goal, in a word, is transformation.” According to this mindset, all that matters is who is at the top of the hierarchical command structure. This is why Wagner readily took over the simplistic idea of Lance Wallnau, a business entrepreneur in the learning industry, who suggests that Christians should control “the seven mountains”. These “seven mountains” describe the following areas of life: 1) The home; 2) the Church; 3) Schools; 4) Government and politics; 5) Media; 6) Arts, entertainment and sports; 7) Commerce, science and technology. The idea of this “7-M-strategy” is simply that whoever occupies the top, controls the whole mountain. Wagner writes: “The warfare strategy is that ‘if the world is to be won, these are the mountains that mold the culture and the minds of men. Whoever controls these mountains controls the direction of the world and the harvest therein’”.

In the next chapter about false apostolic patterns we will have to look into this some more. Jesus describes the nature of government in this world as “ruling over”. He said: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. *Not so with you.* Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20: 25-28). Some have described the approach of Jesus as “ruling under”, the gentle, bottom-up offer of the rule of a self-humbling servant-king (Phil 2:1-10) who, although he has all the power and might to command angels or his servants to rescue him from any situation, he chose not to do so (Joh 18:36) and walk a humble lane.

For our discussion of apostolic ministry (and any other ministry, for that matter), the conclusion is very simple: if we take the issue of humbleness, self-denial, brokenness, meekness and selfless, obedient servanthood out of biblical Christianity, all that remains is proud religion. This is exactly the crux of the matter: the cross. The cross is the monumental watershed that decides if we pursue triumphalistic religious dreams or the way of Jesus. The whole world lusts for money, sex and power; there is nothing new about this. But if an uncrucified Christianity does the same and speaks of an easy path (just follow these 10 easy steps. . .) to wealth, power and sensual fulfillment, and promising people they can “sit on mountains”, be the boss and become a fabulously rich “wealth generating individual” (nothing more than a money machine), some-

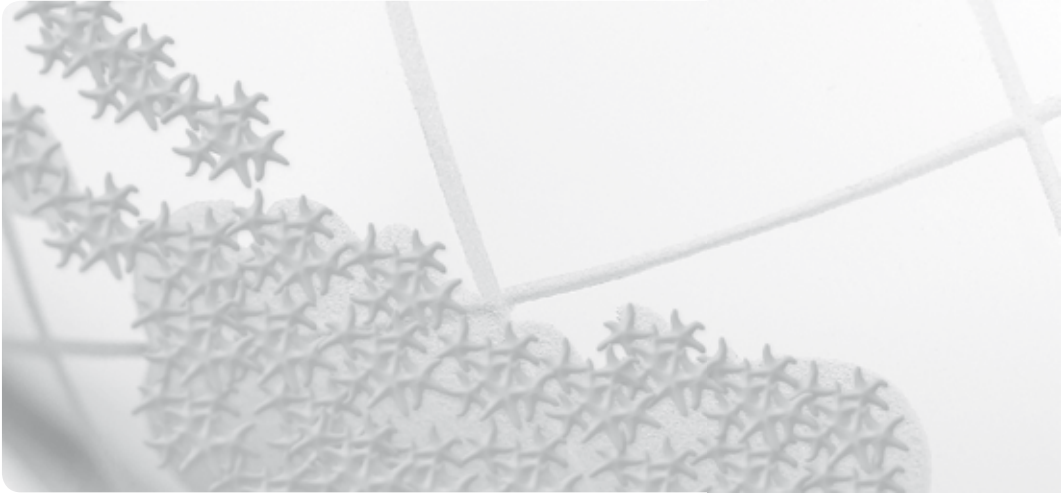
If we take the issue of humbleness, selfdenial, brokenness, meekness and selfless, obedient servanthood out of biblical Christianity, all that remains is proud religion.

thing has utterly gone wrong. Remember the expansive business plans of the rich man that Jesus spoke of in his parable (Lk 12)? The plans of that man who was consumed by “bigger is better” came to very sudden stop. And who called this man an outright fool? It was God himself. That is why one of the most important tasks for today’s healthy apostolic ministries is to understand what I call “The Tarsus Principle” to which I have dedicated an entire chapter (chapter 19).

However, let me underline this one more time: my excitement looking into this period of recovering bits and pieces of apostolic truths far outweighs my few laments about immature and non-strategic deviations and hiccups. That is part of our being broken vessels – all of us. I believe God knows what he is doing, even if we humans sometimes do not. And as we “test all things to hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21) - including the apostolic – I believe in God’s ability to steer us in a healthy direction far more than I believe in the devil’s ability to keep on confusing us and keep vital insights and revelations locked away for too long. This is unmistakably the time for an apostolic reformation, and that is ultimately all that counts.

However, before we continue in our journey to discover and embrace healthy and biblical apostolic patterns, we have to take one last look into the devastating results of some unhealthy, false apostolic “visions” and missions prevalent today that are currently preached at all corners and which confuse great numbers of well-meaning but unsuspecting folks. As we have already seen, a part of apostolic ministry has always been the protection of the sheep against the wolves, and for this we need healthy boundaries, discernment, wisdom and apostolic council to deal with the issues that history places at our feet. In the days of Peter, Paul, James and John, their apostolic council in Jerusalem had to deal with Judaizers, for example. In today’s world the question whether or not someone is circumcised is not a vital issue anymore. However, as we will see in the next chapter, false apostolic patterns come in all forms and shapes. To understand them thoroughly will only arm and prepare us better to stand firm and contend for the faith once given to us. “If there is no vision, people perish”. And if there is false vision, people run into dead-end roads and end up with their cars smashed against trees, walls or falling off cliffs. So if you are ready to look into some of this, be at peace, take a deep breath, and let’s look together with discernment at some of the current false apostolic patterns that harass the sheep of Jesus today. And then move on and get the job done the way the King has told us to.





**17 False Apostolic Patterns:
The Three Apostles of Mammon, Dominionism and the Dream of
Social Transformation**

We cannot have the King without his Kingdom, nor the Kingdom without the King.
We need both.

17 False Apostolic Patterns: The Three Apostles of Mammon, Dominionism and the Dream of Social Transformation

The reason *why we do what we do* (our mandate) and *what goal we pursue* (our vision) is crucial to our existence and therefore to everything we do. In the Kingdom of God, God is the ultimate giver of mandates, and his goals are the ultimate ends we are called to pursue. In the fallen world, the sphere outside the Kingdom of God, most humans are driven not by divine, but by human motivations like ambition, fear, greed, political agendas, advancing one's tribe, ethnic group, state, religion or even one's own football club. What moves people into action is therefore either a sense of collective egoism, nationalism, humanitarian philanthropy, their social conscience, religious fervor or, if they can afford it, just the seeking of fun to beat boredom.

Jesus, pressed for an answer on the greatest commandment in the law, answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:37-39). It is the combination of both, the love for God **and** the love for our fellow humans that is our mandate. If we do not love God, it will be evident by not keeping his commands. Jesus said: "If you love me, you will obey my commands" (John 14:15). And if we do not love people, then the love of God is not in us: "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8).

Love for our neighbors based on our love for God, evident in our desire to keep his commands and to function within the principles of the Kingdom are therefore our purest motives. Like a moon circling two planets in a double ellipsis these two loves of our lives should be the gravitational centers of our human existence: love for God that inspires our love for mankind. Throughout history, man has always tended to wander off to one side of this Double focus. If only love for God – and not mankind – drives us, we might end up an ascetic, a modern pillar-saint, spending our lives detached from other humans on a pillar, an island, in self-inflicted solitary confinement, in a bubble or a cult, only concerned about God and God alone. If we wander off the other end and love people without loving God first, we would not only stop to care about the commands of Jesus, but be easily swept away into loving people in the power of our own love. We will become philanthropists (lovers of people) without being a lover of God, and will be motivated or even driven either by our social conscience, a political agenda, an ideology, a dream or the very real hurts and screaming traumas of the people around us that cry for attention. The extremes are clear: a person who does not love people but says he loves God might end up an unholy crusader and religious fanatic killing others in the name of God, Allah or religion; a person only loving people but not God might end up in the classical helpers syndrome, trapped by the notion that a person is only good to the degree he helps other, weaker or more needy people. Such a person might even win the world but could very much lose his soul.

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Jesus boiled down the deepest motivations of people to two possible sources: God or Mammon. Either you love God and hate the other, or you serve Mammon and despise God. No one can serve both masters (Mt 6:24). Mammon is a demonic being, the spirit of Babylon, an anti-Christian demonic influence that wishes to be the slave master of mankind and dictate its policy. Mammon is about much more than just money or the love of money; it is about greed, fear, power, or what Jesus calls thorns and thistles, “the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things” (Mk 4:19), quickly able to choke to death any passion for the things of God.

In other words: Mammon wishes to have a *false apostolic function*, a direction giving, mandating power over people. Mammon offers himself to be a plausible architect of life, a demonic project and management consultant, and would love to be the driving force behind much of what humans give their lives to. In the absence of a clear and healthy understanding of the apostolic, many Christians have not recognized how powerfully Mammon has infiltrated and subverted even the Church. “Think!” – Mammon says. “Trust in your own understanding. Listen to your senses, not God. Does something make sense? Then do it. Is it reasonable? Then follow your reason; God is secondary. Is it financially plausible and can you calculate it on a spreadsheet? Go for it. Can you plan, budget and control it? My man! Ask what is in it for you, and it shall be given to you. Look around you, everyone is doing it, so take heed and do likewise!” Mammon preaches “it’s the economy, stupid!”, and seeks to link everything humans do to the production of personal gain, be it materialistic, political, social or just to enjoy good feelings. Just like the fearsome “Wizard of Oz” that controlled the imaginary Land of Oz was nothing other than an old, wizened gnome of a man standing behind a curtain in his castle and pulling levers and pressing buttons to make it thunder and call down lightning, Mammon would love to stand undetected behind a curtain and pull his satanic strings. Once the curtain is pulled aside by someone like Toto the dog, who does this in the children’s novel written by Frank Baum, the detected gnome, once discovered, looses his magic spell and is rendered powerless.

Lucifer understandably wishes to block the progress of the work of the Kingdom in every possible way, as it directly destructs and limits his own domain of darkness. One of the most effective ways to do this since Adam and Eve is to slip doubt into the minds of people and make them ponder the question: “did God really say?” Lucifer will work hard at replacing healthy motivations by unhealthy ones. The most persuasive ones will be those motives that look good, but are not of God. Let us have a look at some of these pseudo-motives and false engines for human activities. I call them

The false Apostles of Mammon

Part of the apostolic function is to answer the question: for what end did God send the church into the world? What is her mission, and how shall this mission be accomplished? In answering this question, people will receive direction. In a church that is deeply democratized, it is not God who rules, but literally the people (*demos* is Greek for: the people, *kratos*: rule). In such a church, apostles, announcing and representing the directives of God, were never welcome. They would simply disturb or even upset the smooth functioning of the religious machinery. This is why it has been fairly easy for Mammon

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to slip into the church some of his own “apostles” who tried to beguile Christians of their reward (Col 2:18) and simply reposition the goal posts for entire generations of well-meaning Christians. Some of these “new goals” have been mentioned, exhorted and preached to such a degree that they have been literally sanctioned and canonized and taken by the majority in such a way as if they were God’s own words written down in the Bible – even if they are not. Some of these false apostolic patterns have, through decades of constant bombardment and false teaching, become so entrenched and safely lodged in the bones and marrows of many Christians, that they would consider it a plain sacrilege to even touch the issues. The apostle Paul warns of a time when people will follow the *teachings of demons* (1.Tim 4:1). Let us name at least three of these teachings that, in the absence of the apostolic, have become absolutely rampant in the Evangelical world, not to even mention nominal, church-based religion.

Need. The first and most convincing of these false apostles is need. This false apostolic thinking makes “the problem” to become the center of attention. Whole generations of churches have subscribed to the slogan of “find a need and fill it!” To help people in need we yes, gain their appreciation, but in turn we become the oxen that is starting to pull their cart out of the mud. If Lucifer can make Christians to be need-driven, they will be an easy victim to be co-opted permanently to solve the millions of human needs and stop worrying about God and his plans. Jesus never acted because of a human need nor was he need-driven. He was God-driven. He made it abundantly clear that he did not come down from heaven to solve our problems and take care of our needs, but to bring the rule of God, his Kingdom, down to earth. Jesus was proactive, not reactive, prophetic, not servile. In this sense, how many of the “Christian” projects, endeavors and actions in existence today have actually been ordained by Christ? An overwhelming majority of “christian” initiatives is simply born out of need, humans responding to human problems because they have been made to believe that this is the thing to do. Need births an amazing amount of creativity, and therefore it takes captive the bulk of human capacity into the employment of solving problems of other humans. It is a false gospel to proclaim that Jesus came just to solve our problems; he came to save us from sin and yes, this, in turn, will solve *some* of our problems, but not all. Jesus never promised us a pain-free and problem free life; that comes later. Last but not least: need almost magically opens the purse. Countless Christian and non-Christian projects advertise and legitimize themselves not by being born out of God but out of need. If they solve a need, they are automatically sanctioned, and the bigger the need, the bigger are the donations. Beware of this false apostle of need. If let loose and allowed to govern policy, it will turn the entire church into a hospital, caring about the ever new problems of a never ending stream of patients wishing a cure for their needs, while a sinful world is dying for lack of vision and meaning.

Pragmatism. The second apostle of Mammon is uncrucified pragmatism. He places the visible and tangible success into the center of attention. He preaches more, bigger, better. Pragmatism looks at a challenge and answers: “whatever works!” If it works, it’s good; it’s God. This will automatically lead into

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an addiction to methods, as methods are nothing other than means to achieve an end. Pragmatism implies the end justifies the means, and it teaches people that if we have the tools, we can do it. This kind of pragmatism ultimately leads into the delusion of do-ability, where people impressed with their own abilities believe anything is feasible. Lucifer happily rubs his hands to watch Christians who busy themselves, “worry and upset with many things” like Martha in Luke chapter 10, and copy others who have been busying themselves before. Pragmatism comes clothed in sobriety and with rational arguments: it must be logical, one, two, three. It appeals convincingly to our human but fallen mind and would not flinch a second to suggest to Jesus to please not go and have himself crucified – after all, what good would that do? Pragmatism does not “have in mind the things of God but the things of men” (Mt 16:23), and is therefore satanic in nature, as Jesus had to point out to Peter.

Consumerism. The last in our macabre trio is sainted Consumerism. This false apostle has elevated the constant hunger of the uncrucified mind for ever more religious satisfaction to a sanctified status and has implanted its credo into the bones and marrows of entire generations: “the customer is always right!” Most of us grew up with a discount mindset (where do we get the most for the least money), and so consumerism has opened up a religious department as well: where do we get as much God as possible for the least possible investment on our side. If we allow religious consumerism to influence our thinking, it will tell us that services (or cults!) that attract more people are automatically more spiritual. And just like a false apostle, consumerism has become one of the main consultants to a stagnating church urging it to morph more and more into a well-oiled machine satisfying the demands of the picky, religious customers. Giving people what the people want, he nods wisely, is the only foolproof method in the real world to attract attention and therefore customers, and bolsters it up with stories from the world of business as if that is what the church is all about. The venerated advice of consumerism is simple: whoever can tickle the ears of most consumers in some sort of Olympic contest wins. Accepting this false apostolic advice leads to the formation of a market-shaped, and no longer mission shaped church. Churches affected by this heresy will degenerate quickly into a religious supermarket where some choosy believers shuffle along the buffets and take a bite of this, sorry, definitely nothing of that, and maybe rather a trifle of sweet Dessert. Venerated consumerism has sent millions of believers into an ultimately self-centered search for the perfect church *for them* – and tens of thousands of churches compete to win their attention by trying to offer them the perfect drive-through package to experience God in 60 to 120 minutes on a Sunday morning and be gone. But alas, if you have listened to such wrongly sainted consumerism for all too long, you might find your church full of consumers that keep you busy and the programs booked out, while their hearts grow cold and their heads grow weary. It is a strange thing; the needs of people seem to grow by others trying to satisfy them.

Life as envisioned by the Creator

When God created Adam and Eve, he did not put them into a vacuum, but placed them into a world that was created and completed for them. It was

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a “very good world,” with clean water, rivers, gardens, fruits, seeds, animals, a world that was in an incredible balance with God, mankind and itself. When sin destroyed this balance and open communication, enmity came into the world. The result was strife and war not only between man and God, but between mankind itself, mankind and animals, and even among the animals themselves. God started a long road to reconciliation and, in my opinion, lovingly and strategically planned salvation history and its every step.

As the children of Noah’s sons Ham, Shem and Japheth became many nations and the first societies emerged, God chose in Abraham and his heirs the people of Israel to make them a model nation, a blessing and light to the world, so that all other nations in a Godless darkness could watch and see how it is when people live in the light again, in communion with their God. This also included God’s master plan for the corporate, the political set-up of society and not only a salvation plan for individuals. This is why God laid down strikingly simple yet effective political principles, intended for *his* people to flourish and become all he created them to be. Landa Cope wrote a book calling these principles *The Old Testament Template*. After God liberated Israel out of Egypt, he gave them the Ten Commandments, a foundational *Magna Charta* regulating the core essentials of a life with God and each other, and therefore provided the very foundation for a civil society.

But that was not all. God went on to establish an entire complex political system, complete with principles that included an open interface and the “traffic laws” between God and mankind (the religious system), the setting down of rules of respect for elders, families, clans, and tribes (the societal system), and establishing principles of learning and teaching (the educational system), simple and transparent tax, hereditary, and debt-cancelling laws (the financial system), clear laws on what is right and wrong, including appropriate penalties and principles of applied forgiveness, complete with legislative, executive, and judiciary institutions (the legal system), and even a system of sleeping and waking, working and celebrating, maintaining a healthy rhythm in life (the life-balance system). In this entire spectrum of society, we can clearly state: God did good to man, in every holistic aspect of the word.

A colleague of mine, Thorsten Moritz, New Testament professor at Bethel University, Minneapolis (USA), sums up the grand story of humanity, its *meta-narrative*, in the following four core statements: “There is only God... who created the earth and everything in it... who is committed to recovering the fallen creation... and who chooses to do so by sponsoring a model people whose purpose is to attract humanity at large back into a relationship with himself.” Thorsten goes on to say that “at the heart of the Bible’s understanding is that the purpose of God’s people is to embody true life, life as envisioned by the creator, in a hurting or fallen world. Put differently: God uses a humanity of sacrificial love to entice a humanity fallen into idolatry back into a life that’s creatively in tune. Selflessness is pitted against selfishness, thereby reversing the effects of the Fall. To re-phrase it yet again: God did not elect to force a wayward humanity back in line, instead he chose to pursue the adoption of fallen humanity by putting before the world a people whose relationships are supposed to reflect his own love for his good creation, especially humanity.”

To make the world jealous

Even if the Bible later states that “God so loved the world that he gave... Jesus” (John 3:16), this, by no means, says that God is now only interested in seeing “souls saved” and people calling upon the name of Jesus. God has not stopped being concerned for mankind’s religious, societal, educational, moral, financial, legal, or life-balance systems. God created all of life, and is therefore interested in all of it. “God does not change” (James 1:17). It is still his intention to woo a fallen world back to himself.

Today God is using both Israel and the ekklesia towards this goal. Israel is temporarily probably more of a negative example of a renegade bride that, in amazing confusion, has not recognized her own bridegroom and ran off with someone else. In ethnic and religious pride, Israel has forsaken God and crucified its own Messiah, and as a nation it will remain blind and lost until, in utter despair and need, it calls out to the very one they had crucified (so yes, there will be a happy ending!). The ekklesia, on the other hand, is designed to be a positive role model today, intended not only “to make the Jews jealous,” but basically the whole world. The ekklesia has what the entire world wants: love, self worth because of God’s love, and the peace of mind that is the outcome of that. But even more than this, the ekklesia has an open interface with its creator, and is structured by a just political system, a healthy governmental order under God that sets a standard for all of life. Life in the ekklesia is supposed to be salt and light, a city on the hill, a testimony to all nations, modeling life in the Kingdom, and not keeping this as an exclusive secret within a ghetto, but sharing it: spilling it over and out to all mankind.

As the world again begins to watch an apostolic and prophetic ekklesia lift its head, not a substandard and religious Church forever tied up with itself, this will cause a positive commotion, even an uproar among “the nations” that is best described as *holy jealousy*. Jealousy is the strong emotion provoked in others who see something in others that they don’t have, but want. I am writing these lines while I am in Tunisia, which has seen a sort of revival during times when Christians, persecuted and paraded to die as martyrs in the Roman arenas and buried in the very catacombs where they used to meet, had an amazing impact on those onlookers who wondered what it was that made these people die with uplifted heads to their God. Tertullian, an early “Tunisian” Christian leader (155-222), said these unforgettable words: “In the blood of the martyrs lies the seed of the Church.”

Behind all façade, in an honest moment, most people on this planet would admit to being a slave of one thing or another. Trapped in fear, uncertainty, unwanted work, or debt, stuck in immoral sexual or financial issues, driven by unhealthy desires and greed, dependent on circumstances, landlords, bosses or banks, tied into painful relationships or unbearable loneliness, many wish for one thing: to be truly free, to find peace, to fly away from the slavery that life means to them. And then imagine a group of people living among them, who demonstrate a quality of life that is strikingly different – people who not only say they are free, but their life seems to show it, too. What emotions will such a parade of freedom evoke in others who lack freedom? Healthy jealousy. Every slave listens when a free man speaks. The way Christians are designed to live in this world is to demonstrate and model that there is Life 2.0, a divine upgrade from Life 1.0, a substandard life that is the result of an existence cut off from

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its source, man without his maker, humankind cut loose from God. How does this work?

Not social responsibility, but social impact

Many today are rallying the cause to halve or even to end poverty in this world, among them the tireless economist Jeffrey Sachs. As an example of this, the *Millennium Declaration*, made in New York in September 2000 by an assembly of 147 heads of state led by the UN's Kofi Annan, specifies eight global goals: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.

Let me be as clear as I can: as long as this process is spearheaded by the UN or heads of state, none of this will truly work. As followers of Christ, we know that the deepest reason for all these huge problems, the crux of the matter, is not bad logistics, bad government, corruption or lack of democracy, money, medicine or books, but ultimately the existence of a bad heart, sin, people leading a Christ-less and therefore selfish life. Sinful people (and their organizations, welfare plans, and philanthropic foundations) are not the solution; they are part of the problem. Communism attempted to create a just society without God, but in the process, hundreds of millions of lives were lost in the fight for an utopian idea. The famous socialist and communist "struggle for freedom" has enslaved more people than it has freed. Capitalism attempts the same, to create a free market paradise. But there is no such thing as a free market; it is truly governed by "an invisible hand," as free market protagonist Adam Smith (1723-1790) proclaimed, but as followers of Christ, we know to whom this invisible hand belongs: Mammon. And so, hundreds of millions of people have died for that capitalist dream as well, either enslaved and oppressed by the harsh reality of a controlled and unfair market, or victimized by greed and the peer pressures of entire materialistic societies that literally consume themselves to death. The issue is: Humankind without God cannot solve the very problems it generates. Only a supernatural change of heart, a subsequent change of mind and a transformed life has a chance of truly changing things. Therefore, only those who know how to change hearts and minds, to un-corrupt, detox and deliver humans from the central disease of rebellious independence from God will stand an excellent chance of changing things.

Make the world a better place?

We have heard it a million times from lullaby songs to sermons to books and political statements that our job is to make this world a better place. And so many have come to believe it, made it their catchy credo, even if the Bible paints an *entirely* different future for our temporary planet. If you have read the last book of the Bible without immediately explaining away all of what it contains as allegorical stories, flowery language and prophetic symbolism, what do you see? What if God means what he said and did not leave us a riddle for our brightest minds to figure out that he was meaning the very opposite of what he was actually saying? The book of revelation – and the prophetic books before – speak of global war, plagues, persecution. A third of the trees

will be burned up, all of the green grass as well. A third of the ships will be destroyed. A third of the waters will turn bitter. Finally, all sea life will die. People will be scorched by fire, the cities of the world will be collapsing, the water will turn into blood, great economic destruction will come. You see a whole planet destroyed, and finally we even read of this “first earth” passing away, to be replaced by a new earth.

Does this mean we can be careless about God’s creation? No. Does this mean we should not plant a tree on the eve of destruction? Of course we should. Does this mean we should only be concerned about spiritual things and leave anything tangible to the pagans? God forbid. But the question is, as Kingdom people, what is our role on this planet, and what is it not?

This may come as a shock to some, but the biblical evidence for what many call social responsibility today, a call for Christians to shoulder the problems of this world, to do good generally, and be the humanistic benefactors of mankind, *does not exist*. Let me explain. The early Christians accepted, wherever possible, a responsibility under God to address and change evil, but they did not accept the social or even political responsibility for ills they had not caused. They were not philanthropists or humanistic sugar daddies who built playgrounds for the children of the neighborhood and had a plaque unveiled, showing themselves as the gracious sponsors. To our knowledge, Jesus and his disciples never started a school, did not build hospitals or nurseries, did not strategically take over the care of the elderly in a town, and did not even conduct a single wedding or funeral. By supernaturally donating 600 liters of great wine to a wedding party, Jesus did not really join the system and drown in the circus of social meetings and happenings, but prophetically pointed to yet another wedding party that all of us should sign up for, if we want some more of that “good new wine” on display in Cana. Jesus and his early troop neither baptized ships nor fire engines, blessed no weapons nor carried “make-peace-not-war” symbols; they did not join demonstrations against the brutal imperial politics of the Roman empire, and seemed communally pretty aloof, since they neither arranged nor attended a single business luncheon or political prayer breakfast, and never even visited a local Kindergarten. When Jesus finally got an invitation to see King Herod, he just tiredly waved it off and sent a core piece of his own political manifesto to Herod: “Tell that fox I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal” (Luke 13:32).

Does this mean Jesus and his disciples were uninvolved in the affairs of this world? On the contrary. They, as did the Father, loved the world, and took a very clear political stand by addressing social evil not at the level of its symptoms, but at the level of its roots. They kept focused on the cause of evil, not the effects of it, and thus addressed the origin of mankind’s problems, not coming up with one more superficial solution in an attempt to fix secondary or tertiary issues. If it is true that our solutions are as good as our analysis of the problem, could it be true that Jesus, in all that he did or did not do, actually lived a powerful remedy for the world’s core problems? Jesus performed wonders and “signs of the Kingdom,” healed the sick, raised the dead, drove out demons, sat with the poor and the rich, the in-groups and the marginalized, men and women, children and top-dogs, told stories and ate in any number of homes, but he was never a social worker in our present understanding of the term. Jesus

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and his disciples, and later the apostolic church, did not take up social responsibility in terms of assuming ownership for the world's problems. But in doing what they did and what they proposed, including the great story of the Good Samaritan, they invaded the world in its entire political and societal arena and had an amazing influence into every aspect of life. Why was that so?

Kingdom Solutions for Earth's Problems

Every solution that Jesus brought to man's problems *included a supernatural aspect*, a Kingdom element. He healed the sick, but not by medicine. He raised the dead, but not by using a defibrillator. He donated wine to a wedding party, but not via a delivery van. He fed 5,000, but not by using a party service. He helped fishing businesses achieve amazing breakthroughs, but not as a management consultant. He drove out demons, but not in a series of 45-minute psychology sessions. He upgraded the socially marginalized, not by petitions and resolutions, but by spending time with them, eating with them, being the friend of those without friends. He made peace, not by endless negotiations and resolutions, but by the cross, the symbol for a supernatural love that gives itself away. He brought forgiveness, but not by forgetfulness. He taught truth, but "different from the Pharisees" and their moralizing and sermonizing. He helped people make sense of their lives, not by arranging job interviews with major companies and writing recommendation letters to corporate recruitment offices, but by showing them their place and role within the Kingdom of God. He even raised funds, but not by selling shares in his Mission, setting up a religious PR-machine or applying for matching grants. The only time Jesus actually used human force to achieve an end was when he employed the strongest possible words and even a real whip to overturn tables and drive out the money changers from the Temple (Mark 11:15-18). If we want to see it that way, Jesus started an extremely political movement – even an empire - but not by founding a contemporary political party. "Jesus concerned himself hardly at all with the solution of worldly problems. His word is not an answer to human questions and problems; it is the answer of God to the question of God to man. His word is not a solution, but a redemption", says Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

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Everything that Jesus did as he was either confronted with human problems or chose to confront them himself, contained the message of the Kingdom, included the Kingdom, alluded to the Kingdom, explained the Kingdom, expressed the Kingdom! It is the Kingdom of God that has the solutions for the problems of man. It is only natural that if people with problems see solutions, they want to have them as well. But the issue is: just as you cannot have the King without his Kingdom, you cannot have his Kingdom without its King. Even if the whole world screams out to have its problems solved, hurrying to solve their problems does not solve their core problem, that is the central cancer of their other manifold problems: a kingless existence outside the Kingdom of God. Solving any and all problems of humans may even backfire and short-circuit our divine apostolic mission: soothing the aches of a painful, godless existence may become like distributing drugs to cloud the mind and forget the reason for their miserable existence.

Let us remain here for a moment. From God's perspective, he owns the world, but "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:17). This means that all land titles, even the title deeds of the souls of men, are held by Satan, until they are redeemed – bought back - by Jesus. If people are owned by Satan, and dominated by his principles, this also means that the individual and societal structures of a humanity cut loose from God – entire cultures and life itself – have been deeply influenced and corrupted by Satan. This includes even the way we see and solve problems. And so many attempts of us humans to solve our problems are not really solving anything, but even our very solutions, if they don't go deep enough, remain part of the problem, as mankind has fallen prey to a great variety of sicknesses that originate in a defenselessness against the demonic world.

When the Bible explains that "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8), this means that the main objective of the mission of Jesus – continued in the apostolic commissioning of the ekklesia - is to destroy the destroyer, to release a serum to cure the snake bite, an antibiotic that kills the germs. And it is sound biblical theology that "the destroyer" is a personal Satan, a fallen top angelic being that, together with a host of other fallen angels that the Bible calls demons, has invaded earth and occupied territory. That is why "the driving out of demons" is, in a very real way, the central political act of Christianity, and together with the "healing of people," as Jesus summarizes it in his message to king Herod, the signs of the Kingdom of heaven. Did Herod get it? No, he didn't, similar to many other Herods throughout history. But that did not stop Jesus or the early church. Their mission did not depend on being understood by the world's political system, since they literally introduced their own political system: the Kingdom. This Kingdom, however, is not selfish and does not keep everything to itself. It shares what it has with others, like in the great biblical story of Jesus talking with the Canaanite woman who said that "even the dogs eat the crumbs from their masters table" (Mt 15). Jesus conceded, lauded her faith and her daughter was healed from demon possession.

The Kingdom of God is a sharing Kingdom that shares what it has amongst its naturalized citizens and with even those that are not yet part of the Kingdom themselves. This *sharing* is called diaconia. The Greek word *diaconia* literally means serving, "the sharing of community," to give to others what the community produces. And the things and solutions that the community of the ekklesia produces have a radically different impact on the problems of mankind than the solutions man makes himself. Remember Peter and John being faced with "extreme poverty and hunger," an issue first on the list of the UN's Millennium Declaration? They were confronted with a beggar at the Beautiful Gate. And their response? "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" (Acts 3). The act of supernaturally healing a lame beggar, a solution literally from out of this world, completely changed the perspective on life for all who watched it, totally upgraded the life of the beggar and showed everyone the possibilities of the Kingdom. "I heal people," said Jesus to Herod, and opened up a dimension of problem solving that the world had not previously known.

Many of God's people around the world are ingenious in applying Kingdom solutions to the world's problems. As God gave himself to mankind, they

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As God gave himself to mankind, they give themselves to others too, and give to others what God has given to them. That is the heart of practical diaconia.

God's rulership, before the return of Jesus to this earth, is of a voluntary nature. It will never be forced upon people, neither by political nor military means. His rule is gentle, not lording it over people, but "lording it under", offering his gentle rule to those that voluntarily invite that.

give themselves to others too, and give to others what God has given to them. That is the heart of practical diaconia. We all would agree that wherever people share God's love in practical ways, peoples' lives will be changed. How will this diaconical sharing with the world look like once the church is again refounded on its proper apostolic and prophetic foundations? We will spend an entire chapter called Apostolic Diaconia on this fascinating subject, the world of Kingdom sharing. But at this point, let us look briefly at two false apostolic visions that have gripped a large proportion of Evangelicals over the last few decades: dominionism or the myth of a Christian nation, and the dream of a wholistic social transformation.

Myth of a Christian nation

In the absence of a clear understanding of the apostolic nature of the Kingdom, the Kingdom has become a foggy notion of some sort of an afterlife for many. But what should people cling to today, if not the Kingdom? Where to seek shelter, identity, destiny, security? When the Kingdom is so far removed from their grasp, many Christians have simply become *patriots* and have taken the next best, what is tangible for them: the political nation state. And so many are crying out to God to make their countries, be it India, America, Switzerland, Australia or South Africa, a "Christian nation", a "nation under God". If asked what exactly a Christian nation is, many are perplexed, speak of a truly democratic constitution with a reference to God, more crosses in schools, more Bibles in court, probably a ban on homosexuality, communism, capitalism, war, atomic power plants, drugs, taxes and bad weather. In such a "Christian nation" the government is falsely expected to act like God: superbly just, socially impeccable, and acting as a "protector and defender of the faith". The truth is: "The governing authorities that exist have been established by God" (Rom 13:1). God has issued political government for the benefit of those that do not yet accept *his* government, who otherwise would sink into chaos, anarchy and destruction. The fact that God has set in place rulers for people does not mean that God de facto rules. God has, seemingly reluctantly, endorsed the rule of Saul as king over Israel. But this did not mean that it was now a theocracy where God ruled, far from it. God's rulership, before the return of Jesus to this earth, is of a voluntary nature. It will never be forced upon people, neither by political nor military means. His rule is gentle, not lording it over people, but "lording it under", offering his gentle rule to those that voluntarily invite that. When the religious beliefs of a minority in any given nation are forced on to the majority, like in Puritan England during the time of Oliver Cromwell, or the Islamic beliefs of only 3% of the population in Uganda during the rule of Idi Amin, great duress, injustice and persecution followed. Even man-made religion cannot be prescribed and forced; let alone the Kingdom of God. Jesus warned us from violent people that "take the Kingdom of God by force" (Mt 11:12); he never endorsed it.

There is one exception to this rule. There will be a time when God will usher in the final and historic chapter of humankind on planet Earth, and he yes will force his will on everyone. This will happen when enough is enough, and when the time has come for God to establish and demonstrate justice without asking any human permission. This will be a time when Jesus the Lamb will also be seen as Jesus the Lion and will rule the nations with an "iron rod" (Rev 12:5; 19:5).

Again, the Kingdom of God is not a religious version of the world. It is not a purified world, a world turned into a paradise, where everyone has access to pure drinking water, health care, schooling, where everyone has a job and all potholes on the roads are filled. Just like its King Jesus, the Kingdom is from above, not from below (John 8:23; 18:36). It does not come alongside the world and its self-made problems at all. This Kingdom is not of this world, but in this world. Its inhabitants are not called to assimilate and make themselves one with the world but to actually “overcome the world”. The Kingdom models an entirely new way of life that invites humanity out of this world into the Kingdom as well. The Kingdom does not exist to upgrade the world into a more bearable, just or even pain-free society where all problems of mankind are solved and all can now go about to live in sin undisturbed. If the Kingdom were to be co-opted as a servant to solve the world’s problem the way the world sees these problems, it would fail to deliver the world from its problems the way God sees them: sin, rebellion, demonization. We have seen that the Kingdom of God is established where God’s will is obeyed. This is why the Kingdom is not only about being “nice” and all of us being good citizens. Beyond the fact that the Kingdom models a new life and invites people into it, it is also highly controversial. It confronts Godless rebellion, preaches repentance, drives out demons, confounds religion and warns of hell, just like Jesus the King has done and is now still doing through his people. The Kingdom is therefore utterly counter-cultural. “If Jesus had confirmed and endorsed the cultural powers of his day, he would not have been crucified,” says Armin Sierszyn, professor for Church History in Switzerland. If a person has not personally repented, experienced a change of heart, changed his thinking and accepted Jesus as his personal King, the values of such a King would seem unappealing, pathetic, foolishness in the world’s eyes, even repulsive.

For five centuries, Christians in the Middle Ages spoke of “Prester John” (from *Presbyter* John), a legendary, virtuous King supposed to rule over a Christian nation that many believed was to be found in Ethiopia, until scholars like Hiob Ludolf exposed all of this to be nothing but a popular legend and myth. Fearful, ill-taught and naïve Christians of all ages that had no understanding of the nature and mission of the Kingdom of God have always dreamt and wished for a benevolent, saintly king, president, ruler or even mayor who establishes a little paradise on earth and, if necessary, defends this against all its numerous enemies. Much of the religious ardor expressed throughout the ages to “call a nation back to God”, to marry politics with the Kingdom and to strive towards the ideal to **implement** Kingdom values in earthly business or in a given political system is nothing but a myth, a dream, a nice story with no substance to it. The reason is simple. The only person responsible for how you lead your life is – you. As a parent, you can have responsibility for your family as well – but only if the family members respect you and your values. If you wish to have a larger entity than yourself and your family to follow Jesus the King – a tribe, a company, a school, an organization, a constituency, a city, region or even a nation – you would have to rule it and prescribe their beliefs for them. You would need power to make them do it, to accept the choices that someone else made for them as if they were their own. But every man, woman, child and family must make this decision themselves: whom would they serve, the one and only God or a God of their own making or choice like Mammon? Joshua,

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while he was in a position of political rulership in Israel, knew this well. This is why he did not dictate his faith to the rest of the people but said it like this: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord". To all others he said: "Choose for yourselves whom you will serve" (Jos 24:14-15). Many today dream either of being in such a position of spiritual and political leadership that Joshua held in his days, or wish to work towards it. They dream out loud and say that *if only we had* a godly president, king, ruler or mayor, everything would change for good. No, it would not, as even the example of Joshua shows, or the ensuing story of Israel in the book of Judges.

Gregory Boyd, pastor in Minneapolis, USA, in his book *The Myth of a Christian Nation* calls this mindset rightly a "nationalistic and political idolatry". In the case where Christians are actively asked to use all their energy to transform their nation-state into a "Christian nation", this turns into a false apostolic vision and strategy. Such a "vision" appeals greatly to any uncrucified patriot, nationalist or all who simply are afraid and want to be protected from all evils of life by strength of political government. But the nature of evil does not change by people fighting its symptoms, but only when it is addressed and overcome at its core, which is exactly what Jesus has done.

The nature of evil does not change by people fighting its symptoms, but only when it is addressed and overcome at its core

Dominionism

"No!", says dominionism, nothing more than a new word for the old dream of Christians ruling the world, or at least parts of it. Dominionism seeks to influence, implement and possibly control civil government "for God" by political means. Dominionism preaches to "take dominion", to take up a position of rulership that allows someone to dictate the terms, if necessary by force. As we have seen, to implement anything in a jurisdiction other than in our own lives we simply need authority, power, force, "dominion" over other people. It does not help if we clothe this into the more harmless language of modern leadership gurus who preach, "Leadership is to get people to do what they would not do on their own". The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of a loving father, not the domain of a great leader. That is why the Kingdom can never be forced on people. To use any force, be it political, financial or military in nature, to get people to do something they do not want, is nothing but manipulation, coercion or even dictatorship. To accept the fact that force is a legitimate means to defend (like Peter with his sword in the Garden Gethsemane trying to defend Jesus) or extend the Kingdom of God is essentially the same kind of thinking that fuelled the Crusaders in their bloody war against "the infidels" in their demonic desire to rid Jerusalem of anything except Christians by the power of the sword. It is the same mindset that inspired Muslims in their early quest to win the world to preach Islam with raised sabres and the armies of Islam as their main convincing argument. This mentality is contradictory to the nature of the Kingdom of God and has done great harm and damage to the name of Jesus. And agreeing to use power to expand the Kingdom by political, military or fiscal means usually never stops at just establishing. It always goes on to defend and even expand "the Kingdom" by "smiting the pagans". A modern example for this is the American preacher Rev. Jerry Falwell who said in a TV interview with CNN (in 2004): "You've got to kill the terrorists... I am for the president to chase them all over the world. If it takes ten years, blow them all away in the name of the Lord."

The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of a loving father, not the domain of a great leader.

Dominionism has created its own mandate to dominate the world and its spheres from a Bible verse that has been taken out of context, twisted and made to mean something it does not say. It has been called the “cultural mandate” and is found in Gen 1:28: “God blessed (Adam and Eve) and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” The Hebrew word for subdue is *kabash*, meaning to make subservient, to trample under feet. It is generally used as a military term. The Hebrew word for “rule over” is *radah*, meaning to subjugate, tread down, to have dominion. Before the fall caused by sin, as we have already seen before, the job description God gave to Adam and Eve was to “tend and defend” the garden (Gen 2:15), whereby the defense part was against satanic forces. This original mandate continued beyond the Garden of Eden, as God said they should not only “fill their garden”, but fill the earth, obviously not something Adam and Eve could finish, but a task for their descendents. The key question is, how. In light of the entire biblical revelation, should this be interpreted to mean that Christians should strive to become the dominating political influence and rule the world and its spheres through political, financial or military means? Dominionism says, yes, absolutely. Jesus, in stark contrast, interpreted this scripture totally different. He never dominated anyone and gave great liberty even to his closest followers to leave him and go back to their own lives, if they so wished. What Jesus subjugated, trampled over and had dominion over was not people, but demons. Demons are Lucifer’s agents to represent the domain of darkness in this world. Attacking and overcoming them is the most critical political course of action anyone can take. As we have seen, Jesus made this point abundantly clear in his declining response to king Herod.

Anyone who fails to discern that sin and demonization is the root evil of this fallen world will naturally conclude that “the enemy” they have to fight is somewhere or something else. He will conclude that the symptoms are the causes, the fruit is the root and the consequences of evil are actually its source. Consequently, he will attack the outward manifestations of sin and demonization rather than the core of it, and will seek to fight or eliminate poverty, injustice, ignorance, sickness, war, ethnic strife and solve the myriads of problems between people originating from their cultural, racial, religious or political differences. The art of how to run a society is politics, that activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Dominionism is the desire to rule others in the name of God. This is why dominionism naturally seeks a *political* approach, a way to influence the influencers, and uses any means to achieve that, from protesting to lobbying to endearing and adapting themselves with the powers to be. In times of a repressive government that passively or actively either persecutes Christianity or tries to co-opt the Church for its own political purposes, the church needs to make a decision: either they flow with the flow and adapt themselves to the political situation of the day and gain a limited freedom to exist, or they choose to seek the Kingdom of God first and agree to be persecuted, if necessary. A church accepting its place and role in society – its identity - from anyone else but God soon ceases to be the Church of God and quickly becomes the dog of its political master: it can bark allright, but it is utterly harmless, tamed on a tight leash. The “German Christians” that tried to adapt themselves to the demonic Nazi rule are a terrible example of this.

Dominionism is the desire to rule others in the name of God.

In some cases, Christian dominionists did gain access to governmental power themselves. The Schmalkaldic League, founded in 1531, was a political and military alliance of Lutheran princes against the rule of (Roman-Catholic) Charles V. Lutheranism was greatly defended and advanced by this political alliance, until, in 1547, it was crushed, and the Counter-Reformation took over. John Calvin wished to establish a church-run state in Geneva, Switzerland. In his theory the church exists to glorify God, serve the holiness of the elect and, through church discipline, *to bow the non-elect under the law of God*. To this day Calvinism has always appealed to those interested in mere civil religion, in particular the social elite, if not the power-hungry, who found in Calvin's theories a fitting "theology" legitimizing and sanctioning the God-given right of the elite to rule. The radical ideas of Thomas Müntzer, a German leader of the early Anabaptists, found a short-lived expression in an attempt to turn the German town of Münster into a "Zion", a church-run city-state (1534-1535); it ended in disaster. Another more recent example for this was the role of "Afrikaner Calvinism" in South Africa, a form of Reformed theology attempting to establish a divine right for the minority of the white race to have dominion over the majority black population. Dominionism, the desire to rule others in the name of God, has always been in need of powerful mandates, divine legitimations for something God never ordained. Time and again dominionism has usurped and robbed the motif of the exodus of the unique people of Israel for themselves. We, dominionism cried, are the New Israel, God's chosen race to purge our promised land from the modern day Canaanites, be they the Hottentots in Namibia, the black population in South Africa, the Indios in Latin America, the Indians in North America, the Aborigines in Australia. To proclaim one gentile race as chosen and the other as unchosen and unworthy for religious reasons is nothing else than sanctioned racism, the collective egoism of a cultural group elevating itself to rule others in the name of God.

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a Dutch Calvinist, for some years Prime Minister of Holland and one of the founding ideologists of the Christian Democrats, concluded that the "cultural mandate" meant to influence or even shape all aspects of the world with Christian principles, and do so by political means as well. In this sense he was a classical dominionist. Since then, a growing number of Christian movements have picked up on the ideas from Kuyper. Throughout the political spectrum, from right to left, people have sought to demonstrate a divine legitimation for their political activism. Neo-conservatives and pragmatic groups alike have tried to prove how much God is on their side (is God a Republican or a Democrat?). A new form of dominionism has recently arisen mostly in charismatic circles: the desire to "govern by prayer", to issue prayer with authority, a spiritualist version of dominionism that wishes to change a certain political or cultural situation by "powerful" prayer. Because dominionism wishes to establish Christian government in a political sense – to make sin illegal, if at all possible –, it typically uses a geo-political framework – countries, nations, states – for its grand but unbiblical plans. Cindy Jacobs, an American prayer leader, wrote a modern example of this classical error in her book *A Reformation Manifesto*, where she demands that not only the church, but nations should be reformed. D. A. Fletcher corrects this in his book *One Nation over God: The Americanization of Christianity* and says: "Throughout American history, American Christians have been more American than they

have been Christian, willingly and unconsciously integrating faith with political philosophy at the expense of both."

Do not get me wrong: the Bible teaches us to pray, including for those in authority. It does not teach us, however, to govern by prayer, to dominate or even manipulate other people by spiritual means. That would be the idea behind witchcraft, not the Kingdom of God. Dominionism is the natural consequence of uncrucified leadership. It is the "perfect theology" supporting Christian imperialism, for those that consider themselves fit to rule over others and who are ambitious and ruthless enough to make the Bible say anything that would support the use of force – be it political, financial or military – to achieve their temporary goal of health, wealth and power over people. In this sense dominionism in all its forms and shapes is *always* a false apostolic pattern, the anti-Christian vision of a pseudo-Kingdom of demonic origin that needs to be confronted and then discarded as simply irrelevant for the purposes of Jesus.

Dominionism is the natural consequence of uncrucified leadership.

Holistic Social transformation

"The entire world is to be purified of evil" declares Bob Moffitt in his book *If Jesus were Mayor* and points out the agenda of God the way he sees it: the restoration of all things, a total, global transformation. *Everything must Change*, decrees Brian McLaren in a book titled by that line, and puts forth his vision: The Kingdom is "God's dream coming true for this earth, God's justice and peace replacing earth's injustice and disharmony." Jesus did not only come to save people, says McLaren, but "to save the earth and all it contains from ongoing destruction because of human evil ... and will lead the world's ongoing transformation into God's dream ... here and now". How does someone reconcile such bold statements with healthy biblical eschatology like the passing away of the old order, the coming of a New Earth, the entire book of revelation? Simple, just disagree with it or re-interpret biblical revelation to fit the ideology of the day. Here is a taste from McLaren in his own words: "Increasing numbers of us disagree with this assessment." "The biblical story was rewritten to aid the dominant system." "New heaven and new earth means a new way of living inside this universe, a new societal system, a new spirituality." "The new Jerusalem is nothing but a symbol of a new order", and the "end of the world is only the end of the world as we know it".

We have already discussed what happens if need becomes a false apostolic pattern directing the actions of people. Rather than the eternal purposes of God and his needs, the temporary needs of humans start to occupy the center stage. In the words of Darrow Miller in his book *Discipling Nations*: "The gospel is God's total response to man's total need." Any unmet need requires help, so goes the logic, or *development*, the mantra of the movement of social transformation. "The goal of human development is that we become fully human", states Miller and proposes "our goal must be nothing short of transformational development". What should be the end result of this? Miller says: "God intends for cultures to be redeemed", and "discipling nations means to lay kingdom principles and a biblical worldview as the founding order of a people". In other words, Miller is advocating that Kingdom principles become the governmental policy of nation-states, or, to say it more plainly, that the world is ruled according to what Jesus preached in his sermon on the mount. The urge for all Christians, therefore, should be to work for one goal: to bring

"God's total shalom" to this world, the Hebrew concept of *shalom* being interpreted as the peace of God and his just rule for all of society. This includes the extinguishing of suffering, as all human needs involve a degree of pain. "The first noble truth of a development worker is that life need not be suffering", writes Vishal Mangalwadi in the foreword to Darrow Millers book. It is true that unnecessary suffering can and should be avoided, but who if not God can truly draw the line between suffering out of ignorance, suffering that is the result of sin and demonization, and suffering as a punitive or educational measurement of God? If we put ourselves in charge of that decision, what would we do? Jesus has stated it like this: "In this world **you will have** tribulation" (John 16:33), speaking of another world where there will be no suffering, no tears, death, crying or mourning anymore (Rev 21:4).

Ed Silviso, another proponent of social transformation, claims that whole countries can be redeemed; entire cultures can be brought to salvation and the land itself can be healed. The standard Webster definition of transformation is "qualitative change", the transition from one form into another. The concept of transformation as it is being used in the various Christian groups advocating it does not only speak of a spiritual change or the change to the outward form of things, but indicates that change can and will come to the inner core, the essence, the ethos, the DNA and the fundamental value system of the world. The biblical word for world is *kosmos*, and it describes the entire fallen world under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). Does the Bible speak of a converted kosmos, of a time where the ethos, the value system of the world will be converted to biblical standards? Did Jesus ever speak such language? Let us consider a few simple questions:

Does Jesus expect that the world will be transformed before or after his return? **After.**

Does he indicate that the character of this world, its soul, its nature, its ethos, can ever be transformed? **No.**

Did he authorize his disciples to transform the world? **No.**

Did he advise his disciples what methods they should use to transform the world? **No.**

We have to ask, therefore, if Jesus neither did practice, advocate, authorize nor even mandate a holistic social transformation, who did?

Baptized socialism

One of the most influential political ideas of mankind is socialism, the pursuit of a socio-economic system in which property and the distribution of wealth are subject to control by the society. The actual meaning of the word social is contested, but most agree that it defines a mindset that values the well-being of the community (or society) over and above that of the individual, and therefore favors relationships of mutual dependence and benefit. Karl Marx defined humans as essentially "social beings", gregarious creatures in need of association and social co-operation. The term socialism, used from the 1830s onwards in France and England, tried to challenge the fact that a free (competitive and mainly unregulated) market did not automatically create "liberty, equality and fraternity" for all people, let alone freedom. The first modern socialists were Western European social critics. It is a historical fact that the word social is mostly favored by the political left, while it has been

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typically shunned by the political right, because some socialists implied that social also means the collective ownership of the means of production, an idea that challenges the heart of political capitalism. It is a known fact of history that each and any political idea has experienced attempts at a Christian take-over. From imperialism to colonialism to Hitler's idea that he had been chosen by God to introduce the Millennium, it has been attempted many times to marry political ideas to the Christian gospel, with various degrees of force. Some political ideas have literally hijacked biblical terminology; some ideologies have been sanctioned and "blessed" by the church of its day. This created *baptized* versions of imperialism, colonialism - and socialism, political ideas or ideologies that have been venerated to become Christian versions of the original idea. The core question has therefore always been: what is the first identity of a person, the Kingdom (as in "seek *first* the Kingdom") or the political flavor of the day? Socialism as a political idea has been around for almost 200 years. We therefore need not wonder that there is no shortage of persons over the last two centuries who are socialist first - and Christians second. Their political credo reads: "Seek first the pursuit of socialism, and then find ways for God to bless it!" When the socialist and political left-wingers of all times discover the Bible, what might happen? They discover the classical biblical liberation themes of, for example, the exodus, or the liberation from demonic oppression, and then go on to misinterpret it in a political sense and absorb the biblical language into their political rhetoric. "Liberation theology", a predominantly Roman-Catholic movement of political activists that emerged in Latin America over 50 years ago proclaiming that Jesus is not only redeemer but also the Liberator of the (socially and politically) oppressed is an example of that.

But the same has happened the other way around as well: churching Christians, lacking a clear understanding of the Kingdom of God, trapped in a powerless church that did not really display the power of Jesus to heal, drive out demons or raise the dead, concluded that they needed a political ideology to get anything done in this world, and therefore chose a political path as their instrument and delivery system for their beliefs. This led, for example, to the emergence of what has been called the Social Gospel, an early 20th century Protestant Christian movement trying to apply Christian principles to society's problems and fight the collective ills of society by political means: poverty, inequality, liquor, crime, racial tensions, slums, bad hygiene, poor schools or the danger of war. Social Gospel leaders were predominantly liberal politically and theologically. The idea received a boost by many choosing Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement or later Mother Teresa as their patron saints.

The Kingdom alternative

Many who preach a return to a holistic gospel and therefore to a holistic transformation of society make three serious mistakes. They assume a replacement theology, whereby the church today not only replaces Israel as the people of God, but assumes that all promises, prophecies and Old Testament templates that were given by God to Israel, his chosen people, are automatically valid and applicable to the life of all Christians, people and even all nations of all times. This not only ignores the uniqueness of Israel and its very personal love story with its maker, but swiftly elevates all other nations to a level of chosenness. This could be done out of ignorance, but also out of the same

jealousy that ultimately led to the first murder, where Cain killed Abel. If God promised Israel to “heal their land” under certain conditions, (2 Chr 7:14), many just assume they discovered a recipe for healing for all lands of all times, be they Israel or not. I do not think this is sound theology, but esteeming ourselves to be as elected and special as Israel is probably not more than simply wishful thinking. King David said it like this: “Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself?” (2 Sam 7:23)

The second mistake that proponents of social transformation usually make is that they assume that the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached and lived was not holistic (or wholistic), and that we need to upgrade this truncated half-gospel that Jesus preached by social action, making it whole, finally applying it to all of man’s existence. But what if God did not come to solve all of man’s and earth’s problems, but to ultimately redeem a people – the church and a redeemed Israel - for himself?

It is sadly true that there was a time when many Christians ignored the world outside their churches and pursued a quietistic, ghettoistic, self-serving spirituality that had nothing to show to the world and therefore “put their lamp under a bowl”. The historic under-emphasis of a segment of misguided and uninformed Christians does not warrant the overemphasis of interventionism and the hyper-activism that is promoted by many today as if it were an apostolic strategy. In many of the “holistic” social gospel concepts of today we will be amazed by the blatant **absence** of the power of the Holy Spirit to, for example, heal, to prophetically direct, raise the dead, do miracles and turn water into wine. To simply replace the works of the spirit by more social activism is not a solution, it is part of the problem. I don’t think it is possible to make the holistic Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus preached it and mandated us to do likewise any better by busying ourselves like Martha of old.

Lastly, Jesus did not come to develop, but to disciple nations. It is true, a redeemed person that experiences the forgiveness of sin and the liberation from demonic oppression will **usually** stop using addictive substances, stop stealing, lying and cheating and generally behave more “cultured” than the godless pagan he was before he met Jesus. In Missions history we call this phenomenon “redemption and lift”, the socially upward movement a person often (but not always) experiences when the ropes tying him into the enslavement of a life of sin are severed and he becomes free to do as God pleases.

Darrow Miller defines development as a “self-sustaining process, whereby a people, group, or society advances economically, socially, morally, and intellectually.” If that is development, then Jesus did not come to develop nations. He did not come to upgrade society in general and make sure all problems of the nations are solved. In fact, he said in Mt 10:34.35: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Jesus came to give his life as a “ransom for many” (Mk 10:45), and those who have asked personally to be redeemed might experience a redeemed life – what we called Life 2.0 earlier, life in the Kingdom. However, we should not forget that a very large portion of followers of God have, historically, experienced not a development, but a social disaster after they followed Christ. They have been spat at, insulted, disowned,

Jesus did not come to develop, but to disciple nations.

beaten, persecuted, incarcerated, tortured and killed by the millions. Just like their master, they have not ended their lives as “fully developed humans”, but crucified; “some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground” (Heb 11:35-38). They were not looking to make themselves at home here on earth, but had the mindset of aliens, at best strangers and pilgrims, “looking for a better country” (Heb 11:13-16).

If we make development – from primary to community health care – either the goal of our Christian endeavor or even the means to reach villages or nations with the gospel, like the concept of CHE, “community health evangelism”, that Stan Rowland tirelessly advocates, we will simply miss out on the apostolic and prophetic nature of the Kingdom. We will forever busy ourselves with need-driven projects, commission an army of “development workers” and send them into a non-apostolic mission to do “village ministry”. I have met many of such “development workers” and seen and heard of their frustration. Very often, even after years of such CHE, as I discussed with Stan Rowland, there is only a tiny fruit of a few extracted converts gathering together into a village church-building established for Western style church services, the building typically funded by Western money as well. Such “churches” created through the amazing efforts (not to even mention the financial aspects of such projects) of development enthusiasts that have a big heart for the poor but little understanding for the apostolic and prophetic nature of the Kingdom usually touch mostly those already on the margins of their own society. They are in danger of producing “ricechristians” (people who have been encouraged to attend church services for a sack of rice) and usually have no power to multiply into a church planting movement. They typically end up as one more “church” on the payroll of some Western charity, having to be financed endlessly by well-meaning but unapostolic Christians. Finally, let’s face it: developed pagans are yes, better pagans – but they are still pagans. Without the personal decision of a person or a family to place themselves under the King, Jesus Christ, and to become part of his Kingdom, no amount of development done for them and with them will ever solve their true predicament of sin and demonization. One out of five people in the world is influenced by Islam. Orthodox Muslims are obliged by religious law to give *zakat* (alms), consisting of at least 2.5% of their income to the poor. Many Muslims have therefore welcomed Christians from Western nations to come to them and help them with their problems. They assume that those Christians from their rich and developed nations simply have no poor anymore around to share their alms with. They should be happy, therefore, to be given the opportunity to fulfill their alms-giving duty to Allah and come to Muslim nations and give their *zakat* there. Many Muslims have concluded that this is a clear sign that Allah is great, sending even the Christians to help them with their problems.

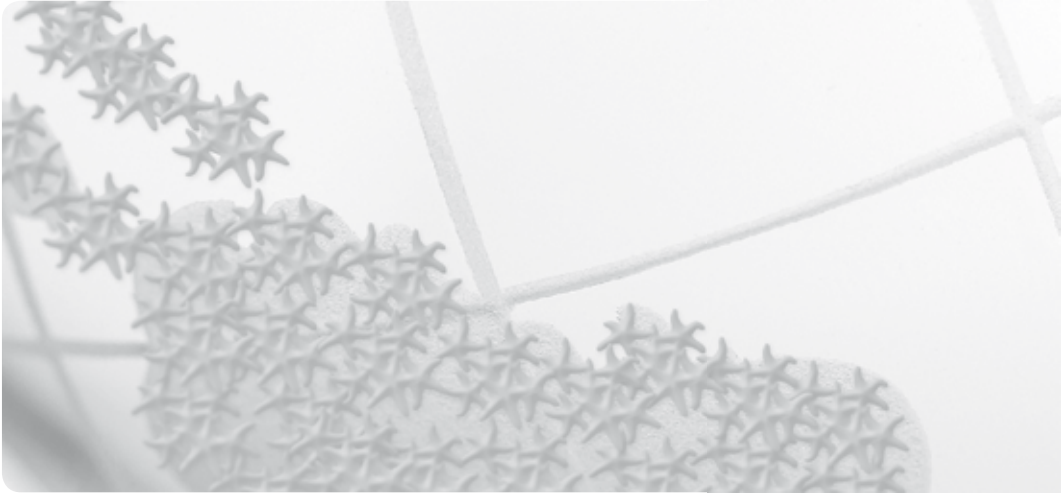
Jesus prophesied this (Mt 24:37-41): “As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah

Finally, let’s face it: developed pagans are yes, better pagans – but they are still pagans. Without the personal decision of a person or a family to place themselves under the King, Jesus Christ, and to become part of his Kingdom, no amount of development done for them and with them will ever solve their true predicament of sin and demonization.

entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left." Imagine a church (the ark) that would be a gigantic technology park and resource center to develop, upgrade and improve all the homes of those without God, but fails to urge them to come on board, a church that would rather watch people drown in dignity than being saved in humility. Would that be pleasing to God?

Let me finish this chapter with a fictitious version of Luke chapter 19, the story of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem:

"After feeding the 5,000, healing the sick and even raising the dead, the nationwide popularity of Jesus was unparalleled. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, he went to the town hall and accepted the people's vote for him to be the first mayor of Jerusalem. He installed his disciples as ministers of finance, transport, education, health, law and police, started kindergartens, schools, hospitals, established free health care, cleaned up the slums, dug wells and finally plated all the roads with pure gold. He made Jerusalem into such a perfect paradise, that no one had either the need or the desire for a heavenly paradise. As everyone was happy and content, the average life expectancy grew to 85 years, the stock market soared, Jerusalem's banks and firms rose to become global players, the perfect social security system replaced the need for God for everyone, and when the tenure of Jesus ended and a new guy was elected, no one really noticed, because everyone was having such a good time."



PART V:
Apostolic building patterns

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Apostolic building patterns

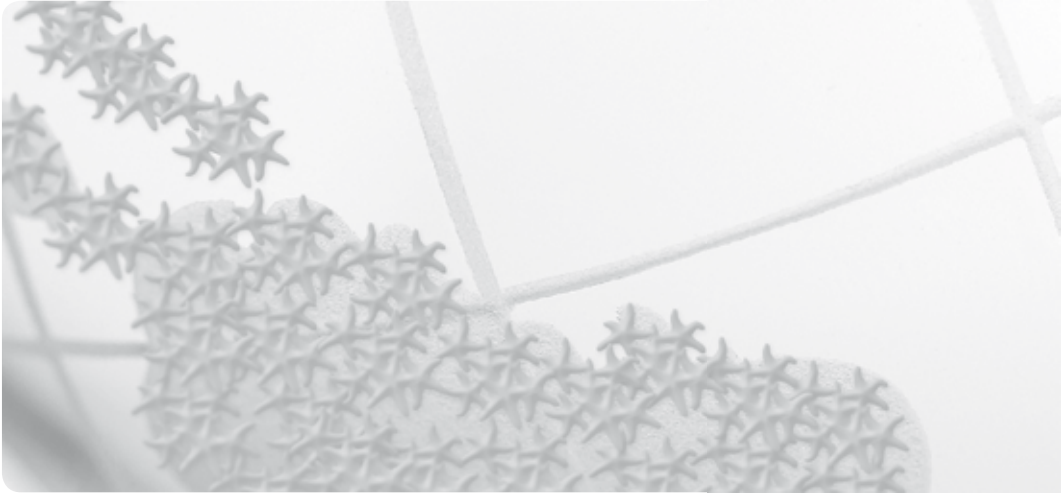
Once we have established a working understanding of the prophetic and apostolic ministry, how do we proceed practically? My own thinking follows the what-why-how-procedure. Once we have defined **what** content we are talking about, then we need to establish the principles, the healthy reasoning for it, that is, **why** this is the right thing to do. Finally, we need to look into **how** are we going to apply these principles and enter the realm of methodology.

Most people seem to go at this the other way round, and basically look for a new method to do the old thing. They are ready to change the methodology any time, as long as it leads them to their preconceived goal. However, this pragmatic approach may see quick results, but is in grave danger of becoming another flash in the pan, the lifestyle of the superficial, where we first shoot and then aim, first act and then think. And specifically as we all aim to do our best for God, we need to make sure as much as we can that not our will is done, but his will. In this section of the book, we will move from the **what** and **why** to the **how**. Still, rather than copying each other's methods, I believe all of us have an important role in birthing solutions to local challenges ourselves, creatively applying divine and unchangeable principles in unique and very different ways that express our individual missions, jurisdictions, and the cultures with which we work. Simply mechanically copying other people's success stories will not be good enough; we need to be better than that, and work towards the goal of having each church planting movement be uniquely handcrafted by God.

With this goal in mind, let us look at six important building principles, issues on which we need to take serious action if we want to see a healthy apostolic movement take root in our area. I call those principles apostolic building patterns, the serious traffic laws of the Kingdom of God, so to speak. Ignoring them will let us use the right language, the right words and expressions, but may get us run over by a truck around the next corner or have an accident, because we did not recognize a stop sign or a speed limit. These building patterns are:

1. Correctly identify healthy apostolic people, and nurture and release them for their foundational work.
2. The "Tarsus Principle": make sure that before they go to work, they are thoroughly dead to self.
3. Establish a prophetic-apostolic partnership: the divine romance (as in a healthy marriage).
4. Identify "apostolic gardens," the jurisdictions of apostolic people, and match them to it.
5. Establish apostolic finance principles, as the new work cannot be done effectively with the old financial engine of CAWKI in place.
6. Establish an apostolic diaconia – providing Kingdom solutions for this world's problems.

In the following short chapters we will unpack those patterns one by one, without becoming too detailed for the reason of obvious space constrictions and given the main thrust of this book.



18 Identify God's Master Builders today

Do not trust anyone who does not limp.

18 Identify God's Master Builders today

If you get up in the morning and start buttoning your shirt, and you get off to a wrong start with the first button, every other button down to the last one will be mismatched. Correctly identifying healthy apostolic people, nurturing and releasing them for their foundational work, is therefore a logical start. If people called to an apostolic role have a foundational, architectural function in the overall process, we dare not leave them out of the picture if we are truly serious about doing God's work God's way. Apostles are not at all the only important builders on the building site of the ekklesia, but they are the ones with the blueprint, and leaving out the architects while everyone is busy building something does not seem to be a wise choice. If God put them "first in the church" in terms of their appearance on the building site, they need to be given space to do what they do.

For this, however, those who have previously assumed apostolic roles without functioning in an apostolic calling must move aside a bit to let that happen. Wherever the teaching ministry, or the finance department, revivalists, Evangelists, tradition or a denominational superstructure has attempted - mostly subconsciously - to be a substitute for the apostolic function, it must now consciously remove itself from positions of apostolic nature and make space. This requires humility, maturity and the ability to see that only if the Body of Christ works together as a whole, and only if everyone does what God has called him to do, not more and not less, will we be able to experience the Kingdom advances that God has planned to happen. Otherwise, ministries and churches that do not stop to substitute legitimate apostolic roles with vicarious ones will stand in the way and actually block the apostolic development. As an example, many ministries and Missions today who wish to move into an apostolic order find that the patterns laid down by their mostly evangelistic founders have become their law, their own DNA, their "tradition of the elders", and created a maze of red tape around moving into an apostolic direction. Craving for a truly divine and apostolic role but unwilling to change (for reasons of tradition, power plays, financial support patterns), such missions and ministries may end up obstructing the very solution God has for them. Just like the Jews, waiting for their Messiah for hundreds of years, were able to crucify him once he finally arrived on the scene as if he were a nuisance, many ministries will dry up, tied to their own problems, and will have to be sidelined by their own apostolic people who now have to look for a way around them - or even flee their own organizations. Such groups will either be removed by God, which is a very serious business, or, worst case scenario, carry on to function in a pseudo-apostolic role in a gigantic delusion, believing that they move in the center of God's will, but, having become non-apostolic in nature, betraying their staff, members, supporters, and ultimately themselves about the real nature of their religious enterprise.

Now that we know what to look for in apostolic people, still remembering that nothing flashy that looks good to our natural eyes will probably do, how do we go about it? The obvious answer is to ask God to connect us with apostolic people in our area of work. It reminds me of a group of friends who recently

met in our living room to pray into a very special question: "With whom shall we work together in the future?" The group was not defined by membership in any common organization, so we did not come to pray for survival, direction, or transformation of something that already existed. We were bound together by four things: a common vision, common values (not doctrines), proximity, and friendship. We just prayed: "Jesus, please help us identify the ones we are created to work with in the harvest, and save us from working with people who just want to draw us into their 'thing.'"

Relationships in the Kingdom, I believe, are not an accident. God will choose those very special people for us so that we can bond with them and work together to achieve something we cannot achieve alone. God told Moses: "Take Joshua, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him" (Num 27:18). It was God who revealed Elisha as the successor to Elijah (1 Kings 19:17-21). However, this may not always be to our liking, and this is where we must rely more on God's provision than our own feelings of congeniality. Saul had such great difficulty accepting David as his successor that he literally died with the issue. Others, the 400 3-D men as I call them, those who were "in distress, in debt, or discontented", gathered around David at Adullam, and found life in him, because they found their future in connecting to an apostolic leader of his time, although, hanging out in a cave in the desert, he was not really in a very presentable situation.

This is a very telling story for our question, and it might also tell us not to look too much in the "palaces of Saul," the prestigious institutions of the religious establishment, for apostolic people; we might very well find them as the very outcasts of that system, in the "Adullams" and spiritual caves they have fled to, where the only people they seem to attract are some of the least attractive we can imagine. What a beautiful test for all of us: are we seeking a better position in Saul's system, or are we truly after our role in the apostolic salvation history of God? Our own deepest questions and motives will define the answers we find – and the people we meet. God, being trans-generational, covenantal and missional at his heart, creates these tailor-made relationships mainly for the sake of our "life's mission," so that we can "live a life worthy of the calling we received" (Eph. 4:1).

But back to our living room again. As we prayed about the issue "with whom then shall we work", we felt the Lord very clearly and gently point out three things prophetically to us:

1. Look for people who have not bowed their knee to Baal.

That reminded us of God's counsel to Elijah and made us examine ourselves and the idols of our own hearts. And there were plenty! Selfishness, pride, denominational mindsets, ministry styles, pet theologies, methodology, take-over plans, you name it. These are a Christian version of Baal-worship, idolizing ourselves, our ministry, organization, church, anything that seems to give us identity, security, and destiny. We may seem to pursue God's agenda on the surface – but deep down really push *our thing* alongside.

If we put the welfare of an organization or a church before the question "With whom, then, shall we work?" we will muddy our own waters and wonder why on earth the relationships with these people around us do not work out.

Simply put: we are being idolatrous and have put in practice a system of work, a ministry, a salaried position, a doctrine or a tradition before God - like an idol. And one thing we all know: God does not like idolatry. The bottom line is: a person who has either started or sold himself out to any human organization has been swallowed by a system. His heart is now divided and he will quite likely wish to draw you into his trap because you are useful for his plans with *his thing*. Beware, said God. Look for people who have laid their lives and agendas on my altar and asked for the fire to fall on them.

2. Look for people who covenant with my purposes, with each other, and with the land I gave them.

This was a tough one, too. Ultimately, we like it the other way round: we love God to covenant with us, become a member of our board, our church, sanction our plans, be our...well, "junior partner." Covenanting with Him, we realized, means that we need to stop asking God to bless what we are doing – and do what He is blessing. We need to lay down our agendas and die to them like the kernel of wheat that otherwise stagnates, taking up space but breaking no new ground. As we die, we could become truly part of God's agenda, pledging ourselves to Him no matter what, being separated for His purposes and thus covenanting with him.

As we then covenant with those who covenant with Him in "giving them the right hand of fellowship", we will find those who will be worth clinging to for the rest of our lives, if necessary. Covenant relationships only work for dead people, those who are dead to their old self, who are ready to lose their life for the sake of Jesus. Others "who find their life and will lose it," as Jesus prophesies in Matthew 10:39, will run screaming away from it, rescuing their overpriced independence from something they think is a threatening interdependence, but something that the Bible calls "The Body."

3. Do not trust anyone who does not limp.

This reminded us of Jacob wrestling with God. He "won" a fight with the most powerful being on earth and came away limping, with a glaring weakness for all to see – like Paul's thorn in the flesh. Our biggest fights are never with ourselves, our peers, our wives, or husbands, not even with the devil. Our biggest fight is always with God, and yes, we will come away limping. Beware of folk who come out of "meeting God" and seem pretty unharmed, with a triumphant smile asking you to join their winning team. Look rather for losers-turned-limpers. Why did Paul, John, Peter and Barnabas never seem to carry visiting cards of "PJPB Apostolic Ministry Worldwide, Inc," give pep-talks to mission retreats, speak at big "Transitioning in three easy steps conferences" or write the foreword for books by Tom Peters? They left all this – including the cooperation question - in God's hands. And, essentially, they were friends of Jesus and friends of each other. They knew their mission, and trusted God to carry it on once they were dead. They lived an "ad hoc" life, ready for changes anytime. If they had any organization behind them – read Acts 6, for an example of this – it all seemed pretty unincorporated, ad hoc, temporary, minimal, a minimum of organization for a maximum of organism; almost like living in a tent, following their master, Jesus, the Word "that pitched his tent among us" (John 1:14).

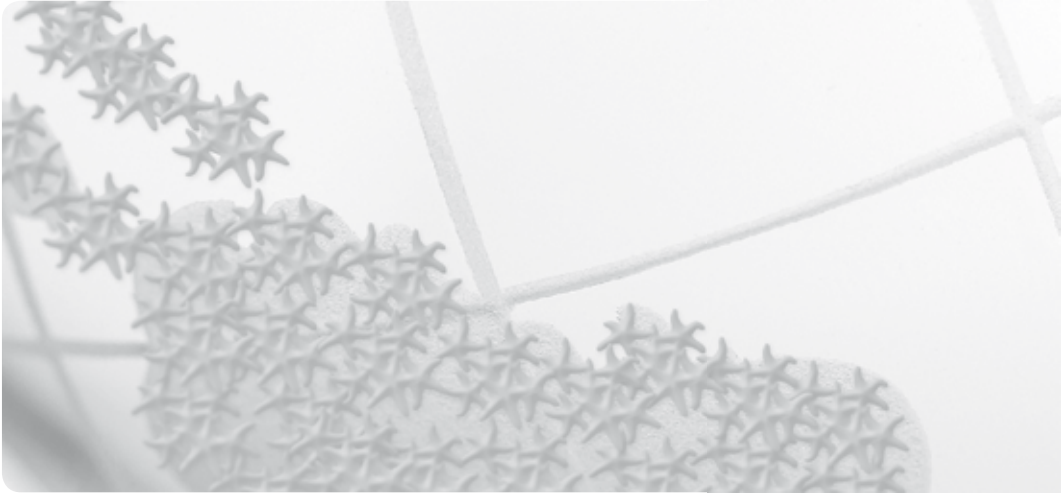
Look again under the heap of stones

Many are both desperately longing for the (real!) apostolic, and desperately afraid it might truly come. So we might have to confront that fear in us also. I know many young people who, deep down, suspect they have an apostolic calling, but are simply too afraid of the consequences, and would never dare to call themselves anything with the word apostolic in it. They need help to get a healthy understanding and appreciation of the apostolic function, to learn to overcome their own fears of stereotypes of people they definitely do not want to copy, and to come to grips with their own role in the Body of Christ. In many ways, this book, of course, is written for them.

Do you remember that Jesus said, in Luke 11, that God has sent many apostles and prophets - some of them have been killed, some persecuted? This indicates an interesting way of finding apostolic and prophetic people: look for killed and persecuted persons! One of the traditional ways to kill prophets and apostles has been by stoning them as a public nuisance – at the hand of the religious people in charge at the time. I think true apostles and prophets are such revolutionaries given the context of a Church that is generally anything but mission shaped, that we have driven most of them out of our churches like we would drive out a demon. I guess we will therefore find many true ones **out there**, rather than **in here**, and find them as we look under heaps of stones that the Church has thrown herself! Chances are quite high that, as we find a leg protruding under a heap of denouncing and disqualifying stones thrown by religious enthusiasts of the present establishment on certain names, we will find gold! To tell you the truth, this is one of my own ways of working in finding apostolic people in various nations and regions: sweetly asking the more respected and established Christian leaders of non-apostolic set-ups, who exactly it is that is most dangerous to their plans, who disturbs them most, and who should really leave their area!

I believe that in every region of the world, in all those 5 to 10 thousand gardens, and among all the thousands of ethnic people groups of this world, God is now preparing several people for apostolic purposes, expecting that at least one or two of them will make it through the tough process of preparation, sifting, and filtering, and be ready to engage in apostolic work in his jurisdiction. Some apostolic and prophetic people have already had a clear view of the hefty price tag, the deadly cost of this ministry, and we will still see people of that nature turning away from Jesus because they perceive his teaching as “too hard.” Many of them will end up in brilliant positions in business, arts or politics, but at some point in their lives, they may well want to return to their original calling. Are you one of them?





19 The “Tarsus Principle”

Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? Job 3:23

19 The “Tarsus Principle”

I am not sure from whom I first heard this, but theologically, this is a very correct statement: “The two most powerful beings in the universe both have the intent to kill you. The question is: who gets to you first, the devil or God?”

Satan, a “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44), comes only to steal, destroy and kill (John 10:10). This would include not only the Jewish race or a few select martyrs of the past, of which, according to Dr. David Barrett, around 160,000 – 200,000 lose their lives every year in our modern times, but also *you*. Satan is bent on killing you, and if he cannot kill you, he will try to kill something near or dear to you, or something *of* you: your health, your mission, your Kingdom relationships, God’s plans for you. God, on the other hand, is the true giver of life, and therefore the ultimate taker of it. Satan can only take our body, but God can “destroy both Body and soul in hell” (Matt. 10:28), that is why we need to fear him, not Satan.

The Kingdom principle I describe here is simple: **life in the Kingdom requires death to self**. Healthy involvement in God’s Kingdom requires us to relinquish our own agendas, our ambitious goals, something that basically requires death to self, death to what the Bible calls “flesh.” It is not a physical death that God requires before our time at the very end of our life on earth has come, but a voluntary giving up of ourselves, and, as a clear symptom of this, the giving up of our own will as the dominant organizing principle in our lives. This does not mean we cannot “will” anymore, desire anything on our own, but to clearly submit our will to the will of God, which is nothing more and nothing less than death to our sinful, rebellious ego. This is most prominent obviously in the life of Jesus, who said: “Not my will, but your will be done” (Luke 22:42), and of whom it is said that “he made himself nothing, humbled himself, became obedient to death” – that is why God exalted him beyond anyone else (Phil. 2:5-10).

Before God can exalt someone, there has always been a humbling, a death experience, a disqualification of sorts, to which we have to agree. Noah had to die daily to build an ark in the face of public ridicule for a full 120 years; Abram was a nobody and had to humbly live in hiding in Egypt; Moses lost face in front of his own people and had to flee to the wilderness for 40 years, definitely a death experience for an ambitious young man with exquisite plans of his own. Job had his very elaborately described death experience, that was basically a bet between Satan and God whether or not he would give up glorifying God once his material possessions were taken. Though his wife was quick to give up and advised him “to curse God and die” (Job 2:9), he did not, but held on to God through his suffering and was reinstated later, when God gave him “twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10).

Most prophets in the Old Testament had to go through slander, rejection and all sorts of death experiences—Jonah and his “fishing trip” probably being the most drastic of all. David experienced this kind of death in many situations, and Hebrews 11 recounts the amazing story of those heroes of faith: “Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put into prison. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death by the sword, went about in sheepskin and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – the world was

not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground" (Heb. 11:36-38). Should you be like one of them?

Jesus, living his Kingdom life because he had given up his natural life (Phil. 2), had the right and mandate to call his disciples into a similar life of relinquishing self, of giving it all up, so much so that he said that "anyone who does not give up everything cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14). This very giving-up-of-everything is precisely the cost, the non-negotiable price tag, of becoming a disciple of Jesus, and no disciple and later specifically no apostle of Jesus was able to get a discount, and just go to a fairly pain-free Bible School for three or five years, learn 1000 Bible verses by heart, and then graduate and "take over a pastorate." Every single one of those disciples of Jesus paid a huge price – life as they knew it was over once they met Jesus. Financial security, the core area of most of our own existential security (if we are honest), was now in God's hands, no longer their own! Search for it, but there are no salaries in the Kingdom! There is gratification, absolutely yes, God who "gives us what is right" (Matt. 20), but nowhere in the Bible do we read of a promised financial security meaning "financial independence" or, having amassed enough stuff in our storehouses, barns and accounts, we can now go on and "live happily ever after." In fact, Jesus teaches this as the ultimate earthbound mindset, the behavior of someone whom God himself calls "a fool" (Luke 12:20). Unable to trust God, he ultimately trusts Mammon, especially the money he has in the bank.

Many Christians have been sold exactly this kind of foolishness not only by the financial wisdom of this world, by Mammon who is on the air 24-7 preaching exactly this false security, but by their own pastors and even by their Christian finance advisors, and are busy investing in stocks, real estate, gold, land and the never ending expansion of their own "barns," hoarding wealth, while the cries of the unpaid harvest workers ring in God's ears day and night (James 5:4). What am I saying here? I say that the pseudo-financial security by which you think you can control your life is your own quickest way to safely avoid true "death to self" ("I have a safe job, I have enough money, tell me, why do I really need God?") If you embrace true financial security **by means you cannot control yourself** and give it into God's hands whom you do not control, this may be your quickest way to be released for work in the Kingdom.

Because of ages of non-apostolic teaching and confusion on the subject, let me underline this point again: **every single disciple in the New Testament who carried that name left his financially stable situation, his day job, his secular financial existence, and left everything of that nature behind to be completely free to work in the Kingdom.** Those the New Testament calls "believers" yes worked, had day jobs, were not "full timers," but no *disciple* could work as a fishermen or a financial consultant in the night, and wander around Israel with Jesus during the day. There are only two main ways of financial existence: **life by faith, and life by sight**, which I translate as life by *calculation*. An Indian bus driver works 8-10 hours a day and gets the equivalent of 200 US-Dollars a month; a Norwegian bus driver works 8 hours a day and gets the equivalent of 4.500 US-Dollars a month. What about you? As long as you can calculate your "billable days," your honorariums, your book sales, your salaried work hours for a Christian organization or church, or the expected outcome of your prayer letters that will raise an average of, say, 80 Dollars per supporter, face it that you are not living by faith; if at all, you live by faith *in your own cal-*

If you embrace true financial security by means you cannot control yourself and give it into God's hands whom you do not control, this may be your quickest way to be released for work in the Kingdom.

Maturity in the Bible is never defined in terms of independence from God, but in terms of dependence on God.

culation! Maturity in the Bible is never defined in terms of independence from God, but in terms of dependence on God. Speak of dying, we have it right here! Learning to leave behind the seemingly foolproof world of economic calculation and the seemingly safe financial principles of “work and earn, pay taxes and burn” and be financially completely vulnerable to God is probably the quickest, safest and most direct path to the death of our flesh.

How do we do that? “Give away all that you have, and come follow me,” was the answer of Jesus to the rich young ruler. If you are poor and have nothing, or you already gave away everything except “food and clothing” and possibly a place to stay (1 Tim 6:8) and you “are content with what you have” (Heb. 13:5), then you will realize your amazing advantage, your quick start into discipling. Maybe this is one of the key reasons why the gospel is advancing so quickly in areas of the world where people have little or nothing, and one of the reasons why the gospel is advancing so terribly slowly in the richer nations or neighborhoods.

In this sense, all the apostles in the New Testament lived a life not only dead to religious ambition and the shameless promotion of self, but specifically a life that was financially dead to this world; having become bond-slaves, voluntary property and slaves of Jesus Christ, their finances were in his hands, not anymore their own.

Paul, a theologically and practically well-educated man, after his conversion and time in Arabia and Damascus, returned to Jerusalem, where he argued effectively with the Hellenistic Jews (Acts 9:19–29). However, he was obviously too strong, “baffling the Jews in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:22). No one wants to be forced by convincing arguments, by baffling and stunning insights, to grudgingly admit that OK yes, you are right about Christ, and I am wrong. The problem we have here with Paul is that we see a man truly commissioned for apostolic ministry, but someone who is yet too strong, too much **convincing** with words of wisdom rather than **convicting** with the power of the Spirit; a man who has still too much Paul to him, and not enough of Christ. The baffling of the Jews, being driven into a corner by the conclusive arguments of Paul, created problems for the entire church in Damascus. The Bible reports that “the Jews conspired to kill him” (Acts 9:23). No one wants to be coerced into conversion, let alone by a theologically well-versed, know-it-all, from-deepest-darkness-to-the-brightest-light-in-3-years Saul-to-Paul-convert. The only solution to this was “the basket”: Paul’s very followers took him, lowered him in a basket outside the city walls, and had him leave. And what did junior-apostle Paul learn from this experience? Nothing! He went straight to Jerusalem and started the entire baffling-business again, “talking and debating with the Grecian Jews,” who, as a result of this, tried to kill him (Acts 9:29). Sounds familiar? We see a man in his fleshly strength, unrefined and convinced of himself, secure in his calling but yet very insecure in the ways of God, the logic of the cross and the philosophy of the Lamb.

And so the only solution open to “the brothers” was to take Paul to the airport and send him away, to go home, to cool off: “they took him down to (the harbor) Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus” (9:30), his home town. This is one instance where a church starts growing numerically and being strengthened not by an apostle coming to be with them, but by an immature, unrefined apostle **being taken away from them**. It says: “**Then** the church throughout

Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace, was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, and grew in numbers" (9:31). Could it be that we would benefit a lot from sending off those among us who are still in the baffling-business?

Off to Tarsus!

Little is known about what has been called the "silent years" of Paul in Tarsus and Cilicia. After Paul spent some years – maybe three – in Arabia (Gal. 1:18) and Damascus, and was then unceremoniously sent home from Jerusalem via Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem fourteen years later (Gal. 2:1), suggesting a time of around eight to eleven years in Tarsus and the area of Cilicia. Mark Wilson, a Bible scholar and specialist in Turkey's biblical history, says that "two obscure references in Acts 15 suggest that Paul was probably active in church planting" during this time. "The churches in Cilicia were one of the addressees of the letter drafted by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23). Later Paul visited these Cilician churches at the beginning of his second ministry journey (Acts 15:41). Since only Paul is known to have been in Cilicia during this period, the existence of these churches suggests that the apostle is their founder." But here we have a man at the end of his 30s and beginning of his 40s, a man in his prime, extremely well educated, probably the pride of his parents, who comes back with a ruined career, even sent off from what must have been perceived by his family as a new cult that their promising son had gotten into. If a prophet "is not without honor except in his home town, his relatives and his own household" (Mark 6:4), this means that an apostle, someone who is made for fundamental and governmental system changes, who does not come and speak of a vision alone, but of a plan to get it done, will have an even more difficult reception among those who know him "in the flesh."

Tarsus was most probably for Paul the place of experiencing ultimate rejection from every group that he was secure with before: for his profession as a theological teacher he was a disgrace. It was probably the very same *chazzan*, the cantor in the Tarsus synagogue teaching Paul as a young man, who was the one administering the humbling beatings of 39 lashes that Paul reports to have received five times (2 Cor. 11:24). As these beatings, a most gruesome and often deadly act of hitting someone with a whip that had six ropes, four made out of veal skin, and two of donkey skin, are not reported in the book of Acts, it is most probable that this happened during his years in Tarsus. Here Paul was cut off from his past, cut off from his profession, cut off from his family and most probably his old friends, and cut off as well from his future, too, since the very church that he so much desired to help with his great talents and giftings had simply sent him home, and enjoyed growth and peace afterwards.

How would Paul have felt? How would you feel? I know I would feel a terrible loser, humiliated, depressed, ridiculed, rejected, forgotten, going out on the streets only after dark so as not to be seen and ridiculed some more by folks on the road. I can imagine that this was the time when Paul worked as a tentmaker in his father's business, making himself useful to a family that has been suffering public disgrace through their black sheep boy, and, probably in his spare time, fleeing into the mountains above his town, planting a few Churches in Cilicia here and there. He obviously also took time to re-evaluate his entire life before he met Christ and afterwards to the deepest possible

extent, and he came to a clear conclusion: "I am dead!" In his words: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20); to his friends in Philippi he wrote that he considered everything a loss compared with knowing Christ, "*for whose sake I have lost all things*" (Phil. 3:8). He considered everything else rubbish, dung!

Paul obviously did not leave that death experience in Tarsus behind. In many ways, the cross stayed with him as he reports in his accounts of his murderous experiences in 2 Cor. 6, or the famous "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12), a lifestyle of apostolic suffering which makes Paul say: "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31) and; "I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). How am I doing on that scale? How are you doing?

Tarsus, in other words, was the graduation class of apostolic suffering, a place for experiencing the desert, loneliness, dryness, where our own kernel of wheat has to fall into the ground and die, a place "to trample on scorpions and snakes," something that is most probably not a glorious bossing around of demons, but a tough wilderness experience, the place where scorpions and snakes are. If anything is most vitally needed in today's development of many thousands of apostolic people around the globe, it is a time in Tarsus.

Beware of "apostles" that just had a great time in the capital, who come in glory, motorcades, 5-Star behavior, and tell only of their triumphs. But look for apostles who have been in their very own Tarsus experiences, who died to ambitions of coming on the stage with an apostolic bang, trumpets, and four color ads. Paul stayed in Tarsus until God called him out through Barnabas (Acts 11:25-26) and engaged him in his first legitimate apostolic role, a role that he did not usurp and take for himself, because he knew he had the gifts and callings, but a role he took because God gave it to him during the time that seemed right for God. In partnership with Barnabas he was to teach many people in Antioch for a year.

One of the reasons that it took so long for Paul to become a functioning apostle is that it does not really take long for God to make one, but to **break** one. Paul was a very gifted man, the opposite of weakness or meekness. For a guy like him to inherit the Kingdom, to come out of Tarsus without any apostolic super-star allure starting his glorious global apostolic business, he simply needed a time of death. This is what Tarsus stands for. A symbol of how we have to die to all human plans, otherwise we would simply stand in God's way. The pathway to apostolic life is death. And, as Art Katz described this very subject: "Nothing is more deadly than waiting. Seemingly eventless waiting. Like Moses with his sheep, Paul in the desert and in Tarsus. Whoever starts acting out of impatience, sells his spiritual birthright. Impatience, egoism, religious ambition, the pressing need to do **something** – and be seen doing it, the wish for acceptance, honor and respect – all this is death for the true purposes of God."

Only the disqualified are qualified

When Moses at 80 years of age asked God: "Who am I that you should send me?" he was an old, broken man, who no longer could rely on his human qualifications. In the words of Art Katz again: "His hands were empty, his name gone, his power broken. There was no way he could ever even think of rescuing his

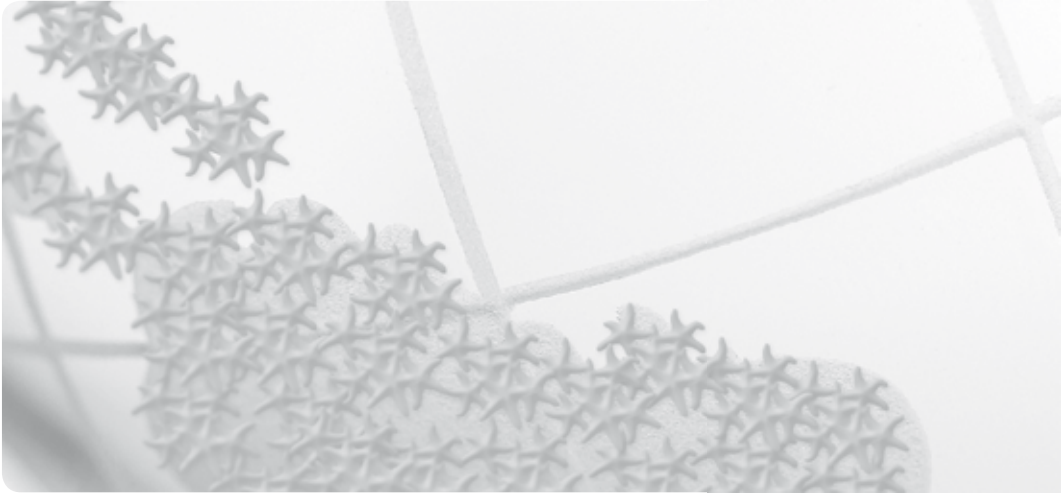
One of the reasons that it took so long for Paul to become a functioning apostle is that it does not really take long for God to make one, but to break one.

people from slavery. And yet no man was better qualified than the one who is deeply convinced that he is disqualified. This is God at work: he disqualifies us, before we can qualify ourselves. And that is the only reason why Moses ultimately was able to act, not because he saw the need and acted as a responsible person, but only because he was able to respond to God sending him, the God who said: 'I have heard the cries of Israel! The reason for our mission is not our seeing, but the sending of God – at a time and under conditions that he makes, and no one else.'

This is what I call the "Tarsus Principle," the crucial apostolic building principle that only through our death to selfish ambition, by our voluntary relinquishing of our will to God's will, our readiness to die financially and be in the hands of God rather than cushioned by a safe salary and nifty little things on the side, will we be able to be truly sent by God – and accomplish his will in his way. This will make sure that we will not even dream of patching our labels, names, and methods onto the things that clearly God did, because we will know that whatever happened, it did not happen because of us, but very much in spite of us. How much do you truly want that? And what price are you ready to pay for it – right now?

No man was better qualified than the one who is deeply convinced that he is disqualified.





20 *Divine Romance* – Matching the Apostolic with the Prophetic ministry

“Apostles and Prophets need to fall in love, get engaged, marry and have children.”

Dr. Marco Gmür

20 *Divine Romance* – Matching the Apostolic with the Prophetic ministry

It was close to 50 degrees Celsius and the sun was beating down hard on our meeting hall in the outskirts of Khartoum in Sudan. I was just finishing a session on church planting for a hall full of evangelists, pastors, and workers in Sudan, which was geared to envisioning God's possibilities for them to win many millions of Muslims to follow Christ. Just before, we had sat with a few church leaders who had told us how difficult it was, from their perspective, to win Muslims for Jesus. In their words, it sounded nearly impossible to win even more than a dozen per year, and here I had come from abroad, seriously attempting to encourage them to venture out to plant at least 25,000 new house churches as a mid-term goal. Some of them probably looked at us as a bad joke. But back to the meeting hall, where I felt I needed to hand the microphone to Erich Reber, who had joined me for this trip. Erich had seen in a prophetic vision what God was about to do in Sudan, and had come with me to share this with some of the Christian leaders there. As he stood up, I had to translate for him. He started saying: "God tells me there is someone in the room, in the back row towards the left, who has a broken right arm. You cannot lift it, it is broken in the upper part. But you are not here by accident, and God wants to heal you right now. If you lift up your left arm in acknowledgement of this, God, at this instant, will heal your right arm." Stunned silence, including myself. I stood just one meter away from him in the very same room, and I had heard nothing. I heard the fans in the room, the huge water cooler blasting air inside the room, heard even some sounds from outside the venue and some noises from the kitchen next door, but I heard absolutely nothing from God about a broken arm or someone in the left part of the room. Erich, however, had tuned his radio to a frequency that my receiver simply did not seem to pick up. So, having trust in God to be able to do anything, and also trust in Erich, whom I had witnessed many times hit the nail on the head in similar situations, I just did my job as an interpreter.

As all of this was translated into Arabic, there suddenly was a raised hand at the back, then a scream, and then someone fell to the ground. We all rushed to see what had happened, and saw a lady on the ground, totally perplexed, as if hit by a train. She told us, when she caught her breath, that she truly had broken her right arm where Erich had indicated, and as she raised her good arm in astonished bewilderment, she had felt a heat go through her right arm, was able to lift it into the air, something she had not been able to do at all, and fell to the ground. After trying it out, she showed to us how her right arm seemed to be totally healed on the spot, and marveled at what God can do. The fun part was, at least from my side, that she later confessed of being sent in by a Muslim group trying to spy out our meetings. Needless to say, she decided to give her life to that Jesus who had so surprised her. And needless to say, that those church leaders as well as all others who were present that day, were greatly surprised, encouraged, and actually agreed to move towards a corporate church planting strategy during this conference.

What had happened? God had prophetically broken through the mist and cloud of fear and tangibly demonstrated how possible the seemingly impossible really is. A prophet had seen what God was going to do, and God so chose to confirm an apostolic message with an additional prophetic sign. This lifted the entire meeting to another dimension, far beyond good planning, numbers and strategies, and made the plans of God much more possible, even probable. It also made all those present aware that God is up to something, and it brought an immediacy, a tangible nearness of God, almost a healthy fear of the Lord, into the room. Many felt they just need to pray now, re-evaluate their lives in the fact of what they had just heard and seen. "Prophecy recruits intercession," as my prophetic friend Chris Daza usually says.

Groundbreaking prophetic-apostolic partnership

If the ekklesia is truly built on prophetic and apostolic foundations (Eph 2:20), and apostles "come first, prophets second" (1 Cor. 12:29) in their building role in the church, then the healthy relationship and partnership between apostolic and prophetic people is foundational and absolutely crucial. The Amos 3:7 type of prophetic intelligence ("The Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants, the prophets") is vital for apostolic architecture. The Kingdom principle here is: **Prophets and apostles are made to work together, specifically in the foundational and groundbreaking dimensions of Kingdom advancement.** Biblically speaking: "Put your trust in God's prophets and succeed" (2 Chr. 20:20), or: have Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, work together with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the builders (Ezra 5:1-2). A beautiful practical picture that sums up this principle is shown in Ezra 6:14: "The elders of the Jews continued to build and *prosper* under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, and *finished the temple.*"

This principle of apostolic-prophetic partnership has so many examples in the Bible that it will suffice to mention just a few: Moses, in his apostolic role of calling Israel out of Egypt, not only had Aaron put at his side - God called Aaron "his" prophet (Ex 7:1) - but also "Miriam the prophetess" (Ex. 15:20), Aaron's sister. Samuel the prophet was used by God to discern and anoint David, the King (as an Old Testament image of an apostolic, governmental person), who then, in turn, developed the Kingdom in such a way as to accommodate Samuel, and establish a governmental perimeter within which the prophetic could function. David had not only one prophet he was relating to, but several others: Nathan, or Gad, who is even called "David's seer" (2 Sam. 24:11). Other prophetic-apostolic tandems and "couples," who were obviously put together by God were Deborah and Barak, Josiah and Huldah, Jeroboam and Ahijah, Elijah and Ahab, Elisha and Joram, Isaiah and Hezekiah, Shemaiah and Rehoboam or Jeremiah and Josiah. In fact, what would the whole story of Israel's kings reported in the books of Kings and Chronicles be without "their" prophets? The main emphasis in those accounts even seems to be on what the prophets prophesied, and whether or not the Kings of their days would do what they said. If they did it, blessing, restoration, and reformation would happen; if not, disaster visited the people.

Prophecy before apostolic action

"In the beginning was the word" (John 1:1). Before anything ever happened, it was the word of the Lord that preceded any action. He said: Let there be light, and there was light. As "the word became flesh," the things spoken by God became the things done by God. This incarnation principle is a fundamental law of essential Kingdom existence. That is also why all major "apostolic" advances in the Bible have a prophetic dimension that comes before the action: God spoke prophetically to Abraham about his future, and he saw the first tokens of it. God spoke prophetically to Moses "to bring my people out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:10), and Moses went on to fulfill that word. David was prophetically described to Samuel, and went on to fulfill his typological, messianic role. David, being the smallest, the last ruddy boy, is a beautiful foreshadow of the "meridian gladiator" aspect of the apostolic, whom even his father Jesse did not really consider for the job.

The birth and reformation-role of Josiah was prophesied 300 years before his time (1 Kings 13:2), and as he came to visit this prophecy by reading the very scriptures containing his name (2 Kings 22:11) something in him got ignited and he went on to fulfill the very task prophesied about him. Over 300 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled by the life of Jesus Christ. In a beautiful picture and example of this, the prophetic figure of John the Baptist, "the greatest man born by women" so far (Matt. 11:11), prophetically points out Jesus, the prophesied Lamb of God (Isaiah 53). Paul's role was prophesied not only directly to him by the risen Jesus, but to Ananias (Acts 9), which then served as a link and testimony to establish his unlikely credibility to the Church. Without credible prophecy, who would allow the very man who led the current persecution of the Church right into the Church? Many times we see prophecy as a means of authenticating apostolic action so that the people of God would accept a new move as having been initiated by God. I am sure this is one of the meanings of the statement of John in Rev. 19:10 where he says: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," describing how Jesus, through prophecy, is "confirming his word by signs" (Mark 16:20).

One well-known example for this is recorded in Acts 10. Before the Gospel could move out from the enclave of the Jewish people to the Gentiles – a key apostolic phase – God spoke directly to God-fearing Cornelius at 3 PM in a very detailed vision, telling him to send men to a specific address ("in Joppa, at the house of Simon the tanner which is by the sea") in order to get a specific man: Simon who is called Peter. During lunchtime the next day, Peter had a prophetic experience himself, and is carefully prepared by God for thinking the most unthinkable thing to Jews up to that very day: that *their* God would also seriously consider Gentiles, those considered unclean by Jews, to become part of the Church. After it all had happened, Peter, challenged by the believers in Jerusalem, defended his apostolic action by pointing to the prophetic dimension of the story, and that is what convinced everybody: "When they heard *this*, they had no further objections" (Acts 11:18).

The biblical principle, again, is this: **Before there is a significant apostolic move, there is prophecy about it.** Prophecy precedes apostolic action. "Let us also cherish the Prophets, because they, for their part, foreshadowed the Gospel," writes Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, in his letter to the Philadelphians. To put it into a black and white way: prophets deliver prophecy, apostles *fulfill*

it. As some of the core tasks of the apostolic have to do with architecture, building, fathering, building systems and foundations that lead to multiplicative movements, the core tasks of the prophetic have to do with announcing the next apostolic move of God, envisioning the people for it, have them prepared and excited, and help during the building-process by discerning, encouraging, warning, and at all times in holy jealousy, guarding the covenants with God in total and healthy disregard to any politics, diplomacy, or apostolic personality.

Prophetic words can be like seeds that need an environment conducive to the maturing and flourishing of that seeds. Just like an embryo needs the mothers womb, and the mother needs first a bed to give birth and later a safe place to groom a kid, prophetic words are not yet fulfilled by merely been spoken – they need our obedient action based on this word. If the prophetic words are not heeded and put into practice, they will “fall to the ground”. A terrible example of this is when the people of Israel, God’s very own chosen people, the apple of his eye, moved out on their exodus journey from Egypt to Israel. It is fair to say that at this point they were a profoundly prophetic people on the face of the earth. However, they also had their own part to play, and they chose to play it badly. At the bitter waters of Meribah they rebelled against Moses and God’s commands, and later they – not only the Sons of Korah - rebelled in many instances against the system of governance that God had installed. As a result, God allowed an entire prophetic generation to die in the desert, a staunch warning for all of us to understand the necessity to listen prophetically and act apostolically.

Prophetic words are not yet fulfilled by merely been spoken – they need our obedient action based on this word.

When Apostles ignore the Prophetic

“In the church in Antioch there were prophets...and while they served the Lord together and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: set apart for me Barnabas and Saul...so they prayed, placed their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:1-3). This description of the birth of the second of Paul’s apostolic journeys (the first one is a delivery of money to Judea, Acts 11:30 and 12:25) starts with mentioning the presence of prophets. As much as prophecy precedes apostolic innovation, the Bible is such an amazingly realistic book that it even recounts for us an instance of apostolic *disobedience*, where an apostle ignores the prophetic. Without prophetic partnership, even the most gifted apostle retains a certain blindness; his radio, so to speak, is unable to receive signals that prophets pick up more easily. Prophecy describes the direct uplink to God (2 Kings 3:11), and therefore functions as the navigational system to discern both the general directions and, often enough, the exact turns and twists needed to dodge and navigate in the here and now. If an apostle does not listen to the prophetic, it is not to his advantage.

Consider the story of Paul. After an apostolic triumph (50,000 drachmas worth of books burned in Ephesus; Eutychus raised from the dead, the whole city in uproar, a new church planted) Paul *decided on his own* – note the absence of any prophetic precursor - to go to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21). The Greek original says: “Paul decided by himself” (not the Holy Spirit) to do that. Paul probably did this in connection with a vow he made in Cenchrae, where he had his hair cut (Acts 18:18), a typical outward sign for a Nazarene vow. Paul was a big-picture man, and, given the latest thrilling experience of the result of his ministry in Ephesus, he had definitely heard about the problems during

this time in Jerusalem. In passing, on his larger route towards Rome and Spain (Rom 15:24), he obviously planned to go down to Jerusalem, step up to the stairs in front of the temple, get out his apostolic anointing and show those apostolic folks in Jerusalem what a real apostle can do in a speech or two. This decision, that was made by Paul without prophetic counsel, is later spiritualized by Paul, when he says in Acts 20:22 that he is “compelled by the spirit,” literally translated “bound by the spirit,” or “a prisoner of the spirit.” On his route to Jerusalem, he becomes strangely schizophrenic: He says that he is “going to Jerusalem **not knowing** what will happen to me there,” but in the same breath claims that the Holy spirit **warns** him (Greek *diamarturetai*, to testify **against**) in every city that prison and hardship wait for him there (20:23). He continues to run through two more red lights: in Tyre the disciples (not immature believers!) urged Paul through the Spirit **not** to go on to Jerusalem (21:4), and Agabus, a prophet, came all the way from Judea down into the house of Philip the Evangelist and, using Paul’s belt as a symbolic sign, in the presence of Philip’s four prophetic daughters, all of them, literally “we and the people there,” pleaded with Paul **not** to go up to Jerusalem (21:12). To no avail. The guy wanted to go badly, and that’s what happened. But the same Paul, who had such a fine sensorium to confront any Judaizers who had come in earlier and demanded that Old Testament laws should be fulfilled by all new Christians (like circumcision), seemed to become more Jewish the closer he got to Jerusalem on this journey. We see him participate in Jewish purification rites, have his head shaved, pay for four others who are on a pilgrimage to the Temple, and finally go into the Temple at the proper time and announce the offering that he is going to make. Could it be that something went really wrong with him? That he replaced that inner conviction of the Holy Spirit that is there when we do something that is prophetically foreseen, and legitimized it with conforming to Jewish Rites and rules? Because the same man who wrote to the Romans that “we are not anymore under the law” (Rom. 6), suddenly lives “in obedience to the law” (21:24). Paul even becomes strangely fatalistic and basically said “If I am bound and die, so what!” (21:13). He finally got to Jerusalem, got up the stairs at the Temple, starts his planned speech, and just as it becomes interesting, before he hits the bottom line, Paul is shouted down, flogged, arrested, and this was basically the end of his public ministry.

Could it be that all of this was written to us as a stern warning to respect both the apostolic and the prophetic as equally important ministries? I believe yes. Is it a stern warning to any other apostles who decide something on their own, get a stubborn idea and keep running through stoplights of any kind? I believe yes. Could God still use Paul, his journey, and his message for good, and still write history with an apostle who dropped his leash for a while? I believe so, too, because God does not miss a beat. The next prophetic event, where God seems to pick up with Paul again, was when, in the Roman barracks, “the Lord stood near Paul and said: ‘Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome’” (Acts 23:11). However, I want us to take this as a warning that God has placed right into Scripture to encourage us to heed prophetic directives, specifically in apostolic ministry. This is a clear warning for the apostolic people (and all others, of course) not to get their heads in the air, declare themselves independent from the prophetic ministry, or any other ministry, and for them to remain humble, vulnerable, steerable,

so that when the spirit says “No, don’t go into Mysia and Bithynia,” they would respect that; and if the Spirit would say: “Come to Macedonia,” that is what they would do.

Samuel is still anointing David

The prophetic ministry, just like the apostolic, has been always with us through the entire history of the Church. Seen through the selective retrospective glasses of an increasingly non-prophetic church, “prophecy virtually disappeared from the church by the end of the second century AD, although for some churches, notably Thyatira, it remained a powerful influence for several hundred years,” writes Clifford Hill in his excellent study *Prophecy Past and Present*. Although strongly influenced by the spirit and ecclesiology of their time, prophetic aspects, for example in the life of the Montanists, Theresa of Avila, Catharine of Siena, Joan of Arc and others, can be easily spotted. But specifically since the 1980s, the prophetic ministry has come to a new prominence and maturity. It is surely correct to say that we have witnessed a global comeback of the prophetic ministry.

Over the past three decades, there seem to have been tens of thousands of prophetic people called and empowered by God for prophetic ministry, who have been prepared, called, tested, matured and deployed. And yes, although some of them, like in all other ministries as well, failed and got carried away in the immature excitement of their own fascinating gifting, as some sort of prophetic teenagers excited about flexing their muscles, many have done an amazing job of wandering around the churches, prophesying at every level about the new things that God is going to do, pointing out the sins of the church, calling the church back to its first love, obedience and repentance, and preparing the Church for apostolic times *such as this*.

Ministries of a prophetic dimension first raised awareness of the validity of biblical prophecy, for example like the “Midnight Call” of Wim Malgo, the Evangelical “Sisters of Mary” in Darmstadt, Germany, or many other ministries that focused on the prophetic dimension of God’s word. Later other ministries of a prophetic nature came onto the scene, people like Clifford Hill, Ken McCreavy, John Paul Jackson, Cindy Jacobs, Michael Sullivan, Scott McLeod, Erich Reber, John Mulinde, Bernard Ankoma, Valerie Kincaid, Doug Maskell, Lee Lacosse, Desmond Baker, Chris Daza and obviously many thousands more that I do not know. These have all helped in their own ways to establish the validity and credibility of prophetic ministry today, that is, not only the validity of the Bible as the prophetic word of God, but also the validity of the present-day ministry of prophetic people. Often enough, many of these prophets have not only prophesied about a coming apostolic time, but done what modern-day Samuels would do today: anointing the new Davids of God, the apostolic children and teenagers growing up in God’s global garden.

Prophetic decrease for apostolic increase

However, many of these apostolic “Davids” who have been picked up by the prophetic radar in the last two or three decades are now growing up and moving into their ministry and jurisdiction. This means that they now want to go and build, lay foundations, go to work, establish the road and the necessary architecture and systems to get to the very destinations that the recent

prophets have been speaking about. But this poses a stunning problem. Many prophets have been through a long time of pioneering, loneliness, rejection, and misunderstanding, tediously working and fighting to regain at least a minimal recognized platform in the body of Christ and re-establish their own validity. Now that they have gained the platform, at least in some circles, they find it very difficult to relinquish the microphone again, or even truly share it with apostles. After they have finally fought themselves through to the front, why, they think, should they share the ministry with those hotshot-apostles who bring something so new to the table that it typically even frightens the prophets!? The apostolic message is generally twofold: 1) we are here, thank you God, and thank you, prophets; and 2) let us build together! The new apostles would even have amazingly little patience for the prophets to go on prophesying, as long as nothing much is put into practice, things remain the same, and, while everyone is stunned with new prophetic vision, the old prophetic visions don't seem to be translated and implemented into apostolic systems that will make sure that the prophecy will become a reality.

Both ministries, the apostolic as well as the prophetic, are certainly dramatic in their nature. Imagine having coffee with Jeremiah or John the Baptist. There will be very little of pleasant niceties or sweet little small talk of how are the children, how is your car, how are your feelings today. They might as well take you asunder piece by piece, speak with X-ray directness into your life and reveal both some of your darkest secrets as well as the brightest futures, turn you upside-down, use the coffee cup and the spoon as prophetic symbols, and open new doors to possibilities for you that you never even thought about, connect some dots you have never seen before, and then, before you know it, leave you with the bill, bewildered, encouraged, sobered - but deeply excited and thrilled.

Prophetic and apostolic ministries are endowed with a level of grace from God to break open new ground, confront, encourage, tear down, uproot, plant, and build, etc. Each of these ministries by themselves will find it easy to explain and legitimize itself and become the centerpiece of a new ministry or church any time of the day. They seem so self-evident, that without carefully watching it, people might jump to the false conclusion that an apostle alone, or a prophet alone (similar to all other one-man shows, no matter which ministry is concerned) can be a stand-alone, all-by-himself ministry. Self-absorbed, self-important, unchecked and unbalanced, outside of the Body-context and the legitimate synergetic positioning that God has ordained for any such ministries, lone prophets or apostles can easily go on to establish *themselves*, especially given the religious market of today. But that does not mean that God is then going to use them to lay apostolic-prophetic foundations, or even a part of it. There are hundreds of lone prophets or apostles who have seriously considered their fraction and part to be the whole counsel of God. But this narrow-minded naïveté and pride will only lead them to establish ministries on a shaky, one-legged foundation that will simply not last long.

Historically speaking, prophets are ahead of apostles in time, and even today they seemed to have been called to the scene earlier than the apostolic people. As a result of this, they have advanced in healthy maturity, and will find it a challenge to accommodate apostolic youngsters, often known to them in their immature and rather unimpressive phases. As Church As We Know It has

decidedly moved away from the apostolic ordinances and structures of God, the reformation-message of apostolic people today is met usually with complete incomprehension and bewilderment, although it has been prophesied for decades by the prophetic voices in the wilderness, or the many intercessory movements of the past. And now that God's apostolic personnel finally come to the scene, there still will be those very same nagging doubts inside the prophets that would make them ask the same question that John the Baptist still had about Jesus. Although he knew that he knew that Jesus truly was the genuine article, his main question still was: "Are you the expected one, or shall we wait for someone else?" (Luke 7:19).

However, John's immediate and healthy response, once he had identified the person of Jesus, was "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30). He realized that his own prophetic role was now changing. From being a lone voice in the desert, he was not alone anymore: Jesus turns to him confidentially and speaks of "*us*" (Matt. 3:15), a new ministerial *we* that had just emerged as prophet and apostle met. And, almost as if to avoid a split into two movements, one prophetic, following John the Baptist, and one apostolic, following Jesus, God took John out of the picture, put him into prison where poor John had to witness how some of his closest disciples actually jumped ship and left him, in order to now be the disciples of Jesus, the new guy. This natural tension is where the "divine romance" really kicks in. It speaks of the necessity of these two ministries, the prophetic and apostolic, to synergize, or, to use words of my Swiss friend Marco Gmür, "to fall in love, get engaged, marry and have children." This means a mutual "attraction in the Spirit," where apostolic and prophetic people first realize that they need each other; then, secondly, comes a more firm commitment of the will that goes beyond feelings and begins a partnership, where the two realize they *want* to be with each other again and again, and thirdly, in its most mature phase, they enter a phase of a ministerial "yoking," where these ministries are functioning in harmony and synergy, each giving space to the other, and giving birth together to the things that God wants to see developed through them.

What does this mean practically?

First and foremost, these two ministries have to learn to appreciate first themselves and the uniqueness of their function. They need to come to grips with those long-lost roles, that, once they embrace them, make them feel odd, different to the others, exotic, and, should they chose to open their mouths, quickly become unwanted outcasts, the uninvited disturbers of the ecclesiastic or diplomatic peace, upsetting the Status Quo as a natural outcome of their very healthy essence and being. Since there have been very few tangible prophetic/apostolic fathers and mothers in Christ in the past that took on mentoring or coaching roles for those rising apostolic/prophetic children and teenagers, many emerging prophets and apostles had an orphan-lifestyle to overcome, a distinct lack of parenting. Typically unwanted by CAWKI-style churches and ministries, they were often seen as a threat by the pastoral system, or oddly sticking out in traditional mission societies. In some cases they might not want "this ministry" themselves, struggle with their calling, and might ask God the old biblical questions to "send someone else," someone older, someone better qualified.

Secondly: as the ministry of the prophetic, and historically a little later the ministry of the apostolic, is being rediscovered by large sections of the Church, this means that we all seriously have to learn to accommodate these ministries again. After having focused for centuries mainly on the pastor-teacher driven church models that might embrace as a pioneering extra, an evangelistic ministry once in a while, most of today's progressive and cherished forms of CAWKI are entire churches started and molded by an Evangelist, such as Rick Warren's Saddleback Church or Bill Hybels' Willow Creek Church, or genuinely evangelistic ministries like Campus for Christ, OM, YWAM, the Navigators or the Billy Graham Association. But what do we do once we have established a building and forgotten the foundation? Well, we could always point to the Johannesburg Airport in South Africa: they achieved a marvelous architectural feat and actually managed to build an entire new and larger foundation for it, while the airport remained fully operational. Each time I arrived in Jo'burg during this construction time, I wondered at the airport, and what we as the church can learn from this operation.

And finally, these ministries have to learn to appreciate each other deeply, not to be threatened by each other or envy each other for platform time or ministry presence, but learn to embrace and begin functioning in partnership with each others, as well as with all the other vital pastoral, teaching, evangelistic and administrative ministries that God has given to the church.

This means that at present we will find three types of prophets out there:

1. False prophets that God had never sent. As there are false apostles who have called themselves, we should not be surprised to find false prophets of a similar breed.
2. There are healthy and genuine prophets, however, that still work outside of an apostolic framework, outside the healthy jurisdictions and borders that the apostolic ministry creates, and no other. The most common three versions of this are
 - UFO-type prophets (Unidentified Flying Objects), falling out of the sky, doing their thing, and disappearing into thin air;
 - "Apostolic" Prophets who have, usually when they became influential, come to be called apostles themselves and have accepted the title. This does not mean, however, that they have the calling and anointing for it, which is usually an enterprise either in people-pleasing, delusion, or denial, pride or sheer madness;
 - "Framed Prophets" who sincerely believe they work within an apostolic framework, not understanding that their framework or network is either not legitimate, or unhealthy, immature, or tied so strongly to a traditional CAWKI-base, that their entire ministry is severely cut back and put on a short leash by the very system they are tied into. Thus, they might prophesy anything, except touching or even rattling their own cage;
3. There are those prophets who function within healthy relationships, clearly inside such apostolic architectures. As in the case of Samuel and David, it generally was the prophets who were sent by God to pronounce the next

King, to have him anointed and see him established. Once the King took office, the prophet started to function without question within the legal, governmental framework that this King set up. The prophet defined the apostle, and the apostle defined the environment within which both worked together.

Gardening together

In my view, Adam and Eve were an apostolic-prophetic couple, gardening together in Eden. Before sin entered, God talked to them every evening and they did according to what God told them to do. This is an image to which we must strive to return. Much of the current or past prophetic ministry happened outside the parameters of healthy, apostolic ministry, outside of the garden, so to speak. In a number of ways, this was frustrating to them. Many prophetic persons seem to have run in circles; they have become messengers with letters from God that they deliver again and again and yet again at the doorsteps of a sleeping church that just would not listen. In the process the prophets themselves do not seem to be able to advance or even break through into their own mature adulthood. Many felt that, forever waiting for their words to be heard and accepted, they were treated like an insecure teenager in a room full of politicians. Many prophets have therefore started a certain “teaching ministry,” trying to *explain* to the church why they should be listened to, giving a rationale for the irrational. In such situations I have personally heard some of the worst and most unhelpful “teachings” ever, given by authentic, genuine and wonderfully prophetic people of God who wish to make themselves understood and heard.

But prophets who work in a garden, who function within a given apostolic jurisdiction, have no need for self-justification. Others do this for them. What needs to happen is that such prophets need to be encouraged to do what they do best: live a prophetic life, be a prophetic person, make prophetic disciples, and yes, don't forget to actually prophesy.

Two Rafts on God's River

Anni Bärtsch, a prophetic lady and friend of our family, once had a dream that described an important aspect of the practicalities of apostolic-prophetic cooperation. She saw two rafts, which she recognized representing these two ministries, floating down a river, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Those two rafts nudged each other and helped each other along to navigate obstacles and difficulties. One, the apostolic raft, was more bulky and heavy and got stuck in places; the other, the prophetic raft, was smaller, more flexible, and both floated along separately on the river of God. Then she saw a human hand, tying the two rafts together with a rope, as if this were a good idea. But at the next opportunity, at the slightest tension where one raft got stuck and the other tugged at it with the rope, the rope immediately broke, as if human connections between the two ministries, such as joining the same organization, will not last at all. Then Anni saw a huge hand, the hand of God, taking both rafts out of the water and placing them on dry land. There, God performed a kind of open-heart surgery, cutting out the central part of each raft, and splicing both pieces together perfectly, so that they were joined together in the form of a cross. Then the hand of God placed the new vehicle back into the stream, and

it went along with the flow, changed and inseparable.

Anni believes this to mean that the two ministries needed to be taken out of their own separate, stand-alone, parallel existence by God, and understood that merely human ways of partnering and networking between the two may look good, but will not last long under pressure. And pressures will always be there. Therefore, both of them needed to be taken out of their very ministry and experience “heart surgery” in which God takes out a central part of their strength and identity; only then will it be possible for God to splice them together, enabling them to swim together in the river of the Spirit, joined by God, not by man.

Overcome prophetic tiredness

Lacking a healthy apostolic linkage, many prophetic words in recent decades have literally “fallen to the ground” (1 Sam. 3:19), have remained lingering in the air – or on bookshelves – prophetic words that were heard but not implemented, welcomed, but not responded to. These unfulfilled prophetic words have not created something new, and by now have fueled a growing disappointment even within the prophetic circles themselves. The so-called “Latter Rain” movement and other revival-prophecies, movements, and waves in recent decades, came onto the scene with a rather loud prophetic bang, predicting an age of unimaginable healings, miracles, and triumphant breakthroughs to a stunned audience, promising heaven – but delivered pretty much earth.

However, with a few exceptions in some individuals and ministries like the one of John G. Lake (1870-1935), Smith Wigglesworth in the 1920s and 30s, William Branham in his crusade in Zürich 1955 and many other places, little of this has actually materialized, and we need to be realistic: a certain tiredness of being excited and promised great things yet one more time has set in. This pseudo-prophetic fatigue needs to be taken seriously. However, this disappointment is not really the fault of the prophets, but many times due to the fact that in the past, most apostles had little or no room whatsoever to go to work to implement prophetic vision, translate it into strategies and architectural systems designed to see it come to pass. Those “heavy hearts” as a result of “hope deferred” need treatment, and often pastoral counseling with inner healing. Sometimes just a break will be good medicine.

Invite the apostolic to rescue and upgrade the prophetic

The emergence of apostolic ministries on the scene in these years requires a sober alertness among the prophets. Prophets, having been historically the “last wave” of the Spirit, can otherwise become like a cork in the bottle and block the very ministries they have prophesied about. Those prophets who sense that will humbly step back from the scene a little. They will stop dominating the platforms and meetings with their latest visions, dreams and insights, and give room for the apostolic to go to work, to regain their role. For this, we need a prophetic *decrease* for an apostolic *increase*. Specifically, as there is a never ending market out there in a consumer-driven Christianity that wants to be entertained, challenged and thrilled – but if possible without making their hands dirty in the sweat, blood, and agony of the harvest - the spoiled Christian mob will generally prefer a fiery prophet over a sober apostle any time

of the day. People who can say “I have a word for you” will be 100 times better received over a serious apostle coming with plans and strategies, someone who might, like Paul, write weighty letters, but is quite unimpressive in person and not really welcome or at home anywhere.

This is where the emerging apostolic people need a lot of help by the more established prophetic ministries, who might want to pause and stop what they are doing – pointing their fingers saying: “Welcome, we have waited for you for a long time, let’s pray, eat, celebrate, and go to work together!” Remember the typological event of John the Baptist’s meeting Jesus? John stopped his preaching, baptizing, eating honey and locusts, but publicly pointed with his finger and said: this is the one we waited for!

This describes something that we need to do practically, and do it urgently: if you are personally involved in any prophetic, prayer- or intercessory ministry, or in any church, ministry, or denominational set-up of any kind, make sure that you connect with true apostolic people, invite them to speak to your conferences, groups, and churches, so they can inform and teach you about the apostolic ministry and download the DNA they carry into your systems. Give them as much time to explain and inform others about the apostolic ministry as you have taken to explain *your own* ministry. Give them the chance to impart and thus infect and cross-fertilize ministries that are otherwise in danger of becoming prophetic inbreeds, incestuous intercessors, or pious prayer movements that have sunken dangerously low towards becoming trapped in spiritual routine, repeating methodology, liturgy, and, at some point, just celebrating the glorious past.

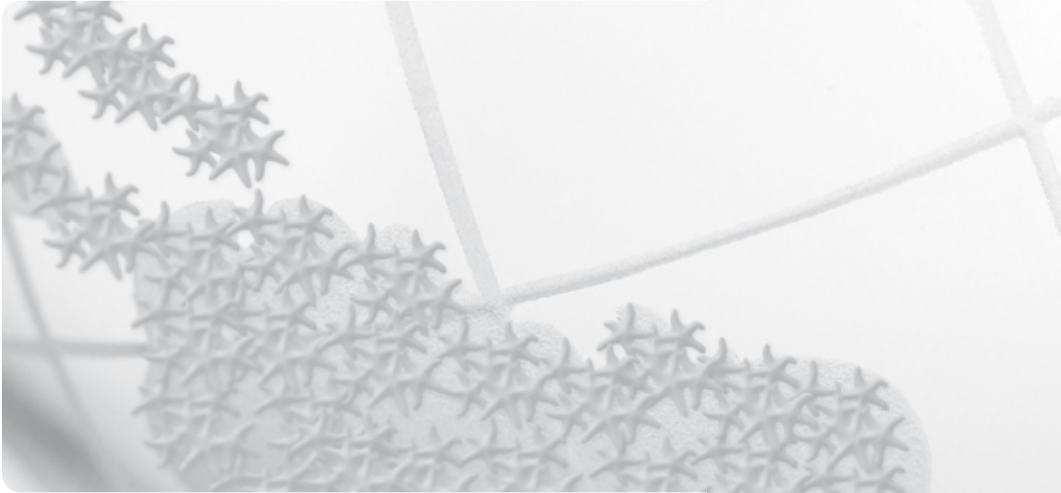
In the words of Steve Schultz: “Today, the apostolic reformation is activating the prophetic to help build the Kingdom through deep and close alignment with apostolic anointing and grace. Those called to prophetic ministry must align their ministries and their hearts to find apostolic linkage. This is causing and will continue to cause many to die to the ‘old prophetic frequency’ and emerge into a more accurate pattern for apostolic/prophetic ministry. The good news is that many prophetic ministers sense the need for advancement. As a part of this recognition, they must realize their dependence upon the anointing of the apostolic to bring them to a more accurate level of thinking and function. This means that more energy and enthusiasm will be released, prophets will feel greater fulfillment and a greater sense of safety and confidence, new strategies will come forth, and a greater depth of prophetic ministry will be evidenced in people’s lives.”

Without a proper connection with the apostolic, the prophetic itself will remain underdeveloped, strangely immature and in danger of bowing in the fear of men, in danger of becoming a Christian soothsaying ministry with just another word for someone, an engine running at maximum revolutions per minute, but with no gearbox and clutch that connects the power with the rest of the car. A prophetic ministry will always be in danger of becoming an individual-blessing industry, where the best they can do, in the eyes of a religious market, is to hear God for others and utter prophetic words. God, however, wants to do so much more with prophetic people than having them parade in the churches as the ears of God for sheep that have long lost the ability to hear God for themselves, and much rather go hear another couple of prophetic words than repent, read their Bible, and become obedient to the last words

God, however, wants to do so much more with prophetic people than having them parade in the churches as the ears of God for sheep that have long lost the ability to hear God for themselves, and much rather go hear another couple of prophetic words than repent, read their Bible, and become obedient to the last words God gave them long ago.

God gave them long ago. Many prophets I know are painfully aware of this, and simply need to be rescued from these trappings of CAWKI and sometimes their own ministry. Their feet need to be put firmly on Kingdom ground, by apostolic people helping them to understand the apostolic, patiently answering their questions, and thus redefine and significantly upgrade their prophetic ministry in the context of the Kingdom within this world, as well as within apostolic borders.

God wants to liberate the prophetic ministry from the clutches of the ever-consuming religious market, take it out of the four walls of endless religious meetings, out of the Christian ghetto of prayer movements and yet one more conference on intercession, out of endlessly explaining itself to CAWKI-Christians in one more seminar or workshop, and thrust it back into politics, business, arts, media, and culture, so it can achieve, in cooperation with apostolic strategies, what it could never achieve by itself, and therefore reach its own ultimate and apostolic destination.



21 The Gardens of God

Gardening has become a major religion. Now we know why.

21 The Gardens of God

If God has designed this planet and the people living on it, and “made every nation (Greek: *ethne*; ethnic group, not national state) of men that they should inhabit the whole earth and determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26, see also Deut. 32:8; Job 12:23), then we can conclude that this is also the way in which he has planned the Kingdom of God to take root among the *ethne*, the people groups of this world. The Bible reveals three important things in regards to this: 1) Tribes and people groups are the way God has created mankind, and as Jesus has commanded his apostles to make disciples of all *ethne* (Matt. 28:18-20), we need to see entire tribes and people groups as the God-ordained target of Kingdom discipling movements. 2) There is a God-ordained *kairos*-time, a “time of visitation” which God has surely planned for every people group on the face of the earth, and there is 3) a geographic location where this people group will be found (at least many of them), a settling ground, where they have made their home on earth (at least initially). In the words of Alistair Petrie, prophetic teacher from Canada: “Throughout Scripture we find several references to nations that are called, loved, blessed, disciplined, corrected, directed, and even scattered. Well-known passages such as Habakkuk 1:5 indicate that God has purpose and strategy in the way He works with nations – Look at the nations and watch – and be utterly amazed....”

In books like *The Twilight Labyrinth* by George Otis Jr., *Peacechild* or *Eternity in the Hearts* by Don Richardson as well as in anthropological, ethnological and historic research we will find distinct references as to how the great migration, from an early Babylon and a time where the earth had been divided (in reference to Peleg, Gen 10:25), has taken people from the Mesopotamian basin to Fin-land and other “ends of the earth”. As they were traveling away from a disastrous attempt to build a Babylonian tower and fleeing from a God who had sent them away from his face, they went, so goes the thesis of George Otis, through three distinct phases in their migration: **trauma, pact and allegiance.**

In their **trauma** of Babylon, being sent away from friends and partners, rooted out from a place they called home and sent off as nomads in search of a destiny, they experienced a deep wounding, a collective hurt, a rejection that made them search for help, for something that could heal their wounds. Inevitably on their journey, they would encounter obstacles, huge forests, aggressive wild animals, invincible mountain ranges, deserts, rivers, and seas. Faced with an insurmountable challenge, their fears would make them enter into a spiritual **pact** with assumed ghosts and gods of the mountains, rivers, seas, and forests. The pact is a quid-pro-quo contract that basically said: if you help us through this obstacle, overcome that challenge, we will serve you and worship you.

Finally, after having made it into their destination, they would renew that spiritual contract by proving their continued **allegiance** through annual rituals, festivals, spiritual traditions or pilgrimages. One of the reasons is to initiate each new generation into thankfulness towards the spirits that made them to complete their journey, and to renew the spiritual rental contract of the land in

which they are settling. Therefore, religious festivals, where the former ghosts soon grew to gods of their cities and regions, and where regional traditions grew into full-fledged religions (as in the case of Allah, who through the work of Mohammad grew from a provincial God of Mecca to a universal God at the center of what is Islam today), served as anchors and protectors of their right to stay where they settled. A war between people groups, at least in the original animistic traditions, was therefore always a war between regional gods.

That is why it has come both as a terrifying shock – and an exciting prospect - for most people groups to learn about the existence of a “God of heavens, who made the sea and the land” (Jonah 1:9-19), in other words, a God whose existence not only superseded the relevance of their regional deities, but reminded them of a long, old and almost forgotten story and saga that was whispered among their campfires and had grown to a distant myth: the memory of a God who formerly was with them, blessed them, was their creator, but then, because they had become disobedient, sent them away. Since then, many were in search of a redemption, a reconciliation with that God, that gave birth to sacrificial traditions to appease an unknown God, as the one worshiped in Athens during Paul’s time (Acts 17:23) have often been prevalent.

It is a testimony to the prophetic abilities of God that in many people groups we find tales of redemption, like the story of the Peace Child, stories that prepare amazing “Bridges of God,” redemptive avenues that can connect entire people back to their God. A fascinating account of this can be found in earlier Sanskrit versions of the Hindu Rig-Veda, considered to be the holiest and oldest of all four Vedas, the scriptures of Hinduism, which contain a prophecy recorded more than 700 years before Christ: one day, *Prajapati*, “the God of the people,” will come and give his own body as a sacrifice for the sins of man, so that no more animal sacrifice will be necessary. According to the Vedas, Prajapati in the form of “a large man,” purusha, will have ten distinctive characteristics: he will be a sinless man; divided from his family; his own nation will reject him; a plant of thorns will be placed upon his head; he will be tied to a tree that looks like a three-pointed spear; blood will flow from his body; he will die, but his bones will not be broken; he will return to life; he will offer his flesh to the sons of god; and all forms of mankind will build his body (more about this in the book *Is Christianity a Necessity?* written by Sadhu Chellappa). As you can imagine, devout Hindus looking for Prajapati all their lives are in for a huge surprise to find that Jesus Christ has all those 10 characteristics prophesied to them in their own language and book.

These redemptive bridges are, for many ethnic groups, a prophetic path to their creator, and as we learn how to use this path for each nation, we need to do three things: 1) undo and heal the trauma through a sort of ethnic inner healing (like the work of the International Reconciliation Coalition, led by John Dawson or the work of Brian Mills of Interprayer), 2) cancel the spiritual pact with the demons that have been accepted as gods and replace that pact with a dedication to the true and living God, and 3) change the individual and corporate allegiance of a people group from demons to God.

Inner healing and deliverance ministries have long discovered that in many ways, demons are like rats. They are there wherever there is dirt. Rats can be chased away, but as long as the dirt is not cleaned out, they will always come back. This dirt, the reason why darkness lingers where it does (Job 38:17-19),

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gives them legal rights, like spiritual rental contracts signed voluntarily by representatives of the people to demonic “gods”, to invite them to live among them, and infest them. Merely chasing these demons away in naïve prayer liturgies without seriously healing the trauma, exchanging the pact and allegiance towards God, will result in some temporary relief, but usually leads to even more demonic darkness, as those demons chased away wander through waterless ground and are happy to return with seven colleagues to make matters worse, as Jesus taught us (Luke 11:26).

As we have seen before, it is a Kingdom principle that the title deeds of people groups have fallen to Lucifer, and he redistributes them as he likes (Luke 4). Someone, therefore, has to challenge him on legal grounds, Kingdom laws, accepted by the title deeds office which is the throneroom of God in heaven, in order to regain the right to the land, the water, and the proceeds of the land, and then go about the business of establishing the Kingdom of God, to the extent that this is possible this side of the *parousia* – the physical return of Jesus. In order to do this, a regional/ethnic church planting movement needs to be installed in each and every region and each settling ground of ethnic groups that is of apostolic and prophetic quality, with the goal of saturating and filling the entire area, region or people group with the “yeast of the Kingdom working itself through all the dough” (Matt. 13:33), until “all have heard,” “the gospel is proclaimed fully” (Rom 15:19-22), and all nations are disciples.

As we will see later, that can mean at least half of a given population, or, if possible, the majority of a people group, would actively follow Christ sacrificially, on both an individual and corporate level, when the ekklesia is established both as spreading regional housechurch networks, as well as an apostolic-prophetic platform with a governmental function to model and redefine life as much as possible in alignment to the values of the Kingdom.

Saturation church planting

Jesus said: “If the people see how you love each other, they will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). This is why I sometimes call the physical place where this “loving of each other” takes place “God’s shop window.” **Saturation** church planting is not only church expansion by means of planting more and more churches, but strategically planting shop-windows of God within walking distance of every person on the globe. One of the leading supporters for church planting in the twentieth century was the late Dr. Donald McGavran. Jim Montgomery, founder of the DAWN movement, who died in 2007, told of the following incident: “During the last months of Mary McGavran’s illness, my wife Lyn would frequently spend time with her. Donald McGavran would be there, too. He would disregard his own painful cancer while taking care of his beloved Mary. “You can be sure Jim and I will continue our commitment to church growth after you are gone,” Lyn said to Donald one day.

‘Do not call it church growth anymore,’ was his quick response. ‘Call it church multiplication!’ Two weeks before his death, he said, ‘The only way we will get the job of the Great Commission done is to plant a church in every community in the world.’

The concept of saturation, from the many biblical examples like the Kingdom “yeast working through all the dough” or “filling the earth like waters covering the sea,” connects church planting with the issue of closure, finishing

the job, bringing to an end what the early church had started, and making every effort to spread the presence of Christ in the form of his Body on Earth into absolutely every neighborhood, village, town, city, and region so that it will become impossible for any single person to be overlooked.

Victor Choudhrie describes it like this: "The word 'nation' in the Bible means people-group, or group in which the people share the same culture and language – of which around 6,000 today still do not have an indigenous church, and it is immediately clear that it will take more than a few churches to disciple a nation. The only way to disciple a nation is to plant many churches within that nation." Roger Greenway, a specialist in reaching cities, says in *Discipling The City*: "The Church's evangelistic task demands that every community, apartment building, and neighborhood have a church faithful to God's Word established in it."

As the traditional set-up of CAWKI, that needs to buy lands, build buildings, erect and run Bible Schools to train and pay pastors and staff to establish new centripetal, "attracting churches" will simply never be able to achieve that for financial and logistic reasons – not even to mention the theological reasons – it is clear that only the decentralized, centrifugal proliferation of house churches led by new converts raised into disciples and elders will be able to achieve that. The future "leaders" of the church are still in the harvest field, and as the church spreads through entire regions like a virus, more and more people from a region will be swept into the movement, gathered, disciplined, and scattered again to become part of the process of completely filling a region "with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" like waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14).

After Pentecost, the churches were planted into the spheres that were opened to them: houses. The Greek term used for this is *kata oikon*, meaning according to the houses, or wherever there was a house. If Jesus has sent his apostles ultimately not only to some of the houses in Jerusalem, but to *all* the people groups of this world, and if there are such apostolic jurisdictions, areas of apostolic work measured out by God as allotments as we have discussed before, this means that in order to not overlook any people group and its settling ground, the place I call "the garden," we need to make sure that in every apostolic jurisdiction or garden a process is begun that will ultimately lead to the discipling of that very "nation," house by house. The house is the micro-sphere into which the ekklesia is to be planted; the garden is the "mission field" defined by the settling grounds of a people group, the macro-sphere. Paul writes his letters to the Corinthians "to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints *throughout Achaia*" (2 Cor. 1:2), describing exactly such an apostolic jurisdiction (Achaia), such a macro-sphere.

In my world there is a map of the globe with thousands of such gardens, apostolic jurisdictions, some of them colored in red, some others in green. Green means that this garden is adopted, spoken for, claimed by apostolic and prophetic people who have the right to get the title deed back, and go about establishing the necessary values and foundations for the Kingdom work that God wants to do there. Red means a vacant garden, unspoken for, and yet unclaimed. Maybe these are physically occupied or even trampled by myriads of churches and ministries that have "adopted" such places, but none of them with the authentic right to truly claim the turf. Even if an apostolic claim were to be made, it would be fiercely contested and fought tooth and nail by other

churches that would, in their total apostolic naivete, feel jealous, competitive, or just too democratically or congregationally wired to let any one single vision proceed.

The idea of a clearing-house for the unreached people groups of the world (a precursor of a clearing house for apostolic gardens) is not very old, but has a tradition of its own. In the early 1970s, Dr. Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Missions, began helping churches and mission agencies turn their focus toward unreached peoples. In the early 1980s, mission agencies began to talk in terms of adopting people groups. In November of 1989, an allied force of 43 mission organizations and denominations met at the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, CA, to create a “clearinghouse” to help match local churches with unreached people groups for the purpose of “adoption” and church planting. The original vision was for this clearinghouse to act as a comprehensive tracking station to enable the Church to see remaining gaps in its forces as it worked to see the completion of the Great Commission. It inspired groups like the International Society for Frontier Missiology, the Global Network of Centers for World Mission, Global Mapping International, and Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse under the leadership of Frank Caleb Jansen. By 1994, “the Clearinghouse” had moved its offices to Colorado Springs. They released a 600 page document, providing at the time the most detailed and up-to-date assessment of how far the Body of Christ had come in taking the gospel to every one of the then known 12,000 people groups on earth. YWAM (Youth With A Mission) is an evangelistic organization founded in 1960 by Loren Cunningham that pursues a project they call “Project 4K,” breaking up the world into over 4.323 regions they call *Omega Zones* (4K = 4000). The world’s nations are broken down into geo-political regions of up to nine million people, whereby the smallest nations comprise only one Omega Zone, but the largest ones, like India and China, have more than 500 each. YWAM did this initially for prayer reasons, but the director of this initiative, Dustin Barrington, also sees it as providing “all of us with a framework for new mission initiatives.” Ultimately we need globally networked research bases like www.ethnologue.com, www.ethne.net, “missiopedia” (see www.momentum-mag.org) and other initiatives that together monitor the advancement of these apostolic developments, in relationship to continental and regional research centers dedicated to exactly this task.

What does a disciplined nation look like?

Beyond discipling individuals and families, Jesus gave us the task to make disciples of all people groups (“nations”). A nation cannot be baptized as a whole, but we can baptize, teach and influence as many individuals and families as possible within a people group for this to become a groundswell and finally a critical mass – even a majority. People groups like the Nagas in North-East India – formerly known as fierce head hunters - converted in the 1970s en masse to Christianity, so that at some point more than 90% of the population of Nagaland (more than 20 million people) claimed to be Christians. Although many Christians leaders in India agree about the number of converted and sacramentalized Naga Christians, a huge question remained: to what degree were the Nagas not just converted (made to accept Christianity as their new religion), but truly *discipled* (aligning their lives with the teachings of Jesus as

King). However, it is clear that if more and more people align themselves to the teaching and values that Jesus gave us, it will start to influence society and might even influence political legislation – for a short while. Many kings or Prime Ministers like Frederick Chiluba (Zimbabwe), Matthieu Kerekeu (Benin) handed over their nation-state to God, as has First Lady Mrs. Museveni (Uganda) and others. “When a majority of the citizens of a nation profess Christianity, it also means that its culture, values and laws are based on Juedo-Christian values”, writes my colleague Jun Vencer, former General secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance. But usually this is only a temporary, fleeting state, and once there is a new president, the laws change yet again. A disciplined nation therefore will not be a nation state in which “the Bible is the law” and Jesus Christ is *officially* Lord of all spheres of life and Christian principles have become binding political law, like so many dream of today. A disciplined people group (“nation”) is a defined group of people where the yeast of the Kingdom has “worked all through the dough” (Mt 13:33) and absolutely everyone has been seeing the Kingdom of God demonstrated and preached through the church in such a way as to be able to respond personally to the challenge implied and make the decision whether or not to place himself – and his house – under the rulership of Jesus Christ from now on and become a disciple. I believe that we will see the positive discipling of up to 50% or more of the population of a given people-group, the subject of the last chapter of this book.

Apostolic Gardening 101

Where do we start with such a gigantic task? If we begin to see the whole task ahead, we need to break down the work into small segments and make sure we start well and finish well. If we want to see the apostolic command of Jesus meticulously fulfilled to disciple *all* the people groups of this world, we need to identify a) who they are (through ethnography, people group profiles, anthropological, linguistic and socio-demographic studies) and 2) where, exactly, they live (the geographic dimension). Once we have this information, the process of “gardening” can be broken down into a number of phases:

1) Identifying the garden. Identifying the geographic location of an apostolic jurisdiction may require historic research, prophetic discernment and geographic as well as anthropological knowledge.

2) Identify the gardeners. *God has placed* Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. We can therefore be sure that God has selected and destined some individuals to be his gardeners at any given time in history. Those tasked by God with this mandate are typically apostolic and prophetic people who know with supernatural certainty that they have been called and assigned to a specific people group or region.

3) Form a team – of which “the gardeners” are a vital part -, a committed network of mature parents in Christ, ideally representing all of the areas of the fivefold ministry, who are ready to take up their sacred responsibility. In my language I call this “the gathering of the bones”, taken from the prophetic picture of Ezekiel 37, were the bones are those that are ready to carry weight (who are ready to serve selflessly) just like the bones in a body.

4) Clean up. Many gardens are full of historic spiritual trash: the residues of splits, divisions, genocides, persecutions, atrocities done against the people of God or even by the people of God have contaminated and “defiled the land”

(Ez. 36). Someone needs to inter-cede, literally meaning to stand in the gap, go and ask for forgiveness on behalf of these sins done in (or by) a particular region that may cry out to God from the ground like the spilled blood of Abel contaminating the ground. This includes seeking to reconcile parties at odds with each other and start living in a prophetic and new spirit, not anymore bound by past traumas, but designed by future promises.

5) Sow a kingdom vision and train people for church 2.0. Today we reap what others have sown a generation ago. People today are members of churches that someone imagined – sowed - 20 years ago. We need therefore to start sowing, by preaching, teaching, demonstrating and training both new converts and those from legacy churches for the work ahead.

6) Celebrate first fruits, water the first stalks and sprouts, guard and encourage the initial models of hope, the fruit of the new genetic code sown and planted in the region.

7) Cultivate and multiply the fruits, so that house churches develop into networks of house churches, that start reproducing new networks as well as ministries, companies etc. It will be like rearing children, celebrating their birth, watching them grow up and then encouraging them to go on and multiply themselves.

8) Export it. Develop the region into an “Antioch”, an apostolic regional church that, with the express commissioning of the elders, is sending forth their best people, chosen by the Holy Spirit, to go and reproduce the *entire* process elsewhere. This may mean to adopt the development of one or more other gardens in the world, and making available to others what has been learned in the process at home. Each area of the world has a specific spiritual DNA to contribute to the wider economy of God, and this is surely one of the most exciting things in apostolic work: to see a region or a city stand up and be counted as a mature contributor to the global mission of the King.

Paul went so far as to make it very clear that he finds it beneath any healthy apostolic etiquette to boast of work in another man’s area (2 Cor 10:16). Today, this is probably one of the most frequently violated “gardening principles”: to ignore, to disrespect or to disturb the divine building mandates that God has given some of his people for an existing garden. To violate this foundational issue that Paul takes pain to mention would be similar to plowing through someone else’s backyard without thinking or any permission, and to erect, pull down, plant, uproot, sow, harvest and do whatever one fancies without the slightest respect to the building patterns of God. It is one of the major disasters created by a fragmented Christianity that not only the right hand did not know what the left hand was doing, but each finger found itself at odds with any other finger. Churches and mission agencies that do not know or respect these patterns have caused untold harm, exporting unnecessary divisions in their home regions into other areas of the world. Thinking they were sowing good seed, they were actually sowing tares, because even the best seeds, sown at the wrong time into the wrong spot, can cause more harm than good. The uncoordinated mission endeavours of the past have led to a climate of such divisiveness amongst those that say they bring the gospel to certain areas, that the stunned onlookers and recipients of such a “gospel” have turned away in disgust, rightfully concluding that this just cannot be the gospel of the Kingdom of God, but is nothing more than the gospel of the kingdom of reli-

gious men who wish to extend their spiritual genes in a mindset of unbroken colonialism.

Preparation for a regional harvest

If we believe that, in cooperation with God's plans we will see a large harvest among the people groups and the gardens of this world through the return to apostolic building principles and prophetic navigation, we need to demonstrate our faith in this by preparing ourselves for such a time, here and now. If God again will be "adding daily those who are being saved" (Acts 2:27), it means that a lot of work is ahead of all of us: people have to be delivered of demonic patterns of life, the new believers need to be baptized, new house churches need to be planted by them, they need to be disciplined and brought to a multipliable maturity, where they, in turn, can be scattered, sent out as new harvest workers to expand the process.

Somebody has to do all the work. The few Christian people on fulltime staff inside their existing churches and what has been wrongly called para-church ministries are overly busy and frequently close to a burnout, if we take away the superficial veneer of "everything is just fine!" That's why we need two things: 1) a thought-through **recruiting strategy** for a multitude of harvest workers as well as equippers of the saints, and 2) an **apostolic meta-strategy**, geared towards the fulfillment of God's plans, that provides the necessary foundation and framework, defines the needed values, priorities and decision-making process as well as apostolic finance systems that are not designed to prevent mission by sidelining it, but by enabling it.

True, most explosive church planting movements seem, at this point, yet to happen outside the West; but the West is not as uninterested in God as we might think; most people are very interested in God, even hungry for him, but have become very disappointed with Church. Their "God yes – Church no!" stance has opened them for things that happen either outside the traditional church system, or at least at the fringes. Through some evangelistic and healing breakthroughs, for example the healing events with Charles Ndifon in Denmark in 2000, South African Evangelist Suzette Hattingh in Deggendorf and Hamburg, Germany, Malawian prophet Chris Daza in Luzern or Daniel Hari (Switzerland), reaching out very successfully to New Age and esoteric groups, we have witnessed: people are open for God – but the existing churches are not really open for people!

The same can be seen in the impact of Christian music groups that are not really church-based, but God based. The music of German Christian artist Xavier Naidoo has been greatly welcomed by people outside the church. But this should not cloud our eyes to overlook a devastating fact: new converts are only retained and successfully integrated in an alarmingly small measure into traditional churches. All empirical research speaks of a minute retention rate of 1-2 % (that is: one or two out of 100 new converts actually becomes an integrated member of a traditional church; 98-99 never make it and become a victim of CAWKI-based evangelistic concepts and phrases, often successfully vaccinated *against* the gospel for a long time). This does not really speak of an unwillingness of unchurched people to join something new, but of a historic and tragic deficiency of many Christians to become obedient disciples themselves. These non-discipled believers are simply unable to disciple others and

Centuries of non-apostolic, market- and need oriented teaching in churches has left its mark, as Churchianity, having lost its Kingdom position and having been successfully divorced from the world, has become a religious ghetto that has, at best, a sectarian flavor to it that makes healthy communication with “those outside” extremely difficult.

welcome them into the Kingdom. They have not experienced what it means to be discipled themselves, so how can they pass it on to others? Centuries of non-apostolic, market- and need-oriented teaching in churches has left its mark, as Churchianity, having lost its Kingdom position and having been successfully divorced from the world, has become a religious ghetto that has, at best, a sectarian flavor to it that makes healthy communication with “those outside” extremely difficult. The problem is not the message of Christ; the problem is the messenger and the people he likes to hang out with!

For many this leads to a sobering insight: Christians as well as non-Christians are not really prepared to meet each other. Very few Christians are truly prepared in any way for a large harvest, neither personally nor in terms of the necessary skills. And most new converts are not prepared at all for facing the intense culture shock of a pious, totally fragmented otherworldly parallel universe that calls itself church, which confuses most newcomers and rejects them before they find the chance or even the desire to join it. This is why we need to shift our priorities not to get more people come to church, but to bring the church to the people and *reinvent church together with them!*

God’s fruitful and ongoing harvest strategies always have had a number of elements that we find both in the Bible as well as in historic movements:

The supernatural dimension. “Signs and wonders” happened, like healing, exorcism of demons, raising the dead, interpreting dreams, prophetic words, etc. This is an eye-opener for many, challenges their non-Christian world-view and acts as a signboard towards a God who not only wants to intervene in our lives, but also can. Ninety percent of all conversions and church plants mentioned in the Bible, but also in today’s missionary reality, are the direct result of supernatural demonstrations of the power and love of God.

Readiness to suffer. Becoming a disciple and serving others has a precisely defined price (Luke 9:23-25; 14:33; Gal. 2:19.20): the death of our ego. Wherever followers of Christ are only making sure that their own religious needs are met, the Bible does not speak of disciples but of “*believers*.” It is a perfect start into a life following Jesus to begin as a believer, but this introduction and childish phase is violently attacked and invaded by an ever-present discount mentality. It repeatedly nudges new (and older) Christians who want to avoid any problems and who seek basically to advance their own causes toward where they can have “the most God for the lowest price” – a religious ‘budget supermarket’ mindset constantly seeking where to get God’s blessing at the biggest discount. Wherever people have learned to move the center of their focus and attention away from meeting their own needs to meeting the needs and priorities of Jesus, the Bible would speak of *disciples*, people who are ready to leave their former life behind, no matter who and what they were. These people have come to the correct conclusion that Jesus is not only their savior, but also their Lord and King. This insight – and the example of other true disciples who live the talk - makes them ready to get their hands dirty in service of others, and even embrace suffering, misunderstandings, rejection and persecution, because they understand it is absolutely not all about them, but all about spreading the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33).

Readiness to go into the harvest. Jesus asks his disciples: “Ask the lord of the harvest to expel workers into the harvest” (Luke 10:2). A harvest can only

be brought in through active harvest workers. Potential harvest workers, those who should be in the harvest but are not yet on the field, are being found “in the marketplace doing nothing” (Matt. 20), or they currently are catching fish, working for the tax authorities, prostituting themselves like Mary Magdalene, or clinging, like the rich young ruler, to their material possessions. It is exactly this seemingly safe world of earthly securities (secular work, job, financial planning), our own golden cages, into which people are literally trapped, from which they must be literally ripped away, driven out, expelled, recruited. And Jesus specifically asks his disciples to pray to God to make this very painful thing happen! A certain violent rejection of the old cage is absolutely necessary before we can truly embrace the new.

First people will need to be harvested themselves, then they need to be turned into harvest workers. Only then will barns, the places into which the harvest is being brought, churches, be multiplied. Remember the progression recorded in Acts where first the number of believers, then the number of disciples, and finally the number of churches, grew daily. The phenomenal success of the early house church movements, and also those in China and India of recent years, is due to a simple motto: **“Every Christian a church planter, every church a church planting center.”** Wherever the majority of all Christians in a given region become ready to get their hands dirty in the harvest, and don’t leave this to a few professional clerics and their staff, we will truly see how entire people groups will be discipled, just as Jesus told us to do.

Apostolic Architecture. Founded on Jesus Christ himself, God calls and anoints apostolic and prophetic people to lay foundations for a multiplying harvesting movement and develop systems and structures – architecture – that are designed to do that. Wherever evangelists, deacons, pastors, or teachers attempt to take over this specifically apostolic and prophetic task, they overwhelm themselves, ignore the principles of the word of God and replace apostolic resources with more programs, endless teaching, cheap recipes, and pressure. Apostolic architecture would never design that time of hectic breathlessness, in which people run from meeting to meeting, that so characterized the past “revival movements,” but it focuses on the long run of corporate, obedient building according to the revealed patterns of God, where each person will find the correct spot to join the work and give whatever he is designed to do best for God and his glory.

How to prepare for a regional bushfire

Jesus said he wants “to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49). An apostolic strategy would see itself in exactly this role: to start a spiritual fire that spreads and extends to the ends of the earth, region by region, house by house. Here are some practical steps towards that:

Seek out the apostolic and prophetic people in your region, connect with them and establish the valid mandate for a regional apostolic strategy with them. Without a mandate to build there will be no true apostolic architecture, but a multitude of “spiritual tents,” temporary structures and ministries that not only come and go, but block each others way.

Train as many harvest workers as possible. For this, seek out those in your region who are not merely believers anymore, but whose life demonstrates that they have become disciples, and ask them to help train multitu-

A certain violent rejection of the old cage is absolutely necessary, before we can truly embrace the new.

des of people to get their hands dirty in the harvest. Tools like “The LukeTen Course” and other short-term training concepts will be extremely helpful for that. Avoid the school approach, remembering that schools produce students, at best graduates, and at their very best, more schools. We need disciples.

Develop mobile church planting teams, groups of two to four persons who are ready to be deployed anytime, to start house churches with new converts inside a region or people group.

Establish a regional diaconal-administrative hub to ensure communication between the needs and the resources, helping to connect the emerging or established house churches with the five-fold ministry, and make sure this works in direct contact with the apostolic and prophetic people of the region, otherwise the administration *will* take on a controlling life of its own.

Set clear discipleship standards. Disciples multiply not what they say, but who they are. One of the confusing problems generated by CAWKI was that nominal Christians have been called believers, believers have been called disciples, and disciples have been called extremists and unbearable enthusiasts. An excellent tool for setting good discipleship standards is the Life Transformation Group developed by Neil Cole, where mini-groups of two people of the same sex meet for around one hour per week to confess their sins, give each other an account of what they did with the word of God and pray for friends to join Jesus – and this group. This goes on until the mini-group of two or three grows to four, at which time it immediately multiplies again into two groups of two, and repeats the process.

Inner healing and deliverance. Many if not all people who newly come to Christ bring their traumas, wounds and demonic mortgages into the church, and simply need a thorough time of repentance, restoration, inner healing and deliverance from demonic infections of their past. Cutting through the legal rights and rental contracts of demonic spirits, often enough established through personal sin, victimization by other peoples’ sin, curses, or a familiar spirit whereby ancestors’ demonic mortgages are inherited by the next generation, speeds up the discipling process phenomenally, because people are not only challenged to go forward, but also cut loose from the supernatural ties that hold them back.

As the idolatrous nature of our clinging to false securities (jobs, financial securities, material stuff) mostly has a demonic empowerment and dimension to it, the call of Jesus to pray for God to “expel” harvest workers might very well allude to the need of seeing them operated out of demonic clutches, anxious mindsets, and fear-driven paradigms. We cannot afford to ignore this exorcist dimension, that was obviously extremely relevant for Jesus, otherwise we will invite long-term problems into the church that will definitely surface later, again and again, as shaky, traumatized, and biased living stones are being built into the temple of God, endangering the entire structure.

Equip the equippers. In many cases, the five fold ministry mentioned in Eph. 4:11 cannot be drawn together and put to work immediately, but many times has to be equipped itself before it can equip others. This is the result of CAWKI and its faulty training structures that have left more than 85% of all full-time staff, clergy, and missionaries unclear about the exact nature of their own mission. This calls for a time of all those ministries coming together, being informed, inspired and imparted with the apostolic and prophetic

**Disciples multiply not
what they say, but who
they are.**

ministries and the foundation-laying nature of these ministries, and invited to join a partnership. If “The LukeTen Course” is a boot camp for future harvest workers, we would need, to remain true to the military language, an officer’s school, equipping people to equip others. There are many ways of doing that. One is to call together those skilled and willed, mature people from all the five ministries in your region who have demonstrated character and integrity and are not bound to a particular church or organization, but have committed their lives to their region and develop a multiplicative mentoring and later coaching system with them that then leads to partnership, whereby each person takes on a number of disciples. These, then, become mentors for new believers who inspire and recruit more people into the various callings and ministries.

Develop finance structures that follow apostolic principles. An example for this is the establishment of regional apostolic foundations or trusts, that can serve as a modern day equivalent to “the purse” of Jesus or later “the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:35). This is where money is gathered in a transparent way, and in direct cooperation with diaconal people full of the Holy Spirit and therefore able to withstand the seductions of Mammon. This money is carefully spent for apostolic purposes, so that the money coming in through new converts and the giving of maturing believers and disciples again serves the very core task the ekklesia was designed for in the first place. More details are in the next chapter on Apostolic Finance Principles.

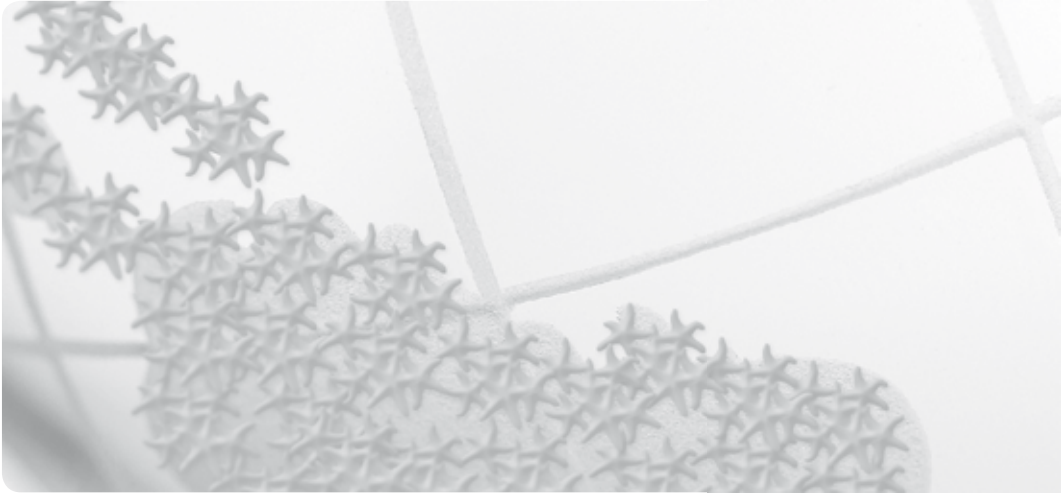
Cooperate with professionals. We need to develop a regional network of Christian doctors, psychiatrists, street workers, financial advisors, artists, teachers and educators, business people, politicians or media people linked to this apostolic process to invite the participation of professionally trained talents and gifts and help invade the world in all aspects of society with Kingdom solutions. Cooperating with those who have a professional role in the community and are already followers of Christ will lead to more acceptance and impact in society, as these professionals will not only need to be equipped beyond the limited pastoral care they received in CAWKI-times, but through apostolic and prophetic input, they can be empowered to become who God designed them to be in their respective societies and communities.

Imagine if suddenly the number of physical healings in your area grows, and it is no longer the healing evangelist himself, who already has the image of a mistrusted used-car salesman in many cultures, but Christian, and if at all possible, non-Christian doctors and psychologists who document those healings in a scientific and believable way. In the days of Jesus, a person who was healed of leprosy would show himself to the priest, and only after his verdict would he then go and be declared healed, not on the authority of the subjective experience of an unknown individual, but of a trusted institution.

If new inventions, business solutions and new approaches to schooling, health, relationships, finances, and politics are powered by the spirit of the Kingdom of God, many of life’s problems will find surprising new solutions, and this will lead to a redefinition of Life on the planet. As the ekklesia shares with the society what God has given to the church, it makes itself available to not only “save souls for the Lamb,” but to contribute to the life of the greater community in its own unique ways.

In this way, the gospel will constantly find new expressions and touch many people in places far removed from the reaches of traditional church.

Without a spiritual brushfire, the domino principle that one stone touches the next, touching the next, and so on, the billions of unreached people on this planet will never ever be reached and harvested for the Gospel of God. But as we systematically go, garden by garden, and establish apostolic architectures and movements there that are “blessable” for God by fruitfulness, multiplication and global impact, chances are surprisingly high, as we will still see, that in an amazingly short time period, we all will reach that apostolic destiny God has made us for, and will finish well.



22 Apostolic Finance Principles

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 Apostolic Finance Principles

Our financial behavior, like nothing else, shows our true values, colors and priorities. And if the church has, over the last 1900 years, mainly been directed and shaped by the *gathering* ministries of pastoral, teaching, or evangelistic nature, we would expect this to be evident in the budget. If one thing is for sure, then it is this: we humans do put our money where our heart is. If we are moving back to our own roots as apostolic Christians, this move will be less than half-hearted if we do not allow this migration to seriously affect our thinking and actions concerning finances. Jesus speaks more about money than about heaven and hell together, as if to say that the area of financial behavior is absolutely crucial for our role in the Kingdom. The Kingdom finance principles that he taught and lived are revolutionizing to anyone who truly sees, hears, and understands them, much more revolutionary than Communism or Socialism – economic concepts that have grasped the passions and imaginations of many millions who are thirsty for justice and want this planet to change for good.

No wonder that it was always when Jesus touched the financial aspects that people reacted with astonishment (Matt. 7:28; 19:25), or with outright unbelief. The “rich young ruler” who was clinging on to his material possessions went away not only sad, but Jesus clearly described him to be one of those camels that won’t pass through the eye of a needle and enter the Kingdom. In other words, if he remains that way, *he will go to hell*, because he values his possessions more than Jesus. This is why those “who heard this said: then who can be saved?” (Luke 18:18-30). In order to answer this exact question, right after the story of the materialistic young ruler, in Luke 19:8-10 we read about Zaccheus, who immediately saw the financial consequences of a return to God and said: “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” And Jesus said to him, “Today *salvation* has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

According to Jesus, financial behavior is a powerful symptom of being saved or lost.

Salvation is a very strong word as a comment on the economic change in the behavior of a materially minded crook and fraud, but we have no reason to doubt that Jesus, the savior in person, meant exactly what he said. To answer those who had asked just a little bit earlier about the chances for the salvation of rich people, he tells them: people like Zaccheus will be saved and enter the Kingdom; folks like the materialistic ruler will remain lost. According to Jesus, financial behavior is a powerful symptom of being saved or lost. And if we would sit down together to map out the basic rules and factual principles of your and my financial behavior, our beliefs, attitudes toward work, and our earning or giving – how *saved* would we be?

WWJG

No one in his right mind would start a Kingdom without a financial system, without basic financial rules and the absence of an administrative function according to Kingdom law. We have seen earlier that all human Kingdoms and empires that failed to develop a sound economic system with appropri-

ate financial instruments were doomed, like the Spanish empire of old that failed to develop a working banking system, much different from the British Empire with its banking capital in the City of London. Jesus the Messiah, the establisher of a new and much more tangible phase of the Kingdom of God on earth, demonstrated an entirely new financial system through his life and teaching, complete with a concept of banking, good and bad investment principles and economic laws and rules for Kingdom existence. He demonstrated, among other principles, that "God has paid work for all!" which is extremely good news for all those who are unemployed. He demonstrated that God pays for what he orders, and has even a pension plan, and that those who work for him will never truly lack anything vital and will look forward to the safest financial set-up and foundation that exists on the planet, and even beyond that. Specifically evident after his departure from secular work as a building contractor, Jesus' central task was to "serve people" towards their salvation (Mark 10:45), which he understood not only to be teaching them, but healing and delivering them from demons as well and showing them a saved way of financial existence. Those who were served by him shared with him out of their financial riches (Luke 8:3), and that money ended up, at least partly, in "the purse" (John 12:6). This purse served as a kind of joint account, and the money was obviously used for the living expenses of Jesus and his convoy, but also for "giving to the poor".

What are some of the financial principles that Jesus brought?

Jesus lived four economically distinct life phases as a child, a young man, a (spiritual) father and, after his departure to heaven, as a grandfather. As a boy, Jesus was financially dependent on both his human parents, Mary and Joseph, as well as his father in heaven, who sent gifts to his son, for example through the wise men from the East. Then, as a young man of about 12 years of age, Jesus went into business. After finishing his 18 years as a building contractor, financed by the business, he left phase number 2 and entered phase number 3: he started to live a very different financial life, lived in community (which is more economical), served people (Mk 10:45) with the gifts he received, and was in turn financed by those who gave to him who out of their wealth (as in Luke 8:3); their gifts were duly gathered in "the purse" (John 12:6), a corporate account run by Judas, and was used for the sustenance of his train as well as for the poor (Mk 14:5). He preached what he lived: that God has paid work for all who are ready to leave the marketplace to serve "the owner of the vineyard", God (Mt 20). If we are truly to be followers and imitators of Christ, then we are also invited to follow his life in economic terms. In that case this messianic principle can be summarized as: **"God has paid work for all!"**

Jesus demonstrated that, through prophetic advice, businesses can flourish, as in the case of Peter and the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5), which represents a dramatic business breakthrough. But he also showed that getting involved in the Empire of God is far more important than business or money (**"don't die a businessman"**, another important messianic principle). Cleaving requires leaving: getting involved in the Kingdom and the harvest of the King requires leaving behind everything else (Luke 5:11; Lk 14:26-33), nets, businesses, relationships, houses and fields. For many this may come as a shocking insight, but every single disciple of Jesus that is mentioned in the

Cleaving requires leaving: getting involved in the Kingdom and the harvest of the King requires leaving behind everything else, nets, businesses, relationships, houses and fields.

Gospels needed to *leave* a secular job or a business existence behind, a very radical step that was necessary in order to be “cast out into the harvest” (Luke 10:2). The principle is: missionaries of the Kingdom are recruited *away* from the market, and not sent into the market. In this third phase of his life, Jesus called out disciples, for whom he was clearly a father figure (John 17). After his ascension he left them behind on earth to, in turn, become the fathers of the next generation of disciples, while Jesus himself relinquished the steering wheel and went on into a sort of grandfather role in heaven. After modeling tangible fatherhood, he retired from this job and, entering the fourth and last phase, he left it for his spiritual sons to take over fathering the emerging church, while he, financially speaking, was surrounded by more wealth than we could possibly comprehend.

Looking into the financial system of the early church, we can see how his disciples understood the revolutionary economic message and life of Jesus – and put it into practice. They did not romanticize the revolutionary economic teachings of Jesus or claim that he only meant all this in a figurative sense; they seriously put them into practice. It does not do justice to the finance principles that Jesus lived and preached to simply declare that they are nothing but a romantic fiction of a bygone era which we can safely ignore simply because our cultural times have changed. Some dismiss the idea that the corporate way the early church in Jerusalem handled money was in any way prescriptive because, so the argument goes, it was only temporary, and therefore cannot and should not serve as a prescription for the church later on. However, the early church, in the time just after Pentecost, lived in the closest possible proximity to Jesus’ physical time on earth, in a phase that historically came immediately after the ascension of Christ. This was a time, as the book of Acts records, when God frequently intervened in strategic ways into the unfolding of the history of the Kingdom, and it seems a legitimate point that God would have clearly stepped into the picture through prophetic words, visitations, or the outcome of apostolic councils, should the church have behaved clearly off the wall in the area of finances.

The fact that he did not correct the financial policy of the early church, and even clearly endorsed some of the stronger actions that touched the issue of finances, as in the supernatural death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), brings me to the conclusion that the ways in which the issues of finances were implemented in the early church in Jerusalem are not at all a brief, somewhat idealistic and unique episode of an immature Church that did not yet know what they were doing. Rather, it was a valid and truthful expression of messianic finance principles, clearly endorsed by God. I see the financial behavior of the early Christians as an uninterrupted continuation of principles that Jesus lived by while he walked the earth. As the Church is the Body of Christ, it is safe to say that Christ continued to act out the very same principles through those who had given their lives to continue his mission. So, what were those principles that those in the formative days of the church implemented? And once we have looked at how Jesus established financial principles through his life and teaching, the question then is: WWJG – *What Would Jesus Give?*

Let us look at three central questions:

1. Who gave (where did money come from)?

2. To whom was money entrusted (who receives it and decides about its further use)?
3. For what was the money spent (the budget question)?

1) The sources of income of the Early Christians

There are three main supply-lines for the people of God that the Bible tells us about:

a) Supernatural support. The Old Testament knows of many supernatural events of God stepping into history with miraculous events like multiplying oil for a widow, Elisha being strengthened by ravens, or water and bread given to him by an angel, water from the rock that Moses hit, or the quails and Manna that fell from heaven during Israel's 40 years in the desert. Similarly, the New Testament speaks of miraculous multiplications of bread and fish, amazing amounts of fish caught by following prophecy, and even the famous fish that Peter caught which had tax money in its mouth.

b) Now the King owns us, he also owns our money. All new converts that had houses and fields (Acts 4:34-35; note the plural), describing people who had surplus, more things than they needed, transferred ownership first of themselves, and secondly of their material possessions to their new Lord and King, represented by the governmental structure of the ekklesia, those that Jesus had installed as responsible for that in the Church. "Not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own." The relinquishing of possessions by new converts into the financial pool of the church **was by far the largest single income factor of the early Christians.** Although "not many rich" and wealthy came to Christ, it was, like everything in the Kingdom, a voluntary practice but a normal experience for those new slaves of Jesus Christ to bring their material possessions under the rule of their new master. Selling houses and fields and bringing the proceeds into a central financial pool would mean today at least six-digit figures in Euros, Dollars, Pounds or Francs. It is easily imaginable that this influx of money at the time of conversion covered up to 95% of the financial income of the church. As new converts found a new security, identity, destiny and a new family to belong to - and who would be there for them in times of need - and as they learned about the promise of a God who "has paid work for us" and a retirement plan in heaven, they found it easy and self-explanatory to part with their own capital resources they had stored up for their future, as they came to understand that their future was now in God's hands, not theirs anymore.

What happens if financially well equipped converts or believers who remain or become rich do not yield their surplus to such a financial pool **outside their control**? Easily 95% of all material resources that God originally intended to be available for the financial cash flow of the church will be cut off and the entire system comes to a painful standstill. Whether "rich Christians" do this because they lack knowledge or Kingdom understanding or out of sinful unwillingness to recognize a common apostolic purse, the effect is still the same. Lacking the financial lion's-share by ignoring the normative entry payment of any surplus at the time of conversion for all Christians, the church is forced to completely fall back on the remaining 5% and stretch it to cover 100% of all activity.

c) Sharing, gifts and donations of believers. After people had become believers it was normal for them to share a communal lifestyle, cutting down

immensely on the costly luxury of an individualistic lifestyle that had to finance its own independence rather than enjoy the security of interdependence. Believers who kept on working in their respective secular jobs for a while put together gifts and offerings as much as they could (1 Cor. 16:2). This money, especially when it represented larger amounts after having been accumulated for a while, was then again forwarded to the apostles who made sure it reached its destiny. Not even the Old Testament knows of a system of giving *one singular tithe*, meaning a mere 10% of one's income towards a religious system, let alone the New Testament. The issue in Christianity is not "how much do I need to give in order to make God and the church happy?" but "what can I afford to keep for myself, once I have been completely bought by the blood of Jesus on the slave market of sin?" For far too long, cheap financial tributes ("church tax") and legalistic giving concepts in the churches have corrupted God's liberating financial and career plans for all of us and weighed many Christians down with guilt and shame, without opening up a path to true financial freedom for themselves as well as for the churches they grew up in.

2) Who initially receives these funds – and then decides about its future use?

The New Testament is absolutely clear about this: the apostles, and no one else. It was "the feet of the apostles"- not those of pastors or evangelists – that was the very place where the money was laid (Acts 4:35). This financial privilege of being the first stop of the cash flow into the Kingdom came (and comes) with huge and heavy responsibilities. One of them was this: the apostolic ministry had the obligation to financially carry those who, on their own, could not yet carry themselves financially in the Kingdom. As selfish apostles don't exist as a biblical role model, apostolic persons would, by the very nature of their entire DNA, values, priorities and mission, use the money given to them to further the apostolic purposes of God, including the maturing of those around them, a group of future, soon-to-be apostles, or, in my language, apostolic apprentices. Jesus financed his disciples, using his own income to sponsor not only himself, but also those around him, his apprentices.

Technically speaking, this was a temporary vicarious financial function, where Jesus took over financial responsibility for those who later would do the same thing for their own apprentices. Jesus never employed people, so he was not a boss paying salaries to his staff, but he clearly provided financially to those around him. If this is a model for us to follow today, because this is how our master has done it and asked us to do likewise, then the apostolic ministry will have to make a temporary financial provision for those who seem to be called into full-time ministry themselves, specifically during the time when they cannot yet stand on their own feet financially.

But back to the expression "the apostles' feet." Apostles, plural, speak of a redeemed plurality (not a stand-alone Christian guru or star), and feet indicates a clear public and transparent dimension of giving, where people did not give in secret and stuff money into the pockets of individuals, which would give room for all sorts of abuse and speculations. Those who decided about the general and most foundational direction of the church were also those who decided about the money. Otherwise, strategic planning and financial budgeting would separate sooner or later. The apostles worked together for this purpose with "deacons" (Acts 6:1-7), whose responsibility it was, among other

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things, to assess and separate true from projected or artificial needs, so that “everyone was given according to his need” (Acts 2:45). The early church had a “purse,” a common financial pool that in all probability worked for a defined apostolic jurisdiction, a regional church. In this sense it was what we would today call an “apostolic foundation,” a financial trust in the sense of a transparent financial joint account for funds dedicated to the Kingdom, a financial instrument that was run by apostles and deacons in clear view of the entire church. In this way everyone knew what came in, to whom to give, and what was happening with the money. This would be far away from the sectarian secrecy, the pseudo-monarchic hereditary systems where the physical sons of a spiritual president/founder/director, the “king” of a Christian ministry or church, would assume the right, with surprising ignorance and stubborn transgression of Kingdom laws, to place the “affairs of God” in the hands of his own siblings, and a totally different financial system from any of the “creative” or hush-hush accounting that we have seen in the church and mission agencies of the past.

3. What was the money spent on?

The New Testament has a clear outline for the budgeting of funds:

a) Family first: diaconia towards our own poor. Caring first for the disadvantaged that are now part of God’s family, especially orphans and widows, is not only a natural response of any healthy parent, but also a biblical requirement to “do good to everyone, *foremost* to those in the family of believers” (Gal 6:10; see also John 13:2 and Gal 2:10)

b) Spiritual mothers and fathers. Those who had become mature trainers, coaches and equippers of others had developed into spiritual parents, “workers worth their pay” (Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9, etc.). People who fully invest themselves in others (Eph. 4:11-13), those who are the workers in the harvest, are worth their pay (Matt. 20) and were supported out of the general apostolic pool in similar ways that those who followed Jesus “and had left everything” were supported out of “the purse.” These equippers had a parental function in the Body of Christ. Just as a healthy extended family would never let down their Grandmas and Grandpas financially, the church as a whole needed to care financially for those who cared for them. This did not mean they received regular annual or monthly salaries, an idea completely alien to the New Testament, as it creates dependency and false security, laziness and “artificial” ministries not directly linked to what was happening in the church. Rather, the giving consisted of material resources and monies were given according to the need, that is in a dynamic link system that was tailored to the needs of everyone who could no longer work in a secular business (which then meant mostly working on a farm).

c) The outside poor. Diaconia to those outside the church was third on the priority list of giving: After taking care of one’s own weak and disadvantaged as well as the vital financial empowerment of those that existed for the equipping of the saints, the word was: “Do good to everyone” (Gal 6:10). Giving to the poor who were outside the church was not compulsory, but *voluntary* (Mark 14:7: “...and *if you want*, you can help them anytime”), a very wise emphasis for giving-priorities by Jesus. Otherwise the never ending need of the poverty of this world would completely sap the entire budget of the

church in no time, if it were not for the partnership of apostles and deacons working together to make sure the budgeting is and remains God-driven, not need-driven. If the spending of church money were directed by pastors or anyone with a compassionate heart, but without any apostolic or prophetic understanding, the money of the church would quickly evaporate, dictated by the screaming need of the horrendous injustice and poverty that stares into our face at every corner, and budget items 1 and 2, ensuring the longevity and long-term strategies of the church, would have to be sacrificed in the name of the pressing, immediate need.

d. Apostolic projects. Paul arranged a financial collection for the aging grandmother-church of Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3), and the church in Philippi raised a substantial and liberating sum for the needy apostle Paul who, lacking support from a church that should support him, had no other choice than to “make tents” for a limited time (Acts 18:1-5; Phil 4:15). It seems that issues like mobility - to keep mobilizers mobile and on the run – and their daily support were legitimate and key financial reasons to keep ministries afloat that, in turn, existed to keep the church afloat. Once these mobilizers lost their financial support from the church, they literally drowned in tent-making and had to use their own hands to support themselves, severely limiting if not eliminating their existing contribution to the church that was dependent on them for their very future and expansion.

A Financial Reformation

As God is in the process of launching the most far-reaching reformation of ekklesia since the times of Luther and Calvin, the consequences for the economy as well as for the unity of the Body of Christ are monumental. Our congruency with the revolutionary principles that Jesus the Messiah has established in the area of money and work, governing our practical personal and corporate financial behavior, is not only a highly informative spiritual thermometer, but crucial to our accurate Kingdom existence. Historically, original biblical patterns of ekklesia gave room or have even given way to the more human traditions of men in historic churches, denominations, and ministries. However, today we witness a comeback of a truly apostolic and healthy ekklesia pioneered by mainly non-Western movements, birthed not in methodical triumph but in longsuffering and the intense trauma of persecution and its baptisms of fire. As we move back to the Messianic principles regarding money and work, we find ourselves on the threshold of a financial reformation of global proportions. The overlap of ekklesia *and* business, ekklesia *and* politics, ekklesia *and* media, education *and* ethics within the framework of God’s Kingdom will be the place where this financial reformation will show. In other words: the practical solutions to man’s problems invented from a Kingdom perspective will be the arena where the Kingdom rubber hits the World’s road. Jesus teaches, as in the Matthew 13 story of the parable of the sower, that only in direct physical contact with the world can there be an invasion of Kingdom principles and a valid reshaping and upgrading of life on the planet. So, once an expansive, apostolic Christianity is no longer molded by the world, but again by its divine Emperor, it regains the potential to reshape the world and see a never-ending increase of “the government of God” (Isa. 9). This will affect the entire Matrix of Life, up until a final climax between the global players for

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God's ultimate world cup: the system of Babylon, and the "Apostles, Prophets, and Saints" (Rev. 18:20). Where Christianity refuses to be market-shaped but becomes mission-shaped, and the Mammon-driven principles of maximization of gain and competition are no longer allowed to remain the engine for the religious success of a fragmented Christianity, we will see the emergence of a truly Jesus-shaped counter culture, built on apostolic and prophetic foundations and biblical patterns of Ekklesia.

History knows examples of some of this, as in the amazing story of Hans Nielsen Hauge of Norway (1771-1824), who, against all contemporary odds, called for a regaining of simple, authentic NT home-based Christianity and ethical business planting, and laid the foundation of modern Norway, the country with arguably the highest standard of living in the world today. Former Norwegian parliamentarian Sigbjørn Ravnasen, in an attempt to influence ethical trade and economy, has established a "Hauge Institute" (see www.haugeinstitute.org). In a similar vein of influencing politics with Kingdom principles William Wilberforce of England (1759 – 1833) and the "Clapham Sect" of South London drew together leaders from Politics, Church and Business to pray and redefine society, especially in regards to the abolishment of slavery – with success.

Centralized money for a decentralized mission

Even if it runs deeply counter-intuitive to many people who have grown up in Western, individualistic cultures, and even if it offends the rebellious mind of any who cling to the supposed absence of any governance in the church as if it were an idol, the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, clearly knows **financial centralism**. Each time, when in the Old Testament, a special project was to be achieved, you will find a centralized financial collection (1. Chr. 29: Solomons temple; 2. Ki 12:10: King Joash repairs the temple; Neh 10:33-40: Nehemiah's reformation; Neh 13:4; Gen 41:49: the storehouse of Joseph; Ex 25:1-9: financing of the Tabernacle etc). The Old Testament is abundantly clear that all major projects of God were funded in a centralized way. Consistent with this principle of a "central banking system", we should therefore not be surprised, but even expect that the empire that Jesus Christ brought into this world - and an empire is no decentralized democracy or even an anarchy - also knows central financial instruments, as is seen, for example, in the partnership of apostles and deacons and their role in the financial infrastructure of the Kingdom. The biblical principle here is: centralized money for a decentralized mission.

One of the NT examples of this is what I call the forgotten mission of Paul. Rather than three missionary journeys most commentaries describe, he actually undertook four. Prophets from Jerusalem had come to Antioch and prophesied a famine (which happened in AD 44 under Claudius). In response to this, the disciples collected as much money as they were able to, and – after it was **centrally gathered** - sent it through their most trusted emissaries, Barnabas and Saul, to the elders in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). After having correctly delivered the money, Acts 12:25 reads: "When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission (Greek: when they finished their **diaconia**), they returned from Jerusalem..." The first mission of Paul was a mission of financial nature. We dare not sever the connection between mission and money. It seems a clear

It seems a clear biblical principle that God, before giving anyone a significant responsibility for people, first tests their loyalty and reliability with material things, including money.

biblical principle that God, before giving anyone a significant responsibility for people, first tests their loyalty and reliability with material things, including money. Jesus preaches the same in the parable of the ten talents (Lk 19). Whoever demonstrated that he used the talents according to the directions of the King was set over entire cities afterwards. At the very beginning of the entire Christian mission enterprise stood a test, examining what stuff Paul and Barnabas were made of. The very last mission that Paul undertook was, again, a financial mission. German missiologist Eckhard Schnabel writes about this: "Paul organized a financial collection in the churches of Macedonia and Achaia for the church in Jerusalem. It was during this mission that Paul put his very life on the line and was later arrested in Jerusalem."

Jesus underlines the striking relationship between responsibility for material wealth and the role someone truly plays in the Kingdom like this: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Lk 16:10,11). Could it be that God is withholding "true riches" – the souls of real people, a flood of new converts, – from many because they have demonstrated extremely poor stewardship for the material resources he has entrusted them so far? If yes, then here would be an enormous promise for all of us: if we were to align ourselves obediently with the financial Kingdom standards again, and abandon, in the power of the Holy Spirit, any man-made, liberalized, self-seeking, uncrucified or even plain demonic financial principles that have crept into the church and set themselves up as the new standard, God would no longer need to withhold the "true riches" he wishes to inundate us with.

Christian trusts and foundations

A foundation or trust is a significant amount of money dedicated for a specific purpose, and set up as an organization to safeguard its founding principles according to national laws. Ideally, in every apostolic garden of this world we will need to establish a joint account, a common purse, a foundation representing "the apostles feet," a financial instrument to serve the apostolic purposes of an advancing church. Many of the more than one million foundations that exist today express specific tasks that its founder wrote into its constitution, and are mostly continued after the death of the founder as a legacy. There are many Christian foundations and trusts of all kinds, and I reckon the number of specifically *Evangelical* foundations in the world to have crossed 100,000.

Many foundations are inundated with a flurry of proposals, projects and more or less desperate cries for financial help at the rate of up to 1,000 letters per day. To filter and process all these requests, most larger foundations have set up a system of application, sifting and short-listing, whereas in smaller foundations spontaneity and often enough the daily mood of the president serve as the deciding factor about who gets money for what. This has produced and encouraged many artificial ministries that have become experts in speaking the language of the foundations and conforming to their usually very business-like value and filter system. Some of my Indian friends call this "laptop ministry," describing people who are doing not much more than writing fancy proposals to foundations on a laptop and executing the projects once the grant comes through to satisfy the donors.

According to Kingdom principles, apostles, in cooperation with deacons, need to be in charge of the funds. Jesus never needed to go ask Judas whether he approved of a specific project that Jesus had. Technically speaking, foundations and trusts are a wonderful contemporary instrument to advance the Kingdom and the apostolic purposes of the ekklesia. Statistically, by far most of the Evangelical foundations have a charitable or educational thrust, followed by a few thousand that have evangelistic purposes. Those foundations that are at all interested in missionary and cross-cultural work, may number a few hundred worldwide, at best. Foundations or trusts with a strategic, let alone apostolic focus who would be a New Testament equivalent to “the place before the apostles feet” are, at this point in history, next to non-existent to the best of my knowledge. Bluntly speaking, the very opposite of what we read in Acts 4 is usually happening today: instead of the truly large sums of money that were placed before the apostles feet, I watch many mission directors and apostles kneeling in the sand at the feet of Evangelical foundations and “big donors”, asking for support for their projects. And the more they try to explain what they are about, the less they are understood by a largely non-apostolic constituency that runs the current foundations. Most apostolic people that I know have either never started or long given up asking such foundations for money, because they not only refuse to conform to the non-apostolic giving principles and filtering patterns that are built into most of them, but also abhor the sweet talk, the never-ending writing of proposals and the outright control and attached strings that more often than not are part of the deal. They know well that money, as I have written before, has been a false apostolic tool for far too long, substituting the apostolic with financial control. Most trusts today are set up either as a family foundation or as a continued financial legacy of a (usually non-apostolic) founder. However, I believe that ultimately a number of existing foundations that are good observers and healthy stewards of the funds entrusted to them will be able to embrace this current reformation, and will therefore either transfer their wealth more and more to apostolic projects, invite apostolic people to take over their foundations, or transfer their capital, or at least the bulk of it, into apostolic foundations. Many foundations have received prophetic words about this already, but it will require huge steps of obedience and a complete change in structure to give up all the financial power and influence like that. Accepting Kingdom principles for economic behavior will be like a financial conversion for many, rich or poor and everything in between. Realistically, only a few existing foundations will probably change; but those who learn quickly and do adapt to this new day will see revolutionary new fruits that by far surpass all experiences of financial investment in the past. However, the order of the day will be the establishment of new apostolic foundations and trusts that are geared, from the very beginning, to solely steward apostolic developments. Jesus tells us that new wine blends into new wineskins. This is true for the stewardship of wealth as well.

As it is easy to play God with money, it requires not only great discipline to resist the temptation of playing the role of a financial God in a sea of need, but simply death to our own ambitions. I said that “only dead apostles are good apostles”, and this is true especially for those who have been charged by God with the distribution of significant funds. If anyone needs to be “dead to sin and alive in Christ”, it is specifically those that carry great responsibility either for people, or in the financial realm. Several prophets have spoken of a time when

a similar holy fear will come to the church, like the “great fear” that fell on the church after the death of Ananias and Sapphira who wanted to both look good in the eyes of the church through a large financial gift, but ultimately tried to double-cross the apostles (Acts 5:1-11). Judas, the apostle, carried the purse, which was probably a gracious move by Jesus to see if Judas could resist the temptation and overcome it. But as we know he was ultimately corrupted by money: he betrayed Jesus for that ridiculously small sum which was due for a slave accidentally gored to death by an ox (Ex 21:32) and died an untimely death. Let us hope that we all can move back to accurate Kingdom finance principles without God having to resort to measures that would result in such casualties.

To accept the fact that all our dealings with money are to be governed by Kingdom principles is an extremely difficult challenge for folks raised in democratic, materialistic societies. The mere existence of financial rules in the Kingdom deeply offends their democratic mindset and the “customer is always right” mantra that has been drilled into them almost from birth. Many firmly believe with every ounce of determination they can muster that they – absolutely! – have a God-given right to decide what to do with their money on their own, simply because they have earned or inherited it. The bankers of this world might nod, but this is not how the Kingdom works. In the Kingdom it is the King who decides about our money, not us – unless we, of course, reject the King, let Mammon rule and allow ourselves to be enslaved to our own opinion. New believers may need some time to grow into understanding this radically different standard in the Kingdom, as compared to the world where they have come from, and do so according to their own “free will” learning to yield freely to their new King.

Money with a mission

Imagine a time when “the sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous” (Prov 13:22), “those that increase wealth by exorbitant interest amass it for the one who is kind to the poor” (Prov 28:8), “the sinner gathers and stores up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God” (Eccl 2:26), and “those who heap up silver like dust: the righteous will divide the silver” (Job 27:13-16). Would we be ready to handle this? According to these biblical prophecies and given the nature of the current Kingdomization-development, I anticipate a large shift in regards to who decides about the use of the King’s money on earth in the immediate future. If apostles are again repositioned by God to their true function, and the body of Christ becomes increasingly realigned with their own architects, finances will again flow directly towards the apostolic purposes of God. Add to this the wealth created through inspired business inventions, some existing foundations that are able to change into a Kingdom order, and a general return to Messianic finance principles, especially in the fresh house-church planting movements around the world, and we will experience an entirely different and explosive financial reality. This will create a financial shift of seismic proportions – and these finances must, from its very inception, be money with a mission, Kingdom money and therefore apostolic money, and not spent for the same old self-serving church- and project driven purposes that we are so used to.

If Dr. David Barrett is correct, CAWKI spends currently a total of US\$270 billion per year on ecclesial running costs of all sorts, not counting in the \$16 bil-

lion per year that are siphoned away through ecclesiastical crime (the embezzling of funds at the hands of clergy and clerks). The US\$ 286 billion per year that traditional Christianity spends on its countless programmes, mountains of paper, training, permanent evangelistic events, church buildings and maintenance costs, salaries of church employees and budgets for welfare and mission adds up to US\$ 2,860 billion over a decade. What, in comparison, does it cost to start house churches? Churches with no building or parking lot, no paid pastor or youth leader, no overhead projector or 24-channel sound system? Sitting down to calculate the total costs for all the travel required, seminars, training, research projects, equipping of the few key people and multipliers, plus emergency welfare assistance, we might arrive at no more than US\$ 30 million per year, or around US\$ 300 million over the past decade. US\$ 300 million is around one ten-thousandth of the sum total of US\$ 2,860 billion that traditional Christianity spends on itself per decade. What would happen if Christians changed their giving habits over the next ten years, so that instead of the current 0.01%, 10% of Christian finances were invested in strategic multiplicative church planting movements? Imagine that in an act of justice or revisiting the principle that Ananias and Sapphira experienced, the money that routinely is *stolen* from the church by the hands of clergy and clerks would be available every year for apostolic purposes? It would change the world. At the time of writing this book, almost every apostolic person or development that I know on the planet is by default the most underfunded, strung-out and financially sidelined person you could imagine. Imagine only the *most minute* move towards apostolic financial patterns, and we will experience a revolutionary change in the way that funds are appropriated for apostolic and prophetic purposes. It would lead to a missionary explosion of incredible proportions and would free up the most creative force on the planet. The historic finishing of the apostolic task given to us by Jesus to make disciples of all the people groups of this world would suddenly be within reach, the often unheard, desperate cries of the harvest workers (James 5:4) and their mentors would quiet down and divine order in the church would be reconstituted. Preventing such an apostolic explosion can only be in the best interest of one being: Lucifer. We should not doubt for a moment, therefore, that Satan and the entire demonic world will do whatever they can to influence and control the giving patterns of Christians to remain as harmless as possible. If Satan can confuse the way Christians deal with money and have them obsessed with religious self-satisfaction, unapostolic principles, twisted Old-Testament temple taxes, neo-legalistic giving patterns, existential fear, an uncrucified security-driven mindset or simply pride, he wins. But this plan of Satan has a serious flaw: you and me. People who are realizing, together with an increasing number of followers of Christ around the world, that the financial procedures in the church are entirely out of bounds and need to be restored back to Kingdom order, whatever the cost. How could such shift occur? How do we get back to a truly "Christian", messianic way of dealing with money and work?

Crucified giving

In order for any of this to happen, I believe that all of us need a 'financial conversion' that would lead us to what I call 'crucified giving'. The cross is not logical for our human mind; uncrucified giving is. And an uncrucified mind demands

But this plan of Satan has a serious flaw: you and me.

The cross is not logical for our human mind; uncrucified giving is.

hard facts, sound reasons to expect a proper ROI (return on investment). Uncrucified giving calls for a business plan and visible, rapid results. The cross is seeing what is hidden; uncrucified giving finances whoever screams loudest. "Success" in the spirit often looks like failure in the flesh. The cross teaches us that we are strong when we are weak; uncrucified giving therefore finances the strong, whatever looks successful. Crucified giving recognises that desert experiences are often the most important times for God's plans. Crucified giving is glad when a grain of wheat falls in the ground and dies because it knows God's promises; uncrucified giving ignores a few pitiful harvesters, it rather likes a depot full of top of the line combine harvesters. Crucified giving recognises that Jesus knows better than we what money can be spent for, and submits to his principles. Uncrucified individuals bask in their assumed individual right to give what they like, when they like, to whom they like, if they like; crucified giving has understood that giving is a corporate task of obedience and even worship to God. Crucified giving starts wherever there is a truly renewed mind (Rom 12:1-2), and is visible in financial actions that seem utterly uncomprehensible and even foolish to the wisdom of the world. Let's look at a few biblical examples through a different perspective; would you have ever given money to projects like

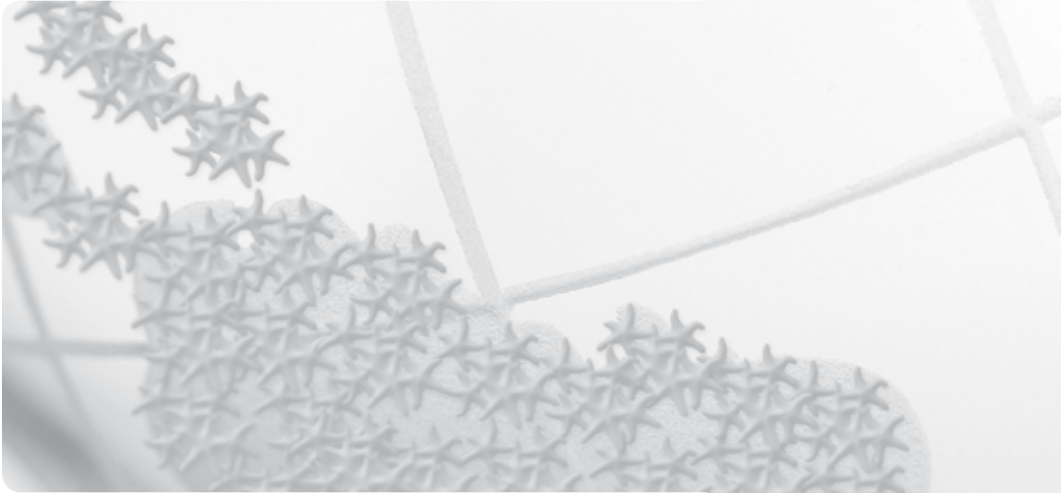
- a group of obviously demented people who built, for a full 120 years, a ship on dry ground for a "coming catastrophe"? And yet, Noah's Ark became the central salvation strategy of God for a new start for humanity.
- a shepherd boy and wanna-be king who broke with the establishment and claimed a prophetic anointing, then hides with 400 distressed, indebted and discontented folks in a cave? And yet, this band of rogues became the foundation for the government of King David.
- a self-appointed dream-interpreter who, an out-cast of a respectable family, now languishes in an Egyptian prison? And yet, Joseph became the messianic figure for an entire era.
- a hot-tempered murderer, on the run from the police and hiding abroad for a full 40 years tending sheep in some forgotten desert place, talking of a calling to deliver Israel out of Egypt? And yet, Moses became a living legend, the model of a deliverer.
- a disputed small family asking for support for a few years of holidays in Egypt, because, as they say, their child has been declared by "oriental seers" to be the savior of the world? And yet, Mary and Joseph became the original "house church" from which Jesus was launched into this world.
- an obviously politically shipwrecked figure with such outrageously exclusive claims to some vague "kingdom" that even many of his own disciples left him, and who, instead of finally stepping up to the throne in Jerusalem, ended like a loser, crucified to a Roman cross? And yet, Jesus was exactly who he claimed he was.
- an unimpressive ex-Rabbi, who, after failing miserably in his theological career and being the object of the mockery of the entire city, ended up making tents for 11 full years in Tarsus, driveling about an "apostolic calling" from God? And yet, Paul laid the very foundations for the expansion of the gospel for the entire Western world.

What are some of the obvious tasks ahead?

- **The new Church needs a new financial concept.** As a new Christianity clearly arises, we cannot afford to power the new Christianity with the old financial engine. It would create a generic system conflict, and wreak havoc to both. Therefore, we need to establish financial principles that are missional in essence and follow the prophetic development of ekklesia, again becoming what it has been before: a private and public governmental invention of God, firmly placed into the expansive environment of the Empire of God, re-emerging around “Tables and Stadiums,” in flat, viral house-church networks and regional celebrations, empowered by the 5-fold ministry and, far beyond Church Growth and Mega-churches, reproducing exponentially.
- **This requires a preparation for tectonic, economic shifts.** As we regain an understanding of Messianic Finance Principles, this will reshape our handling of work, and the way, amounts, and directions of money given to the Kingdom. This will have to include our preparing the necessary “mammon-proof character” development for the impending wealth transfer that God is planning, as, globally, “the sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous” (Prov. 13:22). Many have prophesied an end time wealth transfer similar to the events of “Joseph buying all of Egypt,” but little has been done yet in personal and corporate preparation for this.
- **Apostolic foundations.** It is a clear and urgent task that, in each “garden” of the world, apostolic trusts or foundations need to be set up as soon as possible in order to re-install the financial instruments that follow messianic finance principles outlined in the New Testament for the central gathering, accounting, and apostolic re-distribution of funds. Without this, the essential apostolic and prophetic people desperately needed for the re-establishment of a regional ekklesia will continue to be amazingly under-funded, sidelined, and absorbed in any number of temporary tent-making situations, floundering on the ground like a fish out of water gasping for oxygen. As they are financially empowered, they will be able to take up their vital role again and make their presence felt – for the benefit of all.

One of the tasks ahead here is the re-training of those Christians with considerable wealth to reconsider their own missed entry payment into the Kingdom, requesting them to relinquish their funds stored in their own foundations and investment strategies. American investment mogul Warren Buffett did something like this in 2006, giving 35 billion dollars, then 85% of his known wealth, to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, recognizing “that they are so much better in distributing funds than himself.” If we can trust secular stock and investment brokers with our money to invest it for our benefit, how much more would happen if we learn again to trust in God’s stock and investment brokers, the apostolic people called and anointed to direct the Church’s money into the road of its apostolic destiny? In addition to this, we need to start teaching all new converts the essential finance principles as they enter the Kingdom (from 2010 onwards, you can find a downloadable booklet called *Principles Of Kingdom Economics* as a Starfish Resource at www.starfishportal.net).





23 Modelling the Kingdom

Words, words, words. I am sick of words.
Sing me no song, read me no rhyme, don't waste my time.
Show me.

From: My Fair Lady

23 Modeling the Kingdom

Jesus came as an invisible king, representing an invisible power to assume the government of a yet invisible empire. Only those were introduced to this secret to whom the father in heaven agreed to explain it. The discovery of this mystery, however, depended not on information (researching the facts) but **revelation** (inspiration). The reason for this is crucial: no one was to proudly brag that he, out of his own shrewdness and intellect, has found the Messiah. Only those that ask, seek and knock (Mt 6) will see an open door. And once they go through it, they will find their Messiah, Jesus. This represents a very effective filtering system that only reveals the royal identity of Jesus and the nature of his empire to those that seriously ask. Whoever does not seek shall not find. But whoever finds the King and dedicates his life to him - and relinquishes the control of his own life accordingly - can become a part of the empire of Jesus. Jesus once said to Peter, representing the other apostles: "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom" (Mt 16; Mt 18). The ones who have keys can open locks. He has the ability - and with it comes the task - to open up doors for people and show them what is hidden behind them. Whoever finds Jesus as savior and King has, from now on, a new ability - and a new task. He is now an adept, initiated into the greatest secret of humanity. As a person with a new security clearance and now literally a member of a secret society, he is to initiate many other seeking, asking and knocking persons to also discover the invisible King Jesus, and place themselves under his authority, by which the empire expands.

Imagine an invisible person who only betrays his existence by his footprints in the sand. A small group of **visible** people have now discovered his footsteps and follow them. These obvious pursuers of an imprint in the sand, hidden to most people, are the key to making the invisible visible for others; they are the scent, the red thread, the clue to a mystery that beckons the rest of the world to be discovered. There are five distinct aspects by which the citizens of the empire, those that follow Jesus, can alert a blind and yet-unbelieving world to the fact that Jesus is King.

Love for the unlovable, as it is expressed in selfless sacrificial service, is the clearest and most powerful hallmark of a person that is in love. And wherever we see such a lover in action, we see a walking advertisement for the person he is in love with.

1) Love. Love is no theory, that is why love always becomes visible at some point. "God is love" (1 John 4:16). This love has four directions: a) God loves us. God has first loved us, although he knows every detail about us. This is clearly the most profound demonstration of God's love that he loves the unlovable to such a degree that he even sacrificed his own son. As an echo and answer to this amazing love we are invited to respond and love him back. If we do, b) our own love flows back to God. But as we discover God, we discover other citizens of the empire, his family. c) As we begin to love our new brothers and sisters, the mystery starts to be lifted. The moment we express our love in a horizontal way - towards other people - it betrays the existence of a vertical love affair - with God. Jesus said it like this: "When the people see how you love each other, they will know that you are my disciples" (John 13). d) Once this happens, God wants to fill us so much with his Holy Spirit, that we all, together with God's love and the collective love of our new family, love the world. And true love is ready to sacrifice. Love for the unlovable, as it is expressed in selfless sacrificial

service, is the clearest and most powerful hallmark of a person that is in love. And wherever we see such a lover in action, we see a walking advertisement for the person he is in love with. And, "God's truth be told", who wouldn't want to find out what kind of amazing person, what passionate lover can affect such a revolutionary change to any life?

2) Loyalty. Whoever acknowledges and yields to a King becomes a subject. He from now on respects the king, his values and principles – the kind of justice, that is valid before him, his righteousness and imperial law – as his top priority in life (Mt 6,33). Nothing can compete with the role that Jesus the King now plays in a new royal subject's life any longer. And in a world where everyone – patriotism, religion, tradition, clans, money, supermarkets, power, entertainment, fun, political doctrines, systems and gurus of all kinds – screams for our loyalty, a person that is loyal to Jesus as King sticks out like a fish swimming against the tide. The very direction of life of an imperial citizen is the exact opposite of a citizen of this world. Anyone driving a busy one-way street in the opposite direction can be sure to cause attention. Loyalty becomes visible in the direction of our life. And loyalty has one more important dimension: when a man proposes to an unmarried virgin and she agrees to become his wife, they become bridegroom and bride and are from now on legally engaged. They are "spoken for", protected by a public declaration that usually is made visible by a ring or other tokens of their new status. They are not at liberty anymore to pledge or sell themselves to another person, but have declared to remain faithful and loyal to each other, until wedding makes their pledge a final legal binding. Jesus has declared this loyalty to us; have we declared it back to him? Then let us show it.

3) Legitimacy. Only tested and proven loyalty leads to legitimacy. Loyalty that does not stand up when challenged is cheap. Nobody issues a driving license to a 15 year old simply because he can drive a car real fast. The teenager has to demonstrate that he can handle the car and the traffic well, and even more that he knows the traffic rules and actually abides by them. In Europe, he is given his driving license only with 18, and can now officially and legitimately drive a car. He definitely had the ability and power to drive a car before, but now he has the license to exercise this power and ability in an official, legal, recognized way. In the same way that weapons don't belong in the hands of children, the awakening of sexual ability during teenage years does not automatically mean that teenagers are allowed to practice sexuality if they want with whom they want whenever they want. It is just like with a driver's license: there is a driver's license for sex. This license is officially awarded by the society, including their own parents, after proving that a person is able to handle sexuality in a disciplined and responsible way – and not wild, out of bounds and with purely selfish motives. This driver's license is called marriage. Sexuality without this license trespasses on God's creational order and borders, hurts blossoming life like trampling on flowers before they bloom, and pays a horrendous price.

The same is true for *charismata*, the charismatic gifts of God, given to every child of God through the Holy Spirit. Charisma requires character; precious gifts call for a proper way of handling them. The more powerful something is that

The very direction of life of an imperial citizen is the exact opposite of a citizen of this world.

Power (Greek *dynamis*) in God's empire is not just ability (*charisma*) to actually do something ("I can heal, therefore I heal; I can evangelize, therefore I evangelize"), but always -official power (*exousia*), legitimate power, power that is bound to the King, aligned to his empire and therefore licensed, endorsed power.

God is placing into our hands, the more maturity we will need not to create an unhealthy disaster, but to be good stewards of God's grace and use his gifts according to the directives of the King. Power (Greek *dynamis*) in God's empire is not just ability (*charisma*) to actually do something ("I can heal, therefore I heal; I can evangelize, therefore I evangelize"), but it's always official power (*exousia*), legitimate power, power that is bound to the King, aligned to his empire and therefore licensed, endorsed power. Mere abilities that are naively exercised without official license and endorsement quickly become the foundation of misused, robbed, assumed power, usurped power that inevitable leads to the establishment of self-centered human empires, precisely because they don't care for God's imperial law. Such power, applied in ignorance or even defiance of God's rule that does not care about the directives of the King, is essential theft, illegitimate power that does not find God's backing. If such power becomes self-aware and therefore corrupt, it will inevitably try to back up itself, prove itself, or force itself on others, even if this means the twisting of arms and manipulation of other people.

Even Jesus had to prove his loyalty towards God. When he was "led into the desert, full of the Holy Spirit" (Lk 4:1), he was challenged by Lucifer in three crucial tests. Why did Jesus pass all those tests with such high honors? Because he did not argue and act in his own best interests and simply used his amazing abilities (power) just because he had them at his fingertips, but because he demonstrated a much more powerful truth: that he is **under orders**, evident by him referring back again and again to a law that is above him: **it is written!** Jesus throws it into Satan's face like a bomb that he, unlike Satan himself, is still voluntarily very much bound by God's word. He is the intentional subject of an objective codex that God has established, and therefore Jesus cannot and will not act in his own best interest and be purely selfish and subjectively concerned with "what's in it for me". He demonstrates to God, with the devil present: "Your will, not mine, be done!" This totally robs the devil of any chance to handle Jesus, so that he had to shake his head in utter frustration and sneak away. But this is only one part of the story. Before his father in heaven, Jesus had just passed the tests of his loyalty, and therefore he is handed the license, given the official nod to - from now on - to use his charismatic gifts, his God-given powers, in an authorized and official way that Satan has no chance to object to. Jesus returns from the desert as someone given **exousia**, authorized power to perform **dynamis**: powerful signs and wonders. The desert was his graduation. From now on he is not only "full of the Holy Spirit" (full of abilities and possibilities), but he has been given official license (**exousia**) to use these abilities in accordance and in personal synchronization with his father (John 5:19,20; 8:38) on a day-to-day basis. Does it not strike you that this moment is exactly the time when the ministry of Jesus is transformed, the power is "switched on" and literally the supernatural sparks fly? If Jesus needed such a legitimization of his own loyalty as a Son of God, will we be able to do without it? The solution to the amazing power crisis of great segments of Christianity is not a lack of the power of the Holy Spirit or a lack of gifts, but a lack of authentication of license that has to do with our shortcoming in legal Kingdom existence. The problem is not **charisma**, but **exousia**. If we fail our graduations, our very own desert-tests, again and again, it is because we basically rebel against God's rule, act in our own best interests and do not abide by his prin-

ciples. In that case, no amount of begging, fasting, praying, singing, the laying on of countless hands or magic self-appointing – by “declaring and decreeing ourselves to be mighty miracle workers” – will do the trick. Every human will be tested – Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Peter, Paul -, so that David can write in his Psalm 139: “Search me, oh God, and know my heart, *test me* ...”. But those that overcome and pass those tests, which are *always* tests of our loyalty to God, will become legitimate. And a legitimate life, a life that does not speak or repeat hollow and cheap words, but has been tested in the fire, ultimately becomes authentic, and therefore convicting. Words can convince, but only a life backed up by God convicts. Everything else will be religious hypocrisy, which the secular world despises, and rightly so. But when we live what we preach, it leads to:

A legitimate life, a life that does not speak or repeat hollow and cheap words, but has been tested in the fire, ultimately becomes authentic, and therefore convicting.

4) Authenticity. The whole world searches for genuineness, the real deal. And life in God’s empire is very real, and therefore different from life in this world. It is authentic life, “abundant life”, a life in fullness (John 10). As we can see with the example of Jesus, this does not describe a materially successful, secure, rich and healthy life that requires us to walk this earth eternally smiling as a part of a triumphant cult. It means a life that reaches its goal, fulfills its mission and purpose and is able to give life to others, because it is overflowing with life itself. Such a life cannot remain hidden and invisible, because no one lives in a vacuum. It is tangible and authentic in the five main domains of life: family, education, culture, business and politics. I call such an authentic life in the Kingdom

Life 2.0

Jesus has spoken of an “abundant life”, a cup overflowing with God’s blessing. Yet, not only the life of most people on the planet, but also the lives of many who call themselves Christians seem flat, resigned, defeated, purposeless and dysfunctional. Leading a substandard life – life 1.0 - focusing on personal survival, “to work and earn, pay taxes and burn”, is to lead the life of a slave, of someone that is told by someone else who he is and what to do – and is denied his true identity and the ability to reap the fruits of his own labor. Countless people are factual slaves of work, fashion, consumerism, religious traditions and their environment. You may have heard this saying: “Great people talk about ideas; average people talk about things; small people talk about other people.” How many great people do we know? In this regard we dare not fail to mention the demonic enslavement the Bible speaks of. Whoever is not “a slave of Jesus Christ”, as Paul describes himself, is a “slave of sin” (John 8:34) and - in this regard - finally a slave of the one that has gained temporary government over a fallen world: Lucifer and his host of missionary demons. However, as multitudes move back into becoming loyal and legal citizens of the Empire of God, their individual and corporate lives will be completely revolutionized. No longer will anyone carrying the name of Christ be destined to remain a pitiful victim and subservient slave of his economy, culture or tradition, but he will be empowered to lead a life of love, hope and faith. God did not promise us a life without pain, crisis or suffering on this side of paradise. But as God is again allowed to be the Emperor of his people, the church is transformed from Church 1.0 to Church 2.0: followers of Christ will be restored back to becoming an apostolic people, a different species

altogether. To the outside world, they will again become a model nation, a city on a hill, light and salt, as the blessings of God's empowerment will be visible to all. This is when others can again say: "Look, so this is how it is when people live in community with their God!" This will not only make the world jealous, but finally also the Jews (Rom 11).

The fruits of Church 2.0, a Kingdom-aligned church, will no longer be measured in glorious worship services, attendance or membership numbers, but how it changes lives that, in turn, change lives that change lives like a gigantic series of dominoes, until the whole world is impacted. As all of the main five areas of life are being disciplined (family, education, economics, culture and government) and again placed under the government of God, individuals, whole families, clans, tribes, villages, cities, regions and whole people groups (the Greek word *ethne* speaks of people groups, not political nation-states as we know them today) will move, healthily and incrementally, from a substandard Life 1.0 towards an abundant Life 2.0. The Bible does not promise us paradise on earth before the return of the king, it speaks of no complete Christianization or even a global transformation with peace, joy and material well-being for all. Far from it. But if anyone wishes to be part of the *ekklesia* of God and aligns himself intentionally in loving obedience with Jesus, the head of the Church and the Emperor, he will want to learn and obey afresh the life templates, the civil, spiritual, economic and political laws of the Empire of God. As a result, he will personally experience the blessing of God, that most significant and totally transforming encounter, liberation and empowerment that will move a person from mere success to true significance. It will change us forever, and, in turn, will revolutionize our lives and the lives of those around us. And one of the main reasons for a significant optimism at this hour is this: a Kingdom-shaped Church is emerging once again on this planet for anyone with eyes to see. All signs point to the significant fact that this church is not born and bred in the cultural West, but outside, in China, India, Vietnam, Cuba, Egypt, Bangladesh, Indonesia etc, from where this church will surprise the West by its very existence and become a global teacher to all those with the humble ability to learn. At the heart this describes an *ekklesia* that has repented of its ignorance, competition and rebellion, and finds its way back in loving obedience to its head and Emperor. Such a church will no longer just be a place to enjoy God's love and grace, but a powerful, communal and prophetic lifestyle that experiences God's blessing, and models life for all those who do not yet know the source of this life: **God**. What does life in the Empire of God look like? Take a look at this table that illustrates this in a nutshell by contrasting Life 2.0 to Life 1.0, a life outside of God's government:

The 5 spheres of life

Family Education Culture

Economics

Government

Concerning issues like

authority, relationship, sex values, learning, teaching science, arts, sports, media, entertainment, health work and finance, money

politics, structures, military, law

Life 1.0

godless, pointless, bad, meaningless, unblessed

dysfunctional, barren, unsafe vocation-based, degrading unclean, demonic, trivial, exploiting, manipulative depressive, enslaving, Mammon-driven, greedy corrupt, aloof, *over* God

Life 2.0

godly, purposeful, good, meaningful, blessed

healthy, fruitful, safe Calling- and life-based, empowering clean, inspired, intelligent, respectful uplifting, liberating, life-driven, giving just, involved, *under* God

5) Signs of the King. The life of Jesus was filled to the brim with supernatural healings, driving out demons, raising the dead, prophecies and miracles. One example is: "When the crowd saw this (Jesus healing a paralytic) they were filled with awe; and they praised God who had given such authority to men" (Mt 9:8). The laws of God seem to clearly supersede the laws of nature, which in turn had been created by God. Supernatural Kingdom law supersedes natural law. One of the ways this becomes evident is when the citizens of the empire exercise their God-given authority over the citizens of the domain of darkness, and drive out demons. Every child of the Kingdom of God has been given the charisma to heal others, drive out demons and speak prophetically. But to truly retake land from the domain of darkness for the King it is not enough to do a few signs here and there and lead a few minor battles, but it requires **our readiness to take over responsibility** for the newly taken land and cultivate it according to God's directives.

The Bible does not make a distinction – as some Christians have done in the past – between evangelizing unbelievers and discipling the new converts, as if the first is the job of the evangelist, and the second is the task of the church. We need to understand that we ourselves have to shoulder the consequences of our actions. What some have labeled a "hit-and-run-approach" in evangelism – hit the street and run away, do an evangelistic outreach and quickly retreat into a far more standard, non-outreaching life – makes no sense in the long run as a sound strategy and basically shies away from disciple-making. It attempts to make converts, not disciples. If we want to lead others to Christ but refuse any responsibility to baptize them **ourselves**, make them to be **our** disciples and have them participate in **our** lives and rather leave this "to the experts", then it is no small wonder that the King is entrusting us with so few new spiritual babies. Jesus is actually protecting people from dying a silent spiritual crib death, SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome. One of the potential risk factors of SIDS is the immaturity of the parents who are busy consuming themselves and have poor parental care for the new addition in their lives. Wherever the signs of the empire of God break into this world – through miracles, exorcisms, raising the dead or healings - it causes no small excitement. Anyone witnessing these signs realizes that this means they have just come in touch with an entirely new reality, and are suddenly confronted with a new question: what does this mean for them right now? This calls for people ready to answer the natural questions of those that are perplexed and astonished by witnessing a sign of the Kingdom. It would be a natural process that those that win new people for Jesus and his Kingdom also baptize them, organize them into churches, disciple them and become their spiritual parents. Charisma to perform a few signs that people watch will not be enough; this calls for **exousia**, a healthy authority given by God to act on behalf of the King. We are not called to impress people with demonstrations of spiritual power, but to use the spiritual openness that the signs of the Kingdom typically create to bring people into a loving relationship with the King and his Kingdom. The imperial authority and maturity to do this is directly linked to our legitimacy, and this in turn, is linked to our loyalty. If people decide to play outside the rules of the empire of God, like ignorant children making up their own rules and join a sort of spiritual non-alignment movement, they will still have a small measure of supernatural ability, since God has given all of them charisma. But if they would much prefer to be lone rangers, stand-alone ministries that refuse to align with

the King, his Kingdom, his principles and therefore other Kingdom citizens, they become like a battery. It yes can light something up for a little while, but is generally weak, cut off from the real power grid, and often needs to be recharged. The true lack in such non-aligned people is not their charisma, but their lack of loyalty and therefore legitimacy in the eyes of the King. Most probably he would have to say to them one day: "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say? Go away you evildoers, I never knew you!" (Mt 17:21-23). Wherever people develop activities that are not aligned with the king, programs and projects that are their own conceptions and creations, who "drive a car without license" or practice sexuality outside God's protective structure for sexual love, marriage, they may be fully convinced that they're doing things for God that God, however, had never asked them to do. These non-aligned activities, born out of a religious heart, out of convenience, tradition, financial needs or the desire to prove oneself and "establish a stand-alone ministry like everyone else", can absolutely produce "children": ministries, organizations, churches and even denominations. But legally, from the perspective of the righteous laws of God's Kingdom, these are illegitimate children. They are yes, children, but born out of a spiritual wedlock. And things that are born outside the legitimate framework of the empire carry an amazing danger: they can quickly become a worshiped kid, an idol for their prideful parents, something that illegally takes the place and role of only God himself. But where people live in clear-cut and obedient loyalty to the King and his empire, the legal right to act and speak "on behalf of Jesus" is conferred upon them. They now are allowed to speak in the name of Jesus, in legitimate representation, as a deputy of the Emperor. This absolutely includes a life demonstrating the supernatural signs of the Kingdom. God the father gives people the *charisma*, the power to do such things; however, something else needs to happen in order for us to use this God-given power in the way God wants it: Jesus needs to issue us the license, the legal authority (*exousia*, see Mt 10:1; Mk 16:17 etc.) to actually function in this authority. Jesus said to his disciples: "I give you authority" (*exousia*).

In Germany, catching a fish is quite a challenge. You cannot take a fishing rod and just go to any body of water and try your luck. You have to obtain a fishing license, take training and pass quite an elaborate "fishing-test" with more than 800 questions, and then, should you pass, you are given your "Angelschein", your anglers license. But to actually go fishing, you need a second thing: a fishing permit, a day/week/month or annual ticket to fish in a certain water that has to be purchased from the owner of the water. Then, and then only, are you legally allowed to fish. Whether you can actually master it, to then pull a fish out of Germany's dramatically overfished waters is, however, another story. In other words: God issues the fishing license, Jesus the King issues the permit to fish in his waters, to be, like Peter, a true fisher of man. Only with both permits – charisma and Kingdom legitimacy, *exousia* – will people be able to truly act "in the name of Jesus", with astonishing fruits. The 186 separate accounts of individual signs and wonders in the gospels and the book of Acts almost always report that people who witness those signs immediately open up for the reality of God and become dramatically receptive for the gospel of the Kingdom. It is a well known fact of church history and today's missionary reality that many nameless, faceless, untrained but obedient and loyal men and women of God – or even children – experience the most dramatic signs and wonders in their ministry for God, while many well known theologians and respected clergy are comparatively power-

less. This is one of the reasons why theories like dispensationalism or cessatio-
nism (the idea that God's power was only active during special dispensations/
seasons or have even ceased altogether after the first batch of apostles died out)
have been invented by theologians to basically prove that it is OK to live a power-
less live. Some try to invoke the presence of the King with constant repetitions of
formulas like "in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus!" as if he would respond
to Christian mantras or a magic wand. Ultimately this might quickly become a
ridiculous religious tool of the helpless, a Christian mantra for those without au-
thority, a Christian version of the Buddhist prayer wheel. This is why it is so crucial
for us to see that the key to world mission is not *charisma* (power), but *exousia*,
legal, imperial power. Jesus said: "All authority (*exousia*) in heaven and on earth
has been given to me. **Therefore** go and make all people groups disciples ..." (Mt
28:18-20). If we bind ourselves to the King and his words, if we love him and each
other, if we demonstrate our loyalty through fidelity and steadfastness and lead
the authentic life of imperial citizens, then we have taken every precaution to
protect us from doing anything other than engaging in missions and activities
that truly have received the stamp of the king's approval. Once this becomes our
normal way of operation again, we can absolutely expect the fulfillment of the
task of world mission to be only a matter of time.

God's rule becomes visible where we obey

The Muslim world is divided over the question of whether or not to impose
the *Sharia* (Islamic law) in a nation or not. Sharia is the legal framework within
which public and private life are regulated for those under Islamic jurispru-
dence. Sharia deals with many aspects of life, including politics, economics,
banking, business, contracts, family, sexuality, hygiene, and social issues. Cur-
rently the Sharia is binding law in the Maldives, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh,
Mauretania, Afghanistan, Gambia, Senegal, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen and
parts of Indonesia, Sudan, Nigeria and Pakistan. Just like nominal Christians and
many Evangelical Christians refuse to be under the actual rulership of Jesus the
King, many nominal Muslims refuse to be under Sharia law. Only those who
voluntarily agree to live according to Kingdom principles are actually living "in
the Kingdom"; all others think they are, but are not. God forces no one under
his rule (just yet). He has arranged it in such a way that the empire of Jesus will
become visible through people who do not only consume Gold for their own
private salvation and religion, but who place themselves fully under the rule
of Jesus Christ. As they do this, they start to live, look and sound like Jesus. The
hallmarks of Life 2.0 are love towards God, brotherly love, driving out demons,
healing the sick, raising the dead, signs and wonders, and a financial and eco-
nomic life that defies the banking principles of this world and crucifies the spi-
rit of materialism head-on. It is life structured not by man but by God, a super-
natural community consisting both in Kingdom families (house-churches) as
well as in a political, governmental and countercultural movement. Most of all,
imperial life is characterized by sacrificial love towards all, even the enemies of
God. This is the most powerful force on the planet. If we all start to live what
we preach - and **then** open our mouths! - then the world will listen. And if
we allow our King to structure us and build us into his apostolic architecture
the way he sees fit, and not according to traditional patterns and the religious
patterns of CAWKI, the empire of God will develop into a supernatural parallel

**If we all start to live what
we preach - and then
open our mouth! - then
the world will listen.**

structure, an alternative universe that, as Jesus put it, “is in this world but not of this world”. Through a life lived in sacrificial service to others out of love, this will become the fastest and most powerful movement in the planet. If it is true that God blesses obedience – blessed are those that keep my ways; blessed is the man who listens to me (Prov 8) – and therefore transposes onto them astonishing fruitfulness, epidemic multiplication and worldwide presence, then the question of biblical structures of *ekklesia* are not just unimportant, secondary, or even a nuisance, forever disturbing the greater harmony of an ecumenical, political Christianity, **but a core test of our loyalty and obedience**. If we move back to the biblical principle of regional house church networks, we need to do it out of obedience to the King, not because of personal preferences, opinionatedness or as a fashion. Our obedience decides about blessing or curse.

And if this is the time that “God establishes a Kingdom that will rule forever” (Dan 2:44), the key question is: are you a legal part in this, right now? If not, I would ask you to become a part of this today and place everything that you are and that you have, before the feet of your King Jesus. He will be able to make your life into something so much better than you could do yourself. He is the great archer; if you are an arrow in his bow, chances are excellent that your life will hit the bulls-eye – to the pleasure of your King!

City on the hill

In one of the most foundational, introductory teachings, Jesus compared his disciples, those that are under his Kingship and therefore in his Kingdom, to a “city on a hill that cannot be hidden” (Mt 5:14). This means that we cannot be invisible, submarine Christians, stashed away in church buildings with thick, impenetrable walls performing religious ceremonies or celebrating little DIY-us-4-no-more-house churches in invisible ghettos, avoiding any contact with “the world” like a plague. The very opposite is true: the gospel is not only private truth, it is public truth. Either Jesus is truly wishing to be Lord of all, or he is no lord at all. A hill is in public view of anyone; even more strikingly, Jesus calls not only himself (John 8:12) but also his disciples “the light of the world”, and what is more visible than light itself? Jesus goes on to not only say that this is what we are, but he also says what we should do with this revelation: “**Let your light shine** before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven” (Mt 5:16). This is consistent with the rest of New Testament teaching, where followers of Christ are exhorted: “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1. Pe 2:12). Paul writes: “Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe” (Phil 2:14.15). This is what I called “Life 2.0”, Kingdom life as it expresses itself in a way that the surrounding society, the *kosmos*, the world, can see, feel, smell, touch, taste and observe.

Culture and Kingdom

Culture is the behavioral pattern of people, “the way of life” of a given society or people group, defining such issues as values, mannerism, dress codes, and “the way things are traditionally done around here”. If tradition is the collec-

The gospel is not only private truth, it is public truth. Either Jesus is truly wishing to be Lord of all, or he is no lord at all.

tive memory of a people, their ancient founding stories and emerged patterns frozen into behavioral habits, culture is the architecture, the building within which those traditions are observed. Culture is the hardware, traditions are the software, the programs running on it. A given culture is strongly defined by its worldview, the way people see and interpret the world. Once someone's worldview changes, so does his behavior. Our worldview is typically defined by where our strongest allegiance and loyalty lie – to whom or what we are answerable, to whom or what we feel accountable. The highest allegiance of people is to the highest authority they recognize, be it their own family, their gods/religion, their traditions or government, or, as in the cultural West, typically to themselves. If an individual meets a higher authority than any that he had previously known, he “converts” his loyalty to the new found authority, and arranges his life accordingly. If the allegiance of a person changes, his behavior, his patterns of life change. Once a person decides to place himself under the supreme authority of Jesus Christ as King and Savior, his new loyalty as a royal subject becomes clear by his new ways of behavior. An individual cannot create a culture all by himself, as culture is a corporate and not an individual way of life. But if a number of people – a minority or a majority of a given people group – change their allegiance from anything but Jesus to Jesus as their new King, they will change and create a new way of life, a new culture, a “Kingdom culture” as it is expressed in their host culture. As followers of Jesus are called to be “in this world but not of this world”, we have the challenge to live, as our first priority and identity, in the Kingdom of God, in the domain of his uncontested rule, but also to express this life within the cultural framework that we are born or sent into. Jesus was born in Palestine and expressed and lived the Kingdom not aloof to culture (nonculturally or aculturally), but *incarnated into culture*, within a particular cultural setup. He was from above, but lived within. He came from God, but set up his tent amongst us humans (John 1:14). He was not governed by the surrounding culture or “conformed to the patterns of the world”, as seen by the way he took his own time to go to religious festivals or deal with governments, but clearly lived as King of his Kingdom under the directions of his father and expressed this Kingdom life in ways that the surrounding culture could understand. His priorities were clear: Kingdom first, human cultures second. If we are to follow him in this, we are called to be Kingdom people first, and only then Germans, Indians, Tutsis, Hutus, Gypsies or Aussies. The gospel is not private truth, so we cannot legitimately huddle in our little ghettos, monasteries or churches in some sort of Amish, Tolstoyesque isolationism and keep to ourselves in a churchy bubble. The gospel of the Kingdom is *public* truth and needs to be lived out in this world, *in its face*. We are called to be a city *on the hill*, a light *in this world*, and express the culture of the Kingdom of God in our cultural biotopes, habitats or the cultures and civilizations into which the King sends us on apostolic missions.

Richard Niebuhr, an American theologian, has, in his book *Christ and Culture*, defined five ways Christ could be seen in relationship to culture: Christ against culture, Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in paradox, and Christ as the transformer of Culture. In today's new understanding of the current Kingdomization we are called to become and be Kingdom people first, and then live the culture of the Kingdom in ways that are both expressing and

incarnating the Kingdom in ways that human cultures can understand, but never totally swallowed or co-opted by the cultures of this world. The eternal and supreme reality of the Kingdom will challenge, inspire, crucify and redeem certain aspects of any culture it invades. This is why Kingdom people will never completely fit into any human culture. If they try to, they will be swallowed up, civilized beyond recognition, domesticated and assimilated by a human culture and given a space called civil religion by their host culture that gags Christians trapped in it into a notorious, non-prophetic, non-apostolic, harmless and toothless existence. Kingdom people are eternal misfits, the “scum of the earth”, outsiders from the perspective of worldly insiders. “Christians are no ordinary people”, says C.S. Lewis. “Nations, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat.” Kingdom citizens will therefore be always homeless pilgrims, aliens, a species from an empire headquartered in outer space (heavens), super-cultural, counter-cultural, challenging the authorities to be, the Caesars, Gods, religions or political ideologies of the day, because they have found in Christ the Ruler Supreme, the Number One, and therefore refuse to play in the second league.

In the long centuries of a non-apostolic era of the Church most Christians have developed a firmly cultural identity. They are first Hutus, Tutsis, Germans, Americans, and then, secondly, Christians, typically members of culturally aligned and civilized, domesticated churches. Mission has often been nothing more than transplanting or even franchising cultural expressions of church from one culture to the other. But human cultures are, from God’s perspective, on a par with each other, on the same level, equivalent to each other, whether we like it or not. No culture can dictate down on any other culture except for racist ideologies, assuming its own supposed supremacy for whatever reason. If this happens, this leads to the suppression of one culture by the other, and the suppressed culture will only by force accept and adopt the religion or church of the oppressors, as in the long and bloody history of Roman Catholic “Missions” in Europe or South America. This is why merely cultural expressions of church and Christianity made very little impact in the cultures of then world, or created not much more than isolated beachheads of imported religious cultures.

The world, very basically, falls today into two Mega cultures: the West and the Non-West. Some, like Sarah A. Lanier in her excellent small book *Foreign to Familiar*, call them *hot* and *cold* cultures. Here is a rough overview between these two Mega cultures, the cold ones being mainly found in Canada and the northern states of the US, Northern Europe, the white population of Australia and New Zealand, the Jews in Israel that have a mainly European origin, and the white (ex European) population of countries like South Africa, Brazil, Argentina etc. In terms of numbers, cold cultures comprise roughly 700 million, about ten percent of the total world population. In other words, with around 90%, the vast majority of the world lives in hot cultures.

cultural

cultural temperature
 communication
 orientation
 lifestyle
 identity
 focus
 opinions
 avoid at all cost
 biggest failure
 social orientation
 it matters
 you are
 power distance
 protocol
 planning
 strategy means to
 economics
 home

West

cold
 direct, say what you think
 task
 independent, you are
 individual
 truth
 trumpet your own, / think
 guilt
 make a mistake
 private
 what you know
 what you say you are
 small
 completely irrelevant
 essential to be effective
 be part of a plan
 industrial
 city

Non-West

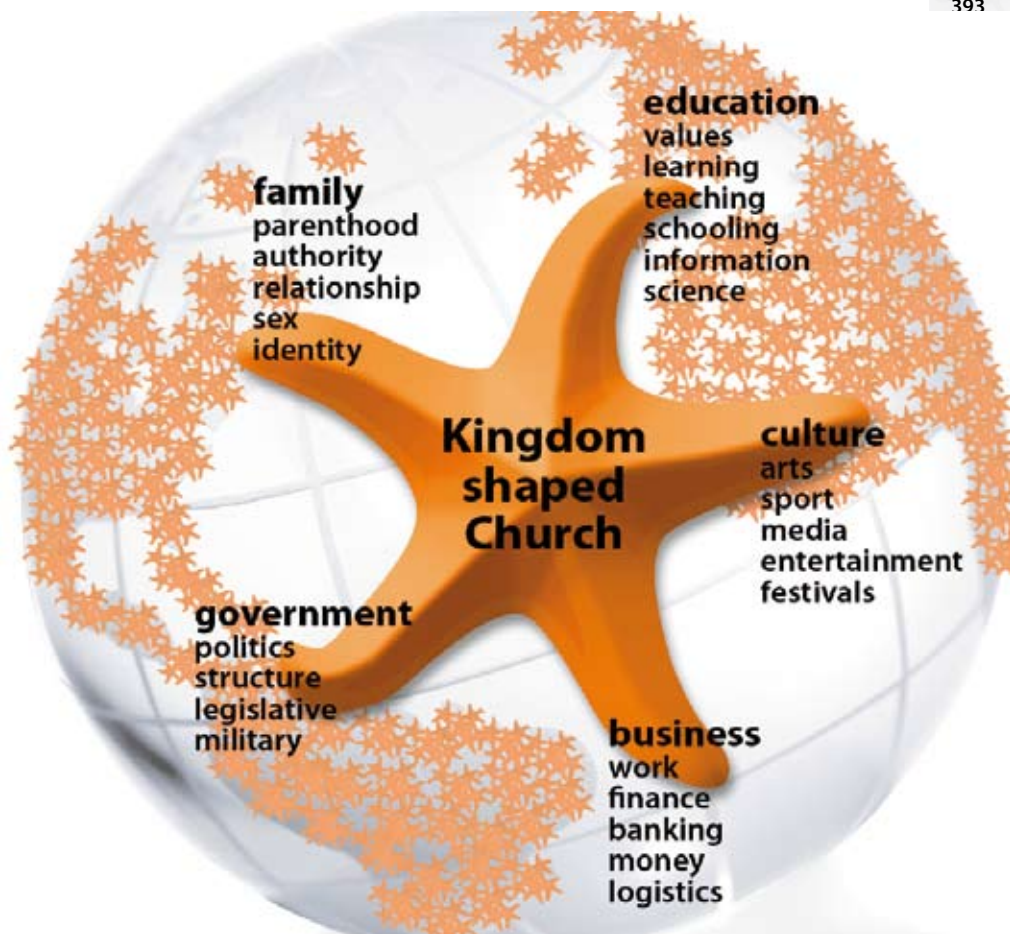
hot
 indirect, be polite
 relationship
 inter-dependent, you *belong*
 corporate
 friendliness
 group-related, *we* think
 shame
 lose honor
 inclusive
 whom you know
 what others say you are
 big
 matters
 be relevant
 experience the moment
 agrarian
 village

With the exception of the Roman Catholic Church that is headquartered in a predominantly hot culture, Italy, the age of Missions basically meant that churches that have emerged in cold cultures (Northern USA, UK, Germany) were implanted into hot cultures. This was not very effective, because cold-culture churches made very little sense to hot culture people, like Lutheran Churches in Japan, Anglican Churches in Egypt or Southern Baptist Churches in Northern Iraq. To promote churches formed in the cold religious cultures of 10% of the world's population in the rest of the 90% of hot cultures was a great cultural mistake; some even go as far as to say that it was not much more than proud or at least naïve cultural imperialism. Many have interpreted cultural differences between peoples in spiritual ways. Germans would look at the notorious tardiness of Africans as something close to "sin", while Africans would look at Germans besotted with planning as the sin of exchanging the Holy Spirit for a calculator.

What culture was Jesus driven by, hot or cold? I think if we would examine the culture of the Kingdom of God, we would find elements of both Mega cultures, hot and cold. We find typically cold culture values like planning, justice, rules and regulations, but much of Kingdom life centers around hot culture values like love, hope and faith, extended family, spontaneity, flexibility, sharing, inclusivity and a corporate identity. Whatever culture we have grown up in, let us therefore not make the age old mistake of overspiritualizing our culture as "better than theirs" (because *they* think the very same about us), but allow ourselves to be naturalized into the governmental realm of the Kingdom that supersedes any culture, make it our only home, and then allow the King himself to send us back into whatever culture he so chooses. As we live as Kingdom citizens in Kingdom shaped churches, this creates a global culture of its own, the way of life of the people of the Kingdom, Life 2.0, life that is only possible if our first identity is in the Kingdom of God, and everything else comes in second, by a very wide margin.

The Five Kingdom Ministries

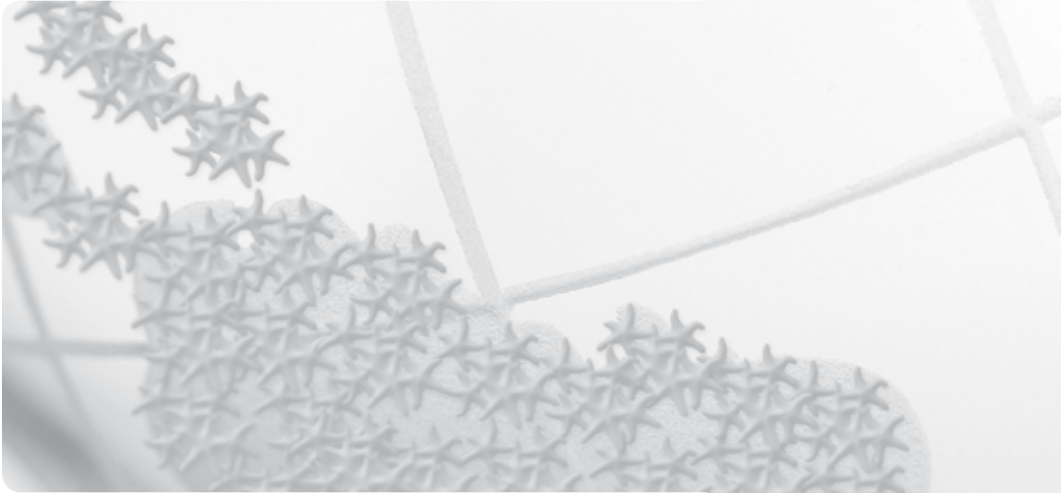
But let's move back from culture to the nature of the Kingdom. Each political government has ministries responsible for a certain department, a fraction of the entire government concerning certain issues. The person primarily responsible for this is called the minister of justice, minister of education, culture, defense etc. The government of the United Kingdom, for example, has currently these 21 ministries: Attorney General's Office, Cabinet Office, Communities and Local Government, Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, Department of Children, Schools and Families, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, Department of International Development, Department of Transport, Department of Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Her Majesty's Treasury, Home Office, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice, Northern Ireland Office, Office of the Leader of the House of Commons, Scotland Office and Wales Office. If the Kingdom of God is a governmental domain – the realm of God's uncontested rule – the citizens of the Kingdom are expected to consider the Kingdom of God their primary home (Mt 6:33); everything else is secondary. We might say: I live in the Kingdom, but I linger in India. I live in the Kingdom, but I sojourn in Australia . . . but I am a pilgrim in Japan . . . I am detained in North Korea. I am a citizen of the Kingdom carrying an additional passport of the US, Germany, France or Benin. I am not from this world, but I am still in this world. As the Kingdom of God is governmental in its nature, life in the Kingdom falls into various departments – ministries, so to speak (I am not referring here to the ministry of apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists, commonly known as the "fivefold ministry", but about governmental spheres). It is therefore easy to see that Life 2.0, the expression of life in the Kingdom, falls into these five basic areas: family, education, culture, business and government. The backbone and foundation of all of this is an ekklesia that is firmly rooted in the Kingdom. To use the starfish analogy here, a picture version of this would look like this: the Starfish itself is the ekklesia, and it visibly demonstrates the Kingdom through love, loyalty, legitimacy and the other supernatural signs of the Kingdom, miracles, healings etc. The Starfish is constantly multiplying itself – the church, but it does more than that. Its life – Life 2.0 – is lived shoulder to shoulder, in direct contact with the world. The "good deeds", the light that Jesus asks us to let shine so that others can see it, is expressed not only in-house, inside the church, "hidden under a bowl", as Jesus describes it, but in public view. This light is demonstrated by the radical difference of the quality of life in the very tangible areas of family, education, culture, business and governance; it is a difference like day and night, light and darkness, Life 1.0 and Life 2.0. As the starfish conveniently has five legs, we can see those five areas of life as starfish-beachheads, starfish-mission bases, starfish-embassies or at least shopping windows for those outside the Kingdom.



In governmental language, these would be the five departments in which the rulership of Christ the King is expressed in very practical terms, making families (and all that goes with them) into Kingdom-families, engaging in education as a function of the Kingdom, seeing and doing business from a Kingdom perspective, expressing culture not by merely avoiding or copying what the world does, but as prophetic manifestations of the abundant and hyper-creative life in the Kingdom, and advising, influencing and changing government in all its facets to more fully express the fact that Jesus is the Lord of all lords.

This is what I mean by modeling the Kingdom. However, life in the Kingdom is something not to keep for ourselves, but to share with those outside the Kingdom; not only the gospel of the Kingdom, but also life in the Kingdom is an item for export. Plus: as the Kingdom of God is an advancing entity driven by the Holy Spirit that invades the domain of darkness, it is an act of spiritual warfare, for which we need wisdom, insight and intelligence. Service to others is called diaconia; doing so in tune with the apostolic mission of the Kingdom will be impossible and plain self-serving unless we do this service within the framework of genuine apostolic design. This is why I call the sharing of the Kingdom *apostolic diaconia*, the subject of the next chapter.





24 Apostolic Diaconia

Diaconia needs to be subject to a greater mission, otherwise the left hand of diaconia does not know what the right hand of the apostolic is doing.

24 Apostolic Diaconia

“The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty” (Hag 2:8). If God literally has all the money in the world, why would he hesitate a single second to give it all away to those in need of money? God has millions of angels at his disposal. Why does he not prevent a child from falling off a cliff by sending in an angel to rescue it? Jesus was able to see fish and bread multiplied. Why does he not do this every day for those who go hungry? The Lord has power over the weather; why would he not prevent storms, tsunamis or earthquakes to save the loss of human life? He has so much to give; why would he hold back?

It seems that the answer to these questions are not as simple as we might think. And the reason for this is that God thinks different than we humans do – and he has other goals in mind. God does not seem to distribute his amazing resources based on human need – otherwise he would do it. He is also not a socialist; otherwise he would divide his vast resources painstakingly into exactly equal shares and then distribute them. He also seems to have a special love and place in his heart for Israel, whether or not we might share that. The revelatory process by which God has made himself known to mankind was a step-by-step process that seemed to follow a certain pattern. From his first introduction to Adam and Eve, the revelation of his various names, the revelation of more and more of his character through the books of the prophets and the Psalms took thousands of years. In addition to this, he gave: after giving everything else to Adam, he saved the best for last and gave him Eve. The giving of God continued, from the land title to the Garden of Eden to the promised land of Israel, from water out of a rock in the desert. He gave quails and manna, but also military victories or the interpretation of dreams. Lastly, at the appointed time, God gave Jesus, his only son. God was always sharing *some* of what he had with mankind, and he seemed to be careful, even reluctant to just dump what he had on people. His giving seemed to have followed an intentional pattern that was tied to the unfolding of the history of salvation. He gave the right things in the right quantities at the right times for the right people for the right purpose. I believe that this strategic self-dispensation of God, God sharing *himself* with mankind, is subject to the central mission of God, the salvation of the largest possible proportion of mankind for himself and his son Jesus towards an eternal future together. I also believe that this mission-based self-disclosure of God is a pattern for us today: as God has given himself to us, we should give to the world. This is why our giving needs to be part and parcel of our apostolic mission; diaconia needs to be subject to a greater mission, otherwise the left hand of diaconia will not know what the right hand of the apostolic is doing.

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In the world today there is enough money in existence that, if evenly distributed, it would make every person on the planet a millionaire. There is more than enough food to feed everyone. God has given us enough for all – but greed, racism, the love of money and human power plays have disrupted the distribution and have cut off some from access to the goods that God’s earth is providing for us. The fallen world and mankind in it does simply not know how to share in such a way that we all reach our final destination. Many treat

the resources that the world offers like a big cake, and the goal seems to be that every one tries to get the biggest piece possible, irrespectively whether he needs it or not. Ridiculous but very effective slogans have captivated the minds of billions: "the one with the most toys wins." This is why this world needs a model, a city on the hill to look at, a people that demonstrate sharing and giving in the power of God, not in their own power. Similar to our lives and our churches, our diaconia must be apostolic in nature; otherwise we will miss our God-given goal. If we as followers of Christ would just give and share based on needs, our feelings or even give out of a hurting conscience, but not based on God's directives, we might actually end up hindering the mission of God by giving out of line. There is a great number of well-meaning philanthropists, humanists, social activists, government schemes and national, regional or global aid programmes that are committed to helping others in tangible needs. However, much of international aid, as the German ambassador to an Asian nation has once shared with me, does not reach its goal at all, but disappears into any amount of ominous channels. Plain corruption, organized crime, political cunning or the building of personal empires, rivalries between NGOs, bureaucracy and huge overhead costs have probably swallowed up more aid than what actually reached those the aid was intended for. Human giving, giving that is not done under God and his directives, obviously is not part of the solution; it is part of the problem.

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The beginning of diaconia

In the history of the church, the diaconal ministry came into being in direct relationship with the social needs of a massively growing apostolic church. The specific issue was that the widows of Grecian Jews were overlooked in favor of the widows of the Hebraic Jews in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6). So the twelve apostles gathered all the disciples and said: "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the spirit and wisdom. "We will turn this responsibility over to them..." a proposal "that pleased the whole group." The group of disciples (not the apostles) chose Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, presented these to the group of apostles, who "prayed and laid their hands on them." The result was a further spreading of the word of God (as the apostles could continue their ministry, being relieved from "waiting on tables"). The number of disciples increased rapidly, and it obviously made a huge impact on the religious establishment in town: "a large number of Priests became obedient to the faith" (v. 7).

How diaconia became caritas

Apostolic and diaconal ministries are made to function in tandem. Other than the prophetic ministry, that, in synergy with the apostolic ministry, has a foundation-laying role, the diaconal ministry initially solved food distribution problems, but soon developed into an administrative function of the entire apostolic movement, an absolutely indispensable role for a multiplying church. As the apostolic ministry itself became near extinct during the course of church history, the diaconal ministry found itself without its original apostolic tandem partner. It became more and more sidelined, and even developed

As the Kingdom of God is always God-driven, not need-driven, the moment human needs started dictating caritative initiatives, need became the real engine that drove the work, not an apostolic impetus.

into a stand-alone ministry, where social help was becoming an end in itself, and *diaconia* finally became *caritas*, the caring for the needy, whether or not the ministry was linked to a church, let alone to apostolic and prophetic ministry. Plain need-driven food distribution and the caring for the sick and elderly became a domain for nunneries or a function of specialized ministries often divorced from the church, like Friars and monasteries. To this day, particularly women, often unable to find a spiritual role in a men-dominated Church As We Know It, have compassionately and boldly embraced a life of sacrificial service, becoming deaconesses and nuns, for example. Although the role of Mother Theresa, Lotti Moon, Lilian Trasher and others make fascinating and moving stories, the diaconal ministry, divorced from the apostolic ministry, often lacked vital partnership and impact, and more often than not became swallowed up in the never ending need of our broken world. But as the Kingdom of God is always God-driven, not need-driven, the moment human needs started dictating charitable initiatives, need became the real engine that drove the work, not an apostolic impetus.

As a result and example, countless orphanages, hospitals, and schools have been started by well-meaning Western Christians overwhelmed by the screaming needs in many under developed and developing countries. Without an apostolic synergy, these ministries often petered out or greatly changed after the death of its founder, like in the case of George Muller of Bristol, UK, or Gottlieb Wilhelm Hofman in Wilhelmsdorf (Germany), and quickly became huge liabilities, swallowing up enormous amounts of human resources, and became either a never-ending fundraising project that would crash the moment the funds stopped, or a social company, a socially oriented commercial for-profit endeavor. The worst examples of such a derailed nonapostolic diaconal ministry is probably the past and current emergence of stand-alone caritative ministries focusing solely on orphanages, food and clothes distribution, education, health care, or well digging. These compete for Christians' funds through secular public relations-campaigns complete with ever more penetrating pictures of the proverbial hungry African child, appealing to the pity, mercy, and, if necessary, the guilt of a consumer-driven society to share a penny for the poor.

Do not get me wrong: none of these activities are bad at all; but as it is being done divorced from the apostolic commissioning of the entire church, diaconal ministry today basically happens largely outside of the parameters of a healthy apostolic framework. This means that precious synergies are lost, partnerships and opportunities are missed, and people who were designed by God to work shoulder-to-shoulder find themselves competing for the attention, prayers, and even funds of the Christian world. Apostles again wait on tables, while deacons preach the word; rather than praying, apostles are bogged down with accounting and administration, something they don't seem to be gifted for at all, while many deacons and deaconesses sit in aging caritative communities, working around the clock, praying and wringing their hands about the future of their ministry, while at the same time wondering what to do with the huge hospitals, schools, and other social ministries (and their steep bills) that they inherited. The result? The opposite of what happened in Acts 6: the word of God does not spread the way it should, the number of disciples decreased rapidly, and the religious and secular establishments in town are remarkably unimpressed.

In some instances, the diaconal ministry was picked up and even utilized

by other ministries: the evangelistic ministries “used” social help and caritative ministries “to get into countries,” earn the goodwill of the society or a village so that they could have their crusades and rallies, or use the caritative aspect of “their ministry” as a fund-raiser to finance their evangelistic work. Pastoral ministries and systems used caritative and diaconal ministries as an extension of their shepherding spirit and passion, usually ending up sooner rather than later with social ministries that were quickly swallowed up and maxed out by the very need they try to solve, and burned out many helpers and volunteers in the process. Christian teaching ministries who (understandably, but wrongly) identify a lack of education as the core problem of this world, are tempted to employ those gifted in administration in a never ending role to assist in the production and dissemination of ever more teaching materials, seminars, booklets, classes, courses, workshops, conferences. But no amount of good teaching can position the ekklesia on multiplicative foundations for its apostolic advances, and as a result, such one-sided alliances between evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching ministries with the diaconal ministries are usually mutually disappointing in the long run.

Diaconia without the supernatural

I need to mention another important issue. Traditionally, in the way CAWKI has defined it, diaconia means to do good, help the needy, serve the poor; but, with amazing predictability, sooner or later the defining Kingdom elements, the apostolic spirit and the supernatural dimension of the solutions that Jesus brought, is lost or even cut out. Stephen, one of the first deacons mentioned, had a clear power ministry: “He did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). Much of what today is called diaconal ministry can probably not exist without true and healthy Christian compassion and love, but seems to do pretty well without the obvious supernatural power of God. The contemporary story of Mahesh Chavda is a moving example of this, as Mahesh, working with handicapped mongoloid children, at one stage was arrested by his own powerlessness, and, overcome with compassion for the crippled child in his hands, experienced God’s miraculous ability to heal the child right in his arms. This totally transformed his perspective on God’s abilities in regards to the pains of this world.

As a young missiology student I was once sitting with a group of mission leaders who all directed major ministries to the physically blind. They were discussing mobile eye clinics, laser techniques, how to train dogs for the blind and distribute more and better drugs to battle glaucoma. In my innocence, I raised my hand and asked naively: “Excuse me, but Jesus did none of all this. He, if the biblical records are true, healed the physically blind in every instance in a supernatural way. Is, in any of the ministries you represent, the supernatural, miraculous physical healing of the blind a significant factor?” I will never forget the icy atmosphere that followed; everyone stared at me as if I had just committed the unpardonable sin, and I was, let’s say, discouraged to ever enter the discussion again, shaken off as a nuisance.

So what is the difference between traditional CAWKI-style caritas and apostolic diaconia? Apostolic diaconia is directly tied to apostolic and prophetic ministries, **diaconia within apostolic parameters**, and works in partnership with those ministries. It focuses on the administrative, logistical challenges of

expansive apostolic movements, and, rather than serving others with natural means – like distributing roses, cookies, washing cars, baby-sitting, visiting the poor, or helping an elderly woman cross the street – it embraces and often even displays a power/Kingdom element, administrating solutions that are literally from out of this world. Such a ministry is involved in divine and wise need assessment, helping to steward the very considerable material resources of an apostolic movement towards those who have true needs, as opposed to fake or false needs (1 Tim. 5:4-9). For this, a deacon (or deaconess: Rom. 16:1) needs character and moral qualifications, and should be tested (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

In the area of finances and administrative power, I sometimes call deacons financial *eunuchs*, those immune to being tempted by large sums of money (and influence) going through their hands, something that only a person of wisdom, and full of the Holy Spirit, both the foundational requirements of such a ministry, could manage. In their direct attachment to the apostolic, this means an administrative involvement in movements that break new ground, plant radically new things, do what no one has done before, and help in the stewardship of the advancing Kingdom, something that is unthinkable without a multiplying church-planting movement at its core.

Diaconia within an apostolic framework helps to turn the world upside down, while traditional caritas usually arranges itself within the world as it is, helps preserve the Status Quo, and, at best, is a function of an existing church-as-we-know-it. In this sense, caritas is often a function of an attractive, non-apostolic church, doing services to mankind with the ultimate purpose to make people finally “come to church.” It typically joins what already exists and helps with means that non-Christians would also use (care, time, money, human skills). Healthy diaconia, other than the typical helper-complex of purely humanistic attempts, is motivated and driven by the love and compassion of Christ, which makes a huge difference in all what we do. This is why *Christian* hospitals (or orphanages, Kindergartens, social projects etc.) usually have a distinctly different and better quality of service about themselves. However, if the Christian impetus for any social work is institutionalized through time and the fading influence of the founding dream, the quality of service usually dramatically sinks back to the world’s standards, or even below.

Lastly: traditional caritas usually has no borders and guidelines that protect it from becoming need-driven, swallowed up by the vortex of brokenness around us, and can quickly forget what Jesus said about helping the poor: “... *if you want*, you can do good to them.” Such a one-sided diaconia can become legalistic, and even harsh, as it reduces all of Christian life to works of service, demands that everyone do good deeds, lobbies for human rights and against institutional ills as if they are the problem, and is then only a stone’s throw away from well-worn leftist political or social activism.

It has been argued that the Good Samaritan story Jesus told was an example of diaconia that did not really need a supernatural empowerment. However, I think otherwise. For a “despised Samaritan” to love a Jewish neighbor in need and give of his financial means to see him put back on the road of life, it required a love that is greater than the racism or the hatred that had grown between those two people groups. This is a supernatural love that Jesus speaks of, a love that the experts of the law did not have. Joe Fuiten, pastor of “Cedar Park Church” in the Seattle area (USA), says: “Church needs to happen not only

Diaconia within an apostolic framework helps to turn the world upside down, while traditional caritas usually arranges itself within the world as it is, helps preserve the Status Quo, and, at best, is a function of an existing church-as-we-know-it.

on Sundays, but Monday through Saturday, 24/7, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. One of the many things that this church does is to employ four car mechanics, so that people can get their cars fixed for free, they only pay for the spare parts - today's equivalent to what the Good Samaritan of the Bible did is to repair cars," so Fuiten. One of the four mechanics is Craig Brandenburg, who left his garage and today is half-mechanic, half pastor. "Its unbelievable how many people inundate us with phone calls, folks completely outside the reach of traditional churches," says Brandenburg. "This way we can demonstrate to people that Christ loves them."

Healing and deliverance ministries

One of the crucial and absolutely central aspects of the ministry of Jesus was healing the sick and casting out demons. If healing and the deliverance from oppressive demonic spirits and their thoughts, paradigms, and values lie so much at the center of the ministry of Jesus, we dare not dismiss these issues. Healing and deliverance are the bread and butter of sharing the Kingdom with those yet outside. Connecting healing and deliverance ministries back to the foundational apostolic and prophetic ministries will recapture much of their true role in equipping the church and "setting the captives free." Many of these ministries have been stand-alone ministries in the past, highly specialized but generally marginalized by the rest of the Body of Christ. Millions today hear the word "TV-healing Evangelists" or "exorcist," and turn away with a shudder. Misuse and abuse, practicing these ministries decidedly outside an apostolic framework as well as the personality cult that so easily goes with such "spectacular" ministries, has painted these aspects of ministry in the most suspicious colors, and I am sure that the devil rejoices at the fact that people raise eyebrows and flags if they even encounter the notion of such ministries.

However, Jesus was a healer and an exorcist, and people today still need healing and deliverance. In recent years, more balanced and healthy insights into deliverance ministries have emerged, and, especially as these ministries are rescued from pure navel-gazing Christian versions of self-help and placed back into a relationship with prophetic and apostolic ministries, they surprise with their powerful efficiency, straightforwardness and simplicity. In the past two decades, for example, Charles Kraft and Gary Hixson have established new and balanced standards of inner healing and deliverance ministries that have helped countless people in radical ways. Daniel Hari, a Swiss friend of mine who left the Salvation Army to become a healing evangelist to New Age and esoteric people, has seen many hundreds come to Christ through transparent healing in the Name of Jesus, and I count him among those Christian healers, together with many others like Bill Johnson, who will help re-establish a credible witness for Christ as the healer and savior of man.

Jesus "went around and did good to everyone," which mainly means he healed sick people and delivered demonized people of their oppressors. Let us not only go and do likewise, but train millions of people to reflexively respond to people's needs with their God-given tools of healing and deliverance, so that these "signs of the Kingdom" will be everywhere, positively testified by medical doctors and in the media, and impossible for even the most agnostic person on the planet to escape and miss. Rather than train ever more specialized people in these ministries, creating more marginalized and stand-alone ministries,

Healing and deliverance are the bread and butter of sharing the Kingdom with those yet outside.

let us, in this age of reformation, rescue healing and deliverance from the specialists and put it firmly back into the public domain of every believer and disciple. If healing is the “bread of the children,” as Jesus says, we will need to make sure every new church and church planting movement train *all* of their believers and disciples to distribute that bread everywhere, healing and delivering people in a way that only Christ can empower us to do, and doing the various miracles he allows us to walk in by following the footsteps he has prepared for us ahead of time (Eph 2:8-10).

A prophetic species

As we start to live out a life of supernatural love and loyalty, God is empowering – legitimizing – such a Life 2.0 beyond the substandard life outside the Kingdom. This life is visible and tangible to all those who we are in touch with. They can feel us, smell us, hear us, touch us, ask us. If people do not get in touch with our secret lives in house churches or even the most public regional celebrations, they will be definitely able to see and witness how we live as a family, how we deal with education, culture, business and politics in an entirely different way than they do. By being filled with the prophetic Holy Spirit we have been baptized into a prophetic people, and, seen through the eyes of those observing us, we are a prophetic species, demonstrating a life that is impossible to copy for those outside the Kingdom. This makes not only the church, but also our life in the five key areas of family, education, culture, business and politics a shopping window for others to watch the Kingdom in operation. Once an apostolic, kingdom-shaped church is emerging, it thus becomes “a model nation”, a city on the hill, light and salt in this world to not only demonstrate and model the Kingdom, but also share with those outside the Kingdom what God has shared with his people. This, I contend, we have to do in an apostolic and prophetic spirit, in sync with the apostolic mission God has for his people. If the Lord is sharing with us a table, there will be always more than enough – be it healing, deliverance, wisdom, fish, bread, breadcrumbs, a cup overflowing – for us to share with others. Jesus said: “Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap” (Lk 6:38). Let us have a look, therefore, how such an apostolic sharing of what God has given us with those outside the Kingdom could look like, in the five key areas of life: family, education, culture, business and politics.

True to its evangelistic origin, a book published in 2008 called *His Kingdom Come*, edited by Jim Stier, Richlyn Poor and Lisa Orvis, has described the approach that YWAM (Youth With A Mission) has been following. However, in an apostolic age, we need to grow decidedly beyond evangelistic patterns that all too often end with dominionistic dreams of social or political transformation. It is a Kingdom principle that true discipling of nations never originates with evangelistic strategies, no matter how passionate and wellmeaning they may be. So what is called for is not a new activism to feverishly “do things” and endlessly invent ever new Christian projects in all areas of life, but to strategically invade the domain of darkness with an apostolic and prophetic Kingdom alternative and model Life 2.0. If people don’t understand what the gospel is all about, even after having looked at our churches and meetings, all is not lost. We still can and should say: “come and see!” If Kingdom people share what they

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have with others around them, they will make a significant and sustainable difference in the lives of people around them - in our communities and in our cities. An apostolic church is called to be separate in lifestyle but never called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence.

So here are a number of examples how this could and will look like.



Family

The area of family encompasses aspects like the role of love, responsibility, parenting, sex, marriage, children, divorce, in-laws, the role of singles, principles of inheritance, forgiveness, relationships, and how to express family life inside a clan, a village or a nation.

If family is an institution of God to serve as a structure to protect, demonstrate and multiply the most valuable asset we humans have – love – Kingdom families will be different from other families. They are not only self-serving entities, but “families with a mission”, families that are part of a larger Kingdom, families with an apostolic purpose.

Child adoption

Adoption is at the heart of the father in heaven, and I believe that Christians reflecting this heartbeat therefore need to be world champions of adoption. The early church took heed to the words: “Look after orphans and widows” (James 1:26), and Christians were famous for picking up kids sometimes literally thrown away on the garbage dumps of their cities. These garbage dumps of a society that throws away its own children are today fuller than ever. Millions of children on the planet are orphans, because their parents are either victims of AIDS, war, alcohol, divorce, violence, or the children are half-orphans, kids who theoretically do have a physical place they could call home, but they are unwanted, uncared for, ignored, or even ill-treated and regularly abused. They need a place of refuge, and where should they run to if not to that heavenly invention of the divine family of God that the father in heaven has invented to provide parenthood for those without parents, the church. If orphanages have been the main way CAWKI has dealt with the issue, I propose that adoption into Christian families and house churches as forms of extended families is the main way CAGWI picks up the challenge.

Thorsten Moritz says it like this: “The ultimate basis of a biblical theology of adoption is found in God’s love for his creation and his determination for his people to emulate this love. Through Jesus, and only through him, God’s people can finally succeed in demonstrating to the world God’s adoptive intent for fallen humanity. Incorporation into God’s model humanity is the only hope the world’s waiting children have. Adoption lies at the heart of God’s concern, and we can see it in salvation: God adopts us in Christ; Christology: Jesus the foremost Son of God; evangelism: finding the lost (adopting them) for Jesus; ecclesiology: the community of the adopted ones. What sort of salvation are we advertising if we keep our doors shut to the orphans of this world? This would be a serious caricature of God’s grace. Just because we already have our own children, adoption does not have to be the exception. Not even a bio-

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logical child can prosper without being adopted by a life giving community. Biology alone does not secure that. The church is the family of God united by its common bond in Christ, its bloodline, and commitment to that new family of God, as in the case of Jesus, is more important than the commitment to our lineage. God entrusts children to our care. Whether he does so by biology or by adoption, is spiritually and biblically irrelevant. We therefore need to encourage and facilitate child adoptions by Christians wherever possible, and prioritize child adoption as a truly Christian core value."

So let us therefore be as creative and strategic as possible in seeing that it becomes the normal habit of Christian families to adopt a child or two, raise them up in the fear of the Lord, and disciple them into mature followers of Jesus, that same Jesus who said to his disciples: "I will not leave you orphans!" (John 14:17). Yes, we will be able to change the world by planting millions of house churches. But also by changing the world through extending God's supernatural love and parenthood - one adopted orphan at a time.

Web for Life

"What do we do with the children in house churches," parents have asked me many times. And, when the parents are not listening, the kids sometimes ask: "What do we do with the parents in house churches?" CAWKI has taught us to create programs and meetings for children that give them basically a children's version of the adult version of a 5-P church experience, and prepare them to be a full member of Mom and Dad's "real church". Usually, only a small number of kids ever make it, and the numbers are dwindling fast. If the latest research of Ron Luce of the recent Battle-Cry initiative in the US is correct, only 4% of all teenagers in the US will want to have anything to do with Mom's and Dad's religion (34% of whom say they are Bible believing Christians), and 4% is an almost "European" number. I believe the time has come for an entirely new way of addressing the issue of how to inspire, mold, invest, and prepare children for their life with God. And youth groups, Sunday school, even youth church will play an ever smaller role in achieving that.

Looking at children, the first years count, and they never come back. From 0 -6 years it is primarily the family that molds a child. From 7-17, the family, the school, and churches are competing with the media, the street and the Internet about who wins the hearts and minds of children and young adults. The outcome of this race will determine what will occupy their hearts, minds and dreams. In these years, the patterns of life are laid down, a genetic code is transmitted and received, and any role models have their deepest, lifelong impact. This is when values, roles, style, tone, language, patterns of respect, thinking and acting are formed and our character is molded. Things that will have implications for a lifetime. What heritage are we giving to the coming generations? What are the foundations on which they will build their lives? How ready are they to face the future? What are we sowing into them - and what will we reap?

Imagine a regional network of house churches specifically for children (non-Christian and Christian kids mixed), in three mini-generational age groups of 7-9, 10-12 and 13 to 17-year-olds. These "family time" groups of around 5-15 kids will meet in a home or any other safe place in the presence of adult hosts that provide the space, but their groups have Mini-"elders," two teenagers who

will be the “elders” of the group of 10-12 years old, and two 10-12 year-olds are the “elders” of the 7-9 year olds. These “elders” function as teachers and role models. The groups meet for around three hours a week and would involve a meal in a healthy family atmosphere. This network can become a force alongside family, school, and church through a practical regional network of people with a passion for kids and young adults, to instill a positive vision for life, mold characters through healthy role models, create a team spirit, and teach respect, experience nature through guided adventures, lay values as a foundation that will last a lifetime, and enhance children’s spirituality without making them religious.

These gatherings can serve as a complimentary education alongside parents, family, and school, and discover talents and help them to maximize their potential. The issue here is not the classical “outreach-and-in-drag” kind of evangelism, trying to incorporate children into a traditional church of any kind, but rather than bringing children to church, this would bring the church to them. The main issue is to create role models for healthy community, instill values and vision, create a safe environment for healthy development, provide a temporary extended family experience, and introduce and empower children to a nonreligious life with God that has not only invaded their world, but makes them an integral part of the decentralized invasion of the Kingdom of God that is happening on the planet.



Education

The area of education encompasses aspects like the role of transfer of values, knowledge and skills from one person or generation to the next, the modeling role of parents or mentors, seniors and elders, initiations and rites of passage, or the more formal ways of education like creches, kindergartens, schools, universities, think tanks, research, briefs and expert groups.

Hope Centers

Hope is one of the most precious commodities of the Kingdom. Without hope, life becomes dull, relationships cease, visions become dim, people perish, and nations resign. If people have no hope, they have no reason to continue a joyful life, everything becomes grey, moods become melancholic, and even most of our music turns from major to minor, as in the case of Finland. I see the lack of hope as the root issue, the main reason for today’s rampant confusions, depressions, psychological problems, medication, alcohol or drug abuse, or even the “brain drain” phenomenon, the “human capital flight,” that emigration of talented people in many areas of the world, like the Inner Cities in the US, or in Eastern Germany, where those with intellectual capacities literally move away to places that offer better options for their work (countries with serious brain drain include New Zealand, Iraq; the global list is currently topped by Iran).

Unemployment is highly suicidal as recent studies of the University of Leipzig have shown, and simply kills four times quicker: beginning with stress syn-

dromes, high blood pressure or addictive behavior, many are not only giving up hope to ever have work again, but ultimately give up on themselves. Most of these symptoms can be observed to set in sharply after a person loses work, and intensify after all attempts to find solutions fail. According to the ILO (International Labor Organization) of the UN, roughly 200 million people in the world are seeking a job, but are unemployed; 218 million are child laborers (aged 5-17). Only two nations in the world officially have zero unemployment: Andorra and Norfolk Island (belonging to Australia). The worst nations in terms of unemployment are Djibouti (50%), East Timor (50%), Gaza Strip (50%), Cocos Islands (60%), Turkmenistan (60%), Zimbabwe (80%), Liberia (85%) and Nauru (90%). In addition to national unemployment rates (Europe's highest, for example, is Spain with 13.7% unemployment), there are special groups like immigrants in Canada (51%) or slum dwellers in the "township" of Orange Farm (around 2 million people) near Johannesburg, RSA (60%) that have near-lethal unemployment rates. What is the gospel for them? Imagine going there and seriously explaining them that "God has paid work for all?"

My colleague Jeff Fountain has written a book called *Living as people of Hope*, describing reasons and ways to live by hope as people of hope. Imagine that we as followers of Christ, the hope of glory, would take the vivid hope that is in us and share it with those who have no hope, or lost all hope. Imagine we would rent or buy a local dilapidated school, restaurant, factory or hospital and turn it into a community center. We would recruit Christian people from all walks of life throughout the region, who demonstrate tangible hope and a positive outlook in life through certain social, creational, recreational, artistic or sports skills that they have, and ask them to be voluntary teachers of that particular skill, be it sowing, painting, collecting stamps, repairing cars, gardening, whatever, for two hours a week. Then, we would offer these courses for free to anyone in the area – a community college run by the people of hope themselves, teaching them not one, but at least two things: skills that help these people to learn to do something positive in life as a first step towards hope, and second: instill in them a hopeful attitude and outlook about life.

As they start connecting with new hope in their lives, this will lead to advancing, significantly, the hope-factor in many more people besides themselves who have given up hope, or worse, who have given up on themselves. This will culminate in their recovering life itself, including the life that is offered in Christ. Remember Hip Hop, that cultural movement that is best known for its style of dancing? One of the reasons why Hip Hop was born was as an attempt to take street kids off the gang-infested streets, and rather have them dance and tell their stories than cut each other's throats, impregnate each other and take drugs. Such regional "hope centers" could be run by anyone with administrative, communicative and pastoral skills, and if the Christian community will not do it, who will? This would be a very do-able and tangible way to save and rekindle the hopes of millions of people, and as a result, even rekindle their lives, both physical and eternal.

New kind of schools

The future of a society will be as good as its present schools. Schools, like nothing else, are the embodiment of the values and ways that a culture or society decides to pass on to the future generations. The current apostolic-prophe-

tic reformation will be a catalyst for entirely new – and old – ways of schools, as it will rediscover age-old pedagogical principles of teaching and learning and help young and old people alike to find their mission and meaning in life. God has not created mankind to “work and earn, pay taxes and burn,” as if work, employment, a pension and a space in a graveyard is all there is to life. A school system that prepares people for that – and no more - is setting whole generations up for trouble and a life of slavery. The global PISA study has highlighted and shocked many about the abysmal state of many schools in the world. Everyone studies, but hardly anyone learns anything. The standardized systems of information transfer into the heads of pupils and students, especially in the government run schools of the world, are leaving a terrifying mark on many graduates. They graduate, but without a goal; they possess knowledge, but no meaning. They are ready to do something, but without purpose. We seem to have arrived in biblical times where people are “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth” (2 Tim. 3:6). One of the diaconal aspects of this present apostolic-prophetic reformation will be the emergence of entirely new ways of learning, teaching, multiplying knowledge and wisdom, and new schools of all kinds. We will even see new schools for deacons started by apostolic people, like the “School of Social Management” initiated recently by my friend Thomas Giudici in Switzerland.

Anderson Williams, an apostolic man working with Elijah Center, a church on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, told me how they have designed and invented an entirely new school from scratch, a school geared to empower young people to understand and influence the world. In a short period of time, students from this particular school had won so many awards and contests, that the government became alert and said: what kind of school is this, after all? As they went and sat with the government, they were invited to use the educational board to challenge the schooling systems of the entire country towards this new standard. In this way, they were given a chance to influence the national educational system at a very significant level. A similar thing happened as their network, called CWBN, established a new type of leadership training in Belize. The Mayor of Belize was so impressed, that he offered them land opposite the town hall to set up a leadership institute designed to establish not only a new training standard, but to challenge the universities and other institutes of learning to the same caliber of teaching and learning.

My friend Bruno Bayer, an apostolic man from Herisau, Switzerland, was challenged by God in an encounter with a Christian school in Argentina to set up a school where children can quickly find their calling from God. Bruno went back to Switzerland and established Kaleb School. He continues with the vision of helping to establish many new kinds of schools across the nation, not just to provide a safe ghetto for the kids of christian parents, protecting them from the world, but imbedding into them a mindset trained to overcoming the world in a prophetic and apostolic way. Marco Gmür, a prophetically gifted evangelist in Switzerland, rediscovered the age-old principles of Jewish rabbinical teaching (including the stimulating and intelligence-building art of rapid-fire questions and answers so common to rabbinical schools), and uses it for biblical training.

Jeff Reed, visionary leader of BILD, an organization based in Ames, Iowa, dedicated to train many millions of church planters, told me how they are wor-

king to rediscover the pedagogical principles we saw at work in biblical Antioch, teaching principles that laid the foundation of an apostolic church (Acts 11:26). The (strongly Hebraic) teaching principles were later replaced by the (more bookish) Alexandrian model, and finally by the (scholastic and pagan) Greek schools of thought, that ultimately became the foundations of Western Academia.

Bindu Choudhrie, prophetic wife of Dr. Victor Choudhrie of India, an apostolic father to many, observed how illiterate women – rather than literate ones – found it much easier to pick up church planting principles and were basically four times more fruitful in ministry than their literate counterparts.

As we rediscover principles of oral learning, story-telling, modeling, mentoring, MAWL-ing (a teaching process that involves Modeling, Assisting, Watching, Leaving), the area of education will be one of the arenas where the current reformation will radically alter some of our most treasured conventions, but will lead to a much higher and more efficient level of teaching and learning. Prophetic ways of education means we need to model the exact opposite of dumb and dumber TV shows, Trash-TV, mind-numbing video and computer games, disinterested and disillusioned schools, and teachers who the devil loves to let loose on mankind to steal man's ability to think and then become a degenerate vegetable and couch potato.

Intelligent media productions, exciting story-telling through arts and media and schools high on mentoring, coaching, life and social skills, employing age old pedagogical principles like “it takes a whole village to raise a child,” (Hebraic) disciple-master relationships rather than (Greek) student-teacher relationships, learning by example, etc., will lead to a global and general upgrade of the quality of thinking of millions of people. And, as people's mind and ability to think and discern is changed and upgraded, their lives will change as well.

Kingdom Think Tanks

Remember the “Club of Rome,” that “global think tank and center of innovation and initiative” that was founded in 1968? In its own words, “it brings together scientists, economists, businessmen, international high civil servants, heads of state, and former heads of state from all five continents who are convinced that the future of humankind is not determined once and for all, and that each human being can contribute to the improvement of our societies. The Club of Rome's mission is to act as a global catalyst of change that is free of any political, ideological, or business interest and contributes to the solution of what it calls the *world problematique*, the complex set of the most crucial problems – political, social, economic, technological, environmental, psychological, and cultural - facing humanity.”

“The Club of Budapest,” drawing together well known names like the Dalai Lama, Gorbatschow, H.D.Genscher, R.Süssmuth, Peter Gabriel, Sir Peter Ustinov etc., promotes a “Planet Life University,” a new training institute of the “Club of Budapest” to train in skills and knowledge to actively change the world for good. Similar initiatives are the “Copenhagen Consensus,” or even think tanks like “Imani” in Ghana, an educational foundation set up “to promote property rights, the rule of law, open and unconditional trade, free speech, and a decentralization of power and resources, and to educate and create a core of young

scholars that will promote free enterprise, individual liberty, personal responsibility and voluntary action as ends of a free and prosperous society.”

What are the Kingdom solutions to this? **We need to set up what I call “Kingdom Think Tanks”** in the spirit of this apostolic and prophetic reformation, drawing together people of political, business, media, and educational backgrounds with apostolic and prophetic people at the center, not margins of this, **and do four things:**

1. Identify the core of the problem;
2. Come up with godly solutions to this;
3. Develop ways to implement these solutions;
4. Point to resources helping along the way.

If godly discernment and prophetic analysis are among the talents God is giving to Kingdom people, it positions them uniquely to address the “world problematique” at a root, not surface level; at a spiritual, not political or ideological level. Such groups will have to come up with Kingdom solutions to the world’s problems, which are nothing other than apostolic diaconia at a global level, and propose such solutions in palatable and wise ways to the concerned groups, governments, NGOs and global decision-making forums. If those forums take the proposed solutions and apply them, good; godly and wise counsel will be implemented and improve the lives of countless people. If such solutions and alternatives are rejected, also good. Christians have at least said their constructive piece, pointed to a creative alternative, and those in charge of political or strategic decisions are now in the hands of God. Both ways, the gospel wins. The only alternative is to remain silent, criticize from the sidelines and slam condemning Bible verses on politicians’ desks. From a Kingdom perspective, non-involvement in this world is not an option. For evil to progress, all it takes is for good people to do nothing. And if we are not part of the solution, we remain part of the problem. We have a German saying that goes: “Wer schweigt, fördert was im Gange ist,” meaning: “Silence promotes what already is happening.” This silence needs to be broken.

Other initiatives are www.ekklesia.co.uk, www.kingdomnow.org, www.thirdway.org.uk, Bruce Chapman’s “Discovery Institute” www.discovery.org, www.takingitglobal.org or “The Apostolic Nation Building Foundation” (ABB) in West Java, Indonesia. Most of these initiatives are excellent, but do not yet reflect the seismic changes that this present apostolic-prophetic reformation brings to the table. I believe we need to go much further than most of these initiatives and include Messianic work and finance principles, inspiration-based business and political innovations or prophetic intelligence. In addition, many of the past initiatives were born out of CAWKI, and not only reflect those churchy values, but often carry the same old denominationalism. The fragmentation and isolationism that this brought with it will have to be upgraded and advanced into true global networking, prophetically driven by a Kingdom-minded “swarm intelligence,” as the Kingdom of God is a global entity and unity that is very inadequately represented by fractionized, exclusivist guru-driven “apostolic networks” or great but isolated political ideas.

For evil to progress, all it takes is for good people to do nothing.

Let us not forget that we are not only called to provide solutions, but to be the solution, to live the solution, to practice a model society through which God powerfully makes the world jealous and calls an entire lost planet back to himself.

Furthermore, we need not be reticent to call sin - sin, demons - demons and God - God, and last but not least, let us not forget that we are not only called to provide solutions, but to be the solution, to live the solution, to practice a model society through which God powerfully makes the world jealous and calls an entire lost planet back to himself. For this, we need to live more communal than the Dalai Lama, network better than the UN, fight corruption better than World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz's anti-corruption crusade, advise Presidents better than witches and soothsayers, predict the future better than futurists and trend analysts, do business better than Sam Walton, "reduce inequities" better than Bill and Melinda Gates, and finance the entire thing better and more efficiently than the chop/chit "flying money" networks of China or the "hawala networks" for transferring and remitting funds known in the Muslim world for 500 years.

So why not start such a Think Tank in your home, your hotel or mansion, in your region, on your island, or your "garden," and network it with others around the world? Why not come together once a year in a Kingdom version of the "World's Economic Forum" in Davos, inform each other, participate in a truly global conversation, and make a global impact together? My colleague Dr. Raju Abraham, Indian neurologist, researcher, innovator, and church planter, is one of those who demonstrates that you can even take a remote hospital, as in the case of Kachwa Christian Hospital in Uttar Pradesh, and start such a think tank literally everywhere.



Culture

The area of culture encompasses aspects like the role of science, music, health, nutrition, arts, sports, entertainment, media, traditions, festivals, architecture, relaxing and leisure.

Prophetic art

We need to learn quickly to reinterpret prophecy outside of CAWKI. Prophecy in CAGWI happens decidedly outside church walls, in homes, on the bus, in business, through arts and media, by storytelling and poem writing, dancing and painting, song writing, musicals and dramas, and, OK, ideally every time a house church meets. My colleague Bruno Waldvogel in Basel, Switzerland, has written a musical called *Basileia* that tells the story of many hundreds of Jews who were killed brutally in a pogrom in AD 1349. Soon after, leprosy broke out in the city and killed many. Seven years later, the largest earthquake north of the Alps destroyed the city. Bruno is prophesying to an entire city, using a musical to do that.

Vincent van Gogh, that sad Dutch artist who badly wanted to become an Evangelist among poor Belgian mine workers, was rejected by the church of his day and not given the funding he requested for that purpose. But in an amazingly creative fury over the following years, he painted many pictures, some of which, in my view, prophesy into the lives of people and zoom out

and highlight aspects of life that confronts them profoundly. Millions now flock to the Amsterdam Van Gogh museum each year. This is why I believe artists, filmmakers, novelists, business inventors, script- and songwriters are going to be the main prophets in this new reformation, working together with those prophetic people alive today that have a calling from God to model, teach, and multiply the prophetic ministry all over the world, as well as those who are called to be the spies of God, constantly downloading privileged information from www.heavens.tv, vital intelligence insights that the body of Christ needs for its apostolic advances. Sadly, van Gogh ended up in depression and finally killed himself as he was unable to enter into his evangelistic mission from God.

Science helps to discover the patterns of God

Daniel Goleman, who became well known for his book on *Emotional Intelligence*, released a book in 2006 called *Social Intelligence*. He describes, from a position of neuroscience and psychology, that people flourish best as they are not alone, but at home in a group of people that help bring out the best in them. Similar to the findings of author and psychologist Larry Crabb (*Connecting*) he states that belonging to social groups, that is, learning and sharing life as a part of a social network, makes people not only more intelligent and successful in life, but ultimately more compassionate.

Science tells us that sets of neurons in the human brain exist with the sole task of attuning us to the inner state of the person we are with, mapping their inner state and echoing it back to us. These neural networks are part of our “social brain,” Goleman says, designed to connect us with the person we are with in a very intimate way. These “mirror neurons” make us want to act, and if another person is in need, then something within us immediately wants to help. This is how humans, scientifically speaking, are “wired for compassion.”

Peter Borger, a Dutch scientist working in the area of biology, told me how he discovered that the principles and new discoveries of the new biology basically disproves Darwin's theses that evolution is the motor of life. Unimpressed by a myriad of seemingly scientific observations he collected rock solid and cutting-edge scientific evidence that simply makes Darwin redundant. In his book *Darwin Revisited* he goes on to offer an entirely alternative theory - a general and universal theory of biological variation, explaining how the new biology demonstrates Darwin wasn't right and paving the way for the scientific alternative.



Business

The area of business encompasses aspects like the role of money, economy, work, problem-solving, taxation, marketing, budgeting, banking, interest, industry, globalization, logistics, unions or dealing with organized crime.

Here some examples how apostolic diaconia could look like in the area of business.

Business Planting

Being in contact with the creator simply ignites initiative. A prophetic spirit will be the source of many new inventions, inspirations, business solutions, political solutions, and Kingdom solutions. To step into a relationship with the Creator will release creativity like nothing else. It can put a spark into the dullest eyes and inspire former nobodies to do something great for God. Business has always been a training ground for the people of God – not only Jesus, but basically all his disciples had a business background.

Nowhere do we see disciples in the New Testament retire in their companies, but all the biblical disciples ultimately left their businesses behind and entered their last and final stage of their ministry as employees in the vineyard of God the father himself. Apostolic diaconia therefore means not only to plant churches, but to plant businesses, even starting entrepreneurial schools of pioneering and business-planting, business-factories, so to speak, but make it clear from the outset that business – especially when it is successful – is never the final phase of the life of a disciple, but always a temporary, transient one.

As Kingdom people, we need to be thoroughly involved in the world of business, but in a prophetic manner, establishing a credible witness in society, re-establishing biblical ethics and to raise people and funds for Kingdom purposes. Whole networks of “Kingdom Companies” or “Crown Companies” (where Jesus is, supposedly, boss of the company) are emerging, and business entrepreneurs like my German friend Prof. Jörg Knoblauch are constantly seeking for new and creative ways of invading the world of economics with the good news of God.

Business factories

Jesus was a businessman, a building contractor with eighteen years of experience. And, if our biblical information is correct, all or almost all of the early disciples that Jesus turned into apostles were businessmen at the time. Even the women mentioned who followed Jesus in Luke 8:1-3 had a business (or top social/political) background – including Mary Magdalene, a former demonized prostitute, who was probably “self-employed.” Jesus once warned specifically of a “hired hand” mentality (John 10:13), the mindset of an employee who did his job for as long as he was paid, because he was paid. The entire New Testament does not contain a specific command to remain an employee for life, as if this is God’s idea for anyone’s life, but says, in the words of Paul: “If you were called by God while you were a slave, do not be troubled. If you can gain your freedom, do so” (1 Cor. 7:21). Countless studies have shown, that businesspeople (either self-employed or founders/directors of businesses that employ others) simply think differently, have a different value system, make different use of their time, and ultimately act differently.

The advancing Kingdom of God rests on highly entrepreneurial people, those who initiate, pioneer, go where no-one has gone before, make doors where there have been not even paths before, those who “happen themselves” rather than waiting for something to happen, for others to lead, initiate, and direct. It may not be a coincidence at all that Jesus was so picky with his disciples, and he may not only have looked into their hearts while praying about whom to call and whom not to call into discipleship, but also at their entrepreneurial minds. The advancement of the Kingdom of God sleeps in and beco-

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mes static, if static people are taking the helm, passive hired hands, employees of religious organizations. If you, for example, look at the immensely popular book *Rich Dad Poor Dad* by Robert T. Kiyosaki, a secular man without a Kingdom perspective yet, you read how he tells about his “two dads,” one (his physical father) a highly successful (but relatively poor) employee, the other (his step-father) a rich businessman and investor. The most fundamental difference between the two fathers was the way they thought. One advised to work for a corporation, the other to own the corporation. One gave the (bad) advice “to go to school, get good grades and look for a safe secure job,” the other observed principles of investment, how to turn problems into solutions, and start a business. Ultimately, one takes the initiative for his life into his own hands, while the other gives up this initiative to others. In Germany, a social-democrat country where the social net and system is one of the safest in the world, this has led to an amazing number of people giving up the initiative to be in charge of their own lives: in 2006, a staggering 41.5% of all German households financially live off the government, on social security, pension, etc. If someone else is in charge of your life, with no hope of change, and you are completely dependant on someone else – even if it is “the system” – without any means available for you to break out, then this is exactly what slavery is about. To make my point more accurately: in our so-called free world, powered by a free market economy, the slavery of life-long employment is a state of mind, the resignation of the individual, rendering all powers to “the system” and conforming to it. And sadly enough it has been well-meaning CAWKI-molded Christians, who have demonstrated, propagated, preached, and sanctioned such a life of slavish adaptation to the world. They preached: Abandon, like us, a dangerous, vision and faith-based life and come into the “safety first!” camp. They altered the entire meaning of Matthew 6:33 into “seek you first a secure job, and all its benefits will be given to you.” That is not the voice of purebred Christianity; that is the voice of Babylonian captivity speaking in churches. Where is that spirit of Jesus that sets the captives free, that says: “I can afford to defy the systems of this world, because I belong to another Kingdom”?

There is a world of difference between the way a pioneering businessperson thinks and the way an employee thinks. The place where this foundational economic thinking pattern is developed is mainly in the homes, first fed by Mom and Dad, and later fueled by schools and colleges that train – watch it – more employees. Where do people learn to break out of this employee-mindset? The answer is: in their homes, if they are so extremely fortunate to be among the minute percentage of kids to have a pioneering father or mother. If not, where do they go, university? 99% of Universities train top class employees, who, ideally, turn again into more professors who have all the knowledge, but usually very little business acumen. I believe that in biblical days and in CAGWI the true function of business is what CAWKI has attempted to achieve through Bible schools and theological training institutes: to upgrade the minds of people, to help them break out of the demonic shell of a slavish mindset that dictates to them that things can only happen if someone else pays for it, and embrace a pioneering, daring and hopeful outlook in life. In the business world you need to understand economics, politics, the principle of sowing and reaping, diagnostics and therapy, strategy, planning, integrity, and much more. And you learn that if you won't do it, it won't happen.

Where is that spirit of Jesus that sets the captives free, that says: “I can afford to defy the systems of this world, because I belong to another Kingdom”?

This leads us to an interesting double-insight. On one hand God wishes us to learn to take initiative, to take life into our own hand and not be a passive couch potato waiting for others to make life happen. And just as we have learnt to do that, God basically asks us to lay it all down, to give it all up, to relinquish all self-made egotrips and totally depend on him. If he does not move, we don't move. If he does not do it, we don't do it. Now, not every person is a pioneer, many are called to be "harvest workers" and to faithfully work for their King at the very place Jesus places them. But in an age that calls for a great expansion of the Kingdom of God, especially those people with a call and gift to pioneer, to blaze new ways and move where no-one has moved before need to learn a double-lesson: it is vital to first learn how to overcome a passive mindset that leaves the initiative in other peoples hands and learn to "happen themselves". But once a pioneer has understood that, he needs to learn the second lesson: to give the reins entirely over to the King, to die to the idea of "let's do it alone, with or without God!" and to take the directives and cues only from his King, being close to him, vulnerable and utterly dependent on him.

Imagine if Christians with an apostolic vision would again start "business factories," forging pioneers, places where young and old people alike could come and learn these pioneering skills, and before learning to pastor or even plant churches employee-style ("it's a safe form of employment, and 100-200 members will be enough to pay my pension..."), learn to plant businesses in sound and solid preparation for strategic Kingdom advances that go far beyond mere business. Imagine apostolic and prophetic Think Tanks, where future entrepreneurs are trained by present ones, not only drawing from experiences of Christian ones, but those who are the best in their fields. Jesus once said, "The people of this world are more shrewd than the children of the light" (Luke 16:8) and encouraged his followers "to use worldly wealth to gain friends" (vs.9). In a reformation age, we need to provide a place where today's (or even yesterday's) planters and pioneers instill and mold the mindset and thinking patterns of entire new generations, doing what most parents, homes, schools, colleges, and universities did not do.

Imagine if more and more business solutions truly inspired by God (remember the glue formula of the founder of Jabez Polymer?) will translate into amazing innovations. And because the inventor himself remains a humble servant of God, not a Mammon-drunk business tycoon, the breakthrough will not be used to build a selfish billion-dollar business empire that comes and goes, but to serve the eternal Kingdom of the God and pour billions into apostolic advances. This would be nothing more than acknowledging that it is "the wisdom of God," a prophetic description of Jesus himself, that says: "With me are all riches, enduring wealth, and prosperity" (Prov. 8). And if Jesus gives it, he is the one who deserves to give it away for the advancement of his own purposes. In 2008, the world counted the existence of 1 million millionaires that, inbetween themselves, controlled an estimated wealth of 26.200 billion Euros, equivalent to 40.000 bn US \$. Imagine if the 10,000 richest Christians in this world were to suddenly see this connection, and invest the roughly 500-1,000 billion dollars they might control between themselves no longer according to their own thinking, but placing it, as in biblical days, before "the apostles' feet"? This would literally change the world.

I have mentioned Hans-Nielsen Hauge before, an apostolic father in Norway (1771-1824) who not only planted house churches, but 30 businesses in only four years. This “Haugianism,” as it is called today by many, “has contributed to a spiritual and mental liberation all over the country, and is the contributing factor to Norway’s receiving its own constitution and becoming independent in 1814,” writes Sigbjørn Ravnasen. Imagine how the world would change if we did this in all cities of the world!

Business incubator

In 1988 Vaughn and Narlene McLaughlin moved into a depressed area of Jacksonville to begin a church designed to meet the needs of the whole person. Today their converted Bell South building, called the “Multiplex,” houses nearly twenty for-profit businesses including the Potter’s House Café, a credit union, a beauty salon, a graphic design studio and a Greyhound Bus terminal - all started by church members who lacked capital but had a dream. Another building serves as an incubator for two-dozen new businesses. Vaughn McLaughlin says: “Ministry is always what happens outside the church. If you are not making an impact outside of your four walls, then you are not making an impact at all.” In 1999 McLaughlin was named “Entrepreneur of the Year” by Florida State University. He repeatedly asks the same question that churches in all kinds of neighborhoods are increasingly asking themselves: “Would the community weep if your church were to pull out of the city? Would anybody notice if you left? Would anybody care?”

Tom Deuschle, an apostolic man who went to Zimbabwe to plant a church in the 1970s, told us he encouraged many of the new converts who joined the church in Harare to ask God what he would have them do in life, starting with a business. As he blessed them for their pioneering endeavours, many started new businesses from scratch, some of them becoming the largest companies in the country and some even global players. Tom tells this story in his book *Building People, Building Dreams*.

Parachute churches in companies

In China, companies run by Christians are becoming the legal platform to establish “parachute churches,” churches that basically function within the safe compounds of a business inside a governmental system hostile towards Christianity. The business thus becomes a compound, a safe island within an antichristian society, and entire churches are literally dropped from heaven – parachuted – into these companies.

Repositioning for a new global order

Another friend of mine, Nigel Sykes, professor of economics at Warwick University (England) and a prophetic man, wants to position more Christians in strategic situations in the emerging economic global order. One of the tasks ahead will be to prophetically anticipate the development of global or national economies. Another function will be to fund inspiration-driven inventions (many coming from Christians or Jews) with start-up money and business know-how and watch them thrive financially, ultimately returning billions of dollars of profit for the advancement of the church. This is not new at all; religious organizations like the Freemasons or the Mormons have done it for

“Would the community weep if your church were to pull out of the city? Would anybody notice if you left? Would anybody care?”

centuries, and now the Mormons own half of the state of Utah. But as the global church rediscovers the Marketplace as a place to influence and invade the world, we will see many encouraging signs of the church moving strongly in the right direction. I believe though that business is never an end in itself, but will always remain "God's School of Life," an immensely helpful but temporary experience for believers who mature into disciples and finally into equippers of others.

Life before death: a financial "Alpha Course"

People who live in practice without God (Christians and non-Christians alike) are not passionately interested in finding out more about "God #1," but about "God #2" – money. And because they believe that money comes from work, they are glued to the economy, job market, stock market, business opportunities, and the like as if their life depends on it (which it does not). Most have found out pretty quickly that "those who trusted in Egypt will be afraid and put to shame" (Isa. 20), and that part of the earthly nature is greed (Col. 3:5). Little wonder, therefore, that fear and greed are the eternal companions of a life that trusts in material things.

Every year, a German insurance company called **R + V** does a survey on "*The Fears of the Germans*." The top three of the seven fears listed each year all circle around one subject: work and money. The top three (unemployment, rising living costs, and the worsening economy) make Germans (and not only Germans) shake with fear, and this fear defines and molds their lives to the core. It enslaves them. As faith is the very antidote to fear and as the Bible speaks more about money and work than even about heaven and hell, Christians are uniquely and strategically positioned to speak a powerful message into this world of fear through a message of an entirely different economic set-up. I call it the gospel according to money and work, and it has absolutely nothing to do with those pitiful, pseudo-Christian extremes of "health and wealth" or the poverty spirit that plagues most Christians. Maybe the worst, because it is the most widespread of all pseudo-Christian forms of subsistence, is that eventless, economically streamlined, resigned, employed-for-life kind of middle class life that "toils and earns, pays taxes and burns" like every one else. Perhaps the only icing on the cake is that some Christians pray before their toiling, and attempt to feel better by "giving tithes." As French philosopher and theologian Jacques Ellul writes in *The Subversion of Christianity*, "When faith is vital and brotherly love is resurgent, money is no problem. Money becomes dominant only when men and women really cease to hope or believe and enter into routines and conformities. When being is weak, 'having' immediately becomes dominant. Mammon sets up its law in the church precisely to the degree that the church loses its relationship with Jesus Christ."

Shockingly and very sadly, but not the main point of this book, is that many if not most Christians live by the very same financial principles that the world does: mammon-based finance principles rather than Messianic finance principles. But my point here is: most non-Christians would be desperately interested if there truly were such a thing as an alternative lifestyle, the supernatural Kingdom alternative to the standards of Babylon. This would speak directly to them, into the very area dearest to their hearts, and would tell them that "There is Life before Death!" If we would choose our language carefully, speak with skill-

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ful knowledge and faith-based authenticity, this would convince them of the existence of God probably better than if we would heal a thousand lame and blind folks in a national TV show. Why not bring the gospel to humanity in a jail guarded by Mammon in the one area in which they are all existentially interested?

While it is true that most Christians neither know nor live such a life just yet, this does not invalidate the fact that economic Kingdom principles do exist. Absolutely none of these principles have anything to do with “gaining your personal financial freedom,” that flaky advertisement line of countless pseudo-Christian versions of “financial freedom” seminars, promoting nothing else than a thousand ways to an independent, worry-free life, as if this is the way that God defines freedom (which he does not). I see the pitiful economic situation of both the church (as the salt) and the world as intrinsically linked; one depends on the other. Whether we know this or not, this is a Kingdom principle. If the salt has lost its saltiness, the world goes foul.

I believe that the chaotic and non-biblical standards in today’s Christendom are the result of a traumatic lack of healthy apostolic teaching in the area of economics that has been substituted over many centuries by deficient and substandard principles of thrifty tips and tricks. As a result, Christians have lost almost all firm ground economically; but there is no reason it should stay that way. I have great and detailed hopes for a financial reformation as a result of an apostolic reformation. My friend Thomas Giudici and I have written a book on this subject already, and the feedback, particularly from not-yet-Christians, has been very exciting. But imagine this: you may have heard of the Alpha Course, initiated by people like Nicky Gumble and churches like Holy Trinity Brompton in London. What if we would start “financial alpha courses” everywhere, one-day seminars or four evenings on “There is Life before Death,” and explain to not-yet Christians in their language the simple principles of an alternative Kingdom life or the gospel in the area of money and work? Imagine telling them things they have never heard before, things like “God has paid work for you” and how to break out of a jail whose walls are named “work and death” or “leisure and boredom”? Such seminars (according to Starfish thinking, free of charge with no strings attached), but even more powerfully, such lives lived again according to Messianic finance principles would rock this world, shock Mammon out of his content slumber, shake the gates of Hades hemming in billions of people. And the ekklesia would – and will – again become salt and light in this world. Again, every slave listens, if a free man speaks. Therefore, let the life of free men speak again.

Apostolic diaconia in the midst of crisis

Early in 2006, residents of a local community in the Indonesian city of Jakarta, who were squatting in open areas, were facing evictions, says Wolfgang Fernández. The people, a total of 200 families, refused to leave. No alternative sites were offered to the families. Eventually, the police was called to implement the eviction notice. The result was a violent riot in which many were seriously hurt. The tractors were brought in, the humble homes were destroyed and the land was cleared. These people were Muslim and no one of their faith was available to help them. In the middle of this nightmare, some residents went to the only people that had shown them care and attention,

members of Gereja Victory Indonesia, a small Christian church led by Joshua Dodo and Sta Winarta. Their members were all Chinese and at first feared the consequences of helping these Muslims, but as they sought the Lord they felt compelled to get involved. They welcomed the people, clothing and feeding them until their simple facilities were totally overrun by the needy people. The local church leaders called on other larger churches for help, but none was given. They decided that it was up to them to change the situation and got involved in relocating people, training people and helping them get established. They even bought some land to provide a legal residence for those who had been squatting before. The church has tripled in numbers as many of the former residents now come to the church, even using their *jilbab* to cover their heads.



Politics

The area of politics encompasses aspects like servanthood (at a communal, regional or national level), nationalism, patriotism, constitutions, war, reconciliation, forms of government, military, police, corporate identity, nation building, social DNA, redemptive purposes, secret service, justice, law or globalization.

Here are some examples of how Kingdom servanthood could look like in the arena of politics.

From condemning the city to praying for it

Jeremiah's prophecy in chapter 29 begins with "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (vs. 7). Eric Swanson (Boulder, Colorado), says it like this: "For too long we as the church have positioned ourselves as adversaries to our communities. The monolithic church has stood afar and lobbed in pontifical salvos condemning the city and those who are trying to serve it. Maybe it is time we began blessing the city by blessing those who have given themselves to the city! Pastors in our Colorado community have begun inviting city officials and influencers to their monthly lunches. The Mayor, the Chief of Police, District Attorney, editor of the newspaper, the university president, and others have spoken to this ministerial alliance. After these guests address the gathering they are prayed over and the ministers thank God for these folks and ask Him to bless these city servants (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Anyone can curse the city, but Christians are in a unique position to really 'bless' a city and her people."

Instead of duplicating human services, partner with existing ones

There are basically three solutions to each of man's problems: *satanic* solutions (like attempting to cure AIDS by raping more virgins, sadly a diabolical strategy very alive and well in a number of countries), *neutral* solutions that are born out of a true but essentially unspiritual, humanistic concern, and *Kingdom* solutions that can go to the core of the problem. Nearly every community or city has a number of human service agencies that are morally positive and spiritually neutral, doing their best to meet the needs of the underserved and

under-resourced people of the community. Such agencies include the local food bank, homeless shelter, emergency family housing, and safe houses for abused women, etc. Many churches have until today basically ignored those existing services and have, in a wrong understanding of their role, set up parallel services competing with those that already exist. In Eric Swanson's words: "Rather than starting a new ministry, why not form partnerships with existing groups as 'partner ministries' of a local congregation? The Bible is replete with examples of how God used secular people in partnership with his people to fulfil his purposes. Think of Joseph and Pharaoh, Nehemiah and Artaxerxes, and Esther and King Ahasuerus. Instead of each individual congregation having its own food pantry, why not partner with the local community food bank?"

Praying at the gates

Peter and Pippa Gardner (Wales) have described in their booklet *Praying at the Global Gates* how the Old Testament version of sitting in the city gates, a point of access and places of political debate and decision-making, can be taken and applied to today's globalized world. They explain the function of groups like G8, G20, G77, WTO, WEF and many others as "global governmental agencies" or "global gates," similar to the UN, describing itself as "the town hall of the planet." Christians need to speak audibly and intelligently into such "global decision-making forums" and influence those of global influence. Most Christians are afraid of what they don't know, and fear of the unknown can quickly go one step further and turn into judgment and condemnation. But as we learn how to embrace and love our city, region, nation, and world, we will quickly find allies and friends in unusual places. And new synergies towards "the prosperity of the city" will open doors not only for the redemptive message of Christ, but also for "solutions made in the Kingdom" right into the heart of the political process when the voice of wisdom is again heard in the streets and the gates.

Research and informed reconciliation

If we want to change a city or nation, we need to demonstrate our compassion and love by getting to know the object of our love. This includes the political and spiritual history, mapping its historical traumas and successes, the status of the "harvest force" and the "harvest field," and the basic facts and numbers that a city, region, or nation represents. Facts and statistics, just like in the biblical book of Numbers or the research project of Joshua and Caleb, help us to grasp the magnitude of the task ahead and direct our love and compassion in such a way that it becomes specific, direct, adjusted to the real situation at hand. We simply cannot love what we do not know, and we cannot change what we do not love. Research pioneers like Ralph Winter, Bob Waymire, Ray Bakke, Jim Montgomery, Roy Wingerd, Patrick Johnstone, David Barrett, George Barna, Peter Brierly and many others have done a great service to the wider church in helping them understand the world around them. I believe that research – getting to know the facts before we act - is a true form of prophetic ministry that we have to embrace much more if we want to be part of salvation history. This includes getting to know the darker secrets of a town, region or people group to "find out why darkness lingers where it does"

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as George Otis Jr. describes in his book *The Twilight Labyrinth* or John Dawson in his book *Healing America's Wounds*.

David Demian calls the church to identify, repent, and reconcile traumas of the past as a way to clear the way forward. English intercessor and Christian Statesman Brian Mills has spent countless years doing research towards specific reconciliation between nations and people groups as documented in his books *Fountain of Tears* or *Sins of the Fathers* (co-authored with Roger Mitchell). Both are part of a larger group committed to *Unscramble Africa*, so the title of a booklet on the subject, researching the atrocities by the hand of the colonial powers after the infamous "Berlin-Congo Conference" in 1884, where several countries cut up Africa like a cake, established boundaries of nation-states through the middle of tribal territories and organized the strategic wholesale of Africa, exploiting her riches until today.

But it is not only the dark secrets that we need to know about cities, regions, or nations, but also their unique God-given calling and personality, their positive role in God's economy. Martin Scott of England, a prophetic man, helps this process by identifying the "personality," the nature and identity of whole cities and regions. Arthur Burk has developed the concept of a social DNA and applied it not only to businesses, but also to nations, trying to trace the personality of nations and encourage their redemptive purpose in the wider community of nations.

**"We have waited for you
for 900 years!"**

Sacrificial peace brokering

As both the prophetic and apostolic ministries have a strong redemptive element to them, diaconal projects (to share love and forgiveness towards reconciliation) are opening up huge new opportunities for the gospel. One recent example for this was the "Reconciliation Walk," inspired by Lynn Green and John Pressdee, in which many Christians retraced the bloodstained steps of the crusaders 900 years before, apologizing for the terrors inflicted in Jesus' name on Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the Middle East. Almost all of the Turkish media carried this news as a small band of tired and dusty Christians, misunderstood and even criticized by the majority of Evangelical Christianity, were welcomed by the mayor and many officials of Istanbul with the words: "We have waited for you for 900 years!"

Other acts of apostolic and prophetic diaconia will involve sacrificial peace brokering, the provision not only of UN-type diplomacy, but a quality of reconciliation that involves extreme risk and sacrifice on behalf of those going as mediators between warring parties. Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors, told me how he offered himself as a ransom to the former chief of Hezbollah who had captured a few dozen Westerners and held them as hostages in southern Lebanon in the early 90s. He told him that he had kissed his wife good-bye, and as he has lived his life he was ready to be exchanged for another young Christian man who was in Hezbollah's custody for many weeks. "Let that young man go, take me instead and tie me to your radiator," Andrew said to the stunned man. "I have never heard of anything like this before," the Hezbollah chief replied. "Oh, nothing new at all," Andrew told him. "Jesus of Nazareth, 2000 years ago, allowed himself to be tied to the radiator of another captor of men, so that all others could go free," said Andrew and presented him a Bible. Needless to say, Andrew was invited back, having unique opportunities to speak to

**"There are no closed
doors for God; all doors
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back."**

many battle-hardened and highly armed Hezbollah warriors in the process. "If Jesus is not able to change the hearts of fundamentalist Muslims, no one can. And we Christians need to go to them, ready and prepared for anything," says Andrew, ending it with his famous line: "There are no closed doors for God; all doors are open, if you are ready to go in – and not come back."

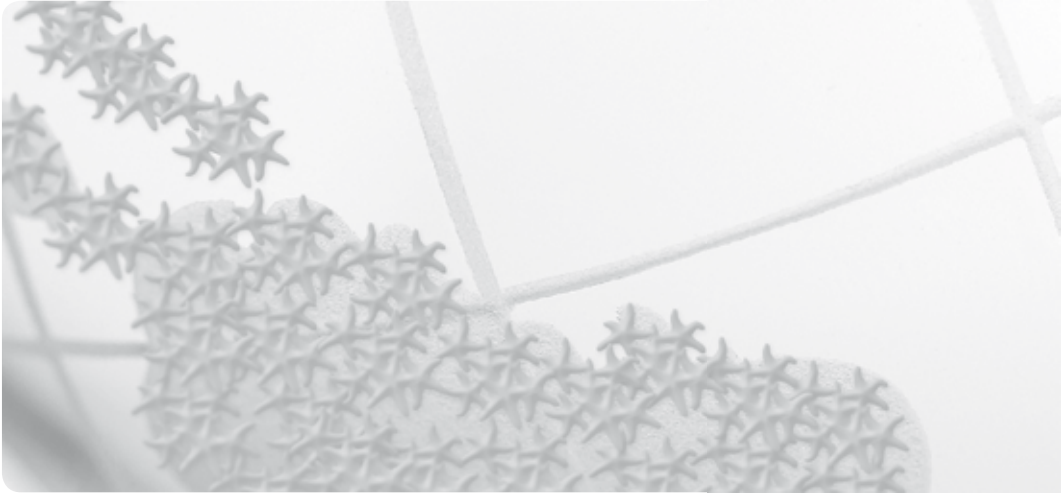


PART VI: IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

In this part of the book, we will look at the question “What does this mean, and what, therefore, should we do?” Ideas have consequences. If what I have been trying to communicate is accurate, at least in its broad strokes, probably all of us will have some very serious choices to make. The first choice might very well be to discard all of this in its entirety. Why bother? Maybe you feel really safe in your world. Maybe it is too late. Maybe it is too early. Maybe you are too young or too old, too well-known or feel too insignificant. Maybe you already have written and preached “your book,” so you feel you are unable or unwilling to retract what you already said in public. Maybe your constituency, your church or organization, the ones that pay you, will not like it if you challenge and change things (has anybody ever liked radical change?). Maybe your church, your denomination, your ministry, or your house church network, has just settled down nicely after debating policy, vision, and mission statements (and the budget!) for four years, and now this! Maybe your church has just inaugurated that grand building, and you are part and parcel of paying a bill of 13.5 million Euros over the next 10 years. Maybe you have just bought a number of oxen or a field, your father has just died, or you just got married - all true biblical reasons for not getting on with the party (Luke 14). I am sure there are hundreds of reasons that sound convincing, telling us to not get involved, and let others change the world. But what if it is not you who found out about all these things, **but they found you?** What if God has not convinced you, but convicted you, and placed a deep hunger and thirst for the true things of God in you?

If you followed and agreed with this line of thought so far, do you need to change? And what kind of change is it going to be?





25 Repositioning from Within

Before you go and change the world, walk three times around your own house.

Chinese Saying.

25 Repositioning from Within

Before I get started on this subject, let me say that no amount of outward and structural change will change anything. Structures are important, but content is more important. Architecture is great, but the architect himself is greater. True change will come from the inside out, not the other way around. And only Jesus, through his Holy Spirit, can do that in and through us – if we give him access. If the person of Jesus is not our central starting point, I believe nothing will truly change. All that talk about apostolic and prophetic reformation really will only lead to a new language, a new façade; and we will end up, not with a reformation, but a redecoration of CAWKI that refurbishes the same old system yet again. Jesus once asked his disciples: “Who do the people say that I am?” Our own true answer to this question will become the foundation on which everything is built that we are and do in this life.

Steve Chalke, the founder of Oasis Trust in England has put it this way: “Our Christology must form our missiology which must form our ecclesiology. In other words, what we believe about Christ must form how we do mission, and that must form how we do church. We often let our ecclesiology form our missiology, and that forms our Christology. We often start with how we do church, and that forms how we do our mission, and how we do our mission shapes how we and our world view God.”

What price do we pay for an accurate Christology? It is nothing short of the giving up of ourselves, our rebellion, our strong opinions, our agendas, and, if necessary, our theologies and ecclesiology. But we need to remind ourselves that we live in a world that is used to a discount mentality: where can I get more goods for a lower price? In many ways, this thinking has found its way into Christianity as well. We have had entire waves of such thinking wash over us that suggested we can have church without fellowship, maturity without prayer, church growth without embracing human pain, discipleship without obedience, charisma without character, freedom without being a bond-slave of Christ, reaping without sowing, salvation without witnessing, revival without repentance, reformation without cost, apostolic ministry without suffering, prophetic ministry without rejection, healing without holiness, Christianity without the cross.

This is why I'd like to invite you to go through three vital stages as you seek to gain understanding, entry, access and, finally, ministry in this present reformation: a re-visitation with Jesus; a re-formatting of your thinking, values and life-arrangements; and lastly a redeployment that allows God to put you where he wanted to have you in the first place. Remember that CAWKI is fading, and Church As God Wants It (CAGWI) is emerging? Interpreting the New through the glasses of the Old will be our fiercest enemy, and absolutely all of us need to repeatedly stand in front of a mirror and re-examine our hearts, our thinking, our lives, our ministry, our faith, as Paul challenges us to “examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith, test yourselves!” (2 Cor. 13:5). In my own life, I find it so terribly easy to sit down and relax on the couch of past great experiences with God, feeling safe in the systems, understandings, relationships, and financial set-ups in which I find myself, and I even look back at all the fruit and excitement of the past and conclude that I don't need to change! I realize

Jesus once asked his disciples: “Who do the people say that I am?”

Our own true answer to this question will become the foundation on which everything is built that we are and do in this life.

again and again what a painful and proud mistake that is, and that I am not finished just yet! What has helped me time after time is this:

1) Revisit with Jesus, ask him to visit you, draw near to God, as he promised that he will draw close to you, seek first his face. For this, you will need both time and guts. So take a time-out and all the guts you can muster, hide yourself away someplace and let Jesus ask you some questions. I always marvel at the penetrating questions Jesus asks. As he sends letters to the angels of the seven churches in Rev. 2 and 3, he looks at these kind of things and probably would ask us these kind of questions: after all that testing of the apostles, did you forsake your first love? Are you faithful even to the point of death? Do you hold on to the teaching of the Nicolaitans? Did you tolerate Jezebel? Are you actually asleep and have failed to finish well? Do you hold on to what you have? Have you become lukewarm – something that truly makes Jesus sick?

I remember being on a guided tour through the Catacombs in Rome in 1999, the very place where the early house churches met underground during times of persecution. I decided to stay back from the group a bit, asking Jesus to highlight the significance of this place for me. And suddenly someone I did not see with my physical eyes started hugging me, tighter and tighter, not to strangle me but to hold me real close, until I could not bear it anymore. I felt very safe in this embrace but wept as I realized Jesus was so close to me. I heard him say that just as a dead man once was thrown into Elisha's grave and came back to life after touching the bones of the prophet (2 Kings 13:21), so will these Catacombs of Christianity revitalize me as well as the church, like dead men reanimated back to life. I have had several experiences like that with Jesus, and not one of them was the same. But all I know was this: as we revisit with Jesus and ask him to come to us, he will do so, and, after that, we will never be the same. If he draws close, let us ask him to search our hearts and turn us upside down to shake loose any idols we keep in our pockets or hearts. Let us ask him to cleanse us from false priorities and understandings and refill us with himself through his Holy Spirit.

2. Re-Formatting. An encounter with Jesus, the risen Lord, will have consequences, or it might simply not have been Jesus at all, but, instead, a harmless Fata Morgana, a powerless caricature or impression of Jesus. However, after revisiting with Jesus, things have to change their format. Just as we reformat a hard-drive in a computer, install a new BIOS (a program that tells the computer what it is), we need to go ahead and start rearranging our heart, our priorities, our thinking, our values, and ultimately our lives. If we are unable to change ourselves, our family situation or our immediate surroundings, it is better to stay at home than attempt to change others. Remember the saying: "Before you go and change the world, walk three times around your own house." What is the format of our lives? Our arrangements with the world around us, the things that we take for granted that mold our lives and box us in? Are our lives truly legitimate in the area of sex, money, and power? If

An encounter with Jesus, the risen Lord, will have consequences, or we might simply not have met Jesus at all, but with a harmless Fata Morgana, a caricature or impression of Jesus that is powerless.

not, will we change? And if not, why not? What are the excuses that seemingly legitimize us, the thoughts that suggest that we stay just as we are? But if we are passionate and disciplined enough to change our own lives, which we can control, God will put us in situations of responsibility over things we do not control. "Whoever can be trusted with very little, can also be trusted with much" (Luke 16:10).

I will not forget an evening on the Kampala prayer mountain in Uganda where I visited with my friend John Mulinde some time ago. In the darkness I heard many people praying, and so I knelt down and prayed too. A man walked up and down nearby, and all we could hear was his prayers at the top of his voice: "God change my life, change my thinking, my praying, my preaching, my family, my mind, my feelings, change Kampala, change Uganda, change Europe, but Lord, please, please, please, change me!"

This kind of prayer clearly articulates reformatting.

3. Re-deployment. After we have done our homework and changed what is in our power to change, let us then – and only then - ask and allow Jesus to re-enter and re-insert us into his plans. He has a place for us: a destiny, a mission, a spot in his army, partners in ministry, giftings and callings, peoples and timings. Let us allow him to scatter us, yoked together with the people that we were made for, into the places where he has us go to do as he pleases. I believe that the huge spiritual unemployment in today's church, the fact that 85% of all leaders are unable to identify their own calling and probably an even bigger percentage of believers who are uncertain of their role, has to do with us taking the place of God in our own life and picking and choosing roles, places, ministries and times at our own whim and will; we copy others, their models and experiences, and forsake what God originally made us to be. In prophetic language, we have started our own armies, selected our own wars, have fought outside our proper place, and need to be brought back to the place which God has designed for us as in the vision in Toronto that I described earlier.

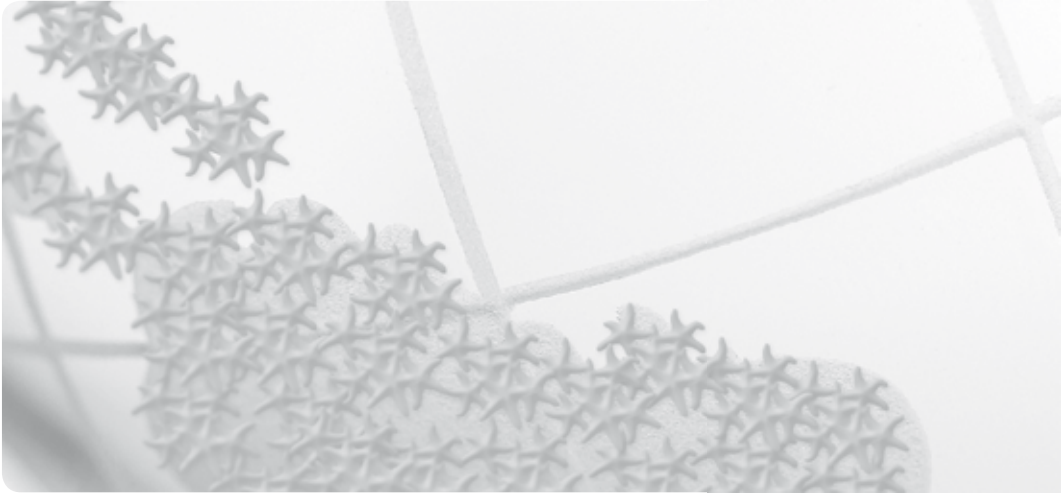
Just today, as I am writing this, I received an E-mail from a man commissioned to develop the mission and vision for a church planting project in Germany. He writes: "Do we want to become a rather large, regional church, with our own building, or rather, do we go for a more decentralized house church structure in the villages around us? We know that there are no biblical patterns for church, and that every church model has countless advantages and disadvantages. We lack the experience to make the right decisions. Who can help and send us a list with all the pros and cons?"

Quite honestly, I would never ask a man who has these questions and convictions (like: there is no biblical blueprint, of that I am sure!) to be involved in church planting at all. But if he does plant a church, I would not be surprised if I visit him in 20 years and find him still scratching his head, wondering whether he did the right thing, and also surrounded by 35 other bewildered Christians as members of his church, who scratch their heads too.

If we cannot believe that Jesus does have a plan and directions for us, a map and a path towards our life's goal, a blueprint for the ekklesia, and an empty spot in his big picture puzzle with our name written on it, then everything is reduced to pointless religion, DIY-Christianity, a waste of time, hopes, prayers, energy, money, petrol, lives. It is a life at random, tossed about by the wind and the waves. But if Jesus is truly not only our savior, but also our King, he will have directives for us to follow, a place reserved in his Kingdom which makes perfect sense in the here and now. It is this hope and joy that particularly excites me: the fact that absolutely everyone has a God-ordained mission in life, a story to tell, a song to sing, a beauty to rescue, an adventure to survive, a finishing line to cross and a crown to win.

In the remainder of this part of the book, let us now look at (1) some of the immediate and tangible consequences that the current Kingdom revolution and reformation has for us, (2) some practical steps in the process of transitioning and migrating into an apostolic order, and finally open up (3) what I call "The Toolbox," a selection of proven and helpful methods that God seems to be using and highlighting at this time, and (4) some practical challenges that are ahead of us. Please allow me to be as brief as I can, since I only want to sketch these things here rather than offer a complete and comprehensive manual for action. I believe that principles come before methods, the foundation before the roof, thinking before acting. And I am well aware that many things that we don't yet understand about the church, the Kingdom, finances, the nations, etc. will open up to us as we go. The progressive revelation in missions continues! Let us therefore not worry about what we don't understand yet, but implement to the best of our abilities what we do know and understand. And I am certain that many fantastic tools and methods or practical ways to accomplish God's tasks for us will be invented by people like yourself, because we all will find as we seek; we all will hear answers as we ask; and doors will open, as we knock.





26 Immediate Consequences

Holy Cows make Gourmet Burgers.

Bill Easum

26 Immediate Consequences

Overcome the apostolic future shock

Most humans fear the unknown. A few people, however, thrive on it. But for the majority, facing new realities poses a threat. This has to do with our established paradigms, how we have explained the world to ourselves, our children, or our friends. If something comes along that challenges our assumptions and presumptions, our normal reaction is defense; to protect ourselves from unnecessary or even dangerous challenges. When Alvin Toffler wrote his book *Future Shock*, he explained that a certain shock, a mental freezing, occurs – just like a car in neutral – when humans suffer “innovation overload” – when they are confronted with simply too much new information. Such a person simply shuts off, pulls the plug on any new information, and, with astonishing fervency, embraces the known, seeking security in the past, in what he has inherited, in his *idols*. When John Wesley started to preach in the open air, even his friend Whitfield opposed him, saying it is absolutely heresy to preach under the open sky, as everyone knows, that for sure, preachers belong in church buildings! Why would those sanctuaries have been built in the first place?!

Christians, it is my firm conviction, have the greatest innovative and creational potential on the planet. Not only do they have a God and King who said: “I make everything new,” but can move into the future with faith and hope, knowing that God has already won the war.

Christians, it is my firm conviction, have the greatest innovative and creational potential on the planet. Not only do they have a God and King who said: “I make everything new,” but can move into the future with faith and hope, knowing that God has already won the war. D-Day is over, VE-day will come. If Christians, however, are the very ones that resist change by any means, and resist progression, development and maturing, then the doctors have fallen ill, the medicine has gone bad, the solutions are rejected, the prophecies have fallen to the ground, and God really has no Plan-B. A Christianity that wants to win tomorrow with the means of yesterday will constantly react, limp, and lag behind, dragging its feet until Christ returns. Yes, the cost of accepting this present reformation will be great. It will cost us *everything*.

But the cost of ignoring or rejecting this reformation will be even greater: we will disregard what the Spirit says to the churches, forever quote yesterday's newspapers, and not only will we not reach our destination and run in circles, but we will do so grumpily, living a life in denial, forever suspicious, worrisome, cautious, uninvolved, sidelined, finding our only consolation in the past and what we think were the good old days. Ray Bakke describes the seven last words of a dying church like this: “We – have – never – done – it – this – way!”

In the last 100 years, Christianity has experienced Pentecostalism and an Evangelicalism that 80 years ago rejected almost all social agendas. We have experienced and survived Hitler, two world wars, have witnessed charismatic renewals, heard Keith Green, plus the explosions and implosions of various spiritual waves and fads. We have experienced Lausanne 1974, Urbana, the end of colonialism, we have seen cell church, Alpha Courses, Willow Creek, and, if you have been raised Catholic, the Vatican II Council. All of this meant change, often enough changing what just had been changed. There is a certain breathlessness about the whole operation, a hold-the-fort-whatever-comes mentality, a wait-and-see mindset among many.

However, I believe that this present apostolic and prophetic reformation challenges us towards the most radical and fundamental changes we have ever seen, that will, once implemented, completely change the landscape of Christianity. That is why I encourage you to take time to process these issues, ponder them, re-read your Bible extensively, or read this book (or similar ones) again, if you first read it too fast. Don't let the apostolic future shock stun you beyond action; let God stun you, as he unfreezes our brain, unscrambles our knots, straightens our scoliotic mindset and delivers us from Christian religion into the freedom of the children of God, who, tied closely to Christ their liberator, move decidedly into their mission and refuse to ever give up before the goal of discipling all the nations of this world is reached.

Removing our labels from God's Property

Human possessiveness and the desire "to make a name for ourselves" is an extremely strong reason why the Church of God, the Bride of Christ, has suffered many attempts to be claimed by humans as their thing. In my decades of watching a fragmented, opinionated, and sectarian Church, I have come to the conclusion that "labeling" the things of God and claiming them to be our property simply because God has allowed us to be involved in his work is a huge obstacle not only to the testimony and authenticity, but also towards the unity of the church. Anyone that says "our church" slams shut the door for a true apostolic future of "His church."

Once God taught me the reality of this, as I met Peter (not his real name), one of the finest, genuine pastoral persons I probably have ever known. Peter led a traditional church of about 120 members. One day I brought someone to his church in my car. As it was my habit for many years, I used to pray for every church that I would pass by, praying "Bless that Pentecostal Church, this Baptist Church, that Lutheran or Catholic Church." As I drove onto the parking lot of the Church, I prayed "Dear Jesus, bless that Church." At that very moment, I heard his voice in my spirit, loud and clear. It said: "If the kernel of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, it remains alone. If it dies, it will bring forth much fruit." This was a verse from John's Gospel, I realized. "Dear Lord! This is how I hear and interpret this," I replied. "You actually want this church to close down, be buried, release the members and have them prepare for a time of great increase of fruit beyond what the original Church could ever imagine. Am I hearing this right?" As an answer, he simply repeated the verse from John 12:24 one more time, and added: "And here comes the pastor. Go tell him."

Sure enough, Peter was walking towards my car, and I said: "Peter, I feel God has spoken to me something about your church just now. Can I tell you?" "Sure," he answered, and I told him what I had just heard. To my amazement, he was neither shocked nor overly surprised, but only said: "Yes, that's what God has already told us once before." "Well, what are you going to do about it?" I asked. "I don't know, what do you think we should do?" he came back. "Well, if I were in your shoes, I would take the next six weeks to gently break the news to the church, prepare them for a time of sanctification and preparation for a great harvest, and close down the entire church operation altogether in dignity and peace. Then I would be waiting for God to give the green light to emerge

into an entirely different set-up that he will have for all of us. This means your church is history.” “But how can I do this?” he said. “I can’t just close down this church.” “Well, I do not suggest you do it, but let Jesus have his way. If that’s what he wants, he will do it, with you or without you. But better with you. And if he had already told you this once before, I take this repeated message to mean that you should do it quick and thoroughly.”

Thoughtfully, Peter walked away to teach a class. Although I knew he would engage with some of this in his heart, I soon saw that he felt unable to follow this advice; his own pastoral gift – to keep the flock together and settled – stood in the way of an apostolic solution. He was too much of a gatherer to allow the sheep to be scattered. In the months after this, I had to watch with pain how the church soon skidded into a nasty split, tearing apart families, relationships, leaving behind a trail of hurting people. I am not blaming Peter for that. Many other good pastors have become the victim of understanding the nature of church as club, where the pastor is paid to ensure the religious well-being of the club members. To close down that arrangement meant to actually fire himself, face unemployment, and leave the sheep to the wolves. Peter simply did not have an understanding of the ekklesia being different than what he knew from the past.

One of the interesting things I later discovered is, that that very church had, as its motto, written out John 12:24 word by word boldly on a large window, not realizing, that the time would ever come to place themselves in the soil, die to themselves and then enter a time of ultimate fruitfulness. There is no fruit without the death of the seed. Just like in the life of Jesus himself, who became a seed towards eternal life for all of us as he gave up his life voluntarily, only as we are ready to die – individually and corporately – and become a seed that God plants into the ground, we will see much fruit. Otherwise we will remain alone – separated from others, fragmented, and ultimately fruitless. I had never seen it this way before. It meant that all these colorful names and labels that we humans have attached to the things of God have only a very temporary function. The moment our own work for God, the organizations and movements we started, are handed back to God, placed on the altar like an Isaac, placed into the cold and dark soil of death, a supernatural and miraculous process begins: life comes out of death, dawn after dusk, day after night, and fruit after the seed.

I started to realize that many if not most things that exist in the Christian world are in seed-form, rather than fruit-form. **We name the seeds, not the fruits**, and as we give those seeds labels and attach our own identity or life to the seed, we make it next to impossible for it to die, because we feel we would die with it. As a result, many are desperately seeking ways to increase the number of seeds by gathering more individual seeds into a certain basket that we call “church.” And once these seeds are safely in the basket, we protect them with all our pastoral abilities from that bad, cold, wet soil out there, making sure the seed is warm, safe and dry, far away from any “bad” soil. If we remind ourselves of the parable of Jesus in Matthew 13, the fact is, that in order to see Kingdom growth, the seed (the sons of the Kingdom) have to be thrown

out into the field (the world) to die there as Jesus sows us out and scatters us. If we resist that process by doing all that we can to remain "in the basket," avoid the cold earth and remain in cuddly and happy-clappy church fellowships, we will remain alone.

Individual death, the dying to self, the giving up of everything in order to be a disciple of Jesus, is one thing. And if we have partnered with other people to start Christian organizations and churches and attach a collective identity to it, we need to be careful not to make exactly the same mistake as those who long ago decided to make a name for themselves as they built the tower of Babel. What would you say if someone had picked up your kid on the road home from school for a ride and declared to you: from now on, your kid has my name. After all, I gave it a ride! Would you not think of that person to be insane? But in matters of church and organizations, we do the very same thing. Is God's name for it – ekklesia – not enough? Must we absolutely attach our own fantastic suffix and prefix to it, de-nominate the things of God as if they were ours, simply because we "gave it a ride?" I like the way Brian Mills responds when he is asked that terrible question whether he belongs to this, that or the other church in his town. He usually says: "I belong to all of them!"

It is probably needless to conclude that from that day when I had that experience with Peter's church mentioned above, I never continued praying for an individual expression of church, a church with a label, "a basket," in the way I had done before. I had come to realize that I was praying for the seed as if it were the plant, for the caterpillar as if it were the butterfly, for the kernel as if it were the wheat. I again learned to pray as Jesus asked us to pray: "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to fling out workers into the harvest. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among the wolves" (Luke 10:2-3). The workers are not the harvest, the seed is not the fruit, remaining in the basket forever is not an option, and naming and labeling the basket is the problem, not the cure.

Of course, one of the other reasons for us humans to label and name the work that God calls us to is "that the government requires a legal status," and "for tax reasons" we have to register properly with the state. It is true that it helps the church to have a legal status; it avoids conflict with the law. And if we can, let us have the best possible organizational form for the things of God to function according to their heavenly design. But let us never forget that the church grew fastest when it refused to be restricted, confined, conformed to the patterns of this world, and accepted persecution as a natural, even "blessed" way of existence. Jesus never said: Blessed are you when you are accepted, registered, filed, chartered, and conformed. He said: "Blessed are you when you are persecuted." The world and its government and legal requirements are never to shape the church organizationally, it is actually the other way around.

But another more subtle and much more powerful reason for us to name and label is to do Kingdom work with a cosmos mind, and in the spirit of maximization of gain and competition for a piece of the market we accept a business model for the church (or a mission). On top of that, as the church beco-

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mes an enterprise, it ensures our regular salaries. Our own amazing inability to trust God for our daily bread and income makes us frantic to secure a job; and, as it is denominations, organizations or churches that offer jobs, we look to these organizations (as employees) to receive money to pay our bills – or plant them ourselves (become a self-employed entrepreneur). Quite quickly, these entities become financial and even ideological lifelines to us, idols that take on the place of God, cows that we milk and therefore never think to slaughter, things other than God that promise us identity, security and destiny. Honestly, would you really remain one more day in your organization (church, denomination, job), if it were not for the money?

Pretty early in my Christian walk, I started a business, a publishing house. When I went to the bank to take out a loan for the initial investment, they asked me about my financial set-up. I told them that for many years I have worked for God, lived by faith, received regular and irregular gifts, cars, clothes, food and sometimes even free housing, and showed them the bank statements to prove it. They took a month to come to the final conclusion that they could not put me into their system, as they simply had no category for me. According to the bank's system, a person like me could (or should) not exist. Finally, we agreed they call me a missionary in their system, a person sent from abroad to work here, a person who is, in the minds of the bank, paid from some mission headquarters far away. I said fine, thinking that yes, my headquarters is truly out of this world, money somehow arrives here in ways even I don't often understand, and if the bank is happy with that, so am I.

Farewell to Holy Cows

Having lived in India for a while, I have had my fair share of bumping into "holy cows," nudging my way around them on the street as a pedestrian, riding a scooter or driving a car. But, if no one looked, I readily admit that I gave it a kick or two. I know its not done in India, and it might hurt the feelings of a Hindu standing close by, but still I did it, when I thought nobody was watching. No cow is holy; God is holy, period. The entire north of Germany opened up to the gospel in AD 800 as Boniface, an apostolic man, cut down that "holy Donars Oak," a large tree that was dedicated to the God *Donar* (thunder). Once it fell, he explained that a God who cannot even protect his tree has no power to protect them from anything. But Jesus can!

This strikingly simple logic was enough to open up large segments of the northern Germanic tribes to God. And as people then watched him in unspoken terror as he cut down that tree in broad daylight, we may need to put the ax to a number of holy trees, or the knife to a number of holy cows that are blocking the road for you personally to pursue your Jesus, and for us corporately to enter into the apostolic destiny God has for all of us. One of the most obnoxious and outspoken critical American church consultants that I know outside of Tony Campolo and Ron Sider is Bill Easum. Bill has written a book with the telling title *Holy Cows make Gourmet Burgers*. Let us look at some of the cows that need to quickly head for the cook, as we press on into a more healthy and apostolic existence in God's Kingdom.

Beyond our revival fantasies

I have been a student of Edwin Orr, one of the most fascinating men of God, who has systematically researched and taught the great and small revival events in church history. I have listened to revival preachers like Stephen Olford, visited conferences on revival like the ones that happened in Les Diablerets, Switzerland, met Mary Peckham, a participant in the last revival on European soil, read revival-oriented authors from Jonathan Edwards, Finney, and Spurgeon to Arthur Wallis and Pete Greig, and many times in my life I have been praying with tears and all earnest for God to allow me to see revival. I have prayed and fasted for days, weeks and months, hid myself in caves and behind rocks to seek God, heard countless prophecies, sermons and, of course, researched my Bible about revival. I found things like this:

“Revive us, and we will call your name, restore us, O Lord Almighty, make your face shine upon us that we may be saved” (Psalm 80:18-19).

It says that God is ready to “revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isa. 57:15), and

Hosea beckons: “Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us, he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence” (Hos. 6:1-2).

I have already written above about revival as an apostolic substitute, as a concept for “it,” for God to happen. The basic point I want to make here is simple: the way most people understand revival is that God should come down from heaven and bring new life into old structures. Revival means to infuse new life into what already exists, like pumping air into a deflated ball. Revival takes it for granted that Church As We Know It (CAWKI) = Church As God Wants It (CAGWI), and assumes all we need is some more power, some more conviction; some more of the presence of God, and all is well. It is as if we ask God to resume the flow of electricity after a long lasting power-cut, when all our machines have come to a grinding halt. The machines are all fine; all we lack is power. We don’t need to change; all we need is new energy to carry on doing the same old thing. I believe this is the central piece of the revival delusion. The crux is that we think the way we ran church in the past is exactly the same way that God wants us to “do church” in the future; we just cannot comprehend that God wants not only to revive, but also to restore what has been torn apart, as Hosea says.

The kind of revival that has molded most revival expectations is that, after fierce preaching about sin and holiness, there is a sudden rush of a holy conviction on masses of people repenting of their sins in wailing and crying, so that tens of thousands of people are suddenly crowding the churches. Anyone who has ever experienced it –or met a person who has - knows that this is a most sobering, sovereign, and exciting thing, especially if you compare a revival atmosphere to the fairly predictable, dull and uneventful services that many of us have come to endure for all too long.

Some time ago I sat in a RyanAir flight from Tampere, Finland, to Germany, next to a group of more than thirty people in their 60s who were all not only impeccably dressed, but had flags with the name Jesus on it that they would wave around in the airplane and smile. In talking to some of them, they told me that they are the remnant of the so-called Laestadian revival, named after Lars Levi Laestadius (1800 – 1861) who had seen tens of thousands come to Christ in a holiness movement especially touching the North of Sweden and the West and North of Finland. Until today up to 70,000 people gather for revival meetings in summer camps, waiting for God to do it again, with a fervency that could almost be called addiction.

In 2002, God sent me to deliver a very direct and clear prophetic word to Markku Koivisto, charismatic Lutheran priest in Nokia, Finland. If he had received it, he would have changed his entire set-up, which was then a charismatic one-man show without peers that drew spectators, but did not build or equip the church. Markku heard the word, fell down on the floor in his office, we prayed, hugged each other farewell, and to my knowledge, he probably forgot the word the moment I went out the door. He had told me with almost borderless and contagious excitement of the healings, the rushes of physical wind in his church building, flames appearing on people, the supernatural swinging of the chandeliers, and all people in the church building being over-awed and on their faces before God. He told me how the media had picked up on what was happening at the “Nokia Revival,” and took all of this as one huge approval and ordination from God for the way things were set up.

He told it in such a way that there was a subtle, unspoken message that came across loud and clear: there is no way that we are going to change things. The signs of revival, as in many revivals before, were seen as a validation of not only the instrument of revival – usually a single person who immediately stands in the danger of being idolized by religious people – but as a divine validation of the structure, the architecture into which “God chooses to come down.” And immediately we say: “Thank you God for revival,” but we forget at our peril that there is always a much bigger purpose for revival that goes beyond revival itself: the restoration of the people of God into a holy order. God revealed himself in a bush, through a donkey, in clouds, wind and flames, but that does not sanctify donkeys and bushes from now on.

From the perspective of an apostolic, viral, mass-movement of discipling the nations through self-multiplying church planting, it is of single most importance that the saints are empowered to do the job – ordinary, faceless people made extraordinary for God, as my friend Felicity Dale points out in her great book *An Army of Ordinary People*. Christian maturity is measured by the generations of spiritual children who are empowered to empower others to be equipped for works of service. One of the pitfalls of revivalism is that it is almost stuck on the very opposite. It is not the preacher who empowers the people, but the masses of people empowering the preacher, who is carried up into ever greater prominence by the wave of people carrying him on their shoulders.

Bernard Sanders once told how Christian leaders had been asking him in conferences or meetings: "How big is your church?" He took this as a sentence in coded language, and explained: "What they were actually asking me was 'how important are you?' and 'where do we place you in the hierarchy?' The bigger my church was, the more invitations I got to speak in conferences, so in a very real sense the people in my church empowered *me* for more and wider ministry, not the other way around." The mega-church phenomenon has lifted some pastors to a guru state among fellow Christians, something that cannot be repeated and multiplied easily.

The phenomenon with revival is similar: it remains unrepeatable and basically cannot be multiplied, and so becomes the subject of a Christian day-dream. Plus, it contains a very dangerous message: revival is the exception; being lukewarm, the lack of revival, is the ordinary. Revivalism creates a conference mindset among Christians, leaping from special experiences to more special experiences, from one spiritual mountaintop to another spiritual mountaintop, from one high point or summer camp to the other, but has basically no answers for life in the valley. It creates an addiction to a special substance called revival, and I can fully understand why one revival preacher cried: "Once you experience revival, you are spoiled forever," and then kept on crying: "Oh Lord, do it again, again, again!"

Such revival dreams and expectations have one last hiccup: the problem, ultimately, is with God. If God so chooses to be busy in China, Argentina, or heaven and has no time for us in Berlin, Minneapolis, or Moscow, then there is nothing we can do about it but wait, pray, sing, and then wait some more, sing some more, pray some more, until he comes down to us.

I remember preaching in a traditional church in Tambaram, a town south of Madras, where a sign greeted all those entering the church building that said: "Acts 2 - do it again, Lord!" Acts 2, of course, meant the revival that happened at Pentecost, so, in essence, this sticker says we needed to wait for another Pentecost, if God would kindly do it, otherwise we are lost. I took this as my basis for preaching that we dare not blame God for a lack of life, as if everything were fine with us, but somehow God is asleep, busy with other things, or has just forgotten us. God has given us a clear commission, told us very clearly what to do, told us even how to do it, where to do it, so let's get on with the job! Maybe there is a sign in heaven next to the throne of God which says: "Acts 2 - do it again, people!" where, from his perspective, God is waiting for us to get "our Acts" together rather than our waiting for God to come to our rescue.

I remember it was a great morning, as people found themselves completely stunned with a perspective that they had blotted out of their thinking and mindset. Did I mention it that, to my knowledge, the church in Tambaram still has that sticker decorating their wall, and are still waiting for something to happen? Maybe I need to ask Stephan Christiansen, founder of "Jesus Revolution" in Oslo, Norway, to go there, and tell them one of his favorite lines: "If nothing happens, happen yourself!"

Let us therefore, in the power of the apostolic Holy Spirit that commissions us to move out into this world and plant the presence of Christ where he is not yet known, remove such revival-stickers from our walls, minds and dreams forever, giving ourselves to God and his task wholeheartedly, start working in the harvest, and make a firm decision not to remain addicted to dreams of experiences in the past. And should God so choose to send revival again and convict entire churches, cities or regions of sin, let us not “go there” as revival tourists and spiritual consumers to fill our empty buckets and hearts with the fresh presence of God and then go home and leave our lives and churches unchanged, but to make our hands dirty in every way we can to see that revival, the mass conviction of sin, is translated into apostolic restoration, the mass planting of churches according to God’s blueprint, the endless multiplication of disciples, so that the revival will not die down in a few days, weeks, months or years, but remain the normative, passionate, hot spiritual temperature and harvesting climate that should be normal for all of us.

Beyond renewal

There are three kinds of church renewals that have captivated the minds and souls of millions of Christians in the last 300 years. One is the pietistic renewal, technically better called a Bible renewal. Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705), the father of Pietism in Germany, saw that the existing church needed a correction, and small groups for encouragement and discipline were necessary. He began such meetings in 1670 under the name “pious gatherings” (*collegia pietatis*). The inherent belief of this renewal movement, born as an antidote to the increasingly liberal developments in the Lutheran church, is that renewal of churches happens as we return to the Bible. And so this renewal movement highlights biblical preaching, biblical study, and believes that if a born-again Bible believing pastor comes to take office in an existing Methodist, Lutheran or Catholic church, things will get well.

The solution to the church’s problem is seen as a lack of Bible teaching. And as much as I completely agree that the Bible is the central authority for life and faith, preaching the Bible without putting the Bible into practice by returning to the biblical values and architectures of an apostolic church will remain the pastime of many for probably another 300 years, should Christ not return earlier. If you are part of such movements, you either need to bring these movements in their entirety – or at least in parts - into the new reformation, or you need to leave, otherwise your loyalty to the past will tie you back from moving into God’s future.

The second renewal movement is a movement within many denominations that call the church back to its roots, its historic origin. This origin, ground zero, is typically not seen as Pentecost, but the time of Luther, Calvin, John Wesley, William Booth or Menno Simons and many others who are founders of present day denominations. The call of these renewal movements are to go back to the founding story, the founding document, the spirit of the founder, the *Confessio Helvetica* or any other confession and theses of their church fathers. These declare that the way into the future is to reconnect with their own past. That is the heart of fundamentalism, not only in Christianity, but

Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam. The core problem is identified as a church that has left its roots, a church no longer living the pure and holy faith as it was in the beginning (of their own church, be that 5 or 500 years ago), and so things need to be purified.

As the start of a new denomination in history is at best a momentary snapshot of the revelation of God in a specific time period, and often enough a reaction against a special heresy in what was considered to be the mainline church of its day, this renewal philosophy wants us to get excited by reading yesterday's newspapers. This, of course, has a strong appeal to conservative folks and traditionalists who have, in a form of future shock, shut themselves into bubbles of remembering and re-enacting the past, wishing and singing back the good old days. At the same time, while loudly demanding or dreaming of another Wesley, Calvin, Luther, or Booth knocking at their door, it is fascinating to note that absolutely all denominations have successfully and meticulously installed impenetrable structures of corporate or democratic decision-making that would make any new Luther, Calvin or Wesley simply run against a brick wall of denominational bylaws, superstructures, and seemingly almighty boards.

Luther would stand no chance in today's hyper-liberal Lutheran Church of reforming anything; he would be dismissed by the Lutheran Word Federation as a complete nuisance. The real Wesley, transported into our time by a time machine, would be quickly shown out the door of many Methodist Tabernacles, and would have to start preaching in the open air again, starting from scratch after discovering that the Methodist Church today looks surprisingly like the Anglican Church from which he departed in the first place. Many in these intra-denominational confessionalist renewal-movements have seen this and have therefore started alternative denominations as purified versions of the old ones: *Free* Methodists, *Free* Lutherans, *Conservative* Baptists, and so on, an institutionalized "Holier Than Thou" approach that creates ever new spin-offs of solutions that have made a lot of sense in the past – but not anymore today.

In the same way, these renewal movements remain a monument to the past, always in the same danger of idolizing their own founder and his writings in the same way that the Roman Catholic Church has done with its church fathers, Popes, and Saints and their writings. As Jesus warns us not to put our hand to the plow and look back, otherwise we would be unfit for the work in the Kingdom, these intra-denominational renewal movements are living a dream, forever trying to re-enact the past. Again, if you are part of this, do your best to help steer and father these movements into an apostolic order, or leave them, if that is not your distinct calling from God.

Lastly, since the 1960s we have witnessed the rise (and fall) of the charismatic renewal, a renewal that was inspired by the belief that, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the charismatic gifts, local churches could be renewed, and new life would be brought back. The charismatic renewal, which is the largest of all the three renewal movements mentioned here and found in most

major historic denominations worldwide, is best described as pouring new wine into old wineskins, a statement that has more than biblical authority in charismatic circles, although, of course, the Bible does not know such a statement at all. It speaks of new wine that needs to be poured into *new* wineskins, not old ones. And so the charismatic renewal philosophy is a mixture of two things, more often than not: very genuine encounters and experiences with God and his Holy Spirit, mixed with a church-dream that has no roots in biblical ecclesiology whatsoever, but is deeply steeped in Constantinian traditionalism. Let me explain this by quoting from my earlier book on house churches:

“The historic Orthodox and Catholic Church after Constantine in the 4th century AD developed and adopted a religious system, that was in essence the combination of two elements: a Christian version of the Old Testament temple, the cathedral, and a worship pattern styled after the Jewish synagogue. This meant that since then, a blueprint for Christian meetings and worship was adopted as the foundational pattern for the times to follow, which was expressively not revealed nor ever endorsed by God in New Testament times: the *cathegogue*, linking the house-of-God mentality and the synagogue. Baptized with Greek pagan philosophy, separating the sacred from the secular, the cathegogue-system developed into the Black Hole of Christianity, swallowing most of its own spiritual energies and absorbing the Church with itself for centuries to come. The Roman Catholic Church went on to canonize the system. Luther did reform the content of the gospel, but left the outer forms of “church” remarkably untouched; the Free-Churches freed the system from the State, the Baptists then baptized it, the Quakers dry-cleaned it, the Salvation Army put it into uniform, the Pentecostals anointed it and the Charismatics renewed it, but until today nobody has really changed the system. It is about time to do just that.”

Peter Hocken, a catholic theologian in Vienna, Austria, dreams of the fragments of all the various churches coming together to form what he calls an “ecumenical grace,” which shows how a purely experience-based unity (“Do you speak in tongues? Then we are one!”) among charismatic Christians can cloud and drown out any call for a return to apostolic structures. In 2000, I spoke with Raniero Cantalamessa, since 1980 the personal confessor of Karel Woytila, the last Pope, and since 2005 also the “preacher to the papal household” of Joseph Ratzinger, the current Pope. He related to me that many within Catholic structures had heard from God about a new move of God in house churches, but as this dare not touch the very structures of Roman Catholicism, many were perplexed and bewildered about what to do with it. In 2007, “Benedict XVI”, the current Pope, spoke to a general audience about Aquila and Priscilla, a married couple active in the early Church. It included - for a Roman Catholic audience - a few quite explosive statements like: every home can be transformed into a small church; Aquila and Priscilla are a model of the church of all times; husband and wife teams can – and should be – part of an apostolic Mission. Commentators make this to mean that he is actually saying:

housechurch-leaders like Priscilla and Aquila are the key for the growth of the Church. Earlier, Ratzinger had written: "We might have to part with the notion of a popular Church. It is possible that we are on the verge of a new era in the history of the Church, under circumstances very different from those we have faced in the past, when Christianity will resemble the mustard seed that is, will continue only in the form of small and seemingly insignificant groups, which yet will oppose evil with all their strength and bring Good into this world." (These words, from a 1996 book written by the then Josef Cardinal Ratzinger: *Salt of the Earth*, were not included in the English translation but in the original German language. They created such a flap in Germany at the time the book was published that they were omitted in subsequent translations.)

Among charismatic Christians, talk about structural issues – and therefore apostolic issues - are plainly taboo. It is therefore no wonder that the remnant of the charismatic movement, in my estimate, has a huge problem with the apostolic reformation. Yes, it wants the apostles, but not the reformation they bring. It wants the Holy Spirit experiences, but not a Holy Spirit ecclesiology, since its founding dream is to renew existing structures, not to start new ones. Since the 90s, the charismatic movement has largely become a conference and worshipping movement, forever re-initiating people in endless and repetitive beginners lessons and seminars into subjects like life in the spirit, the gifts of the spirit or the ABC of prophecy. None of this is bad, but it is a sign and symbol for a movement that has refused to grow up. A number of prophets prophesied in public that the charismatic movement had come to an end in 1992. Looking back into my own notes, I penned an article in 1991 about "*The seven sins of the charismatic movement*" describing the grinding standstill of the movement and pointing a way into the future. My friend Wolfram Kopfermann, for fifteen years leader and genius spokesman of the German Lutheran Renewal, had left the charismatic renewal world in 1989, putting a book on the table called *Abschied von einer Illusion* (Farewell to an Illusion). His most pointed challenge was to the young and hopeful future pastors to not even enter the system of traditional churches, as they would sacrifice their lives, hopes, and dreams to a Moloch that eats its own children. It is probably unnecessary to say that most charismatic Christians have never really forgiven him for that. But in my mind, he was a genuine gift of God to the charismatic movement, at least in Germany, as he had the potential, with his outstanding teaching gift and clarity of thought, to move the charismatic movement into an apostolic direction. Rather than appreciating him for his efforts, a numbed and leaderless charismatic movement felt betrayed and wrote him off. Friedrich Aschoff, a pastoral and deep man of God who took over leadership of the Lutheran Renewal in Germany after Wolfram, declared in public in 1993 that, to his knowledge, there was not a single charismatically renewed church in all of Germany; in other words, in a bold way he admitted the illusion.

If you have grown up within any of these three renewal movements or the parachurch ministries it birthed, I want you to know there is life beyond renewal. If you are in a position to introduce reformational change in a renewal constituency, I would encourage you to do so. Or consider the thought that you should probably not remain there for the rest of your life. In my own life, I am a strange combination of all of this. I had the true privilege to be a tem-

porary part of all three of these movements, experience their “vibes,” breathe their dreams, and hear their hearts, and I found absolutely genuine and deeply inspiring followers of Christ in all of them. At the same time, I was never truly at home with any one of them. I strongly believe that we need to return to the Bible in all its inerrancy, or we are lost without a measuring stick for life and faith. I strongly believe we need to go back to the roots, but beyond Luther and Wesley or Calvin to Jesus, Peter, Paul and John. I strongly believe in the enabling supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, but know that he wants us to move far beyond CAWKI into a last harvest that requires all of us, in the power of the spirit, to share our lives with God and each other and plant new and apostolic churches until the Kingdom of God reaches its climax before the parousia, the physical return of Jesus.

Beyond emergence

As the Western world went through gigantic cultural shifts first into modernism, then in the 90s from Modernism to Postmodernism, and now from Postmodernism into an Age of the Spirit, the church needed to adjust its focus, as the behavior and value system of the people it wished to reach changed drastically. CAWKI was never good at change nor change management, and so most changes and adaptations of CAWKI to the culture around it came, if at all, half-heartedly, and mostly far too late.

In the age of modernity, it was especially the supernatural claims of Christianity that were ridiculed by the newer findings of technology, evolution, and Godless science. In the post-modern times that have gone by, the single most suspect subject is any talk of absolutes, blueprints, plumb lines and fundamentals. It became almost uncool to have any firm opinion on anything. Everything is in process, evolvment, a long story, and as a result, we all are not sure, we will see, let’s talk tomorrow. However, I believe tomorrow has already come, and a post-postmodern age has long begun, which I call the Age of the Spirit or the Inspiration Age.

Many young Christian thinkers and leaders started to engage with Postmodernism in the mid-90s and rightly concluded that modern ways of church would mis-communicate the gospel to a post-modern world. Therefore new and, true to the target, post-modern expressions of church were needed, pioneered by many creative thinkers and practitioners, a process expertly conceptualized in the book *Emerging Churches* by Eddie Gibbs or by other authors like the communications artist Leonard Sweet. Sweet is one of those who has exhaustively analyzed the incompatibility between CAWKI and the post-modern culture and communicated this with almost every trick in the book.

In his book *The Younger Evangelicals*, Robert E. Webber defines three phases of Evangelicals: (a) Traditional Evangelicals (from 1950-1975), (b) Pragmatic Evangelicals (from 1975-2000) and (c) the “Younger Evangelicals,” (2000+), constituting the “emerging church.” In attempting to make the gospel relevant to any new culture or people of a different worldview, an incarnation process has to take place to embody, incarnate and flesh out the gospel in a way that is understood. I am thrilled by many in the emerging (or emergent) scene who do a great pioneering work to make the gospel palatable to a post-modern world. However, I am not really thrilled at all by the typical super-conservative, even pre-modern church systems, and strongly intellectual, guru-driven

structures that we usually find if we look at postmodern expressions of church. The central temptation for postmodern Christianity seems to be this: the Bible gives us the gospel, a message that never changes, but says nothing about structure. Structures, therefore, are always manmade, flexible, debatable, everybody can do as he wants.

Sebastian Heck, in a critique of the Emerging Church, points to the strong, verbal community-focus in emergent circles, a fellowship that welcomes anybody, but does not necessarily gather around a firm canon, a set of propositional, biblical truths anymore. This establishes a community that really has nothing in common – except to be together for the sake of being together. In the words of Mike Breen, former Anglican pastor of St. Thomas in Sheffield, UK and a great voice encouraging “tribal generations,” streams of young people forming tribes for God: The order and way fellowship is set up in postmodern cultures is “Belong, believe, behave – no longer behave, believe, belong as in modern days.” Mike rightly points out that we first need to create a sense of belonging, before we can change anyone; but we cannot afford to stay there. We need to move from the welcoming entry hall to the living room and get down to business.

By way of brief summary, here are the four core problems from which we need to emerge if we do not want to remain immersed, adapted and conformed to the fading postmodern cultures:

1. It will not be enough to take CAWKI and “paint it pink,” redecorate the same old 5P-church-system (pastor, programs, parking lot, pews, problems) with postmodern expressions, cool seating arrangements, and rather than preaching we now narrate, rather than singing songs we watch ice-cubes melt in our hand and ponder the fleetingness of time. **What needs to happen is that we take CAGWI in its biblical and therefore apostolic architecture and reinsert it into what remains of a postmodern world.** However, for postmodern Christians this might be a problem, as postmodernism has a huge issue with anything that sounds prescriptive, speaking of limitations, borders, frameworks, and blueprints. They run the danger of adapting to a culture, conforming to the patterns of the world in order to become acceptable and understandable.

We need to be a Jew to the Jew and a Greek to the Greek, and yes, postmodern to postmodern, but not a sinner to the sinner. To reject an absolute God lies at the very heart of human rebellion and sin. To reject the absolutes of God (like stop calling sin, sin) in order to gain entry into a God-less culture will win us many friends and fans, even a cool crowd of postmodern worship attendees or visitors on our blog spots, **but few disciples who drop what they do to radically sell themselves out for God.**

2. A negative identity is not a positive identity. The very word “emerge” contains the notion of something that comes out of the void, takes shape as it distances itself from its former context. But to declare what we are *not* (anymore) does not yet explain what we *are*. Emergent churches have done a great job distancing themselves from anything that did not work (and sometimes also from things that worked...), but distance does not create purpose. Emergence describes a process of liberation from an oppressive and non-functional system. But the process of liberation is not yet freedom, and Israel *emerging*

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from biblical Egypt was a far cry from Israel settling down into their promised land under godly government. To say that “the path is the goal, and to search means to find,” is not really a cool quote, but a depressive and resigned Buddhist philosophy denying absolute truth and destiny, a pattern of thinking that attempts to legitimize the state of being lost: I am lost, you are lost, let’s be lost together! It is simply not enough, to quote the subtitle of Brian McLaren’s book *A Generous Orthodoxy* to explain “Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished CHRISTIAN.” Brian gave us a book (and a subtitle) that may make us chuckle, but all it says is where we come from, not where we are going.

3. Innovators and Obeyers are for me two important sides of the same coin. As Christians we are asked to obey God and his principles, and be innovative and creative in how we communicate God’s love to others around us. However, we need to be careful not to embrace innovation at the cost of obedience (and the other way around). An innovator is, after all, someone who comes up with a new idea of his own. But there is only a short path for an innovator to become an idolater, one who worships the inventions and works of his own hands. I have been in too many conferences where young, inexperienced and enthusiastic Christian innovators basically shamelessly preached and exclaimed about themselves: “See what great things I did, what I invented, what I am doing? Come, copy me, join me, and buy a franchise license from me to do as I do.” This can go so far that God’s original and age-old paths are forgotten, rejected, in a frenzy of newness and youthfulness that labels everything as good only because it is new.

4. Guru-ism, my last issue with Emergence. We have a saying in German that goes “Among the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” Many young people, in their desperate attempts to escape Mom’s and Dad’s boring and predictable church, are in a search mode, ready to cling onto anyone who seems to have an answer. And, stimulated by a toxic fan culture ready to worship the next star (usually created by the media) that is so pervasive among many young people in their healthy search for role models as they look for answers, they find a *Christian* star. And off they go, hang onto his or her lips, imitate their actions, body language or hairstyles, and are swept into a new wave of Guru-ism. This reminds me of India, where many Hindus (and truth-seekers from the West) came to sit in the presence of a Guru to experience *darshan* (an audience with a Guru). But Gurus are not the long-term answer. A broad, flat-structured, empowered missional movement of all of us, now that is the answer.

In 2002, Andrew Jones, a friend and great mentor and encourager to many in the emerging scene, wrote a hilarious and pointed article titled, “My gripes about the House Church Movement.” He said, and I think he was, as usual, prophetic: “We might be five years away from seeing a complete ecosystem of organic ministries that work together to enable a healthy, reproducing, movement of house churches.” I agree. Let us rejoice about a global phenomenon of an emerging church and an entire generation that is ready to leave CAWKI behind, but let us not pop the corks and celebrate too early, before the movement has crossed the Sinai desert. I believe the emerging movement will have

its own Red Seas and deserts to cross, but I am convinced it will come out strong, refined, apostolic, both amazingly obedient and amazingly innovative.

Beyond Shamgar

Once upon a time there was a most unbelievable hero. Probably stronger than Arnold Schwarzenegger, faster than Van Damme, and definitely taller than Sylvester “Rambo” Stallone. The Bible reports that he was such a great warrior that he single-handedly terminated 600 men with a simple ox goad. When he came back from his fights, the people in northern Israel would line the streets and shout: “Shamgar, Shamgar!!” Pretty soon, teenagers were probably wearing Shamgar-T-Shirts, had cool miniaturized ox goads around their neck, and the 600 page biography of Shamgar titled “I did it all alone!” was translated into 400 languages and published in 300 countries. Shamgar was voted man of the year by Time Magazine; Shamgar-Clubs emerged everywhere and 50% of all boys born during his time were named – Shamgar. Shamgar started a huge mission called “Shamgar Ministries” with a vision to train 20 million youth to carve ox goads to slay a total of 12 billion Philistines in 5 years.

But let’s leave the fiction here, and look at the real man. The Bible says about him: “After Ehud came Shamgar, son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an ox goad. He too saved Israel” (Judges 3:31). Shamgar was one of the biblical judges, and obviously a successful one. But in the song of Deborah we read a few more, but rather disturbing details about him: “In the days of Shamgar the roads were abandoned, travelers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased, until Deborah arose, a mother in Israel. When war came, not a shield or spear was lifted among forty thousand in Israel” (Judges 5:6-8). In other words: in spite – or because – of Shamgar’s great individual success, the public life had come to a standstill, the governmental structures were abandoned, robbers and warlords controlled the main routes, so people had to take to hidden paths, and everyone went underground, trying to survive individually, while the communal life had died, and, after Ehud had gone, “everyone did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (Judges 4:1). The result of Shamgar’s charismatic “leadership” on the army was a total disaster: of 40,000 men, not one could lift a spear or shield. Losing its military ability means the collective emasculation of a nation, which Deborah, a woman, had to point out. What good is a general who can finish off 600 Philistines alone, but cannot train an army? A single star, celebrated by 40,000 weaklings, because he is the only one who could handle a spear! He remains a blip in history, a star without disciples, a Guru with fans, but no peers. For me, Shamgar has molded CAWKI-Christianity more than anything else. He seems to be a role model for most of today’s evangelists in their single-handed approach, and my mail inbox is full of the stories of Shamgar’s modern disciples who tell how they single-handedly won Siberia, Mongolia, Kenya, Africa, Indonesia, or, would you believe it, 600 modern Philistines in Gaza for Christ. For me, Shamgar is a symbol of a spear-less and shield-less Christianity, a weaponless army of underground militia that do as they please, something that is plain “evil in the eyes of the Lord.” He represents a type of Christian leadership that allows folks to sit and soak in church pews for years on end and cheer their platform stars. I suggest that we all go home from Shamgar’s Christianity, leave Shamgar’s churches, stop supporting modern Shamgars in their grandiose single-handed global

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rescue missions, and unsubscribe from Shamgar's newsletters. Then, let's dig up those old spears and shields, and get ready. Shamgar was much too good, too much of a "real" hero to teach all of us how to fight. But maybe there is a Deborah out there who will?

John White, a mentor and house church coach in Denver, USA, recently said: "The biggest obstacle for the church in America is the way the five-fold ministry is operating today." What John meant is this (in my words): strong, pushy, anointed, charismatic, five-fold ministry folks in full swing of their ministry, who are so happy to have gained their space in the ministry, occupy the center stage usurpatory-style. And once they are there, we seem unable to ever get rid of them. They bless and impress everyone out of their socks, "forget" to relinquish the microphone (ministry) to others as they ride the wave of success of their own awe-inspiring ministry. In other words, the "Shamgarization" of ministries is the key reason why the church does not mature. Just by watching Shamgars perform on the stages, no one will be able to lift his spear or shield, meaning to move into his or her ministry, because Shamgar's presence and abilities fill the room so completely and stun everyone into an awe-inspired minority complex that we all crawl into a corner and shiver with respect for the great man or woman of God.

The real calling of the fivefold ministry is not to do the ministry ourselves (as others watch in amazement), but to equip others for the ministry (Eph 4:11-13) while we watch and cheer them on.

What is the solution to this? Shamgar needs to retire, vacate the platform, or to be taken out of ministry. He needs to learn to train sons and daughters, mentor and coach others, relinquishing his ministry into the hands of the next generation rather than going on one more glorious one-man ministry exploit. The last thing we need are Shamgar-ized apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers or even deacons showing off their ox goads again and yet again. The next generations of servants of God will mature far more rapidly if all of us who have a mature ministry can be disciplined and mature enough to clear the center, shut up even if we have something to say, and place a higher value on letting others take over our ministry than perform one more show of ministerial brilliance. How can we continue ignoring the "weaker" vessels and survive as a body? In a very real sense, all of us in those ministries need to become ex-apostles, ex-prophets, ex-pastors, ex-evangelists and ex-teachers, as the real calling of the fivefold ministry is not to do the ministry ourselves (as others watch in amazement), but to equip others for the ministry (Eph 4:11-13) while we watch and cheer them on.

Beyond Wal-Mart Christianity

"Find a need and fill it," was a slogan we used to hear a lot in the Church Growth days of Robert Schuller and others. The message was simple: there is a big religious market out there, and if you fulfill the needs of people, they will join your church. A few have protested meekly that this meant to make the needs of religious consumers the central focal point of ministry and church. In return, this would generate a powerless market-shaped, rather than a mission-shaped church. In the Christian publishing industry I have watched many enthusiastic visionary publishing-entrepreneurs who started first with the visionary books they wanted to publish – but quickly found out that "the market" does not want to buy books that ask them to change their lives. And so many have changed and adapted to the market, selling to the public what the market is ready to buy, what the itching ear of the market wants to hear, while still

trying to push some of their more visionary books across whose production is financed by titles they couldn't care less about. The real money in Christian publishing is in novels, picture books, posters, and, believe it or not, mugs and other Christian paraphernalia.

Wal-Mart, that famous discounter, at some point the largest employer in the world, has excelled in selling out completely to the market, and done so more successfully than others. The market is the sovereign that dictates success; the credo is: whatever the market wants, we will sell, and sell for less so we can sell more. In a similar fashion, this mindset has corrupted the church almost beyond recognition. CAWKI has been offering lifestyle services, design meetings, youth groups, and programs, seminars, and conferences for special castes, tribes, target audiences. If someone sells more (has more people show up or sign up), then he believes he is successful. The success of a father, however, is not how many children he has, but how much of a father's heart he has instilled in his daughters and sons, and how they, in turn, pass on this legacy to their own children and children's children. Numerical success in a Wal-Mart-inspired Christianity makes us think that a father with 100 children is better than a father of two. But, as Bernard Sanders puts it: "A father with 100 children is probably immoral, or runs an adoption home."

In days where, in the absence of true apostolic alignment, a segment of the church has tried to resort to secular marketing techniques and PR-strategies, with books on the market like *Jesus CEO*, where many are suggesting the church learn from business entrepreneurs and apply principles of ISO 9002 (a term defining industrial benchmarking and quality control) type management excellence to the running of church franchises, we need to say farewell to that nonsense and come back to be mission shaped, not market shaped. This does not mean that we cannot have target groups and develop specific strategies to reach indigenous or marginalized people. But it means we need to refuse the temptation of allowing market techniques to dominate the church. Otherwise, we would try to do Kingdom work with a Mammon mindset, bent on maximizing members, offerings, churches and influence, ready to compete with anyone out there Wal-Mart style. This mindset would shun any synergy, dramatically destroy unity, and further fragment the body of Christ.

In the large harvest movement that I foresee on earth, we need to root out a Wal-Mart mindset completely, otherwise we would allow highly competitive (and therefore divisive) people among us to go on unchecked and establish terrible role models. Paul writes to Titus: "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him" (1 Titus 3:10). And nothing is more divisive than if we want to run our own independent Christian businesses, churches and ministry franchises because of our immature desire to grab a market share. If that is our desire, we need to step out of ministry and go back to square one. Make no mistake: Lucifer's disciples, those who know how to make the Jesus people famous and give them all the "splendor of the world" (Luke 4), as Satan tempted Jesus before, will come to you, too, and make you an offer that will be difficult to refuse. Be prepared for this, politely show them the door, and don't let the market dominate your work, but God.

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Beyond Idiomatic Christianity

Private religion – to treat religion as something that is nobody’s business, is selfish religion. An idiot (from the Greek word *idiotes*, meaning private person, simple man; later untrained layman and finally dumb person) was in ancient Greek times a human who refuse to engage in politics, in public life. Later, this expression was used to describe lay people, untrained people of little learning, and only in modern times was the word idiot used to describe folks with a small IQ, or to denote a fool. Medically speaking, an idiot is a person who suffers from idiotism with an IQ below 25.

Polis was the word (Greek for city) that the Greeks used to describe their community, which happened on three levels: the city (*polis*), the *akro-polis*, the high-city, meaning a fortified castle on a hill, and the *necropolis*, the city of the dead, the cemetery. Convinced that every human is destined to be a political being, a *homo politicus*, as the Romans said, the Greek culture developed city-states like Athens, Sparta, or Corinth. Every city needs rules, laws that keep it together, and politicians, people who actively represent the community and make it better – or at least who say that they do.

Once in a while there was an outsider, a freak, someone living at the margins of society, minding only his own business and caring less for the community. Such people lived at the expense of others, took all and gave nothing. The center of their life was *hedonism*, to live based on lust. This philosophy became famous through Diogenes of Sinope, who lived in a barrel like a dog (Greek: *kynos*, from where we have our word cynic) from alms of others. Every functioning society is able to carry some of these folks, even if they are liabilities and not assets. People called them idiots, folks only concerned with themselves, marginalized people who were endured with a shrug by the community. This went on as long as the center, the polis, was strong enough, and the number of idiots was relatively small.

However, things have changed completely since then. An idiotic lifestyle has become absolutely commonplace and is today called individuality, the epitome of personal freedom. Former idiots are today called the much nicer name “individualists,” and the credo of individualism has almost completely captured Western Christianity: “Hallelujah, I can do what I want, when I want, with whom I want, if I want, thank you God for this freedom!” The protestant wing of Christianity of Western origin, especially, has fought on the front lines of this, challenging and dismantling any and all superstructures, so that at the end, only one thing remains: the individual person and his or her God. From individual conversion to individual counseling down to the individual grave, always it is the individual who is the focus of Christianity. The Christian community is then degraded to be a supplier industry for the religious happiness of the individual. And if something is happening in the church next door, where you can get more programs and excitement someplace else for less money, the contemporary idiot zaps through all available Christian programs and, with fool-proof idiocy, settles into a new community, where he can better be himself, having found a church that better fits him and his needs.

If we take a sobering look at Christian programs, church budgets, priority lists, and contemporary church tactics, we see that in the West, mainly those churches boom that have declared the satisfaction of specific religious needs of the individual to be the center of their mission – and to do so as professio-

nally as possible – better than all others (remember Wal-Mart?) In other words: Christian religion booms in places where idiots are taken care of best. But such Christianity has no apostolic core anymore; it has sold out to idiots and lost its legitimate mandate long ago. To the outside world, it no longer represents an organic unity, *the City of God*, but a fragmented collection of 40,000 denominations and groups, blown to pieces by their competitiveness. They appear to be chains of religious franchises, that, like any shop and food outlet, attempt to attract the religious consumers, keep them for a while, milk them of their “tithes and offerings,” and then lose them to the competition next door, as the constantly drifting dunes of religious consumers constantly zap, seek, and find someplace else that better fits their ever changing needs and moods.

This is why we need to say farewell quickly to such an idiotic Christianity, or else the West or any culture will keep on drowning, since healthy community-generating role models are missing – especially among Christians who were called to be a model nation, salt and light for others, a *polis* of God, a city on the hill, literally the Acropolis of the world, where people can flee for refuge.

Maybe we need to start learning this again from the birds and fish, those animals blessed first in God’s creation (Gen 1:22), who have an uncanny ability that Christians have to learn from scratch again: they can fly in formation, swim in a swarm, almost as if they are able to listen to the same music, to an inaudible orchestra and move in complete unity, as a whole. Birds which fly in flocks, as keen observers have seen, follow four simple rules: fly two wingspans from the nearest bird; try to position yourself as close to the center as possible; when attacked, fly away from the attacker; rejoin the flock after the attack.

Farewell to *idiotic* house churches

Let me say a word about the early stages of house church Christianity around the world in recent years. I have been (and still am) quite involved in encouraging house church planting movements around the world. I am excited about many that are truly missional, actively winning new people, discipling them and multiplying healthy house churches. But there are immature and sometimes sick house churches, too. You could summarize their credo as “Us four, no more,” small little bless-me clubs, holy (?) huddles of a few individuals coming together to fill each others’ needs, hang out together, or “because of the kids, you know.”

Andy Zoppelt of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, involved in the house church movement for more than 40 years and speaking from a position of experience and personal brokenness that we need to hear, points to a number of results of such a private religion, expressed in unhealthy, non-apostolic, and dare I say, idiotic house churches? He says:

“Many house churches I have visited are quite content in being ‘us four and no more.’ They have turned inward in believing because they are meeting in the shelter of a house. Most are having little or no impact on their community, the poor, those in prisons, those in need and many are not even impacting missions. They reject others meeting in homes in their same area. They easily have forgotten the house church was never an end in itself in the early church. They have forgotten the church in the city. They don’t want leadership and they are convinced

that every house church is independent. People believe that meeting in homes makes them the new wineskins. There is a spirit against true leadership. We are building without leadership, without power, and without unity. This is a formula that keeps repeating itself, pride and isolationism and division.

The house church in America has no burden for the needy. Ministry has almost come to a complete stop in house churches. When I was an institutional pastor, we would go to the streets and minister and feed hundreds of people. Even the city of Ft. Lauderdale stood up and took notice; they asked how they could help. The local newspaper did a two full-page write up on us. We went into the jails and nursing homes. We were a light on a hill. Now I feel disconnected from my local brothers rather than us pulling together. In the house church we have become cheap! Our anti-tithing doctrine has led to a greed where giving is non-existent. Paul mentioned over and over his concern for the poor. Because there is no recognition of the church in the city, there is no understanding of the universal church and the need of universal ministry. If we don't start building, it will fall apart in the shaking as previous movements. Jesus is the answer, not the house."

Declaration of Dependence

The only way forward is for all of us to re-embrace an apostolic-prophetic reformation of building "the city" together, and give up our idiotic mindset, that happy-clappy private religion that refuses to acknowledge the city, the existence of the regional church and the most basic Kingdom principles in the unholy pursuit of individualism and the kind of freedom of individual religion that some constitutions guarantee, but not the Bible. The United States are built on a "Declaration of Independence" which is taken by many non-Christians and Christians alike to mean the God-given right to do as they please as individuals. This needs to be replaced by a "Declaration of Dependence," declaring our complete dependency *on God and each other*, or we drown in anarchy with individual shouts of Freedom and Hallelujahs on our lips. Remember John F. Kennedy? He said in 1961: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country!" Both politically and spiritually, he was right in saying this. So, in the name of Jesus, let us kill that Holy Cow of unholy individualism, root out any traces of this in ourselves and our movements, ask forgiveness from God and each other for our terrible indifference, stop being idiots, and get together in our areas, cities and regions with those called, skilled, and willed to build together, and turn the world upside down. And who will lead this kind of repentance, reconciliation and rebuilding-initiative in your area? I suggest that the most spiritual and mature person available does it. And you *know* that this is you...

Beyond political Christianity

Having just made the case for a political Christianity in the healthy sense, let me explain what I do *not* mean by the term. „Politics“, writes Englishman Andrew Heywoods in his book *Politics*, is so exciting, because there are always

people who have a different opinion. They have different opinions about how we should live, who gets what, how money, power, and other resources should be distributed, whether and how a community makes decisions, should community be based on cooperation or conflict, who should have the say, and how much influence a person should have. People argue and disagree even about how such questions shall be solved, and what exactly is the best and most appropriate way to disagree and argue. And so, disunity and discord lies at the heart of politics."

Politics is that activity by which humans describe, maintain, and change the social rules by which they want to live. And as in politics people agree to disagree from the very beginning in the absence of a political "Bible," an ultimate standard and plumb line for ethics, behavior and architecture; **compromise** is the order of the day. The political process in most nations is the institutionalization of compromise, which is why politics is sometimes called the art of conflict resolution. A compromise lies somewhere in the middle of two poles, describes a middle ground between extremes, and is, by necessity, a least common denominator that is usually intended to save everyone's face. This is how compromise, a truce between conflicting opinions, becomes the foundational organizational principle of a society.

Compromise is not interested in truth; it has resigned the pursuit of truth in favor of a pragmatic way forward. The latest compromise we have agreed upon today is usually nothing more than the sum total of all compromises of the past. And what do you call a society that has given itself such a governmental system? A democracy. People in democracies are individually free – but basically ungovernable. We cannot really govern a society by compromise, but we can administrate it. This is how bureaucracy – the ultimate rule of administration – comes to power, and remains in power for as long as the political system is not changed. More and more people recognize this, in politics and in business, and that is why we will see an increase in pyramidal, hierarchical "benevolent dictatorship" not only in the corporate world, but in politics, as we see in the Fidel Castros, Hugo Chavezes and others. We all have heard of the terrors of the regimes of Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Kim Yong Il, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Ghaddafi, Mao Tse Tung and many other not so benevolent dictators.

And so, increasingly frustrated by the rule of cold bureaucracy, many countries, in an attempt to break out of unbelievable corruption, will cry for a good strong man, somebody positive to take the reign, to clean up the mess that has rendered many countries literally unable to be ruled. In other words: the dark side of democracy makes more and more people cry for a Messiah. This is why we will witness the return of any number of political God-Kings, and, mark my words, not only in Africa and Asia.

With the exception of the Roman Catholic system and its papal, "apostolic chair" that is fairly recognized by the media and the world, in the absence of a recognized apostolic and prophetic function and structure within Christianity democracy and anarchy, the ever changing rule of "religious warlords," tribal clans, and caste leaders has been the order of the day. In the absence of a recognizable apostolic function within Protestantism, the institutionalization of compromise, a "political Christianity," has become the rule. The rule is that nobody rules – **and nobody dares rule**. The result? Everybody agrees to disagree, and as we all "respect each other's differences," and even believe it is a

God-given right to be different, we become a mixed forest of trees, a market place like in biblical Ephesus full of “confused people where one shouts this, and another shouts that, and most did not even know why they were there in the first place” (Acts 19:32).

You have heard the slogan “United we stand, divided we fall.” Christians have long tried a third option: *Divided we stand*, as Gerald Coates of England once wrote about this perplexing situation in a book about *Why so many Denominations*. This is why in many cities the so-called City Reaching movements, or various “City Transformation Networks,” Gatekeeper and “Fathers of the City” initiatives that are mostly based on non-apostolic and unbiblical congregationalism, the individual right of every congregation to exist independently from others (technically, an idiotic form of church governance that respects individualism higher than corporate or godly governance), have been taking off in the past few years with great excitement. But watch it: after a few years they wear out, either frustrated by their inefficiency to get things really changed and done due to the fact that everyone is ultimately building “his own paneled house” Haggai 1-style, or the initiatives become hijacked by the local loudmouths, usually one of the mega-church pastors in the region who, looking at the attendance size of his congregation, is fooled into believing that this describes importance or even apostolicity. In very few areas of the world today is there a wide recognition of godly apostolic and prophetic “City fathers,” but this will change quickly in the years to come.

What does all of this mean for the apostolic reformation we are in? We are witnessing the re-emergence of healthy, godly, governmental functions in the ekklesia, the restoration of the most basic, forgotten Kingdom principles. As a vital part of this, apostles and prophets are restored, appointed by God back into their first and second role (1 Cor. 12:28) in the church. For a long time, nations had “kings who ruled but did not govern,” as has often been discussed about the Spanish, Belgian, or Dutch kings. Similarly, Christianity always had prophets and apostles, but they were neither respected nor given the space to do their governmental job. As I have said before, there are four political systems the Bible knows: theocracy, a good king, a bad king, and democracy (which, in its extreme form, breeds anarchy). The “return of the Holy,” the restoration of a holy order in Christianity will mean that we all will have to lay down our own little crowns (representing our own little empires, ministries, organizations, and positions of power) before the Lamb and let God rule.

The Kingdom of God is a theocracy, the realm of God’s uncontested rule. So, in the name of Jesus the King, we have to give up our spirit of contest, say farewell to democratic rules in the ekklesia, and with relish, kill the Holy Cow of a compromised, superficial, and fake unity. Remember classical revival history? No revival has ever happened without someone taking the lead. And no apostolic-prophetic reformation will ever happen in *your* city, district, region, or people group that has any effect on CAWKI at all unless you and others in the Christian community willfully, consciously, and intentionally abandon your independent self-rule, and, in humility and the fear of God, accept and respect those among you who have been given the specific architectural and prophetic giftings necessary to implement this reformation. Here you need either to lead, follow, or get out of the way.

Let me be as clear as possible. I used to be part of a meeting with the city pastors in a town close by. We would come together to have coffee and croissants, talk, pray, and leave. Sometimes, an issue came up that seemed to pertain to all of us, and once, we realized that three of the fifteen churches in town had individually arranged a seminar on leadership, inviting three different people to speak on the same subject in the same city on the very same day! One man, actually an apostolic person, but for a number of reasons not functioning in a legitimate apostolic role, who pastored the second largest church in town, said: "Why don't we pool our resources, talk to each other before we plan such things, and stop wasting precious resources? After all, we are one body!" You should have seen the pastor of the largest church in town – a gifted teacher of the word of God – respond to this sober and most natural apostolic proposition. He was, at this time, the president of the Evangelical Alliance in town. "I completely object!" he exclaimed with a raised voice. "The Evangelical Alliance is based on the individual right of each church to govern itself, and nothing, absolutely nothing, shall change that. We all should be allowed to continually do what we feel is best for our churches!" Needless to say, the three independent leadership seminars came and went, the churches and the city remained unchanged, the apostolic man finally gave up and left town. I later sat with the pastor who had shot down this process, and said to him that this exact mentality and mindset is the very killer of unity, and if he continued in this non-apostolic spirit, then he needs to either step down from city-wide leadership, or relinquish it to someone else. This kind of mindset is not the solution it is but the very problem.

As I am sure you have had similar stories in your town or region, we could either give up and leave town only to find the same story somewhere else – or decide to change the entire system back to the order of God. And this, of course, is what we need to do in each city and region of the world. If you are personally in any such city-wide or regional leadership position, but not functioning in an apostolic or prophetic role, please do step aside from your place of hierarchical "firstness" tomorrow, allow for a flat structure of peers and friends to emerge, and humbly make room for those who do have that role and gifting that you do not have. Even if you are apostolic and prophetic, don't rule like a king, but serve, wash the dishes, go the second mile, and work together with the shepherds, evangelists, teachers, and deacons who God has placed in your area who are ready first to serve the region and not first their individual church. And if you are a person who until now remained fixed on your individual ministry and church, someone who defends a stand-alone independent position like that special brother mentioned above leading the local Evangelical Alliance: I need you to know that you are obstructing the Kingdom, and, in time, God will either remove or simply sidestep you. Don't let that happen, as this is not God's plan for you, or "your" church that was never yours in the first place. There have been a number of prophecies lately that said: "Give me back my church, so I can give it back to the world." If you are in such a position that you need to do this, can I ask you to do it **now**? Because if it is not now, then when? And if it is not you doing it, then who? And if it is not for God and your region or city, for who or what is it?

Acts 1 before Acts 2

How do we get back to that incredible “dedication to oneness of mind” (Acts 1:14; 2:1), (the original Greek speaks of *homo-thymadon*, literally thinking with one head) that was the precursor and, I believe, the prerequisite of Pentecost? How do we get back to the establishment of a vessel of local or regional unity into which the Holy Spirit could be poured in abundance? A form of unity that was later able to emerge in front of the whole city of Jerusalem, when “Peter stood up with the Eleven,” and twelve voices had one message? And where none of the Eleven later complained that it was Peter, and not him, who took the mike? They had spent ten days – 240 hours, the time span between the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost - in the upper room together. And I believe they were not just sitting around and singing tarrying songs. They had many reasons to be in great discord. In fact, the entire meeting looked like a sure recipe for disaster, and explosive mix of three components that could blow up at any time.

The first explosive ingredient was jealousy and a history of failures amongst the disciples. Peter had failed twice to stand up for Jesus at the fireplace, and needed to face issues of integrity. Surely, a man like that could not possibly be the spokesman of all, as the “Big Day,” Pentecost, was approaching fast and the group together went over the speakers list. Then Jesus had made a mysterious remark about John, one of the inner circle of three, that the disciples understood to mean that the guy won’t die until Jesus comes back. How, do you think, it feels to sit next to an immortal – and you being so very mortal? How does it *feel* to be next to a person who has eaten while leaning on the very chest of Jesus – while you sat at a good distance? And imagine sitting next to Thomas, that doubting man with the incredible ability to always be in the wrong place at the right time? That unreliable fellow who always missed the most important meetings for who knows what reasons? And don’t forget Matthew, the former tax collector, who in his past probably was a right-winged political opportunist collaborating with the Romans to squeeze money from his own Jewish people. Here he is, sitting right next to Simon the Zealot, a former member of a political “leftist” party who probably had had a knife in his pocket and was waiting to see the disgusting Romans – and folks like Matthew who were in bed with them – float face-down in the Mediterranean sea?

The second explosive item in the upper room was the relatives, those with a special bloodline claim on Jesus himself, “Mary and the brothers of Jesus.” Until today, the entire world of Islam is split in half into Sunnis and Shiites, those who claim that religious leadership carrying on Mohammad’s legacy can only come through blood line relationship, while others say it is all about inheriting his spiritual authority. Until today, that is the reason for continued bloodshed, for fellow Muslims throwing bombs at each other in countries like Iraq. Imagine you were one of the twelve disciples. How would you handle it as someone who has been together with Jesus for a mere three years, when suddenly one of the physical half-brothers of Jesus, sons of both Mary and Joseph, gets up and says: “What’s your lousy three years with the Messiah compared to my solid 30 years? I played with him on the merry-go-round!”

And imagine then throwing yet another, the third bombshell into this amazing room that was a unique and revolutionary factor: *the women!* Women had no real say in Jewish, patriarchal religion, and the fact that Jesus had women

who were following him, financing him, washing his feet, women who discovered his resurrection first and women who became the first evangelists, was a complete departure from patriarchal, macho, religious traditions.

As you can see, there was a lot of stuff that needed to be sorted out amongst them. And I believe that those 120 people in the upper room needed to speak openly, unguardedly, declaring their own failures, washing any dirty clothes, and breaking any ice that existed between them. They needed to sort out their various personalities, special family claims, their roles as men and women working together in partnership, and solve the issues completely, before they could emerge into the public in unity (Acts 1:12-14). I firmly believe that **the real miracle of Pentecost happened before Pentecost**, in that upper room. And that fills me with great hope and expectations. Because I think I see a way forward in our present situations. Let us, in the name of Jesus, the present and coming King, go upstairs together again, to the “upper room.” Let us spend time for as long as it takes to sort out our hearts and claims, to repent, forgive, restore, giving up our wretched and terrible individualism and territorialism, our macho men-dominating-over-woman minds, as we free up the women to be partners in a cause that, oh yes, is ultimately run by one man – Jesus. Let us bury our legitimization of anarchy, our arrogance to exist in independence of each other as if we don’t need each other.

Christians only have one head, and that is Christ. He and the shadow of the wings of God is the only covering we ever need, and as we reconnect with our head, we suddenly will start to reconnect with each other, and start functioning as a body, as a swarm with a “swarm intelligence.” Then, and only then, will we be able to re-emerge on the scene in front of our cities and speak with one powerful voice, when “Samiton and the eleven,” all those Neils, Victors, Tonys, Larrys, Floyds, Enos, Herberts, Brunos, Davids, Johns, Medhats, Timothys, Andersons, Alans, Randeeps, Florians, Brians, Steves and Dicks and their contemporary “eleven” will have again one unified, apostolic message that will see entire cities turned upside down in days.

Maybe some of us who can do this need to start rallying this “upper room principle” again, as a needed preparation for an apostolic reformation. We have seen precursors of this already, as in the “Summit” movement initiated by Joe Aldrich or other reconciliation and unity movements. Here we have a lot of homework to do. But I believe Jesus will bless this, as it is in his best interests. Again, will you please start this in your region? And if not you, will you please join it, endorse it, finance it, pray for it, promote it, publish it?

Beyond Western leadership

Jesus was Asian, and so were all of the twelve apostles. The church was not born in Europe, North America or Australia/New Zealand, those countries that we today call “The West.” The West has been a mission field for Asian/Near-Eastern Christianity, and has, at best, become a temporary home to Christianity, a shelter, and a place from where many mission initiatives have started to convert “The Rest” with the religion of the West. However, from the end of WW2 on, and the breaking loose of nations from Western colonialism soon after, a new time has decidedly come – the age of global missions, where missions no longer happen only from The West to The Rest, but from everywhere to everywhere.

In the last century, most if not all of the enormous growth of Evangelical Christianity has happened particularly outside the West, while Christianity has seemed to stagnate or even recede in the West. Still, the real missions contribution of the Non-West has been largely underestimated by most Western missions in the past, since they saw the growth of Evangelicalism in many parts of the world mainly as a fruit of their own mission efforts, rather than something that God did in order to prepare and usher in an entirely different era of missions altogether. Most Western mission agencies and thinkers looked at the missions contribution of the Non-West usually in terms of their own indicators of missionary success: numbers of cross-cultural missionaries sent, numbers of churches planted in other nations, establishment of schools and bible institutes, hospitals, and budget issues tied to the size of a missionary headquarter. But, obscured by misleading indicators of missions and decidedly under the radar of Western denominationalism, an amazing mission contribution has been created and amassed.

Let me present my conclusion right here, before I go any further: The Church of the West is completely and utterly unable to rescue itself from its present status without humbly accepting help of the Church of the Non-West. With all its methods, its technology, its intellectual abilities, the West simply lacks spiritual power, respect of elders, the ability to obey both individually and collectively, or to even have a healthy sense of shame anymore. Christians in the West, used to thinking that they are the naval, the Vatican of the Protestant world, God's own headquarters, are waking up to an entirely different reality, as Jim Rutz in his book *Megashift* and others have documented. Fifty years after it started to happen, Christianity in the West is by now finally getting used to hearing great God-stories from countries far away, and, true to the amazing consumerism that has molded Christianity in the West, many are still able to either consume stories of vicarious revival someplace else with relish and then go home with straw in their mouths, because they have failed to ask the right questions. Or, even worse, Western Christians become angry about why God is so much at work in China "and not here," and simply fail to come to the most simple and logical conclusion: ***go and learn from China!***

The West, through centuries of missionary history, has become so utterly and completely convinced of being the teachers of the world, that it seems unthinkable, even heretical, to suggest that learning actually works the other way round, too: from the Rest to the West. Up to today, try to have a fantastic Christian book originally written in Tamil, Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, or Zulu translated, published, and distributed in the West, and you will know exactly what I mean.

Let me speak to you here from that part of me that is Jewish and married to an Indian, and forget for a moment that I was born and raised in Germany, son to a Hungarian dad. Huge networks of house churches have formed in China and Vietnam and other places that now, after it has happened there, will become mainline in the West. Experiencing the power of God, the prophetic, healing, deliverance, guidance through dreams and visions, and at the same time remaining faithful and respectful to elders, the extended family, and living a life of amazing obedience and longsuffering, bearing pain in the fires of the most horrible and violent persecution that hardly any Evangelical movement in the West would be able to handle for even a few days, have been mainly

With all its methods, its technology, its intellectual abilities, the West simply lacks spiritual power, respect of elders, the ability to obey both individually and collectively, or to even have a healthy sense of shame anymore.

lessons learned *outside the West*. Many Western *Christian* teenagers (imitating some of their own leaders) are fooling around sexually and ending up with teenage pregnancies, abortions, premature marriages, looking at divorce and remarriage as a totally normal option in life, something that is rampant like a plague among the Christian community in the West. In stark contrast, the oldest son in many extended *Hindu* families will tie a ribbon every year to the arms of their sisters, declaring to them with an oath that they will protect their well-being, their dignity and virginity with their own life. Imagine if such Hindu boys become Christians (as is now happening by the millions), and they start naturally caring for their spiritual sisters in the same way, as they are now part of the same household of faith. Can the West learn anything from this?

Say about Muslims what you want, but it is Islamic theology (not your garden-variety Protestant pastor in a Sunday sermon) that declares that everything in life has to come under the rule of Allah; only as an individual bows and submits himself to Allah (Islam means submission), and as the community does the same, the *Ummah*, the fellowship of Islamic believers can exist. Most Muslims live in extended families or clans, something that is now virtually unknown in the fragmented West, where families have been falling apart at an alarming rate and single moms, dysfunctional families, rebellious kids, their clueless and depressed parents and lonely seniors tucked away in nursery homes watching TV, fed by nurses, cruelly separated from their own children and grandchildren in their old age, seem to be common place. A total of staggering 8.8 million households in Germany – that is 22% of all households in the nation – are so-called senior households with people of 65 years and above being alone by themselves. Unimaginable in traditional Muslims societies! Many there fervently respect their parents, uncles, and the traditional social order. As the Holy Spirit moves into folks like this, as it is happening now in ever greater numbers, they come alive through Jesus with a pattern of life that is so much closer – and therefore better – to God's blueprint of communal living than the terrible individualism and materialism-driven "life" style in the West. As the love of God floods the hearts of more and more Muslims, their legalistic obedience towards Allah will become liberated and obedient love to Jesus. More and more Muslim fundamentalists and Jihad warriors are coming to Christ. After having dedicated their entire lives to the cause of Allah, and having been ready to die for him many times, what do you think their new lives will look like, as they now serve their living God whom they have found in Jesus, with even greater passion and love? Do you really think they will sit down quietly and soak in Christian pews for the next 30 years? They will want to be dangerous for God, ready to go to places where very few Western missionaries would think of going.

This may sound funny, but look at the element of truth in it: Just 100 years ago, decent and well-dressed missionaries from the West, carrying big Bibles under their arm, would go down to Africa to stand in front of a half-naked crowd and tell them: In the name of Jesus, dress up! Today, we are seeing very decent and well-dressed African missionaries with even bigger Bibles show up in Europe, go to the nudist beaches and parks there, stand before those half - or even stark - naked Europeans and tell them: In the name of Jesus, dress up! There is hardly anything in the West anymore for which the West feels true shame. Can we learn something here from our African brothers and sisters?

Let the First Nations be first

I remember when God – like he has to many others as well - spoke to me about the role of the “first nations” (Indians, Indios, Inuits, Aborigines, Maoris, Laps, Adivasis, etc.), the original inhabitants of many areas of the world before colonization set in and set up white man’s dominion in colored-man’s land. Many of them have suffered from an outright racist spiritual colonialism. Listening recently to the tales of an Indian in Vancouver, Canada, at how their ancestors had to suffer at the hands of Christian missionaries who allowed themselves to be an instrument of naturalizing/Canadianizing the Indians in a most horrible way (like sticking needles into the tongues of the Indian pupils, should they dare speak their native languages and not English in the Christian schools) is a story that will not leave your eyes dry. In some places, first nations have started to like the white man’s God, but remained strangely at odds with white man’s 5-P church, no matter how “contextualized” it looked, no matter how many drums were set up and feathers would fly. Organic churches, CAGWI, not imported forms of CAWKI, will make a whole lot more sense to them, because of the way they think and behave anyway. Their communal way of living – before much of it was destroyed by white man’s firewater, guns and cheap jewelry - their respect for nature and their former and still latent ability to move as a tribe will make an important contribution to missions – and speak powerfully to the leaderless “tribes” of the youth of the world, who may not listen to Benny Hinn or Reinhard Bonnke anymore. But imagine when Chief Flying Eagle, born again Apache and a prophetic missionary, shows up in full regalia before the youth in Tokyo, Taipei, Berlin or Manchester, and tells them through a dance performance and dramatic storytelling how they as a tribe have rediscovered the true identity of Manitou! The tipis, iglus, tents, gers, huts, and shacks of first nation people groups will be a very powerful place for many white people to discover God and church in totally new ways, becoming (finally!) learners from teachers they so long have considered second class. Besides this, I believe that the first nations and their descendants are still the legal applicants – before God – for the spiritual land titles of their areas, as their ancestors were the ones who were dispersed by God with full intention to the very places where they settled down (Acts 17:26). They, not white men and their descendents who came as colonizers and strangers onto their turf, will be able and allowed to reclaim their land title from the throne of God, as apostolic and prophetic people emerge from among them. This, in turn, will change life significantly for the white people (and church planting among them) and their guest cultures now firmly implanted and living in their gardens. Descendants of first nations have something to offer to countries like Canada, USA, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Finland, Mongolia, India, Australia, New Zealand or continents like Africa that no one else can give.

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A global fivefold ministry

If we consider that the five-fold ministry mentioned in Eph. 4:11-13 also has a geographical, continental dimension, I would argue that (looking at the positive redemptive gifts and callings, not at their negative, sinful, and corrupt counterparts that we find everywhere) from Europe comes deep insight, from USA comes pioneering, from Latin America comes passion, from Asia comes perseverance, and from Africa comes power. Europe as a whole has a concep-

tualizing, engineering, and inquisitive-inventive quality and dedication to substance and depth that describes a world-class teacher. America has a pioneering let's-go-where-no-one-has-gone-before, a let's-do-it mentality, a better understanding of PR than anyone else in the world, as their whole economy depends on it, and is truly a world-class Evangelist. Latinos, the most relational, gregarious, happy, and compassionate folks on the planet, probably the only ones who truly know how to celebrate like crazy, are absolutely world-class pastors and shepherds. In Africa, you will find more prophets per square kilometer than anywhere else on the planet. And since for many centuries, healing and exorcism are often the only way to fight diseases with the next hospital days away, nobody will be surprised that from Africa comes power, as best represented in the prophetic ministry. Asia, the very place where God chose to lay the foundations of the world's cultures, has produced such an amazing wealth of perseverance and wisdom, all of it in the furnace of persecution and many baptisms of fire, through age old suffering combined with a healthy respect for corporate living, fatherhood, and respect of elders, that I believe it has always continued to be a continent where we find the purest versions of apostolic quality.

Imagine a pool of people, teachers from Europe, evangelists from the US, pastors from Latin America, prophets from Africa and apostles from Asia, who would work together in unity and corporate vision to change the world together, and the sky is the limit for what will happen. What hinders it? Let's remove whatever prevents this, and see it in action.

All in all these components comprise a most amazing and invaluable holistic contribution to global missions, missions from everywhere to everywhere. Without each one of these aspects included, missions will simply remain incomplete and unfinished. The West has long since lost its leadership in the world; yes it still has most of the information, books, stuff, money, and resources, but all these things do not really constitute biblical leadership. Let us therefore embrace each other's contribution in an age of global missions, welcome it, be part of it, promote it, pray for it, pay for it, and accept it, no matter what our own role is. And if the West does not lead anymore, where is the problem? The issue is that we all arrive safely at our God-given destination, not the pride that would ask who exactly the leader of the train was. Remember who the leader of the first successful expedition to climb Mt. Everest in 1953 was? A Nepali Sherpa, named Tenzing Norgay. For me this is a prophetic symbol that, in climbing the very last mountain in the global task of discipling the nations, again apostolic Asians will be the ones leading us to the peak.

Beyond the Lid

If you take some fleas, trap them in a jar and close the lid, you will see something interesting. The fleas start jumping, higher and higher until they hit their heads on the lid. They experience solid borders to their world. They will start jumping to just under the lid, not quite reaching the pain barrier. And now the amazing thing: take the lid off. What happens? The fleas don't excitedly jump into their new-found freedom, but continue to jump just as they did before, to just below the now removed lid. The previous pain has been accepted as a limit and incorporated as a constant part of their life. In short, they have been successfully conditioned, and embraced a barrier in their life that, factually, does not exist anymore.

If you don't have any fleas handy, use an elephant. Using a strong chain, bind one of its back legs to a thick tree. Put some food just out of its reach and wait for three days. Mad with hunger, the elephant will eventually try to reach the food until the chain cuts painfully into its skin. Then you return and generously give the elephant the food - and it will always follow you, its savior in need. After a while, when its thick skin has been worn thin in this one particular spot on its leg, and it has become used to you and the chain, replace the chain with a rope and the tree with a wooden post. At the slightest pressure on its sensitive spot, the elephant will react as you wish. You have successfully conditioned it. The experiment only fails in exceptional circumstances. Imagine, a fire breaks out in the circus tent: the elephant suddenly experiences fear, and 'forgets' its conditioning. The 'chain' on its leg breaks - like the rope it truly is.

I was told that if you have neither a flea nor an elephant, find a chicken. Press its head firmly to the ground with your left hand, being careful not to hurt it. The experiment works best in sand. With your right hand, slowly draw a thick line in the sand directly towards its head. Its right eye will follow your movements closely. Continue the line over its head and as far to the left as you can. Its left eye, again, will see exactly what you have done. Now let go of the chicken and step aside. Amazingly, nothing happens. The bird remains fixed in this position. It clearly saw, and can still feel on its head, that you have tied it to the ground with a thick rope. Only if you scare it, or with time, will it forget the "rope," and walk away free.

These animals have something in common with many of today's CAWKI-Christians: they have been trained and conditioned to unquestioningly accept artificial limits as real. If you feel even a little bit like these fleas, elephants or hens, listen up, as I have a message for you: The lid is open, the tree is a small stake, the rope is made of air! Even the forbidden doors are really not locked. In an age of apostolic and prophetic reformation, "nothing is impossible!" is not only a slogan for Toyota, but for you, too! So, in the name of Jesus, leave behind the CAWKI-bred limitations of don't dare to think this, don't dare to say that, don't dare to publish this or don't dare to do that. Go, get up, jump out of the glass, the lid is off, and set out to work, do what you have never done before - and take as many others with you on the journey as possible.

Align with apostolic and prophetic resources

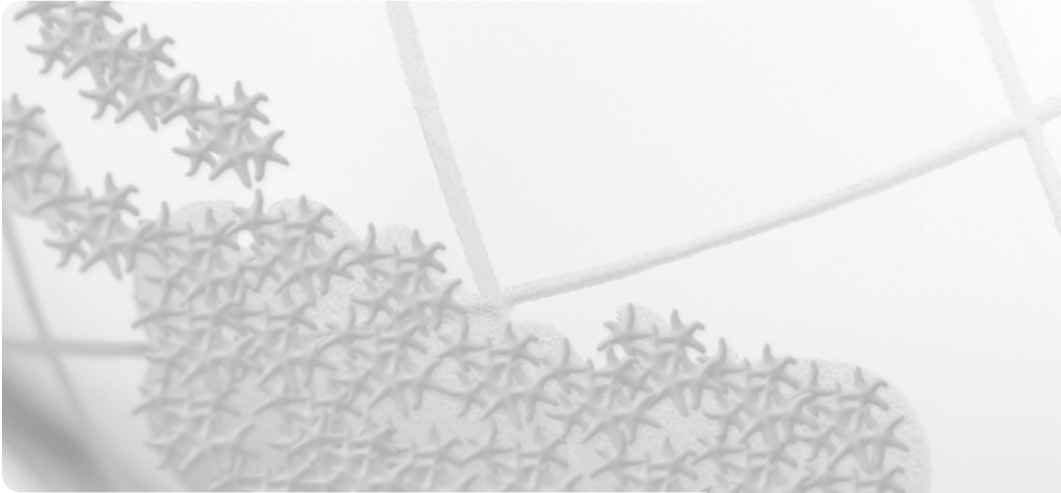
Rediscovering apostolic and prophetic ministries a decade ago was one thing, globally aligning ourselves with them is a natural next step that won't happen automatically, but needs to be done intentionally. The last immediate implication that I want to mention therefore here is for you to go find and align yourself with apostolic and prophetic people in your area. Sit down, pray, and ask God if he can show you healthy prophetic and apostolic people in your region. If you can't seem to find them, ask someone wise and humble who knows the turf better than you, and let him lead you. Don't ask the Stars, the ones who are in the limelight right now, because they only have one answer about the question of who should lead all this, a certain name that is readily and abundantly on their lips. It is an answer that you don't want to hear, and an answer that you don't want to make such a person recant. Remember that it is highly unlikely that you will find healthy apostles and prophets in church. Much rather you will find them under a heap of stones, in politics, business,

the arts, among the doctors, engineers, and inventors of your area. And don't you forget to look in the mirror! If you find such people, visit them, invite them, hear them out, learn from them. Many, if not most of them, will need time to overcome the shock that anyone actually asks for them at all, as they are so used to be shunned, excommunicated and sidelined. Let them come to your church, mission agency, house church network, next summer camp, or annual conference. Start exposing yourself more and more to their thinking and messages. It is not necessary to make these people the leaders (or successors) of what already exists. Most of them will not even think to take over your church, denomination or agency, because they know that something entirely new has to start on apostolic and prophetic foundations that most probably will have to be re-laid from scratch. We don't need a ninth prophetic and a tenth apostolic floor in a building that has a teacher's foundation and eight consecutive evangelistic floors. Discipline yourself in the power of the Holy Spirit, especially if you have been molded by much evangelistic, pastoral or teaching ministries, to listen carefully and learn to understand the entirely different perspectives, values and outlooks of prophetic and apostolic people, and should you be a prophet or a prophetess yourself, please diligently give space to the apostolic and try to grasp it, because it will be *apostolic* architecture and an operative apostolic framework that will ultimately define the space within which God wants *you* to function. This is your chance! Don't put the armor of Saul on the young Davids and expect them to lead. In other words: don't expect them to excel in what you do best. Allow them to choose their own pebbles and use their slingshots. Remember, they are meridian gladiators, and may not think that those things you consider to be the ultimate weapons are as useful as you have always believed.

Maybe you need to be a "Barnabas" to them, and go get them out from their respective Tarsuses and get them to work in Antioch. As this happens, give them time, new clothes, a car, a secretary, some money, maybe a house of their own and a hut on the mountains to hide and pray. Many of them come from long wilderness experiences, are completely unused to the Christian limelight, simply not "sexy" enough to be the perfect TV or media personalities (would Paul be, after all we know about him?), and need time to adjust their eyes. They need to learn to embrace their own role, learn to be effective, learn to move in a Christian culture again, because they may have been far away from it for a very extended period. Remember, 1900 years is a long time.

As you expose yourself – and if possible your entire constituency – , align and partner with apostolic and prophetic people, your heart will change, your thinking will change, your values will change, your hope will change, *you* will change! It will make you hungry for God again, eager to do something wild, excited beyond any limits you have known.





27 Organic Servanthood Development

The workers are few, the consumers are many.

27 Organic Servanthood Development

After the call for more money, the biggest cry of CAWKI has always been for more “leader” – and leaders it got. A leader, so the most common definitions, is a person that rules, has followers, is a person who influences a group of people towards the achievement of a goal. Leaders maximize other peoples potential, are larger-than life persons and basically find it alright to hold power over people.

If we call, recruit, train and commission such people, we should not be surprised if we get what we ask for.

In stark contrast, Jesus did not train leaders. He developed servants. In most religions, the concept of a leader is taken either from business or pyramidal, top-down government. Such a person in New Testament Greek would be called *archon*, ruler. In those few instances that we find the English word “leader” mentioned at all in the NT, it typically is a translation of the Greek verb *hegeomai* (Heb 13:7.17.24) or the noun *hegemon* (Lk 22:26). The interesting thing is that *hegeomai* originally meant to have an opinion, to believe, to have come to a position of faith. It describes, in other words, someone who can articulate his faith. Later the verb started to be used meaning to go before, to show the way, and before long it also started to mean to rule or command. In the military world of ancient Greece *hegemonia* was that position in front of the army that changed daily, so as not to establish a permanent position of firstness. Jesus knew of these two meanings for the word *hegemon*, so in discussing this with his disciples, Jesus made it clear that “the *hegemon* amongst you should be like the one who serves” (a deacon, see Lk 22:26). The key distinctive of someone who is given responsibility in the Empire of Jesus is obedient, selfless servanthood (and not “lording it over” 1. Pe 5:3). If we want such people to multiply, we need to both demonstrate the same mindset in our lives first, and then look into ways how to reproduce after the original template of Jesus, the servant-king.

The process for believers to grow into these wider ministry dimensions that transcend the ministry focus of a local house church follows clear organic principles that we will look into now. There are three main reasons why people believing in the same Jesus and living in the same city can have very different levels of responsibility and influence. These are **maturity, ministry**, and differing **measures** of jurisdictions that are meted out to them by God. Let us have a look at these three vital dimensions of Christian life.

Maturity

A father has different and larger responsibilities in a family than a small child, and a teenager has (although he sometimes does not know this) much less to worry about – and to say - than the elder of an extended family. As God is essentially a father who even teaches us to address him as father, it is vital to note that in the Bible we find the issue of leadership framed mainly in the language of fatherhood, not speaking of technical and business-like leadership levels or pyramidal religious hierarchies. And if there are biblical examples of this, like in the case of Jethro, a pagan priest with a decidedly religious hierar-

chical background (Ex. 17) who advises Moses to select people over 1,000, 100, 50 and 10 to help him judge the court cases, the Bible makes it clear that these hierarchies don't really work well over time. Why, otherwise, would Moses later change the Jethro-System completely and replace it with a far more flat-structured system of 70 elders, on whom God would take the spirit that was on Moses and distribute it among them so that Moses has those who help him carry the burden of the people? (Num 11:17).

In Isaiah 9:6, we find a prophetic statement about Jesus that summarizes what I want to establish in a nutshell. He is described there with these terms "a child is born, a son is given...the everlasting father." In other words, in his own earthly life, there were three main phases of development and maturity. In the New Testament we find the childhood of Jesus (age 1-12) described, where he lives in dependency on his two fathers (earthly and heavenly) and grows "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). A second phase in his life is his son-hood, his teenage and tween years from 12-30 years of age. These 18 years he worked as a building contractor in Nazareth in his Dad's business, until, for the third and final phase, in the last 3 ½ years of his earthly life, he leaves all this behind and steps into his apostolic role. This is where Jesus himself calls disciples to follow him and he raises them as his spiritual sons.

In John 17, Jesus makes a very astonishing statement that could be easily overlooked. Jesus has not even been crucified yet, the famous words on the cross "it is finished!" have not come out of his mouth yet, but look at this statement he makes here in John 17:4 to his father: "I have **completed** the work you gave me to do." **Completed!** It seems that Jesus and his father have an in-house talk here about one of Jesus' key objectives on Earth, and that is, to raise spiritual children and become a spiritual father himself. How did Jesus do that? He had revealed God to those who the father had given to him: his disciples. And Jesus now could say: "As the father has sent me, so I have sent them into the world" (17:18). He had successfully passed on son-ship and mission to others who God had entrusted to him, and he reports back to his Dad: "Mission accomplished! They are already carrying the baton! And even when I die, there will be twelve more like me out there who will ensure the completion of my mission to the ends of the earth. Yes!"

As the disciples had become the spiritual children of Jesus, one of the main objectives of Jesus' mission was truly reached and he could go on to the last task that was reserved for him: to die a sinless death on the cross once and for all, something that would not have to be repeated by others, except that they also would have to carry their cross and die to self and be made alive with Christ for their task in the Kingdom. I believe these three natural maturity phases are prescriptive for all of us who follow Christ.

We see the same development of thought when John writes his first letter and speaks to "children, young men (sons), and fathers" (1 John 2), indicating that there is a natural progression of spiritual age and therefore maturity. With this growing maturity come various specific tasks that cannot be performed by people who are not at the necessary skill level (see the following). Let me illustrate these three phases in a chart that describes the anatomy of maturing progression:

"I have completed the work you gave me to do."



Phase	1	2	3
In plants	seed	stem	head
Age	child	son	father
In business	apprentice	artisan	master (trains others)
Main pedagogical objective	receive	demonstrate	multiply
Skill level	beginner	intermediate	advanced
Tasks (according to 1 John 2)	overcome sin	overcome the devil	know the father
Spiritual role	believer	disciple	equipper of others
Level of ministry	mentoring	coaching	partnering
Charisma	receive gifts	unpack/exercise them	becoming a gift to the Body ourselves

Mentoring, Coaching, Partnering

If we leave out of our discussion a possible fourth stage, the “grandparents stage” (return to weakness, vacate the center, tell stories to the grand children, uphold the legacy etc.), there are three generic levels of involvement that move people from those being mentored, on to those who are being coached, and finally to those who partner on a peer level. Mentoring is what is done to beginners. They receive a lot of input from their mentors, and give little in return. They watch, observe, absorb, and imitate in small ways. In other words: mentoring is what we do to small children. In mentoring we lay foundations (values, character, thinking patterns, learning skills, obedience). When these children grow older and reach their teenage years, mentoring won’t work anymore (or cause rebellious kids, as any father who has not understood these principles will tell you), but needs to be replaced by coaching. Coaching is training according to a different rule set. It is what we do to youth, before they reach adulthood and become parents themselves. Coaching brings out the inbuilt potential in people, assists them as they start doing the work themselves, cheer-leads them, allows them to make mistakes and gently corrects them without discouraging them. Coaching builds further on the foundations that were laid in the mentoring phase and develops skills, methodology, application, initial guided project work, until there is nothing of substance that has been withheld from them so they can make their last and final step into mature adulthood and can start becoming parents themselves: having and raising children, mentoring them, and repeat the process endlessly. In the last phase of parenthood, a person has reached his final skill level, and rather than just doing what he can do best for the rest of his life, God, who wants multiplication to happen so that his apostolic purposes will be fulfilled, instead encourages everyone to devote his or her time to the raising of the next generations of sons and daughters. For someone to be at a mature skill level and

not give himself away to others, but just keep his skills to himself, he would be technically considered an *idiot* (from Greek: *idiotes*), a person only concerned for himself, disregarding the welfare of the whole community; someone living his selfish life at the expenses of the larger community and burying his talent in the ground; in other words: the embodiment of utter foolishness, someone who has understood nothing of life, let alone God.

Here is a (loaded) question I have for you: did God seriously intend for you to grow up? Or does he want you to remain an eternal child or teenager? Silly question, I know. But many Christians have, for all practical purposes, answered a clear and resounding “No!” to this very question if it is asked in a slightly different way: Does God seriously want you to function within a five fold, full time ministry role at some point in your life? Most say “No! This is for a select few, those who feel called to enter a Bible school.” Wrong, very wrong!

Let me ask the same question yet another way: does God seriously want you to leave your secular job or business existence at some point in your life (way before conventional pension age!) and drop everything for the sake of solely being a spiritual equipper of others, a spiritual mother or father who invests into the multiplication of the next spiritual generation? Most will immediately say, “No!” because they have been taught to think that way through centuries of heretical, non-apostolic teaching on the subject that has become institutionalized in classical Christendom. Non-scriptural teaching can seriously damage your future.

Most have heard things like “work and earn, pay tithes, taxes, and burn – and make sure you visit a Church service most Sundays, so you will have a Christian burial,” and this has had a devastating and crippling effect on the maturing of the church. Entire generations of Christians have become bereaved spiritual orphans, lacking a generation of spiritual parents and role models, compassionate and skilled to invest themselves into them, mentor them, coach them, and then release them as mature partners in the Kingdom. Once we grasp these simple principles and they become an integral part of the apostolic and prophetic church that God is raising in our days, this will become an element that explodes as we all understand our natural calling and role to become mature Christian parents and raise others to be likewise.

Believers, disciples, churches

The New Testament makes a clear distinction between believers and disciples. These terms are not interchangeable, and they do not mean the same. A believer is usually a new convert, a child in Christ, someone who does not yet really solve problems but, because of his immaturity, usually causes problems. It was Jewish *believers* (Greek: *pisteuontes*) in Acts 11:2, who criticized Peter for having fellowship with uncircumcised men, who required Peter to explain in detail what had happened in the house of Cornelius. It also was *believers* from the sect of the Pharisees (Acts 15:5) with their crazy idea of wanting to make circumcision mandatory for non-Jewish believers, who made the apostolic council in Jerusalem necessary.

A disciple, if we take the definition given by Jesus in John 15:8,16, is someone “bearing much fruit, showing himself to be my disciple,” in other words, someone who is on fire for God, has started to obey and bring fruit himself – which most definitely involves bringing other people to Christ and thus has

Non-scriptural teaching can seriously damage your future.

become a spiritual mother or father in the process. A disciple, we could show in the New Testament, is someone *who has given up everything he has* (Luke 14:26-33) to follow Christ. Someone who has not done this “cannot be my disciple,” says Jesus himself. I would not want to argue that with the King himself. But if this is true, how many of today’s church-goers – or even church and ministry staff – could honestly say this about themselves? How many would be believers – and how many would be disciples? As a result of false teaching on these crucial concepts, we have generations of believers who think they are disciples. But if we see their lives, we meet impoverished, crippled, stunted children in Christ who fill the pews of traditional churches and forever are attending one more conference. They are believers who may have attended a garden-variety discipleship 101 course, filled out some forms and fill-in-the-blank Bible study sheets, have read a book or two on discipleship, and now are firmly convinced they are what their life (and Jesus) says they are not: disciples.

In the book of the Acts, we see an interesting progression of the things that grow and multiply as the development of the Kingdom moves on. The first thing that grows after the early Apostles take their role in establishing the church in Jerusalem is that “the number of believers grew” (Acts 2:4; 4:4; 5:14). Note that those new converts here are called anything but disciples. When the apostles were the main actors in Jerusalem, and others watched the spectacular show of their ministry in full swing with all those signs and wonders, much was happening and many people became believers. However, that was all. The entire enterprise shifted gears a little bit later with the first hefty prices that had to be paid (jail and flogging for the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira dying). After the apostles had established the custom that money was shared “at the feet of the apostles” (Acts 4:35), implementing a practical financial strategy for what Jesus had taught them in Luke 14: 26-33 and Luke 8:1-4 about a common purse, and they made a conscious decision to ask God for even greater boldness in the face of persecution, suddenly it says: the number of *disciples* (no longer were they called believers) increased, and the Bible even says of the church “that it increased *itself rapidly*” (Acts 6:7).

In other words, Acts 6 was the multiplication threshold where the exact same thing happened to the early apostles that Jesus excitedly reported to his father in John chapter 17:4: they had begun to see their own spiritual sons and daughters. This was the time when the first man who was not one of the original twelve apostles, Stephen, was doing, on his own, an authoritative ministry – preaching an impromptu (without notes), concise synopsis of salvation history to the theological elite of his days. He was ready to lay down his life in martyrdom, because he had understood what it meant to be a disciple.

This was so very exciting that even Jesus in heaven could not contain himself to remain seated on the throne. Stephen, in an open vision, saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God (Acts 7:46). Here the fruit of the apostles’ labor had come out into the open: the disciples they had raised had started to multiply and spread *themselves*. But there was one more ultimate phase that the Kingdom advanced into. After the first apostles had already been sent off to their various jurisdictions, after the first apostolic council had settled the first disputes in unity, after the original twelve apostles had accepted the fact that

there were to be other apostles after them (Paul and Barnabas, for instance), something else started to happen. The fruit of the disciples – constantly winning and baptizing new believers who themselves grew into disciples who did the same – was that they formed churches wherever they went. In other words, constant ongoing church planting was born, and it says in Acts 16:5 that “the number of *churches grew daily*.” It was not that every day new believers were added to the existing church, but now entirely new churches were born all the time. In a summary:

What grew

Number of believers grew
 Number of disciples was increasing rapidly
 Churches grew daily in number

reference

Acts 2:4; 44; 5:14)
 Acts 6:1.7 (*plethyno*: increase
ekplethyno in V.7: multiply *itself*)
 Acts 16:15

This reminds us of Jesus’ parable of the self-growing seed in Mark 4:26-28. The Kingdom of God, Jesus explains, is like a man sowing seeds, and it develops in three stages. First, the dead seeds sprout and produce the stalk; in a second phase the head, and then, lastly, the full kernel in the head. The fascinating Greek word by which Jesus describes this maturing and multiplication process is *automate* – all by itself, from where our word automatically comes. There is a Kingdom mechanism that works because God has created it that way. As we do our job – repent, die to our old self, and give up life as we know it, and then we disciple others to do the same, he does his job and grants the most amazing miracle of life: multiplication, the automatic self-propagation of life “with seeds in it,” with the ability to endlessly multiply, whether we sleep or not. That is exactly what the original blessing of God was all about: to empower things that run according to their original design and their destined framework to be fruitful, multiply - and therefore fill the earth.

The main point is this: growing in natural phases in our maturity is a very foundational, creational principle, and we need to understand and respect it to benefit from it. This includes the fact that God wants to increase both our own individual sphere of influence according to our natural maturity level, if we want that too, and the ability and destiny of the church to move from growth to multiplication and become self-propagating and unstoppable in the process.

From Gifts to Ministries

Another reason for the existence of multiple responsibilities and influence in the church of a region is to promote the variety of ministries, which the New Testament mentions. There are seven different ministries that are explicitly identified by name, seven “Kingdom job descriptions”: apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, pastors, as well as deacons (administrators) and elders. Elders usually have the role of a parent of a house church, or can describe a resident, rarely-traveling apostle like Peter (1. Pet 5:1). The progression of maturing from child, to son, to fatherhood, also involves a progression of what could be called **charismatic skill level**. As new believers (children in Christ) receive gifts through the Holy Spirit, their main job is what kids also like best: to receive them. The part where the wrapped parcel is placed into their expectant hands

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and they do not yet know what it contains is almost more exiting than the gift itself (at least if our three sons are any indication). This is the message that Paul sent to the Corinthians, classical children in Christ: "I don't want you to be ignorant about the spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 12:1).

In a second phase, believers are encouraged to unpack those gifts and use them, because through practice comes maturity. This is the time when believers grow into disciples. Having died to themselves and their egos, they make themselves useful, do ministry in the churches of their region or beyond, and develop their God-given skill and, most importantly, their character. It can be very much so that God's perfect charismatic gift to us and our quite imperfect character are not at all on the same level. But when our character matures, through obedience, suffering, sanctification, service, and our readiness to humbly fit into the larger picture of God and learn to take our place in the local or regional body of Christ, and we overcome childish consumerism and stop being concerned only about us "and what is in it for me," then God will want to move us and cross us over a very important line.

This is the line where we stop *having* gifts from God, but we ourselves *become* gifts – to the larger body of Christ. This is when we move into our parental, equipping role, and God takes a matured disciple and turns him into a gift to the church in order to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph: 4:11). At this point, we are mature enough to stop doing the ministry ourselves, stop always wanting to have the microphone, no longer love demonstrating and putting on display for all to see the great giftedness God has given us (whether it is fitting or not). Now we have become involved in seeing others, naturally less gifted and skilled disciples, move out in front and take on their roles. We now want to move into the background, as parents have learned to do, until we ourselves ultimately become spiritual grandmothers and grandfathers, sitting on our bench in the evening sun, smiling, and watching the kids of our kids create havoc in our garden.

With each gift and, more importantly, with each ministry, come various tasks that people best accomplish when following God's design. Evangelists can do what only Evangelists can do, and no matter how hard a pastor tries, he just won't be able to see similar ministry results should he try to act like he is an evangelist. Apostles, for example, have been given a special brief and a God-given ability to shoulder responsibilities and accomplish objectives that prophets or teachers will never be able to do, even if they tried for 100 years. This individual uniqueness is meant to keep us in balance, prevent us from naïve one-man-shows, humbly and respectfully understand the desperate need that we all have for one another, and to enable us to live out the fact that God has made us part of a body where each member needs the other member, or fails.

Historically, the Charismatic movement (since 1967) has focused much energy on the existence and joyful reception of charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. More and more "charismatic leaders" seem at this point in time to sense the need to grow and mature and move on beyond renewal. Without embracing the apostolic and prophetic ministries that are able not just to renew existing (mainly non-apostolic) churches by opening the door to charismatic gifts, but to reshape and reposition the entire Body of Christ for apostolic and prophetic functioning in the maturity of Christ, this movement – and all move-

ments that came out of it - will probably stall. Moving into apostolic, Kingdom compatible Christianity is an entirely new ball game for many, and will be a make-it-or-break-it point, a spiritual *shibboleth* for the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements as well as the traditional Evangelicals.

Measures of jurisdiction

A last and important reason for various legitimate ministries to exist in the context of a local or regional church (again: not clergy or laity or hierarchical levels) are the different levels of faith and job descriptions meted out to us by God. Paul writes: "Think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given you" (Rom. 12:3). Some people have faith to change entire regions, reconfigure the world's bank systems, reshape the media, revolutionize the school system, plant churches in Mecca, walk on water, or move mountains. Others have faith that they might make it another day, that they might possibly find a vacant parking space in town, and that God might not have forsaken them just yet. As you see, there are different levels of faith, and since "faith is the substance of what we hope for" (Hebrews 11:1), and Jesus said that "it will happen to you according to your faith" (Matt 9:29), our own personal faith defines the spiritual room that is open to us.

In addition to this, God gives us very clearly defined jobs to do, often first short and then life-long missions to accomplish, and he measures out areas of work that define the borders within which we should carry out his purposes for us. God has an exact answer to our questions what, when, where, and with whom we should work, as he has created us and knows intimately for whatever task he has designed us. From the time under Joshua and Caleb, where the land was divided into clearly defined geographic sections, God has been meting out spiritual leases for specific tasks in specific areas. Paul describes this principle in greater detail by explaining to the Corinthians the geographical boundaries measured out to him by God (2 Cor. 10:13-18).

What does all of this mean for training? Will traditional, seminary-based leadership development patterns reproduce the selfless obedient servants that the King is really looking for? If any or all of the above should happen, this will involve not only a different training, but simply better training, a re-dedication to "apostolic teaching," and probably even a reformation of teaching itself. Much training today is developed as extending the DNA and spiritual genes of CAWKI, and as more people are swept into a new kind of church altogether, more and more people will not even want to go through traditional training routes anymore, but pursue new ones. They will ask the kind of questions I have been asked recently: "Jesus and the apostles did not run Bible Sunday schools or Bible schools, nor did they run a single theological seminary or university, and did not even hold seminars and workshops, yet they still changed the world. How come?"

I remember sitting with an Indonesian friend, Chris Marantika, who concluded that in order to plant many thousands of new churches in his beloved land, he needs to plant many Bible schools to train the church planters. "Church planters don't grow on trees, so we have to grow them," he once said in his contagious humor. However, as much as I agree in principle with Chris, even starting 1,000 new Bible schools in the next twenty years to produce 100 church planters per year starting ten traditional (5-P) churches each will give us

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only a fraction of the harvest force necessary to complete the task of discipling the peoples of the world. Let me first, therefore, outline a few basic pedagogical insights I call “organic teaching principles” that we need to rediscover, and then some generic principles of multiplicative learning, learning that does not produce more students or even reproduce schools, but multiply training itself rapidly and endlessly. After that, we will look at a number of training concepts that already exist in that spirit.

Organic Teaching Principles

“Jesus taught like someone with power, not like their teachers of the law” (Matt. 7:29). “Paul and Barnabas met with the church and taught great numbers of people” (Acts 11:26) that ultimately led to the formation of the first intentional apostolic sending base. “Paul had daily discussions (literally: a *dialogue*) with disciples in the lecture hall of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9-10) in such a way that “all Asia heard the word of the Lord.” If we all were to rediscover that power to teach (and dare I mention it: the power to learn) that we observe in Jesus, and in the approach that Paul and Barnabas took, what would that mean? In rethinking and researching organic pedagogical principles, principles that are born out of an organic DNA and a healthy missional mindset, one thing became very clear: traditional CAWKI-based evangelism produces converts, not disciples; teachers produce books and manuals, apostles start mission agencies, deacons start orphanages, pastors run churches and prophets basically start problems.

In the same line of thinking, schools produce graduates, seminars produce certificates, and by now we know that shepherds do not produce sheep. In our former information-driven world, information was everything; at the center of society was “the school.” But schools seem to have become worse and worse, and the latest PISA studies have been such a healthy shock to many, that many are asking: do we need to learn to learn again? Today more and more classical top-down school systems are frantically looking to become more interactive, holistic, or integrative.

In 1999 there was a “world bestseller” called *The Learning Revolution*, a book that sold more than 10 million copies. Authors Dr. Jeannette Vos and Gordon Dryden traveled around the world to propagate their “Learning-Revolution,” describing how students can learn to speak a foreign language fairly fluently in eight weeks, three- and four-year-olds can learn to speak three languages and read, write, spell and count, well before starting school; a seven-year-old getting honors in senior high-school mathematics; an Alaskan high school where students operate four pilot companies while they learn exporting, foreign languages, statistics, or food technology. They spoke of teachers using music to dramatically improve educational standards; schools that identify and cater to a variety of “multiple intelligences;” or how the latest brain research reveals that each one of us is using only a small part of our potential. But rather than looking at the excitement of teaching concepts that are developed outside a connection to God, the original teacher of mankind, New Age self-help ideologies and people “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7), let us look at some pedagogical principles that are both God-connected, revolutionary and simple enough for all of us to pick up.

1) Crucified learning. Acknowledging our creator unlocks our understanding of creation, including ourselves. And someone who understands himself learns better than the bewildered student who tries to master a subject. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; only fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Prov. 1:7; see also Prov. 9:10). Foolishness is a state of the heart, not a matter of a low IQ. “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). Something happens to a person as he gives up trying to understand the world or himself without trying to remain independent from his own maker. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him” (Prov. 3:5)

2) God’s fools are wiser than the world’s scholars. The “Foolishness of God is wiser than the wise of the world.” If “God destroys the wisdom of the wise, frustrates the intelligence of the intelligent” and “made the wisdom of the world foolish” (1 Cor.), why should we educate future generations to function within the Kingdom of God by feeding them the wisdom principles of this world? In light of all scientific evidence for a creation (absence of macro-evolution, or, if life really did start with a big bang 4.5 billion years ago, how come the moon’s core is still piping hot, or has only a few centimeters of star-dust on its surface?), it never ceases to amaze me how otherwise extremely intelligent and scholarly humans can uphold a ridiculous and truly foolish concept like evolution, the idea that amoeba developed into monkeys that suddenly turned into Yuppies. Noah was a fool in the eyes of the people watching him build an ark on dry ground for 120 years. Until the water came.

3) Ask, and it shall be given. The way God teaches man is by asking him questions (Gen. 3; Job 38, etc.). A vital pre-requisite for learning, therefore, is simply to help people ask good questions. Jesus said: “Ask, and it shall be given, seek, and you shall find, knock, and it will be opened.” Our learning is directly limited by the quality of our questions; and if we have no questions, we might memorize, but we will not learn. Questions are stimulated by alertness, an inquisitive mind, curiosity. In other words, questions are asked by a person who is “switched on,” rather than “switched off,” like one more couch potato trying to fake it through school. To ask questions also means to keep a container ready for the answer, to have a proper place to store new information. Otherwise, new information will just flow through the leaks of our nonexistent or superficial questions and go in one ear and out the other.

Intelligence has once been defined as the ability to hold two conflicting concepts in your head at the same time. Jewish rabbinical schools have perfected these insights by following question-based learning principles, and are turning out some of the best graduates in the world, who first had their thinking skills honed (they have been switched on), before engaging with academic subjects and downloading information.

4) Obedience graduates. “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:23), says Jesus. In the Great Commission he says: “Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). Teaching without obedience results in very little. That is why rather than the “memory effect” of half-hearted

Foolishness is a state of the heart, not a matter of a low IQ.

lessons that are stored in our short-term memory for a timed release during exams, the Bible values obedience far beyond head knowledge. Once a person has shown obedience to a special lesson and demonstrates it in his life, he graduates. "Jesus learned obedience through suffering" (Heb. 5:8), and it is not only "the obedience of faith" that is at the core of Paul's gospel (Rom. 1:5), but he says that "obedience leads to righteousness" (Rom. 6:16). And: obedience makes the teacher happy (Rom. 16:19), and happy teachers teach better and are more exciting than grumpy ones.

The love of the disciple for the teacher, as we have seen, is central to the disciple's ability to obey. And: the "Law of Doing" says that students don't learn as the result of what trainers do, but as the result of what trainers get them to do. The student who expects to learn by simply sitting back and listening is likely to be disappointed. The trainer, on the other hand, who relies solely on the "I'll lecture, you listen" type of teaching, is not likely to see much learning take place. Jesus taught them a little and let them practice a lot, contrary to many modern ways of learning that teach a lot and give little room for practice.

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5) Teach and you will learn. No learning is complete without our teaching it to others. Well-known statistics say that we remember only 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear, 80% of what we say, and 90% of what we say as we act.

When we teach someone and do not allow him to teach to others what he has just learnt himself, we significantly dampen the learning curve. This is why good teaching always makes not only room for students to teach others what they have learned, it expects it.

6) Teach teachers, not students. "Entrust the things I say to you to reliable men able to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2). This same principle is applied to the teacher, not the student. If we want learning to spread like a virus, we need to teach fewer people a lot more, rather than a few things to a lot of people. This principle speaks of a selective process to be done by the teacher, looking for the ability to be trustworthy and reliable in his future students, as well as their ability to teach others. If our life-phases are: a) child, b) son, and c) father, we need not only to mentor children, coach sons, and partner with fathers, but encourage b) to teach a), and c) to teach b). As a) becomes b) and finally c), this creates a movement that not only learns, but also learns how to teach, so teaching itself is multiplied by being given away to the students.

7) Disciples learn better than students. It takes a special dedication to be a teacher, but it also takes a special dedication to be a learner. The Greek word for disciple is *matetes* that speaks of a very highly dedicated individual. A disciple in the NT-sense of the word is one that has given up his former life in order to become a learner (Luke 14). Little wonder that Jesus *speaks* to masses, but *teaches* the disciples. The combination master-disciple is a much more powerful one than the teacher-student. A master has access to the life of a disciple, whereas a classical teacher might be in difficulty if he attempts to get involved in the life of a student. Paul had dialogues with *disciples*, not a general audience. This meant that as a result of his dialoging with disciples, they went

and put into practice what Paul taught them outside of the meeting, and as a result, “all of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”

8) The best teachers are other students. Remember math? I, for one, usually had a hard time understanding the brilliant elaborations of Dr. Beck, the man in front. But during a break, I would go up to Frank who was a good student and paid a lot of attention. I asked him to summarize for me what the class was all about, and he would do that in a few lines. In seconds, I understood. My best math teacher, therefore, was not Dr. Beck, but Frank. Another way of describing the same principle is that we are all little ducklings following the big duck at the top of the lane. However, for all practical purposes, we follow the duckling immediately in front of us, who in turns follows the one in front of him, all the way up to . . . Dr. Beck. So yes, Dr. Becks are needed, but many little ducklings help break it down for those of us who are further down the line.

9) Learning by doing. “Everyone who puts my words into practice is like a wise man building on a rock. The one that hears only, but does not practice it, is a fool and builds on sand” (Matt. 7:24-28). This is how Jesus describes this principle. How does a child learn? By watching Mom and Dad do it. The 8-month old toddler first sees the result of an action (Mom gets up and walks), gets inspired by a powerful end vision (it’s possible to walk for a lame person like me), imitates the master (a few thousand times), and finally – walks. I had mentioned the MAWL-principle before (model, assist, watch, leave), but I want to underline that **rubbing shoulders** with those who can demonstrate in real life how exactly, for example, to cast out demons, heal the sick, or raise the dead, can help dramatically in the learning process.

10) Celebrate Mistakes. Real fathers and mothers don’t punish toddlers for falling down as they try to walk. They cheer: “well done” every inch of the way, celebrating excitedly the most minute advance, and giving parental space for dangerous experiments, in which mistakes are not only tolerated, they are expected. Mistakes are great personal learning experiences, and rather than condemning people for what they did wrong (the red ink approach that highlights what was wrong in an essay), we need to encourage those advances, however small, that demonstrate progress (the green ink approach that writes “superb” wherever appropriate).

11) Group or Peer Learning. Jesus never had one-on-one learning sessions (except for some stern and very personal issues with a few), but usually taught the disciples, plural, not a disciple, singular. Peer or group learning creates a learning atmosphere by exposing groups of people to a lesson, and creating a healthy peer-to-peer accountability to learn and implement the lesson together.

12) Goal-oriented learning motivates. A child is motivated to learn by seeing his parents do things that are yet impossible for him. Jesus places Kingdom teaching and Kingdom learning into the powerful framework of a specific goal: “go and make disciples of all nations,” and do that by baptizing

“I do not teach people how to build ships, but make them dream about the land on the other side of the ocean.”

and teaching. Goals have a powerful motivating and mobilizing energy. We need to take significant time to carefully instill the goal for learning before the learning actually starts. Remember Dr. Beck, my math teacher? I once asked him what I needed sines and cosines for in real life. For me, math was all about calculating my exam-percentages to make sure it was just above 60%, to find out how far my pocket money would go, and how long the petrol for my little moped would last. Dr. Beck gave me the worst-possible answer: you need sines because I say so. He failed to instill a tangible goal into me, a vision that would motivate me to learn. And until today, sines and sinuses, in my world, have to do with nasty infections rather than mathematical curves. Goals and visions have an amazing ability to awaken people's creativity. I am not sure who said it, but this statement summarizes well what I want to say here: “I do not teach people how to build ships, but make them dream about the land on the other side of the ocean.”

There are a number of other excellent pedagogical principles (like: the primary place of learning is the home; it takes a village to raise a child; or: we multiply what we are – not what we say), but these few that I mentioned above should serve as an introduction of what I mean. Before we proceed, let us look one more time into teaching and learning that is viral and multiplies itself.

Multiplicative learning

Remember that multiplication, in the book of Acts, begins where the apostles stopped to multiply disciples, but really grows when the disciples started to multiply *themselves* (6:7). Multiplication, we have also seen, is a function of the blessing of God, where God blesses our actions to be fruitful, multiplying – and, therefore, covering the whole earth. It is worthwhile in every aspect to be obedient to biblical teaching and learning principles that in many technical ways, you never manufacture students, but grow disciples, even sons. The thought that seems to be at the core of biblical organic pedagogies is the reproduction of spiritual children, who in turn have children themselves who again reproduce and have more children. So the degree to which we are prepared to be mothers and fathers and give away to the next generations what has been handed to us will be much more important than the scope of knowledge or skills that we have.

Adoption, imitation, initiation

If our growth pattern in maturing in Christ breaks down into typically three phases of our lives that the Bible calls child (believer), son (disciple) and father (equipper), then we have to focus on three key *introductions* to these phases that need to happen for the pedagogical process to move on and for multiplication to happen:

Maturity phase	role	key pedagogical principle
Child	believer	adoption
Son	disciple	imitation
Father	equipper	initiation

- Through adoption (under our parental wings), people become our spiritual children.
- Through imitation, disciples learn to become like their master and prove to be sons, walking in the footsteps of their fathers.
- Through initiation of sons into adulthood and fatherhood, people make a final maturing step and become equippers of others. This requires the relinquishing of the former role, the stepping down or even the departure of the former father; otherwise he blocks the process of reproduction.

The power of leaving early

Without vacating the platform, no new people can enter the stage. In this sense it was probably one of Jesus' most strategic actions to leave the earth after only three years of ministry, and therefore throw – and initiate - his spiritual sons into the role of fathers themselves. If Jesus had remained with them for another ten years, it would have undoubtedly stopped the multiplication process and created that very same heavy dependency that has become so commonplace in non-multiplicative models of training today. "In order for our discipleship process to be duplicated faithfully, we must set the example and expect others to follow. Too much of what is called discipleship today is impossible to copy, it is basically a novice believer watching an expert act like a spiritual giant with no expectation of becoming a spiritual giant any time in the near future," says Kevin York, pastor in Midland, Texas.

Multiplication can only happen if we give away what we have to others, and teach them to do the same. If we keep what we have to ourselves – and demonstrate it by performing the same role on and on, the initiation process is blocked, others are prevented from moving on into a new phase, and the whole process of multiplication is killed. And without multiplication, the apostolic goals of God will not come to pass. One of the most apostolic things that Jesus might ever have done is to leave early, and through his departure, activate the new fatherhood of his former sons. This is how they moved from being disciples to becoming equippers and apostles. If someone does not leave in time for others to enter into their new phase, stagnation and institutionalization will be inevitable. Failure of masters to leave their platform will typically create learning hierarchies, where the next generation of learners will be stuck as long as the older generations do not vacate their positions. In such learning hierarchies, the "old man" will forever rise in prominence and will finally become the unreachable top of a learning pyramid, a mythical guru, an idolized (or hated) icon that has so much become the symbol of non-organic (institutional) teaching concepts.

Let me point out again the immense difference between organic, multiplicative training and traditional, addition-based learning:

- 1 teacher teaches 50 students per class per year. In a lifetime of 40 years of teaching he produces just 2,000 students.
- 1 master teaching 10 disciples in year 1, who each teach 10 other disciples in year 2, who each teach 10 other disciples in year 3, who each teach 10 other disciples in year 4 produces 10,000 teachers in those four years. He will have reached 1 million disciples in only 6 years, 1 billion in 9 years and reaches the entire globe, theoretically, in less than 10 years.

It has become my conviction that the installation of viral, multiplicative teaching patterns seems to be one of the central tasks of apostolic people. Their role is to help set up multiplicative training in completely different ways to the world's non-apostolic patterns, which forever create Greek-style "schools of thought" that, at best, add students, but never seem to multiply. However, there is a positive side to this. In my mind, the lack of multiplication in traditional and even in non-apostolic teaching structures is a blessing in disguise. It helps to prevent the spreading of powerless and lifeless concepts, limits the damage of substandard indoctrination (like the production of "halfings" who do have a master degree, but have not really mastered anything, let alone their lives) and acts as divine containment for material that may be good, but not really of God, and therefore will never change the world, as the good is always the enemy of the best.

To put it a bit more pointedly: traditional CAWKI-molded evangelists like to speak to crowds, pastors to congregations (and hold a few seminars here and there); teachers teach classes and prophets speak to individuals in private. If these giftings are translated into training concepts, evangelists will like to have large teaching rallies, "Fire conferences" and event-based teaching that model the well-known hit-and-run approach: arrive, preach, teach, and go on. Pastors care for their congregations and love long-term preaching cycles, one element slowly and carefully building on the next. Teachers love a systematic approach, that usually is even longer than the pastoral concept as it tries to cover all possible angles, and prophets teach erratically, wherever God sends them to speak to whomever about whatever. God has been using all of this for good. But for the goal of discipling the nations with earth's current 6.5 billion, and looking at the rate of growth and efficiency of training-as-we-know-it, it is clear that we will only ever see this globe disciplined if we allow the apostolic reformation to also touch and transform the way teaching happens.

Therefore, the principles of apostolic teaching that I have outlined above might be far more important than the actual methods, formats, or setups of training that are or will be used. In setting up training structures, I believe we can and should be extremely flexible, true to the context, times and groups we work with, and do not really need to copy teaching models, but rather take multiplication-principles and implement them in creative ways in the areas we work. But as long as we do not plan for ourselves – and others we coach and partner with – to leave our teaching role early in order to make space for the next generation to move in, we become a blockage for our own goals, multiplication slows down, and frustration sets in.

Apostolic formats for other ministries

Most training structures in CAWKI have focused on lecture halls, schools, seminars, or universities. Speeches, presentations, sermons or frontal, lecturing-style teachings, and, of course, books are the ever-present teaching formats. If we take Jesus as an example for an apostolic model of training, then it focuses on training that physically happens on the road, during retreats, away from the masses, in homes and while eating. His teaching formats are demonstrations, learning-by doing, storytelling, dialogue, and sending disciples off to repeat the process. This is why for all the mentioned ministry-aspects above (inner healing and deliverance, healing, prophecy, etc.), we need to set up aposto-

This is why for all the mentioned ministry-aspects above (inner healing and deliverance, healing, prophecy, etc.), we need to set up apostolic teaching models, or else those skills will never become public domain of the church but always be restricted to an elite group of specialists.

lic teaching models, or else those skills will never become public domain of the church but always be restricted to an elite group of specialists. And here, all of us need to make a pivotal decision: if we are a pastor, healer, teacher, evangelist, prophet, or a deacon or businessman, will we be humble enough to allow apostolic people to set up training for us that is better than the way we could ever do this ourselves? If the creation of multiplicative training models is a valid area of apostolic ministry (specifically installing multiplicative learning and making sure there is a built-in departure date of the master), then we need to allow those apostolic people in our regions to do their job, and not try to do it for them.

I recently spoke with one person who feels a strong commission by God to spread physical healing. In his 80s now, this healer held countless seminars, sermons, retreats, workshops, teaching tens of thousands. As I asked him about a few names of spiritual sons that will carry on the work that he will not be able to do in the foreseeable future, I drew a blank. "I do not see anyone around," he said, sadly. I have heard this kind of statement from many kind old professors, retired pastors, countless senior evangelists, and especially senior prophets. This always causes me great pain, as I would have loved to see the genes of the man or woman multiply endlessly, but instead they have become such amazing experts, such icons and unreachable geniuses setting such world class standards, that their very presence prohibits multiplication. Many of them have become fading icons, struggling with their age, rather than enjoying it, and feeling the heat of the young pursuers who often can't wait to take the old man's place.

I wish that those representing the current apostolic-prophetic reformation would go around the world one more time and speak to those spiritual fathers and mothers in their 70s and 80s and invite them not only into a grandfather's or grandmother's role to the movement, not only to give their hearts and blessings to this, but also invest another few years **not of teaching, but raising spiritual sons and daughters in a format that the apostolic people among us will have to design for them.** This is a way to help our own fathers in Christ to deposit their inheritance before they go. In those few years, if they only train 5 to raise another 5 sons each who raises 5 more, they would have multiplied themselves by a factor of 125 and make an impact in only three years that might be bigger than all they have achieved in a lifetime of ministry.

Let me now briefly introduce you to some teaching concepts that have been developed already.

Initiations

If what I said above is true, then initiations – the ritual or non ritual passing of the baton to the next generation – are a key for explosive growth. Initiation rituals of young men into manhood and young women into womanhood are commonplace among many tribes. Initiation comes from the Latin word *initiare*, meaning to go in. It describes transitioning from one phase to another; one chapter is finished, a next chapter is opened. In many cultures, death symbols are used at times of initiations, to make it clear that the former time is dead, and a new time has come; old lives are over, a new one has started. Baptism in Christianity is a well-known sign of initiation: the old life is over; a new life in Christ has begun.

My friend Alan Hirsch likes to point out the way initiations are typically done in an African village. Within a village, there are two sub-villages, one for the men, one for the women. The girls as well as the boys are raised by the women. Until, one night, a group of men raid the women's camp, herd together all boys aged 12 or 13, bring them out, and hijack them out into the bush many days away. They rough them up some more, disorient them, often have them circumcised, and then leave them completely alone. The boys, now alone in the wilderness, typically attempt to make it back on their own, but then realizing very quickly that they will be lost without help. And so they begin to team up, learning the vital lesson that alone they will surely die, only sticking together in a life-endangering environment will they stand any chance of survival. Anthropologists call this experience *liminality*, a violent push beyond all safe limits, in order to activate *comunitas*. Technically, *comunitas*, other than community, means a fellowship born in danger. In the face of adversity, a bond is created not to satisfy the need for fellowship (classical community), but naked survival. After some time, sometimes months, the group of boys (typically there will be casualties, a huge price for an even greater lesson) finds their way home, and they are received with great fanfare, not into the women's camp, but now as real men. As they get their chance to tell their stories extensively at the evening campfires, people hoot with laughter at their stories, and many old men will wipe away tears in their eyes, as old memories and the passions for their community are reignited. Their personal experience of *comunitas* becomes the foundational stone for the survival and future of the community, as the men have learned at the cost of the lives of a few of their best friends, how precious *comunitas* is, and how every single one counts.

Such a powerful initiation model can be culturally adapted into discipleship patterns everywhere. Many of my Christian friends have been running such "initiation camps" in various forms, and even in traditional churches, "rites of passage" like confirmation classes or "firming" have been known for hundreds of years. However, most such rites, at best, initiate into community that is merely membership, not *comunitas*, the formation of a band of people that depend on each other with their lives. We need to be far more dangerous, and stop over-protecting our children forever from life itself in a false attempt to keep them out of harm's way, or we may continue to grow nice looking vegetables in our safe Christian greenhouses, but folks unsuitable for the tough street, people who run when danger lurks, an army who will hardly ever go to battle because they have been raised too safe.

Maybe we need to learn more from those African villages, and organize more raiding parties, invading more spaces with harmless and unsuspecting sheep in them (churches, Bible schools, seminars, conferences, choirs, summer camps, you get the picture), roughing them up and hijacking them into the desert, thrusting them far outside of their comfort-zone into an experience of *liminality* and *comunitas*, and initiating them into their new role as disciples. Otherwise, in the absence of initiations – which all have a certain violence to them – many Christians will simply grow old sitting on their pews and their giftings, and at some point stop waiting for something to happen in and through their lives.

Looking at the typical development of men through the ages, we can observe six distinct phases in their lives: boy, adventurer, warrior, lover, knight, sage. Being a boy, they innocently grow up, until, around the age of 12, they start to become an adventurer, playfully discovering the world around them. Once they have locked into a cause that truly challenges them (at the age of around 15-18), they are ready to stop the games and become a warrior (or a knave/squire), serving a knight. Only then will they move on to become a lover and thus a father, moving on to become a knight themselves, directly in the service of a king, with their own jurisdiction to take care of. Ultimately, they grow into their pension stage and become a sage, upholding the tradition, giving solicited (and unsolicited) advice, and be a blessing. Looking into the corresponding phases for women (girl, daughter, princess, lover, plunderer and wisewoman), we need to consider new ways of initiating these "generations" into their next phases and support their growth in stature in Christ. John Eldredge has written more on this subject in his book *The Way of the Wild Heart*. In the absence of such Christian initiations, many Christians take role models from the world and imitate them. And so whole generations are initiated by MTV, sports, and often enough by cults or even satanic or occult groups who know very well of the power of initiation. How does a young girl of thirteen grow up into a mature mother in Christ, if she is never initiated into motherhood? How many of us complain of the many girls embracing "Madonna" or Britney Spears as their role model, getting initiated into this value system in concerts and discos, and ending up as another sad copy of a dancing Barbie doll? Many boys never met a truly dedicated and dangerous Christian man, but only predictable, ever-correct and boring names on church membership roles. Once they run into a drug dealer, a freak, or a recruiter for any organization that smells of adventure, off they go, swept off their feet by the promise of a more meaningful and adventurous life and a chance to change the world. Many of God's best and most influential men and women in history come from rough, and not overprotected backgrounds: fishermen, prostitutes, zealots, orphans, those who came out of the drug culture, mafia circles, political extremists, or even former jihad warriors or near-terrorists. Few came from correct Bible schools or predictable middle-class churches, where no one has given them a cause to die for, challenged them to the core, so that, as they embrace the challenge, they have something to live for.

A case in point is the way that Israeli Soldiers are routinely brought through such a process of initiation. They are led to visit Massada or holocaust memorial sites like Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Faced with the terrors of the Holocaust and the past wars, they are told: "You, soldiers, are the last line of defense between such an enemy that is still out there, and the safety of our land and your family. What will be your resolve?" Often enough, with tears in their eyes, something clicks in the young men and women, and they understand: if I don't give my life for this, my country will be lost. And it transforms them from dreamy teenagers, waiting to watch one more movie, into soldiers who take responsibility. It wakes them up, challenges them, and initiates them as disciples for their cause, those who are no longer waiting for others to take initiative while they enjoy the good life, but those who leave their former life and enter into a new kind of existence.

What if we as Christians would lead our young generations down the isle of our very own holocaust, killed by predictability, boredom, lack of comunitas, liberal theology, nominalism, lukewarmness, non-apostolic traditions of elders, ritualistic religion and legalistic pride and being taught to death by non-missional formats of training. If you are young, let me tell you in all seriousness: you are the last line of defense. So what will be your resolve, soldier?

What if we as Christians would lead our young generations down the isle of our very own holocaust, symbolic or real relics of the things that have killed and drowned the passion and the spirit of millions and millions of would-be disciples who should have changed the world, but have drowned in horrible spiritual oblivion, worked, retired, and died. They have been killed not as the Jews by a Nazi regime, but by something just as lethal: predictability, boredom, lack of comunitas, liberal theology, nominalism, lukewarmness, non-apostolic traditions of elders, ritualistic religion and legalistic pride and being taught to death by non-missional formats of training. If you are young, let me tell you in all seriousness: *you are the last line of defense*. If you don't take up your sword, and dedicate your life to defend your spiritual family and come invade the space of this world with the Kingdom, the enemy will take over and win. So what will be your resolve, *soldier*?

Kingdom based training

If the most important framework for our activities on this earth is the Kingdom, and if the key characteristics required for a person to be given authority and responsibility in the Kingdom is obedient selfless servanthood, where will we find people that fit the bill? The answer is simple: look for people who understand both how a kingdom works, and who have clearly demonstrated in their life the ability to follow orders, serve and be selfless.

In many countries outside the Western cultural sphere people know very well how royal or even dictatorial regimes work. Once they find in Jesus their loving savior and king, they have no hesitation to embrace him and follow him wherever he asks them to go, even if this means their own death. They have an ability to happily obey that is just beyond any comprehension for the average person born and raised in the West. This is actually one of the biggest advantages Non-Westerners have over Westerners in regards to the Kingdom of God: they know how to follow without making a monumental show of egotistic individualism. My wife Mercy, born and raised in India, pointed to the vast difference in terms of obedience between Western school children and children in Indian schools as an example of this.

But what about the West? If the Western society has, as a result of historical developments like enlightenment, the French Revolution, Republicanism, democratization, secular humanism, modernity, post- and now even post-post-modernity become almost completely immune against the idea of a "ruling King" over anyone's life, where do we look in such a context for people who are trustworthy, obedient, selfless and therefore actually useful in the Kingdom of God? Where will they come from? I suggest the bulk of them will come from six specific people groups. Each group has created a unique sub-culture and embedded its values into its members in such a way that, once redeemed and transferred into the Kingdom of God, they will grasp far quicker than most others in Western societies the nature, culture and principles in the Kingdom, and will therefore grow much faster in their maturity and their area of responsibility than others. What are these six groups?

Military. People with more than a brief military training and with military careers have understood one thing: you follow orders and play as a team, or you are out - or dead. Giving one's life into the hands of

others, respect, the understanding of the place of the individual in a larger context and the dedication to a cause (the pledge) even unto death has molded the minds in such a way as to quickly understand what the Kingdom of God is all about. Dissidents, persons that refuse to obey and follow their own desires, used to be shot as daunting examples for anyone, otherwise the morale of the whole operation would be undermined and any conflict would result in disaster. Little wonder that Jesus praised the faith of a military commander beyond that of anyone else.

Muslims. Islam means “submission”. Those grown up in the extended families of Muslims in the West or those that have migrated from Muslim countries into the West have an amazing advantage once they have come to Jesus as their King: they already know the value of individual and corporate obedience (remember the pictures of rows and rows of Muslims bowing towards Mecca?), drilled into them from childhood on; they know what it means to respect elders, and they know how to live in community. Once Jesus comes in to redeem this, many Muslim background believers – unless spoiled by CAWKI and CAWKI-based missions - take off into a fascinating role in the Kingdom of their new King.

Mafia. If there is one secret world in Western societies that runs on tough principles, it is organized crime. Once we know how far-reaching the Mafia, the world of the Triads, Yakuza, the Mob, the drug cartels, the El Qaidas, terror groups or the more simple slave-rings and street gangs – the youth groups of the Mafia – really is, then we see what a huge reservoir of people are waiting to be recruited for the cause one who has laid down his life for them. And because many have already sworn all sorts of allegiances, the idea of finally becoming a bond slave of Jesus Christ and laying down their lives for him has very real meaning. Books like *Illicit* by Moises Naim can introduce the uninitiated into just how amazingly large this shadow world truly is.

Sports. Anyone who does sports for more than personal pleasure knows that most sports follow strict rules, require discipline, the submission to a penal code, readiness for team play and the ability and willingness to obey a coach or trainer. This instills a perfect starting position for someone who discovers the nature of life and work in the Kingdom of Jesus, the coach of our life.

Business. Some have said: business is war, battling for competitive advantage. In many ways, this is true. It is a war for an ever-bigger piece of the cake. If you have not resigned to a mediocre existence, it requires constant, alert observation of the market, the competition, new ideas, and striving for excellence. Many companies are little kingdoms, and they can be excellent training ground to prepare people for their role the King has for them.

Those from a broken world. People whose life has fallen apart, who have gone through crisis, whose life has been broken and wrecked,

who know the horrors of substance or any other abuse know one thing for sure: either someone helps me, or I drown. Their loud cry for help - completely unlike the proud, self-assured, middle-class, thanks-I-am-fine mindset of most in mainstream Western society - is an invitation to receive help and become part of a solution - and a cause - that is not of their own. In the beatitudes, Jesus did not indicate that the rich, affluent, self-confident bourgeoisie will make any difference to this world, but he spoke of how the poor, the mourners, those hungry for righteousness and those who are persecuted will be blessed - and how it is the meek that shall inherit the earth.

I seriously propose that we develop specific concepts of "organic servanthood development" that target members from all of the above-mentioned six people groups and cultures. In other words: we need specific, tailor-made apostolic training concepts for people with a background in military, Islam, organized crime, business, sports or those that come from a life of brokenness that will serve as a fast track into their Kingdom roles, and not slow them down with educational patterns born out of middle class-focused, harmless event-oriented Christianity. As an example, I include a training concept that follows, in this case, a military model. Rick Joyner says it like this: "We are coming to the times when passive Christianity and passive Christians will cease to exist. There is a maturity, a discipline, and a divine militancy coming upon the people of God. Those who have succumbed to humanistic and idealistic theologies may have a hard time with this, but we must understand that God is a military God. The title that He uses ten times more than any other in Scripture is 'the Lord of hosts', or 'Lord of armies'. There is a martial aspect to his character that we must understand and embrace for the times and the job to which we are now coming".

Similar concepts need to be developed for all other areas as well.

Salvation Army 2.0

In the face of the mainstream Christian training concept of "sit, soak and study", William Booth and the Salvation Army he founded, have historically demonstrated with their passionate battle cry of "soup, soap, salvation" that it will take an army of obedient "soldiers of Christ" to get the job of discipling the nations done. With their strong diaconical focus, they also have rescued the concept of a "holy war" from many ideas of false and unholy crusades, and shown that it is possible to fight *for* something, not only *against* something. Could it be that this idea - and the idea of true knighthood in God's Kingdom - needs to be revisited on a global scale, in today's context of an organic, apostolic reformation, on a scale that goes far beyond of what has become of the Salvation Army today?

As much as the ekklesia of God is expressed very properly through words like family, bride or body, we must not be carried away and lulled by a false romanticism. One thing cannot be overlooked: in this world, those who wish to follow Christ are steeped into a deep spiritual conflict, however not "with flesh and blood". In this confrontation, the Bible does not tell us to be passive, "hold the fort" and wait to be taken out of here by the angelic cavalry, but that we *are* the cavalry! This training concept intentionally uses some military

terms, but is wholistically embedded in an organic and apostolic understanding of the Church, which, in turn, is fully embedded in that realm of God's uncontested rule which is called The Kingdom of God.

Training for the Church of Tomorrow

Around the world a new reformation is sweeping today, characterized by the rediscovery of the biblical template of Ekklesia, expressed both in the regional church and the housechurches. At the core of this new reformation we find two things: 1) a passionate departure from institutionalized disobedience, expressed in ways like human traditions that have bullied out biblical revelation, a spirit of competitive denominationalism, Constantinian, consumer-oriented program-based churches, and anti-communal individualism as expressed in "independent" churches, stand-alone empire buildings, pseudo-spiritual monarchies and family-enterprises. And 2): a return to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in holy reverence for his imperial commands, ekklesial blueprints and templates of ministry. Essentially, this boils down to a reformation of loving obedience, both individually and corporately. Excellence and lasting achievement, as anyone in arts, science, sports or military knows, is not possible without discipline. And discipline without obedience would be an empty word. We believe that obedience to the Kingship of Christ and his grand plans starts with very small things. And that as we return to loving obedience and start functioning according to God's original purpose, God may very well start to return that long withhold blessing to the church that imparts fruitfulness, multiplication, and allows for global impact.

The workers are few, the consumers are many

"As the workers are few", Jesus taught his disciples to pray for God to "cast out workers into the harvest" (Lk 10:2). The opposite of "workers" would be "consumers", those who let others do the job, as they sit back, relax and enjoy a religious show. It has become possible to even consume Christian training and education without practicing our faith, without being involved in the harvest, and thus *many have been educated far beyond their personal obedience*. Rather than passing them on to others, many have simply consumed the seeds sowed into them for their own embetterment and advance. However, biblically we are blessed to bless others, learn to teach others, discipled to disciple others, delivered to deliver others. Multiplication is not possible without death to selfish consumerism.

It is in this spirit that this training concept of "Salvation Army 2.0" is introducing a comprehensive, 5-level training template that is designed after a simple yet effective military pattern. Here an overview:

LEVEL 1: Recruitment

Ideally, people who join the Kingdom, also join God's army. However, in most cases in past Christendom, it was possible to have Jesus as savior, but not as King. This needs to change. Before people can undergo training, they need to be committed to loving obedience, and the discipline that comes with it.

Recruitment happens in two areas: ideally wherever Evangelism happens, and secondly, where those who are already Christians are

The workers are few, the consumers are many

challenged for a much higher commitment to Christ: (typically experiencing the supernatural signs of the Kingdom (holiness, healing, deliverance, prophecy etc) or through a call to a life of selfless service.

LEVEL 2: Boot Camp

Boot Camps are the place of transmitting the foundational genetical code, embedding values and molding a person's ability to obey individually and corporately. In the Kingdom, learning basic disciplines like prayer, disciplined reading of God's word, practicing forgiveness and a simple lifestyle of service to God and others is considered homework. One possible way to do this is a concept called **LukeTen**, a basic training spaced out over ten weekends (Friday evening through to Saturday noon) patterned after chapter 10 in the Gospel of Luke and following the natural steps, the organic development of how a brand-new believer can be transformed into a multiplying churchplanter (more on this on www.starfishportal.net).

LEVEL 3: Special Weapons Training

As in the military world, only soldiers who successfully went through boot camp are then trained in using special weapons. Nobody gives heavy weaponry into the hands of unproven people. In the work of God, weapons do not only serve a destructive, but also a constructive, liberating purpose. They are "weapons of mass **construction**". As it takes integrity, character and dedication to handle weapons, we very strongly recommend not to admitting anyone into this level of training who has not done his homework (level 1 and 2). In this part of the training, we recommend four main courses (typically do-able in 6 months):

1. Prophecy: how to prophecy, discern spiritually and interpret dreams
2. Physical healing: How to heal the sick
3. Inner Healing and deliverance: How to heal people from past traumas and cast out demons
4. Discipleship: How to introduce people supernaturally-natural to Jesus Christ and become a spiritual parent to them

Level 4: Fivefold Ministry Training

In the military world, those talented and mature enough are invited for an officers' career. In the development of a disciple, we all begin as children in Christ (new converts), grow to be disciples (young men or women), and ultimately grow up to be mature parents in Christ and exist to equip **others** for the work. We recommend joining a very personal and small, organic group of between 3- 15 persons attached to one mature father or mother in Christ clearly functioning in one of the five ministries (Eph. 4:11), for a period of up to three years. This training usually follows three organic levels: **mentoring** (introductory parenting ministry for beginners), **coaching** (for those advanced and practiced), and finally **partnering** (peer to peer ministry, team development).

LEVEL 5: Deployment and Multiplication

Once trained, people are now sent into their respective areas of work that the King has assigned for them. This is also where the training itself is multiplied in other areas and spreads geographically and into new people groups.

Boot Camps

Likening the training needed for the church of the future to the development of an army, I know full well that this is not the entire picture. Life is more than a war and the church more than an army. But if Paul can challenge his Timothy to be “a good soldier for Christ,” warning him not to get involved in civilian affairs and challenging him to obey and please his commander (2 Tim. 2:3), I will not hesitate to look to military language for training. Military training usually breaks down into three aspects: recruitment, boot camp, officers’ schools. Without recruitment, obviously no one will join the army. Initiatives like the “Promise Keepers” rally in Washington in 1997, “The Call,” initiated by folks like Lou Engle, and the constant recruiting done by firebrands like Heidi Baker, Walter Heidenreich, Matthias “Kuno” Kuhn, Patrick Johnstone, Rachel Hickson, or the huge mission conferences like TEMA, OM or Urbana, and many others can serve as an entry point to the army of God for many. However, if we call people to war and then offer them a safe back seat in a church, we will be achieving the very opposite of what we want. That is why we need Boot Camps of all sorts. Boot camps are not for specialized training but to lay the foundation of military obedience, discipline, ability to function in a team, endurance, and patience, and to install the basic values of warfare in the young soldiers. They also serve as a filter to spot talents that can receive specialized training in the future.

Many of the Indian house church planting movements offer a ten-day start-up training that serves as such a boot camp. Tony and Felicity Dale (Austin, TX; see www.house2house.tv) have developed a phone-based church planting training concept called “Getting Started.” Many Chinese house churches have adopted a Luke10-type strategy and are sending out their young people two by two, as Jesus did in Luke 10, to find houses of peace and start new churches there. Their philosophy is simple: **Every believer a church planter; Every home a church; Every church a training center.** They find that the best way to train new people to plant house churches is to send them out to do it!

I have developed a concept called “LukeTen,” a ten-week course in the format of decentralized house churches, building the ten key skills needed for a future church planter. Every participant is not only challenged with new insights and practicing skills, but also required to pass on the teaching he receives every week to 3-5 people of his own choice, immediately breaking the trap of consuming teaching “just for me.” Neil Cole and Paul Kaak have developed “Greenhouse,” an organic process to embrace church planting values and principles, and Bruce Carlton has developed a church planting course called “Acts 29,” indicating that the story of Acts (officially finishing with chapter 28 in the Bible) goes on today.

TOTs

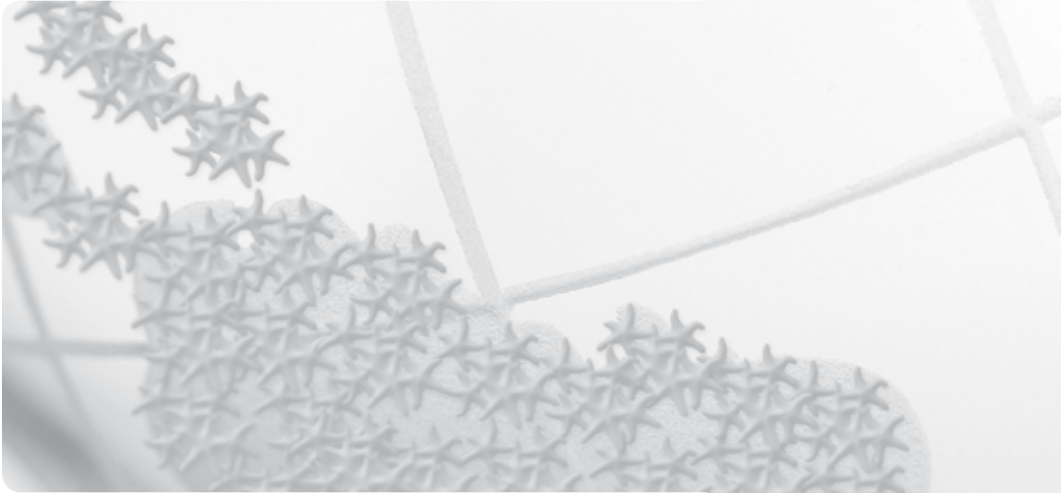
The “Training Of Trainer” concepts would then move on from the boot camp level to the officers’ school level. At this point, people are trained for specific ministries and even equipping roles themselves.

In Switzerland, Thomas Giudici has developed a “School of Social Management,” training for future deacons. My friends Jörg Schori and Jens Kaldewey, both part of “Kingdom Ministry,” a Swiss-based fivefold ministry team, have installed TOTs, for example in the area of pastoral counseling, in India and Central Asian countries. Neil Cole and Paul Kaak have developed training for teachers in the Body called “TruthQuest,” a community-based theological discovery system to equip for lifelong learning and introducing others to the same process. TruthQuest requires a class of four to eight with one facilitator, taking the group through all the systematic theologies in one year, with a system of meetings and home assignments. After one year, each participant is encouraged to become the facilitator for another group, insuring the multiplication of the training itself (see www.cmaresources.org).

Various individuals have developed prophetic schools, apostolic trainings, and formal or more informal systems of mentoring and coaching. Dick Scoggins, for example, has developed mentoring for entire apostolic teams, and Bernard Sanders plans to open up an apostolic community near Heathrow, UK, to establish a place of community, accountability, and apostolic training. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptists has developed a “Strategy Training” to equip “Strategy Coordinators,” a camouflaged Baptist term for apostolic or at least pre-apostolic ministry.

The most profound results of organic servanthood development, however, will always come through the personal mentoring and coaching done by individuals who recruit, mentor, coach and later even partner with those whom they feel God has given them to adopt as spiritual sons and daughters. The most powerful resources in training will never be concepts, recipes, methodologies, or manuals. It will always be men and women of God making themselves available as parents, approachable and vulnerable for others to latch onto them, imitate them, question them, grill them, annoy them, and who in turn will catch the spirit, understand the role, and carry their mantles like Elisha taking over from Elijah.

The most powerful resources in training will never be concepts, recipes, methodologies, or manuals. It will always be men and women of God making themselves available...



28 Transitioning into an Apostolic order

**"Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?" says the Lord
"Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?" says your God. Isa 66:9**

28 Transitioning into an Apostolic order

WWJW

Both individual Christians as well as entire groups have heard from God about an imminent revolution and reformation. It is almost as if you switch on your radio, and at some point you will tune in to a broadcast about the apostolic-prophetic reformation, a program that, whether you expect it or not, suddenly ignites something in your bones and marrows and hits you between the eyes. It is like tuning in to a spiritual frequency, and as we learn to adjust our radios, we will hear the message clearer and clearer. Although, sometimes we need to learn to cut out the static noise, separate it from disturbing jam or the ever-present super-radio stations that seem to drown out all other voices. During the Cold War, as a teenager, after a few intensive years of practice almost every night, I think I can say that I became a fairly experienced radio amateur and editor of my own extensive column in one of the largest Radio Amateur Clubs in the world, the German ADDX. At age 16 I taught my first public seminars on how to do DX-ing, as we call that hobby, and, also with 16, I wrote my first book on how to pick up and decode Morse code based maritime radio stations. When I switched on my powerful and super-sensitive Drake R4C receiver in my little shack in Beuren near Stuttgart, Germany, and wanted to pick up the signal of a distant and very weak radio station, say a 1.5 KW powered private station on short or medium wave from Trujillo, Solomon Islands, Lucknow, Ulan Bator, Maput, or Cleveland, I sometimes even had to rearrange my antenna system. Such weaker radio signals were easily drowned out by the powerful 500-1000 KW broadcasts from Radio Moscow, Radio Free Europe, Radio Beijing, BBC, Voice of America or the South African Broadcasting Corporation, that had their own ideological fights trying to dominate the airwaves. Some FM-Radio stations are so powerful that, under certain conditions that had to do with solar activity, the weather, and the time of day, you sometimes could even receive their broadcasts entirely without a radio, just as a resonance of the radio waves in a metal bucket, a pot or even a jar. I couldn't believe it until I first listened to a radio announcer reading the news to me from within a cooking pot under the kitchen shelf!

I find that the spiritual situation today is similar. There are many loud voices out there in today's radio and TV world that broadcast at the top of their ability, crowd the Christian radio and TV channels, and easily drown out the finer, more sensitive broadcasts that don't have the power and media access because they are not as sellable on the Christian consumer market as other programs.

WWJW –What would Jesus watch? Observing today's Christian media, I would not be able to name a single healthy apostolic or prophetic person who has designed his own format who regularly seems to appear in widely accessible TV – at least to my knowledge or the friends I update with. It is the ever present TV evangelists, healers, teachers, musicians, the self-publishing pastors who raised enough money to put their own sermons on air, parachurch ministries, DJs, entertainers, and in-your-face-advertisement that fills 99,9% of those programs. I also find that some programs and voices are everywhere, and even come at you like my radio wave cooking pot experience! This is where we need to be increasingly selective and discerning, as power, presentation, format and

global media-omnipresence has very little to do with content. I have listened to many messages where someone has been screaming at the top of his or her voice, and ultimately, said nothing of substance. The crowd (and there always is a crowd!) had gone wild, fallen into a religious frenzy, while I sadly switched off and had a coffee.

However, many have, whether by accident or intention, happened into an apostolic or prophetic message that captivated them, and have learned to turn the radio, twist the antenna, fine tune the frequency for more accurate reception. And as they have downloaded the message into their spirit and allowed it to sink in, even by switching off some of the other jam – the unwanted voices that beckon to be heard – they were grabbed, arrested, captivated, or at least they became very nervous and quite disturbed. The question is: once you have heard enough of these apostolic-prophetic messages out there to sufficiently understand their content, what do you do with it?

TLIWSY

I believe we already are seeing many thousands of Christian groups – individual traditional churches, denominations, networks, missions, parachurch ministries – who seriously are hearing from God about a monumental change ahead, and who are no longer brushing it away as a fad and silly notion, or who are no longer allowing their own tradition to constantly win over the messages of their own in-house prophets or healthy reason. Many of God's people, no matter what structures they have grown up with, are hearing directly from God in ways they find plausible, from their own credible witnesses, and simply will want to obey what they have heard. This happens irrespective of our position, whether we are an unknown teenager in a youth group in Uberlandia, an assistant pastor in Mumbai, a theology student in Riehen, a housewife in Capetown, a taxi driver in Malaga or the young heir of a multi-billion dollar company in Jakarta. It happens whether we are the future Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo, the Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Madurai, a Jesuit and church history professor at the Vatican, the director of church planning for the Southern Baptist Convention in Columbia, the academic dean of Anskar Sgolen in Kristiansand, a Lutheran mega-church pastor in Minneapolis, or a Child Evangelism Fellowship missionary in Pirmasens. All of those, I know, have heard from God about these things, and are looking for ways to obey the message. And obey means that something needs to happen first inside of us, and then on the outside, where we need to get into action. For almost all of us who hear this, it means we need to go on a journey, and it might feel a little bit like Abram who was told by God to leave everything behind and go to **TLIWSY – the land I will show you**. And so this is your first decision; will you, or will you not go?

Apostolic Migration

For those who, inspired by Abraham and many after him, want to accept the invitation to a process of spiritual migration and who are ready to embark in faith on a journey of transitioning into an apostolic architecture, even if they do not yet know the exact locations nor dimensions of TLIWSY and their precise sources of income once they have arrived there, I have a simple message: it will work! If it is God who is calling you, then there will be a destination waiting

Why would God want to make anyone thirsty, and then let them die of thirst in the desert? So if we ask for an apostolic fish, God promises us not to give us a religious snake.

for you, a place worth leaving everything behind in order to gain it. This is not only true for individual believers, disciples, and equippers. I believe it is both necessary and possible for entire churches, denominations, and organizations to reposition themselves into this age-old blueprint and order of God. Otherwise, why would they have heard from God in the first place? Why would God want to make anyone thirsty, and then let them die of thirst in the desert? So if we ask for an apostolic fish, God promises us not to give us a religious snake.

Let me quote Art Katz one more time here: "Due to the lack of a truly apostolic church, self-help groups have emerged, Christian organizations or mission agencies, who at best have a fleeting character and exist under the temporary permission of God. God is jealously watching over the concept of what it means to be apostolic. If the church truly wants to be built on the foundations of apostles and prophets, we need to try to understand this word in its deepest meaning. Otherwise, we will never be able to become a part of that which, in essence, truly makes the church to be the *church of Jesus Christ*."

As it is so very close to the heart of God for his people to be an apostolic movement carrying out the issues of the Kingdom, I am convinced he will be more than pleased to extend a hand to us as we find ourselves on the road out of Cairo to the Red Sea, through the desert, crossing our Jordans. And he will give us modern day versions of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb to steer us into the right direction. He will have a pathway, a workable way ahead, a roadmap for anyone, no matter where our starting point is. In order to unpack a bit more of the five phases of an apostolic migration (-2 to +2) I have compiled below a simple outline of a spiritual tour guide that may serve as a series of signposts, before introducing you (and your group) to the four most important issues on our way of transitioning from a traditional, legacy-based order into God's apostolic order.

I) Legitimizing the New – deconstructing the Old

I remember a denominational leader from a Middle Eastern nation who, after hearing something like this for the first time, exclaimed and said: "In only 45 minutes, you have taken away everything I have believed in all my life. I feel like having climbed a ladder with 61 steps (he was 61 years old at the time) only to realize the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. Will you come to my country and help us to move into this?"

If we are moving into an apostolic-prophetic reformation, this does not mean that absolutely everything that we have heard, learned, and practiced has been wrong. Jesus is still the same; the Bible is the same – although we may read it as if through new glasses. The Holy Spirit is still the same, God is still the same. But many foundational assumptions about church, faith, and life that we have imbibed or been conditioned to adapt need to be changed, value systems replaced, DNAs altered, operating systems reinstalled, thinking patterns upgraded, jobs and career plans reconsidered, and relationships re-evaluated. But before we look at legitimizing the New and deconstructing the Old, let us take a time out, and place us before a mirror, and ask ourselves:

How good is our main question?

Our very questions absolutely define our starting position. What we ask is what we get. "Anything," says Jesus, "that you ask me in my name, I will do"

(John 14:14). The question is: what does it mean to ask *in the name of Jesus*? We all know that it simply will not suffice to put a religious suffix behind our sentences, and add the five magic words “in the name of Jesus” to our request for a new Porsche car and a 90-foot yacht, and bingo, it will appear. To ask the father in the spirit and name of Jesus is a loaded issue. It requires the abandoning of our selfish motives, our self-centered focus, and our ability to handle our own small part of history lightly, so as to not be weighed down and completely preoccupied with ourselves. Our organization, our church, our foundation, our *anything* is much less important than we think, if we compare it to God’s larger economy.

WWJA

Remember the time when it was fashion to wear little armbands with WWJD stitched on it? WWJD stood for What Would Jesus Do, reminding people of the variety of choices in life that they could make, and make them either their own way or the Jesus way. However, such a question implies that we believe our general existence, our main course of life is pretty much OK, in line with God, and all we therefore need is a bit of *situation ethics*, the right choices at the minor crossroads of life. However, maybe we have to ask a much bigger question before we ask for directions, and that is: am I standing at the right spot at all? Did I miss some exits long ago? Am I the person that God wants me to be? Am I legitimate myself, in the areas of church/missions, sex, money, and power? If Jesus would be in your shoes today: **what would Jesus ask?** I have found that people are asking questions about this new apostolic-reformation on four different levels, each level being of a far better quality than the previous one:

Level 0: is asked by people usually firmly employed or entrenched in a closed religious system. They would tiredly wave off the entire thing with a shrug, but at least find enough decency to ask a half-hearted question like: **what bit you that you have these crazy ideas?** What’s wrong with you? Whom did you meet, who did you have lunch with? Obviously a question that does not invite an answer! Any answer would be wrong.

Level 1: Asked by people who have heard about “this new thing” through the grapevine, who are mildly curious or annoyed, and give it a shot by asking: **If this thing is for real, can you tell us a bit about it?** This is usually a purely informative and noncommittal question, a question about bytes, information, about things anyone can read if they want. As it is not yet a healthy question, it again is not really worth an answer. I have once been invited to give a workshop as a part of a conference with the title (seriously!) “So what is this house church thing after all?” Needless to say, the response was under-whelming, although I said the very same things that seem to have inspired others to plant many networks of house churches elsewhere.

Level 2: Usually asked by people who have more seriously understood that something is cooking, and who are either getting worried that this thing has not come through their own legitimate channels but for strange reasons from outsiders. It may also be asked by people who are becoming afraid that they would miss the boat if they would not at least learn what this is all about. The core question is usually: “What is in it for me/us?” What do we need to change to accommodate this new thing in what we already do? I call this the fashion question, ultimately a consumer’s concern about what is trendy, what is cool,

what is happening out there so we can update, and continue to be cutting edge people who can join the current conversation in confidence, and even respond to a worried donor to our ministry saying: Oh yeah, we know all about this, we have had so-and-so from this movement speak at our last retreat!

This question, in essence, asks: **How can we get God to bless what we are doing?** Although this is another consumer's question and is usually very heavy on trying to import a (seemingly) minor new issue into a major existing operation – as in patching a new cloth onto an old well-worn garment – I find that there is often enough seriousness behind such a Level 2 question that it is worth discussing it. These are true signs of searching and inquiry, and might lead, at a later point, to the kind of existential and pressing questions that will have much more far-reaching consequences as the answers are coming.

Level 3: Asked by people who have been convicted by this, arrested and confounded, who feel like someone has put an anchor into their heart and is beginning to pull them away. They ask questions like: **What is wrong with me/us? How come we are so completely outside God's picture?** God, please show us the extent of our own disobedience, our sin, both historically as well as today. They are no longer asking the question of how God can bless what we are doing, but how we can do what God is blessing. Many are desperate enough to go to any extent here, and say to God: cleanse us, change us, revolutionize us, and even dissolve us, no matter what. It is the kind of response Ruth gave to Naomi: "I will go wherever you go..." This, obviously, is the best kind of question, and those who ask these questions might be the last to ask, but will probably be the first to arrive.

Could you ask yourselves at this point, which group are you in today – and why? This clarification will be important, as it determines the level on which you receive answers from God. This is your point of departure for your journey – make sure it is a healthy one, in terms of motives, depth, and spiritual passion for what is close to the heart of Jesus.

Deconstructing the Old

Many Christians have grown up in religious and traditional settings that have been "home" for them for as long as they can think. They have internalized its values, memorized the rules, and become deeply socialized into its patterns. For them, Church As We Know It is the only legitimate and therefore holy pattern known to them. To change that will require a genuine effort of legitimizing the New, and deconstructing the Old. I once ran into a prophetic man from New Zealand called Doug Maskell, who prophesied that a part of my life's task is described in Jeremiah 1:10: "...to uproot and tear down, do destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant," and that I should focus on the latter part, not the former. I have taken this to heart, and try my level best never to pull down, destroy, and overthrow an existing human structure, although I feel it is legitimate for all of us to pull down spiritual strongholds, destroy demonic concepts, overthrow futile ideas and tear down human and controlling systems that keep people captive and unable to move into their God given destiny.

Sometimes, although rarely, it happens that a person complains or even accuses me of being too harsh, too direct, too German. I usually find out that

such a person has attached himself wholesale to a concept, an idea, a system or a belief that is being challenged by what I say. I don't think that I am guilty of pulling down such a person, but the real issue is that the person himself has sold his very being to a system, entered into a symbiosis with an ideology or methodology, or simply is being employed by an organization with a different party line than what I am advocating. I usually ask such people not to take this personally, as I don't really have an issue with anyone. People of flesh and blood are never our enemy, and I try my best to live accordingly. And so should you.

Deconstructing the Old requires a serious time of searching and re-searching the scriptures Berean style (Acts 17:11), researching our hearts, motives, values, assumptions and opinions. This takes time and effort, and I am encouraging you not to rush this, but to be diligent not to overlook all those gems and godly legacies that God has placed into you, your movement, and the history you represent. Test everything, and keep the good! Do not pour out any old wine, just because there is new wine, but keep it separate, so as not to spill both. It may mean changing our set-up, our organization, our job description; it may mean a serious time-out for the entire church or group that we are with, letting all those rushy programs rest for a while, while we go and seek out God on the mountains.

My friend Neil Cole likes to tell the story of the duckling, and it fits here, too. If a duckling (or a little goose) picks through its eggshell with its tiny beak, it will first try to push out its little head and look around. Of the very first face that it then sees coming close, it will take a snapshot with an invisible but very powerful camera, upload that picture into its brain, and label the picture: Mama! It is such a powerful birth instinct (made by God so that the little duckling would always recognize its mother anywhere out of a thousand other ducks), that it also works if the very first face it picks out is not the ducklings mom at all, but the farmer's boy, a curious dog or even a fox! Whole hilarious films have been made about this phenomenon, and people laugh when they see a line of geese or ducks faithfully following the farmer crossing the meadow because they are utterly convinced they follow Mama.

But do you know that this works among Christians, too? Try to remember very quickly: when you were being born again of the Spirit of God, what was the very first thing that you saw, smelt, experienced or were told to do? The environment that presented itself to you in such a crucial and vulnerable time to you as "church" will be powerfully embedded in your heart and soul. You also carry such a snapshot of "your Mum" in you, and if it was not the right Mum, you need to ask God to replace the original imprint with the right picture of spiritual motherhood and fatherhood, and what church truly means. Many of us did not have a pleasant memory of our first days or weeks after our conversion, and so we may need to ask God for forgiveness for our own bitterness, loneliness, or forgive those who may have treated us as another number, one more convert, pushed a "follow-up card" into our face or just fed us with heavy Bible verses when all we needed was mother's milk and the warmth of knowing we are safe.

Maybe the church you had been born into was a cult, or a legalistic group, a nominal church or a garden-variety Evangelical church, that called you up

front to some altar, spoke a brief prayer over you, or made you repeat some words after them. Then they walked you through that door, into a follow-up room, gave you stuff to read and classes to attend, considered you ready for baptism a year or two later, and only 20 years later you actually found out there is a Holy Spirit. Why don't you pause here for a moment, put this book down and go back to this time, the days of your conversion, thanking God for what was good and healthy, and asking God to remove anything that was unhealthy and not of him. If necessary, forgive those who, probably unknowingly, have hurt or disappointed you, and ask God to remove any wrong imprints of "church," theology, rites, liturgies, and other things that have conditioned you and made you the way you are. Once you have done this, why don't you ask God for a fresh initiation, a new foundational picture downloaded into your existence, a new imprint of who he is and what church is all about, and then go ask him for a new honeymoon with him and go happily your way, continuing your journey with a cleared conscience, a redeemed past, without any mortgages holding you back.

In 2004, my wife and I invited some people in the Rhine region where we work to consider the vision and cost of working together to see a large harvest brought in and a regional church established. We decided to meet in a convenient place somewhere in the middle of the region, a former steel factory in a place called Bülach near Zürich. At one point it hit me, as I saw on the wall, all these pictures of metal being heated up, and once piping hot and glowing, poured into molds to become useful instruments for the industry. I realized that God was speaking to me that many of us, as we came into the Kingdom hot, fluid, and moldable, we had been cast into molds that were not God's original intentions, and we became members of churches that were not set up the way God wanted them to be, and were given ministries and tasks that were not according to our giftings and missions. I realized that the only way out of this situation was to ask God to heat up the furnace again, and to place ourselves back into the melting pot, allowing God to gently bring us to a boil and back into a fluid state – and then recast us into the mold, vessel, ministry, and churches he had in mind for us in the first place.

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Legitimizing the New

The best way to do this, again, is to search and reread our Bibles and spend as much time as possible with Jesus. As we need to be careful not to be the victim of another fad or fleeting movement, I encourage you to read your Bible as much as you can, read a **few** books to broaden your horizon and put some flesh on the foggy and skeletal understanding that you might have so far, get to know the new world you are entering a bit better, start discussing this with your spouse, family and close friends, while I would have to warn you not to preach this just yet from the rooftops. Let God first thoroughly change our own thinking, go through the first excitements of the huge paradigm shift, go talk to some people you respect about this that appear to you to be wise, unbiased and non-political disciples of Christ, and allow God to confirm these things in your heart.

You cannot go into this journey with a vicarious understanding of it – trusting someone else's understanding and letting others think this through for you. You have to imbibe these things yourself, fill your spiritual stomach

with these thoughts and concepts, because you may have a long way to go. Remember Elijah when he ran away into the desert, willing to die, and an angel came, touched him twice and told him to eat cake and drink water? It says: "Strengthened by that food Elijah traveled forty days..." As your next stop is probably not the promised-land, but a place called the desert, if God is good to you and gives you a chance, take your time to eat and drink before you go on.

Two donkeys for Christ

Even after deconstructing the Old and legitimizing the New, let us not forget that both have a role to play. Prophesied in Zech 9:9 Jesus would ride for the last time during his physical period on earth into Jerusalem on the young colt of a mother donkey, that he asked his disciples to untie both and bring them to him (Mt 21:1-7). My Norwegian friend Njaal Haugland believes this could mean a prophetic foreshadowing of the last "beast of burdens" that Jesus is going to use on earth before he returns not any longer a hidden, but a very public King. The young colt, never ridden or hurt by humans could represent a new breed of believers, a new church that has never been yoked or beaten down by religious traditions like its mother. Both are useful for the King, both have garments put on them, but only the colt carries the King of Glory. The role of the mother donkey - complete with its scars and bruises - was to affirm its colt and be there to make sure it's treated well and does not suffer the same fate, end up with false yokes, burdened with unmerciful masters other than the King himself. She may even know that people who sing hosianna now are ready to kill her and her master with their next breath, and the young colt would need all the confirmation by someone older and wiser that has gone there before. The mother donkey is not disqualified by her hurts, but just like David who had too much blood on his hands to build God's temple, God chose Solomon for that job. So the donkey that once was bound will be a comforting mother and supportive advisor to the little colt, and both together will be "donkeys for Christ", marching into Jerusalem side by side to see Jesus take office. Once he did this on the cross, the next time he will do it on the throne of David.

2) Guided wilderness experience

"The desert" is a significant place (mentioned over 300 times in the Bible) where two things need to happen as we journey on: a) we need to get out of the system, and b) the system needs to get out of us. To get out of the system might mean for us to simply plan an extended break from old-time religion, in whatever way or format this is possible for you. It might mean to simply stop going to church, participating in routine programs, and allow your body and soul to catch up with your visionary spirit that has run ahead. It might mean more than this: that you take a sabbatical, go for an extended vacation, take a world tour, or even quit your job, if it is the job that ties you down. Remember that no job is more important than God and his plans for you, and if your job allows you to take a desert time, then take advantage of it; if not, do not let the job stand in-between you and your destiny. This is a time to put a healthy distance between you and the place you want to move away from, stepping off whatever spiritual bus or train you are on at this time. But it is also a time

to heal from traumas of the past, deal with disappointments and the big black hole.

Taking care of the hole

Seemingly, everyone has a hole, a drain, something like a vacuum cleaner, a big black hole sucking our energy, time and money. And the more money you pour into it, the bigger it seems to get. How did that come about? Let's look at the answer that comes from Hollywood. Hollywood has a never-ending supply of blockbusters coming at us: thrillers, more action, science fiction. If you take a closer look, you will see that most of these films have a very simple pattern. It's so predictable that watching those films, with this in mind, can even become interesting.

Each film basically has four parts:

1. Ex-Top agent XYZ is now happily married, daughter playing in the garden, the dog frolicking in the front yard, the tomatoes are growing and the bees are humming. However, everything changes the perfect family setting, as... some evil...

2. Bin Laden enters the picture, breaks in, kills wife and dog, tramples on the tomatoes, and kidnaps the daughter. XYZ is fuming.

3. The helicopter lands. Out come three MiBs (Men in Black) from the CIA and say to XYZ: You were once our best man. But look, now you grow tomatoes, you harmless bloke. Come on, wake up, and go after Bin Laden. Only you can get him. XYZ first rejects the idea, looking at the tomatoes, but then accepts the challenge. He turns the baseball cap backwards – a symbolic switch actually – front-wards: off (tomato-mode), backwards: on (dangerous, war-mode). He arms himself for World War III and takes off.

4. After a chase around the globe hunting down Bin Laden and 100 other bad-guys, XYZ saves the daughter, marries the helicopter pilot, and goes back to his tomatoes.

This pattern somehow speaks especially to men, because, whether we know it or not, this very much reflects men's own story. 1) Man was planted into an idyllic garden (Adam and Eve in paradise); 2) Bin Shaitan, the devil, robs the peace and throws the world into turmoil; 3) God starts a gigantic rescue mission, sends his very best people in personalized, special-missions into the fight, including his own son, who all become a casualty of war, (but his son miraculously resurrects); 4) The goal is to rescue the bride and a never-ending happy end in heaven. Every human is born with a special mission, a clearly defined and non-transferable task, and sent by God to Planet Earth to accomplish it. To find out one's life-mission and embrace it is the first task of every human – and, very personally, makes sense to it all.

Satan knows this exactly. And, being no gentleman, he tries to derail this process, usually through afflicting a terrible and deadly wound, as early as possible. Typically Satan tries to use those closest to us (parents, in-laws, teachers, etc.) as his main agents. His major weapons: rejection (you are an accident; should have been a boy/girl), abuse (sexually, emotionally, physically), denial of support, encouragement, blessing (you never get it; you loser). As a result, most people fall into a deep hole. Without forgiveness, reconciliation, and

(more than we know) deliverance, this fatal wound festers - and stays with us forever. Statistics show: time does not heal this. Only God can.

This wound has one goal: to prevent, at any cost, every human from entering his godly role, his mission, his true reason for existence, and to sideline him into futile issues, trap him into a meaningless, harmless life. Most hurting people hide their wound behind a mask, a fake identity to tell the world: I am so incredibly OK, just look at my perfect mask. Deep inside, however, we fear to be found out, someone seeing through our mask, discovering we are only making it up. And so we upgrade our mask: spend amazing sums on costly hobbies, compensating-strategies, or we consume ourselves giddy (sugar, fat, alcohol, TV, sex, whatever) to fill that void, screaming, hole within us.

Masks are life-templates you can buy off the shelf nowadays. And so people put on standard, garden-variety masks: some men change into a cold-blooded business guy with suit and BMW in the morning, or become the ever-funny clown that buys attention by making everyone laugh. Some turn into leather-clad Harley-Davidson riding, mega-tire machos, or Mr. hardworking Normal, who sticks out by absolutely not sticking out. Those life-templates are also available in the Ladies section: the hot Barbie-girl, the Goth girl with two kilos of pierced-metal on board, the business-dressed power-woman, or the all-organic green elf. These masks and life-templates cost not only your originality – they cost money. Whole industries thrive on producing masks for us. A desert time is a good opportunity for you to learn to let go of your mask, your externally projected identity, and let the doctor have a go at healing and transforming you. God can do that, and heal our worst memories, heal our wound through love, acceptance, and forgiveness – and even get us back on track for our special mission. It's never too late. In his excellent book *Wild at Heart*, John Eldredge captivates some of this and encourages people to go back on a hunt for their lost romance with God, their lost mission, their lost dream. The hole, in this analogy, is the inner problem we carry, our darkest secrets and wounds, and without God healing those and delivering us from a life-long pity party spent in regret, resentment, bitterness, or rejection, we will always be bound to our past, and not freed up for the future.

Get out of that cage

However, the next step we need to take is to address what I call the cage. Let me explain. The hole deals with our inner problem, the cage with our outer circumstances. In going to the zoo, I like to not only watch the animals, but I am kind of strange. I like to watch people as they watch animals. And it never ceases to amaze me to watch women spend most of their zoo-time in front of one particular animal: the monkeys. Watching monkeys seems to do something for women; however, I have no clue what it is. That is why I rather talk about men. Men also have their favorite zoo-animal where they spend more time than anywhere else: the lion. And here they stand, watching the former king of the jungle, who once struck terror into everything – invincible, murderously dangerous to the core, and still cool and majestic - lie defeated and harmless in some corner, bored to death, totally oblivious to everything around him, only to wake up a bit as the regular bone is thrown in for him at 4 PM sharp. And if no one looks, at night, the lion weeps (at least I think they do), sighs, longing back to the savannah and the wilderness where he can be who

he is. Does he realize that he is only a shadow of his true self? I wonder what goes through the heads of the men watching Leo. Do they recognize how similar their story is? How they also were made to be dangerous, slay the enemies, "rescue a beauty, win an adventure, accomplish a mission," as Eldredge says? And here they are, trapped in their own cage, either in their 9-5 job, their circumstances, or their own little world from which they find no escape. And their mind slowly wanders, dreaming a forbidden dream: What if...What if there is life beyond life? What if there still is an adventure for me, something greater than what I already do, a huge story to be part of, a mission that sweeps me off my feet, a war for loved ones that is worth fighting? Something to die for, which means there is something also to live for? If only I would not need to do all this for my regular bone (as in salary).

What is *your* cage? Whether you are a woman or man, take time to ask God to open up your own personal cage. Stay in all the healthy relationships with spouses, kids and family, but get out of anything, whatever it costs, that hems you in, that puts you behind bars, drains your hopes, and all this for a bone? No bone is so juicy that it is worth all this. God can help you to reinvent yourself. And maybe you need to change your job, start a business, stop being a pastor and open a restaurant, do whatever it takes to get out of all the outer confines that already have held you back for too long. This is a time to return to your own founding dream, maybe a forgotten vision or prophecy. Go dig it out, and make it happen.

Detox

Once you are out of the system, allow God to take the system out of you. Ask him to take care of your inbuilt religious reflexes, the kind of things you automatically do while being socialized in CAWKI. Things like removing that fish sticker from your car, finally. Stop closing your eyes while praying. Start joining a sailing club on Wednesday night, when you used to have cell or home group. I will never forget the remark of a reformed pastor who quit his job and said it like this: "Now that I am out of the system, how do I get the system out of me? I need someone to take my head, put it under the water until the last religious reformed bubble leaves my lungs, and then lift up my head again and fill my lungs with fresh air!"

Günter and Uli Schuster, leading a traditional church in Wels, Austria, did this in a prescriptive way for their entire membership. They closed shop, cancelled their lease for a great building, prepared their people for a new time, told them to go home for a year and have no religious meetings of any kind. Barbeques, birthday parties, etc., are fine, but beware of guitars or songbooks! After a year, they regrouped their folks, started six new house churches, and saw them multiply even down into Albania.

Confrontation

The desert is also the place to face our enemy – and win. For Jesus, the 40 days in the desert was the time between his secular job that he had held down for 18 years and his apostolic role. "Full of the Holy Spirit," he was led by the spirit into the desert (Luke 4), faced Satan, overcame the temptations, and returned "in the power of the spirit" back from the desert and started his apostolic ministry. Take time in your own desert experience to do likewise: face

your temptations, tell the devil to take off, confront your fears and come out victoriously. Having heard many stories about it, and having done it myself, I still believe that yes, fasting for 40 days or as long as you can on water alone does help – but it may not be prescriptive for everyone. It helps to confront our own flesh, free up our mind and spirit to be with God, and, good news to some, even lose weight. The desert is also a time when God may call you, speak to you in very clear ways, as the clutter and noise of the world out there has faded away. Remember, your toughest fight is never with the devil; it is with God. And so God might meet you, but not to wrestle with you (he might do that, leave that to him), but to confront you with your own mission. Look at John the Baptist. He was a desert boy. It says about him: “And the child grew and become strong in the spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel” (Luke 1:80). And what happened to him in the desert? “And the word of God came to John in the desert” (Luke 3:2). Many people have been called in the desert before, John, Moses, Elijah. And remember how many people’s lives have changed dramatically in the desert: Joseph, the entire Israel, and David. As you see, the desert may not be as dry as you thought, and you will be in good company, cheered on by a host of witnesses who have been there before. Many have gone there – and most have come out – stronger, wiser, changed, commissioned. It would not surprise me to see the exact same thing happen with you.

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Un-covenanting

There may be relationships that have been with you for ages, people who you have walked with or they have walked with you that will show their true colors as you are gone for your journey. With some of them, the relationship might deepen; with others, it will be a silent or open conflict, and you need to do something that will be very hard: to peacefully walk on, and bury the hopes that they will ever come with you. Some relationships simply will not survive what you do, and you need to do what Jonathan, after covenanting with David, never did: to let go of Saul and the whole story. This is a time to break covenant with relationships and systems that simply will not go with you. Do not do this in anger, drama, or with pressure, but soft, peaceful and determined. You are not burning bridges here, but simply journeying on, even if others won’t join you. This will be tough. But it will make you free like you have never been before.

3) DNA Reconfiguration

Once you are out of the desert, which is a time for God to take you apart, make time for God to put you together again – the way he had designed you. He may put a new heart into you, a new passion, a new zeal, new values, a new operating system as you changed your thinking (Rom. 12:2). This is a time when God builds you up, so be careful to not skip this time. Maybe it will be a little bit like in the army. God will get you through a boot camp, a place to learn the basics, how to put on your shoes and your uniform, use your weapons accurately, learn basic commands, learn how to obey, whom to respect, where to stand, how to walk in formation. It is the time when God implants you with his BIOS, his DNA. Neil Cole defines DNA like this: Divine truth, Nurturing relationship, Apostolic mission.

Take the time, no matter how many titles and PhDs you have, to go through

this experience, if possible find training together with others, something that is designed for this purposes, courses like LukeTen, Getting Started, Greenhouse, Master training or any other courses that lay a new, apostolic foundation. Remember, many seminars or courses of CAWKI have focused on training Christians how to gather better; we now might need to go through entirely different types of training that will basically help to scatter us better. This is a time for God to recast you into a new mold once you have been reheated in the furnace, so allow him to do this.

At this time, you need mentoring. So look for people who will walk with you for some time, and don't be shy to ask. Learn, read, and start practicing what you learned. This is a time for "exposing yourself to apostolic teaching" (Acts 2:42) and prophetic ministry; and let God put a foundation into your heart by these ministries that will last a lifetime. The issue at this point in time is to be reconfigured, rewired, installed with new values. First things first!

And as you learn the basics, again – pray, become self-feeding with the word of God, win people for Christ, baptize them, disciple them, deliver them, plant simple churches with new believers, take time to practice these skills as much as you can. Much of today's academic training "teaches a lot and lets them practice a little." Jesus did the very opposite: "Teach them a little, let them practice a lot." So even if you seem to learn only a few things, put them into practice, avoid one more time of being educated beyond your obedience, and don't keep these things for yourself: ***start teaching others what you learn.***

4) Regroup and redeploy

This is the time to allow God to put you together with others in teams, connect with those in your area, network with them, make new friends, and go on missions together. Learn how it is to function in teams, complementing each other in cities and regions, and find those who have what I call a 'you-shaped vacuum', an empty spot that carries your name. You may find others who have been waiting for you to switch them on. And as God shows you your mission, your talents, and your place in the army, he may start sending you off to your first assignments. God will be careful to do this according to your giftings and your role, but expect to be out of your comfort zone a lot – God is known for that kind of thing. This is a time where you should look for someone to coach you – no longer a mentoring relationship to download stuff into you, but one to help you bring out the best that God has put into you. There are people functioning in one of the five fold ministries all around you – go carry their suitcases, watch them, hear their stories, and catch their vision. And as you receive coaching, make sure that you start mentoring others, those who are on the same journey, but a few steps – or even only one step – behind you.

This entire process, from starting the journey to redeployment, may take time – from when God actually starts giving you fruit and you become part of a movement to when you take your regional garden for God. If you have been in CAWKI for a significant time, this may take you longer than you think, because anyone who is unlearning, detoxifying and un-covenanting needs space. Look at least at one to two years. If you are a recent convert, or have been out of CAWKI already for a significant period, and been in business, politics, arts or media rather than spending your time in church services, this might go very quickly.

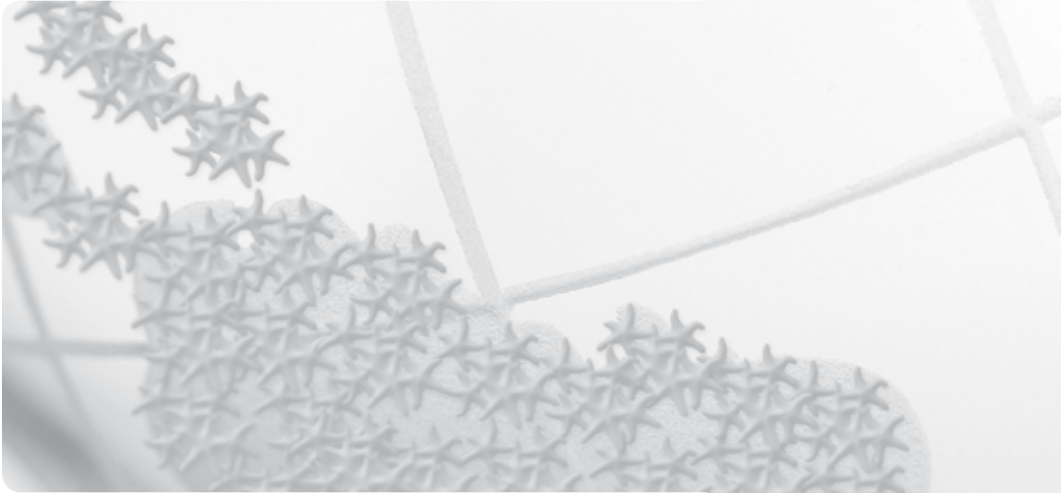
Let me close this chapter by telling you about Sanjeev. While I was in New

Delhi a while ago, I was driven around by Sanjeev, then a 27-year-old, bright and very humorous young man. He told me how he had come to Christ a few years before, was disciplined in a house church, had gone to one of the house church training sessions (a ten day training), and started to plant house churches in a special district that he had been assigned to work in. "In the last two years," he told me, "I have planted 128 house churches so far. Actually, I only planted the first few ones, because from then on, these house churches started to plant other house churches, all by themselves. My district has 2600 villages and places where there still is no church. So I have another 2472 churches that I want to see planted. At the current rate, this will take another two years. Then I plan to marry – and then take on another district," he smiled, honked and steered happily around one more cow on the road. "And you know why I drive this car? It is my mobile bible school! I get to drive around people like you, they talk to me, tell me stories, things that I don't know, and so I learn and put this into practice. Isn't it wonderful?"

I smiled and turned backwards, so he did not see how I wiped a tear of joy out of the corner of my eye. Inwardly, I shouted: "Yes!! Exactly." I knew: this is one of the reasons why India will be disciplined through the planting of millions and millions of new churches. And as there are already thousands of Sanjeevs in India, I consider the discipling of India a matter of time. Let us pray, hope and act in such a way that the same thing will happen in each single nation in the world – including yours, and that you will be inspired by God, Sanjeev and many around you not to stop until the job is finished.

And don't forget: as you have traveled through the desert in your own migration, make sure you make yourself available as a newly graduated tour guide yourself, and stand at the bus stands and railways stations of your area to pick up new bewildered people who are just getting off the bus or train, looking for the promised land. Go to them, say hi, and tell them: I hoped you would come. Come this way, I know where this goes, as I have been here before...





29 The Toolbox

**When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles,
"Brothers, what shall we do?" Ac 2:37**

29 The Toolbox

In the chapter about apostolic diaconia we discussed some of the ways to share Life in the Kingdom with those outside of it. In this chapter, we will look at some tools how we could get started with the kind of church that can be or become the backbone of such a movement that turns the world upside down. Most of these tools are actually very simple.

I remember sitting with the Bishop of the Methodist church in Germany once. We were discussing church planting in general, and so I asked him: "The Methodist movement was originally a church planting movement. How important is church planting for the Methodist church today?" He answered: "We have tried it, but it does not work." I was astonished. "Tell me about it, I want to know more." "Well," he said, "we had one attempt recently in the northern German city of Itzehoe. Our man there was not able, after one full year, to get a single adult to come visit a Sunday service." "And what is your conclusion about this?" I asked again. "I told you already. We have tried church planting, and it does not work, especially not in northern Germany or the town of Itzehoe," was his final statement. "Let me guess," I came back. "This is what your man did: he conducted a number of children's programs somewhere in town and then attempted to invite the parents of the kids to come to a real, adult type church service in some rented place? And there, nobody bothered to come?" "Yes, of course. But probably the people up there are not interested in spiritual things, anyhow," he offered.

"That is very interesting that you should say that," I told him, "because I know this assumption is wrong. I just visited that town, and have a colleague up there in Itzehoe, a Lutheran pastor called Hinrich Bues who offers biblical refresher courses for the parents of youngsters who are about to be confirmed, so that they have a chance to talk informally with their kids during this time of teaching; he has hundreds of people joining these classes, and a very large percentage of those parents are ready to accept Christ at the end. This means that the people are very open to the gospel, but selective in terms of methodology. And that means that church planting should be very possible – if other means are applied. What do you think?" I went a bit further and concluded: "See, if we only have a hammer in our toolbox, every problem becomes a nail."

This was in the early 90s. For the Methodist church, their "hammer" was a young theologically trained pastor (read: an academic from the other end of the social spectrum; one out of hundred usually really connects well to street kids) conducting kids programs on the streets (anybody gets suspicious of such a thing, no matter what you do to kids) and invite their parents (which the kids will forget to do on their way home) to the religious service (which is the last thing these parents think they need) of a church (probably a cult) with a name they don't know how to spell (Methodisten is not really a German name, and to connect methods with religion is deeply suspicious to any German). In other words, methodologically speaking this attempt carried all the seeds of its own destruction right from start. The poor Methodist pastor was set up for failure even before he began his work. They had a toolbox all right, but if you opened it, you would only find one lonely, old, dysfunctional hammer in there, pitifully inadequate to the task of building a house.

"If we only have a hammer in our toolbox, every problem becomes a nail."

It reminds me of the American missionary (a real story) who complained that the Basque people in northern Spain would not come to his services that he painfully conducted in Spanish, and would not even drink the contextualized Coke that he offered for the Lord's Supper. I initially thought he was joking, but he was not. Well, many of the Basques on the Iberian Peninsula hate the Spanish (remember ETA?), and their language. They have their own language. And in Spain, wine is not a drink; it is an ever-present **food**. An American teetotaler (a person who drinks no alcohol, not even socially) sticks out like a sore thumb in such an environment. The well-meaning man did everything wrong, and was surprised by the lack of results. The linguist and anthropologist Eugene Nidda says (in his book *Message and Mission*): "In every society, there are definite rules about what types of people say what kind of things to certain classes of persons. Well-intentioned missionary work has sometimes failed to communicate the gospel because the source (read: the missionary) adopted a role completely incompatible with those to be reached."

My point is simple: methods do matter; they are ways to get something specific done in an effective way. And if we want to build a house, a hammer alone will not do; we need a variety of tools: saws, hammers, axes, pliers, and so on. However, methods have an inbuilt danger: they invite people to copy them without thinking, apply them without doing their homework of trying to understand the situation first. They promise quick results without deeply engaging with the issue, and could prove devastating in the hands of success-hungry, pragmatic, whatever-works kind of folks. People have faces, names, and a God-given originality, their own history, and each one will have a slightly different love story with God. This also means that nobody wants to be the result of a recipe, the product of a program, a number in someone else's plan. CAWKI has literally drowned by using a method - any method!

In 1994, England had seen not only one, but actually four independent national evangelistic strategies that were greatly advertised and had pitched high hopes among Christians for masses in England to be converted that year. At the end of the year, it all proved to be a gigantic flop, costing lots of man hours, prayers, hopes, and money – with extremely few new people joining the churches, as meticulous research by the Evangelical Alliance had shown. People were devastated, and fell into what I call a post-evangelistic depression. I remember Gerald Coates, an apostolic man leading "Pioneers" (however quite a traditional set-up of classical 5-P- churches) standing up in a national conference and declaring: "God has allowed us to be defeated by our very own methods!"

Statistically speaking, the number of pastors that basically adopt the programs and methods invented and offered by others, and then apply them to their own situation, is around 80%. Another 15% use existing methods and alter them to fit their case, and only 5% are called inventors: they invent new things as they go. I find it necessary to place these disclaimers here, because I have seen the gigantic disease and addiction of brainlessly copying other peoples recipes for success in CAWKI – and I wish to warn the entire emerging house church and apostolic movements about the same trap as loudly as I can. Our greatest strengths will never be methods, but the creator himself living within us. As we passionately pray and seek ways to serve people and love them into the Kingdom, this missional love will be as creative as it gets. And so

you may want to create your own methods as you go, and as you feel others would benefit from hearing your story, share it.

That said, let us look at a selection of some applications and helpful methods that God seems to be using and highlighting at this time of re-establishing CAGWI through a massive church planting around the world. Because of space limitations, I will not be able to present more than a short, sketchy draft of the main idea of each concept, and leave out all further practical aspects and out-workings. There is more material available about each concept, either downloadable at the starfish website or in the form of books and other resources that are either out there already or are being made available as we go. As a new church arises in the world today, people look for practical ways and methods that are built on CAGWI's values and DNA. You probably have heard of the so-called 80/20 Principle, also called "Pareto's Law" or the "Rule of the Vital Few." It states that 80 percent of results flow from 20 percent of causes. In other words, most of our actions have little value and yield little results; on the other hand, a few things work fantastically well and have tremendous impact. Based on the values and the genetic code of the new reformation, here are a selection of high-impact concepts.

Luke 10:2b

Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 10:2: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to fling out workers into his harvest field." If the problem is that not enough harvest workers are available, pray for more. One of the ways that this could be done is how house church coach John White and Kenny More, director of the Colorado church planting division (Southern Baptist), both in Denver, have done every day since Oct. 28, 2002. As there is a special promise in the Bible on more than one person praying ("If two or three agree..."), they agreed to pray together every day, either in person or via the phone, for Jesus to send out more harvest workers into the State of Colorado. Their philosophy is that they accept the challenge that Jesus gave to pray like the persistent widow mentioned in Luke 18 who was wearing out the judge through her daily petitions. So they would pray like this: "Dear God, this is John and Kelly, yet again. Today, like all these other days before – and all days to follow if you don't answer our prayers soon – we are begging you to send out harvest workers into Colorado. Please do it. Will be back tomorrow."

If they could not reach each other on the phone, they would leave that prayer on each other's answering machine. They report an amazing response. "The number of people saying that they felt a call to work as harvesting church planters in Colorado had been very small in the past, a person here, a person there. But now, first weekly, and now on a truly daily basis we hear of people saying that they heard a call from God to work as church planters in Colorado! It is a wave we see happening before our very eyes!"

John and Kenny are challenging everyone in their reach to do likewise, and started the LK10:2b virus. Last time I heard, there are many hundreds, now probably thousands, who pray with a prayer partner like this, and infect others to do likewise.

My friend Neil Cole, who is also a Luke 10:2b prayer has a more obnoxious way to communicate this. He has set his alarm for 9 AM that will loudly go off

wherever he is. He then interrupts whatever he is doing (preferably a seminar or breakfast with lots of people), prays this prayer, says loudly "Atchoo!" and tells everyone that sorry, they just have been infected by a virus. Atchoo! Now you have been infected, too.

Dream interpretation

Everyone dreams – some because we are digesting and processing life's events and experiences in our dream world, some because they have eaten too many potatoes just before going to bed, and some because God is speaking to them. Biblically speaking, dreams, mentioned 75 times in the Bible, are one of God's main ways (if not even *the* main way) of communicating with people. "God does speak – though man may not perceive it, in a dream, a vision of the night, as men slumber on their beds, he may speak in their ears, terrify them with warnings to turn man from wrongdoing, keep them from pride, their soul from the pit, and their life from perishing by the sword" (Job 33:14-18). Again, not all dreams are from God, but some are.

Most people know the difference by the way such dreams impact them, and many wonder: "What does this dream mean?" Joseph – together with Daniel, one of the famous dream-decoders of the Bible, explains that "interpreting dreams belongs to God" (Gen. 40:8). As these men of God interpreted the God-given dreams others had, this changed history. *Why not do it again?* I believe that one of the prophetic and discerning functions of the Body of Christ in this world is to interpret the dreams that people around us are having – all the time. Not only all your neighbors, but even the sleepy guy riding the bus with you into town this morning probably had a download of a dream into his spirit last night, and wonders what it means. Why not introduce yourself as a "dream interpretation specialist" (which you are, if the spirit of the very God who interprets dreams is in you), and have him talk?

Many Muslims, for example, report a vivid dream that had this message: A white person appearing to them in a dream, saying: "I am the way, the truth and life. No one comes to the father except through me." Then they would wake up, wondering what this meant, and start out on a quest. A colleague of mine in Indonesia has been asking many thousands of Muslims a simple question: "Have you recently seen a white man?" Some would shrug, others would get excited and say: "Yes, indeed," and he would go on to explain who that person in white clothes might be, and that he probably wants the very same thing from the human he gave a personal visit to than he had wanted from everyone else he met: to get up, follow him and become his disciple. This way, thousands of Muslims have been led to Christ. A Christian Radio station has developed a program called "The Joseph Hour," speaking of real dreams and their meanings on the radio in the Arab world, and the response has been staggering.

Why not cooperate with Heavens TV, as I call it, and start a local dream interpretation center, a website, do seminars in restaurants, or just simply invite neighbors over for coffee and discuss the meaning of dreams? But make no mistake, dreams are not only an evangelistic way to the heart of people; many times God gives directions and prophetic warnings through dreams, too. It is an important spiritual navigational tool, and as we want to listen prophetically to build apostolically, dreams are an important communication tool, a divine e-mail function that we should use extensively. So become a dream specialist,

study the issue in the Bible, learn how to do this, experiment, put an add “Will interpret your dreams for free!” into the newspaper with your e-mail or phone number, start a dream interpreting school, a radio or TV program, a column in the newspapers, and add an entirely new navigational dimension to your life and to the lives of those around you.

Prophecy

Nathanael was a critical man when he first heard about Jesus. But a few prophetic words like “I saw you under the fig tree” pierced his armor. His skepticism crumbled, and within seconds, he decided to become a follower of Jesus (John 1:46-50). Prophecy, that special gift of God that all of us can have (“you all can prophesy,” says Paul in 1 Cor. 14:31), is not only an armor-piercing communication tool that helps all of us to speak past peoples’ masks, therefore short-cutting communication greatly, but it is also a vital communication tool in the harvest. Prophecy is the main way we might find out about “houses of peace,” roads to take, roads to avoid, people to connect with, famines to prepare for, apostolic regions to move into – or stay away from, and is a great source of encouragement as it testifies in a very tangible way to the presence of Jesus (through the spirit of prophecy, Rev. 19:10) into the lives of people.

So learn how to prophesy, read a book or two, practice it, teach it, live it. Do not attempt to live a life in rejection or defiance of prophesy simply because your denomination or original Christian stream had a problem with it in the past. Many have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. That may have been the problem and solution for others, but you do not have to follow that path. The devil desperately wants to rob us of our most precious tools and weapons, and prophecy is one of his main targets. So embrace it, and make it part of your life. I remember coming back to Jakarta one year after I had done some teaching there on planting house churches. A young couple invited me to a restaurant to tell me some stories they had experienced that last year, and after four months of struggle to leave their old CAWKI-mindset and set-up behind them, were now, from their kitchen, planting an average of one house church per month. I had told them, among other things, to “open their house in the power of the Holy Spirit, open their kitchen, open their fridge,” and prophesy to anyone whom God brings into their house – preferably in a distinctly nonreligious setting, for example while they eat. With great excitement they told me they had recently invited a discouraged woman they had found on the streets to come up for lunch, as they had a party going on and food left over. She came, and another Christian lady started prophesying to her: “You have lost your son!” Shocked and bewildered, the lady said: “Yes, I have, how do you know? Eight years ago I lost my four-year-old son Dave on the streets of Jakarta, and I’ve been searching for him everywhere since then!” “Well, your search is over,” the Christian lady replied. “Today, says God, your prayers are answered. Go to the national monument in town and you will find your son under a tree.” The sad lady jumped up, got on a bus, rode to the park in Jakarta with the huge national monument, a big pillar, looked around the trees in the park for a boy that could be twelve years old, found someone and said: “Dave?” “Mom!” the boy shouted back, and they were united again. What a joy to hear how God can use prophecy in a natural setting to reunite a lost son with his Mom, and imagine if this kind of thing becomes commonplace in the house churches in your area too.

Healing

Physical healing has been one of the key aspects of Jesus' former and ongoing work. I will not say much more here than this: if it was important to the apostolic ministry of Jesus, it will be important to ours too. 95% of all conversions and new churches planted in India (and many other nations that are not as well researched as India) are the direct result of a physical healing, the expulsion of demons, or a prophetic word. Jesus never told us to go "pray for healing," but told us to heal people (without prayer!), giving the authority to heal into the hands of his disciples. Many people around the world are rediscovering long-lost and quite simple insights into healing. Watch the ministry of people like Daniel Hari, Charles Ndifon, Bill Johnson, Hamilton Filmalter, Erich Reber, David Hathaway, and many others. And, even more exciting to me, watch those many unknown and unnamed harvest workers of God who regularly see people healed or resurrected and who, because of the people's amazed response to these miracles, gather them in and plant multitudes of new churches. Allow God to put back one of the most potent ways to demonstrate the goodness of God into your hands too.

IHD

IHD stands for **Inner Healing and Deliverance**, a simple but powerful process that takes care of the traumas and wounds almost every person in the world carries but cannot treat without outside assistance. As we all are wounded warriors (remember "the hole?"), it is vital to drop the masks, deal with the traumas of our past, go through God's "washing machine," forgive those who have hurt us, bless those who have cursed us, and move on through life without drowning in a package of emotions and memories that cripple and distort us. Inner healing is a simple way to help resolve these past inner traumas by allowing Jesus to take out knots and unresolved aspects in our lives. Many, but not all, of these wounds and traumas have become infected, not by bacteria, but by demonic beings that feast on human traumas and hurts; they will do what they can "to empower the weakness," make it worse, and even inject thoughts of revenge, rejection, hatred, bitterness, anger, suicide, murder, and death into us. Jesus did not only heal people, he drove out demons nearly everywhere he went. And he told his disciples: "Drive out demons!" (Matt. 10:8). If we want to do what Jesus did, we need to learn to drive out demons too, otherwise we will be seriously lacking the necessary power to break through into vital areas of Kingdom advancement "As I drive out demons, the Kingdom of God has come to you" (Matt. 12:28). Demons need a mandate, a legal right, a rental contract, and spiritual permission to act where they do, and this is directly tied to "the dirt" Charles Kraft speaks about. Demons are not really the problem; the dirt is.

This dirt collects in four main ways:

- 1) **By personal repeated sin** that opens a person willfully to the laws of the demonic world, allowing demonic rulers to open a demonic embassy in the life of a person who is so clearly aligning himself with the domain and laws of darkness;
- 2) **By being a victim of someone else's sin**, usually mental, emotional, sexual, financial, and/or spiritual abuse and victimization. The problem is not the

wound; the problem is the trauma, our bitter reaction to the wound;

3) So-called “familial spirits;” there are demonic consequences of the “sins of the fathers” that are legally valid into the generations to come, and

4) Curses, the opposite of blessings, “fiery darts” that have been spoken or performed against people by anyone from an occultist to a difficult neighbor to, perhaps even the worst case, a misguided fellow Christians and close family member.

Men like Gary Hixson (see www.healingdeep.org) are being used by God in many areas of the world to teach these simple principles that put a powerful weapon back into the hands of God’s people, so they can be free to advance into their purposes in God and free others to do the same. I observe deliverance ministries not only to be a powerful tool in evangelistic contexts where it performs spiritual “spring cleaning” in the houses of people who report occult activity, but also a powerful tool in tearing apart demonic “land rights.” As the church advances more and more into “saturation garden planting,” we need to know what to do with those demonic guardians of the gardens and how to take care of them. Remember, not every problem is demonic, and not every bush hosts a demon. I encourage these types of ministries, therefore, to be done in partnership with Christian doctors and psychiatrists, who can be of tremendous help in identifying problems that are of physical or psychological nature. Both the body and the soul can be hurt, so to try driving out demons where none exist could seriously traumatize people. Establish, therefore, a partnership between such doctors, psychiatrists, evangelists and people who have learned the basics of IHD-ministry in your city or area, in order to help clean up as much of the dirt, both historic as well as present, in your region as possible. Remember: the demons are not the problem; the dirt is. So let us cooperate ideologically with the garbage cleaning facilities and workers in our area since we are in the same line of work. And remember not to rejoice too much if demons flee from you; that is normal. But rejoice because your name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

LTG

LTG stands for “Life Transformation Group,” a multiplicative discipling tool that was developed by Neil Cole. It is a simple yet powerful tool that, connected with a church planting movement, not only has the potential to see large numbers of people brought to Christ, but also to involve them from the very beginning of their life with Christ as harvest workers. In Neil’s words: “A Life Transformation Group is a simple way to release the most essential elements of a vital spiritual walk to people who need Jesus to change their lives from the inside out. It is a grassroots tool for growth, which encourages and supports people to follow Christ by fueling internal motivation rather than applying external pressures and ploys. This tool empowers the common Christian to accomplish the uncommon work of reproducing spiritual disciples who can in turn reproduce others.”

Here a simple overview of what an LTG is:

- LTGs meet once a week for approximately one hour
- The groups are not co-ed, but gender-specific (men with men, women with women)

- There is no curriculum, workbook or training involved
- There is no leader needed for the group

Only three tasks are to be accomplished in an LTG:

- Sin is confessed in mutual accountability
- Scripture is read repetitively in context and in community
- Souls are prayed for strategically, specifically and continuously

There are only two suggested qualifications for starting or joining an LTG:

1. A desperate need for Jesus Christ (Luke 5:29-32)
2. Faithfulness in the process itself (2. Tim 2:2)

In the weekly meetings that can happen anywhere, even on a train ride or a coffee shop, the participants share the implications of the scriptures they have read (between 30-45 chapters a week), go through ten very specific, written questions, ask each other for accountability, and pray for their (preferably) unsaved friends. As another friend joins, he immediately becomes part of the process, and as the fourth person joins, the group, after making sure the last newcomer is faithful to the principles, divides into two groups of two persons each and repeat the process again. This creates a multipliable discipling structure that can be set up immediately, any time and anywhere. More information is available at www.cmresources.org or in Neil's book, called *Cultivating a Life for God*.

Kingdom Logistics

Without a way to bring hope to people, hope would be literally lost on the way. Most developmental help and financial or material aid are either stalled by complicated procedures and any amount of red tape or still swallowed up by improper administration, corrupt channels, endless customs issues, and exorbitant charges of middle-men. In addition to this, most Christian aid suffers from fragmentation and "denominationalism" in the Christian aid world where the left hand often does not know what the right hand is doing; there is little to no cooperation in these ministry sectors, reflecting a non-apostolic and non-strategic spirit. Some of my friends, like Kay Hiramine of HISG (Humanitarian International Service Group; see www.hisg.net) or Eng Hoe are involved in logistics: bringing aid from A to B, and asking C to fund it. To get to the core of the issue, in my estimation, a developing apostolic reformation must install a logistical system that ultimately needs to function globally. Four things need to be moved in the Kingdom of God: information (research, intelligence etc), wares (products, things, goods), people and money.

Financially, we need to develop a faith and trust-based network of remittance and person-to-person payments that is far cheaper and more efficient than bank-based fund transfers or outlets like "Western Union," and develop something better than the Muslim tradition of "hawala networks." These (mostly illegal but very widespread) "hawala networks" are finance-distributing systems where money is transferred without actually moving money, but literally moving trust, and are able to achieve almost instant, same-day delivery of money from Dubai, New York or Durban into the remotest villages of Pakistan for a minute fee. Sadly, but understandably, they have been used by terrorist

networks like Al Qaeda and others for their efficiency. Technically, there is no reason why Christians should not develop their own global banking system; networking all Christian banks towards that purpose would be an interesting start. Realistically, this would probably be a completely futile effort, as these banks have strong traditions, laws, and family interests involved that seem more difficult to change than the most rigid of denominations. It might be necessary to pour new wine into new wineskins, and develop banking again from an apostolic viewpoint. One of the most promising ideas is to financially network and link "apostolic foundations" in the various regions of this world, and use a financial intranet: a highly secure and protected intrafoundational financial remittance system built on trust and relationships that bypasses the world's costly (and often corrupt) banking systems and, instead, use apostolic foundations as its financial hubs.

Kingdom Logistics would also mean that in regard to the material aspects of apostolic diaconia, either existing distribution channels need to be linked, networked, and streamlined (to cut out parallelization and loss through as a result of the refusal to synergize) or new logistics channels more fully dedicated to Kingdom principles must be developed. In a globalized world, this is going to be one of the core tasks of diaconal ministries that work in direct relationship with apostolic and prophetic ministries; these ministries will most likely work best in garden-to-garden partnerships.

Spiritual travel guides: If "Transitioning into an Apostolic Order" is going to be a vital phase for many ministries and churches right now and in the future, we need to train and deploy **change agents:** spiritual "out of house" consultants and "travel guides" for many of those who will embark on their own apostolic migration. This might be an area where a number of excellent business consultants, those trained in organizational psychology or management consultants can find their role.

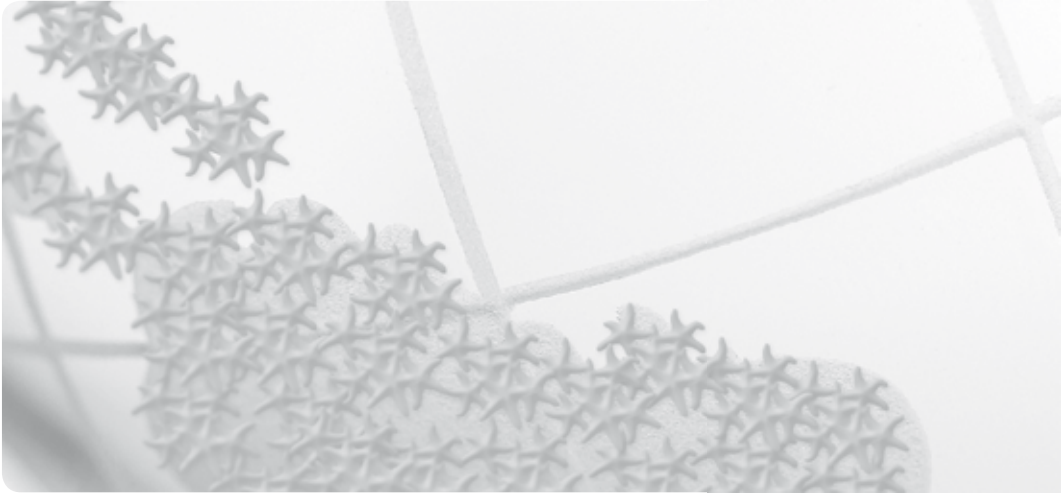
Eraser Ministries: this will involve teaching people how to "unlearn" and apply healthy and non-damaging de-construction to organizations and movements helping them to take the steps necessary to reinvent and reposition themselves within the framework of the current reformation. The key to the future will be not only how to imbibe and download new information, but how to go through our own memories with an invisible eraser and do some spring cleaning, wiping away conditioning and fundamental teachings that have not proven to be helpful, or have even been damaging. This will be a ministry that calls for the sensitive and gentle touch of pastors and counselors.

Evangelists of financial conversion: we will need not only to deploy "Messianic finance principles," that teach the fundamentals of financial conversion to everyone, but we will also need to help people get a holist view of embracing their various life phases as children, sons, and fathers. This identity reformation must begin in their periods of conversion and continue to grow while in business, and culminate when leaving the business to move into Kingdom roles for which no non-Christian businessperson could provide spiritual leadership. For this we will need many people who have lived (at least some of) the financial principles of the Kingdom to introduce and initiate as many as

possible into this entirely new economic form of existence.

Lastly, there will be many existing training groups and networks that will want to link up with the emerging reformation. Here, we need to be careful to “test all things” and keep the best, and also to be realistic to see that many, if not most, training concepts and formats will simply be incompatible with this apostolic reformation. I believe that the very best methods and training concepts of this new day are yet to be invented and developed. And I pray that you will have a major role in this. But even the best method of training is not the end in itself. Only the end is the end. This is why we now need to go one final step further and look at the surprising and exciting possibilities for the final challenge that Jesus has given us. What does “discipling the nations” look like in this new day of Kingdomization?





30 The Starfish Partnership

**“Then will I purify the lips of the peoples,
that all of them may call on the name of the Lord
and serve him shoulder to shoulder.” Zep 3:9**



30 The Starfish Partnership

The very reason Jesus came to this earth -- his life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension -- fulfils many "intelligence reports" or ancient prophecies. German scientist, Werner Gitt, writes that the Bible contains 6,408 verses with prophetic insights; 3,268 of them have already been fulfilled; 3,140 have yet to be fulfilled. Of this remaining balance, roughly 300 of these are prophetic statements in the Old Testament that speak of the coming of Jesus to this earth.

There is no reason to doubt that the biblical prophecies that speak of the future will not also come true. And it will literally "make all the difference in the world" whether we personally and corporately, as God's Kingdom people, place our faith in the word of God or in the words of men. Faith in the words and predictions of men will drown us; on the other hand, faith in the word of God will allow us to walk on water. Assuming they indeed resemble true and divine prophetic intelligence, what, then, do we need to do in order to prepare ourselves in practical ways for the fulfillment of the many prophetic statements that speak of the yet unfulfilled future? What streets do we need to build to arrive at that destination? What architecture is required from us humans to advance God's declared prophetic purposes?

Biblical eschatology, or what the Bible says about the future, is like a beacon that helps us steer our ship into the right direction. The Bible clearly speaks of an end of history as we know it, and it will be marked by a number of cosmic events. I want to mention just four of them:

1) "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The most central event of humanity's future is the return of the King. This return will take the Kingdom of God into a new dimension. And rather than staring into the "starry, starry night" and waiting, dressed in white clothes on rooftops to be taken home and away, Jesus – and the angels who spoke to the Galileans – suggest that we go to "work until he comes" (Luke 19:13). Working does not mean religious busyness. We have to get away from the foolish mindset that merely doing business-as-usual (treading water, running in place, and holding the fort as prisoners-of-war that await rescue and passively wait to be taken out of their misery) is our proper response to the fact that the

King will return. He will return, and he will ask us what we have done to prepare for his return, what we have done with the talents he gave us. And when that time comes, we don't want to stutter something about hiding the stuff in the ground. Passively waiting and refusing involvement in the preparations for our King's return is not an option; it is faithless, speechless stargazing. May the angels of God do what is necessary to startle any one of us out of our cardiac arrest, out of any dwindling of our passion and fire. And may they fan the flame of expectancy again, so that we all press on.

2) "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8), and: "The devil was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur for ever" (Rev. 20:10).

Jesus, yes, did come to establish the good but also to destroy the bad. The works of the devil manifest in a million ways and have a boundary named Jesus. As Kingdom people, the mission of Jesus our King, to come destroy the devil's work with his central death at the cross and his resurrection is upon us today; it is our mission too. Jesus overcame and drove out the devil from his presence, so we can overcome and drive out demons as well. And as the Kingdom grows "to become a huge mountain that fills the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35), yes, sin increases, but grace increases all the more (Rom. 5:20). The destruction of the works of evil is a done deal, the central battle is won; D-Day is over, VE-day is coming. This speaks of a church that triumphs yet in suffering, is beaten but not killed, sorrowful but always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, and having nothing yet possessing everything.

As we read the final page of the Book, ultimately, we – and our God - win. Given such a powerful scenario with an eternal happy ending, we have, thus, to make a decision. Are we going into the future face down, sad and disappointed; or do we lift our heads, rejoicing because our salvation is coming? I have made the decision to never give up, to give my life, to contribute whatever I am and whatever I have, and to do my part, whatever it is, towards the final page of God's book -- no matter what happens. Will you do the same?

A "small flock" of a great God may be far bigger than the large church of a small man.

3) A time will come when "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, sing praises "to Jesus, the Lamb of God; when "a great multitude in white robes that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language stand before the throne and in front of the lamb," and the Bride will be united with her bridegroom (Rev. 5:13; 7:9; 21:9).

If those who come out of the "great tribulation" cannot be counted, what about those who have come to God before that? There will not be a pitiful few, but great numbers redeemed before God that even our greatest statisticians will struggle to count. A "small flock" of a great God may be far bigger than the large church of a small man. So our vision and the action that flows out of it should ready us all to anticipate and participate in a large, uncountable harvest. None of us should settle for anything less, no matter how grandiose any human-designed plan may sound that we come across. We may even need to get out of all human plans in order to be part of God's plan. Would you be ready for that?

How plentiful is plentiful?

The last (4th) piece of biblical, prophetic intelligence that I want to mention here was so startling to me when I first saw it that it took me some time to

digest its implications. In my line of work, countless times colleagues around the world and I have discussed the question that arises from Jesus' claim: "The harvest is plentiful" (Luke 10:2). The Greek word for plentiful is *polus*, which simply means big, huge, and plentiful. How plentiful is plentiful? We know that "God wants *all* men to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4). But this statement is balanced by another statement: It is a "little flock" to whom the Kingdom is given" (Luke 12:32); "some (Greek: *tines*) will abandon the faith in the last days" (1 Tim. 4:1) (some is not "many" as many faulty and suggestive Bible translations suggest). And quite simply, not all men want what God wants -- not to mention that the devil has his wishes too. Paul writes: "Not everyone has faith" (2 Thess. 3:3). Therefore, how many will that "*all*" be, that God wants saved?

"The full number (Greek: *pleroma*) of Gentiles will come in," says Paul in Romans 11:12,25. *Pleroma*, meaning totality, full measure, describing a ship that is fully laden, does not speak of a pitiful few. How full is full? Full is the "uncountable great multitude" that will stand before the great white throne of God (Rev. 7:9) who is the only one who can count the uncountable. One thing is for sure: it is going to be a *big* number.

Some of us have been discussing the needed percentage of Kingdom people in a given population of a region, city, nation or people group to render that area "reached." Will 1% be enough? 5, 10, 20%? But we have made an important realization: to see people *reached* is not truly a biblical or an apostolic goal; to see them *discipled* is. Traditionally, "reached" has been used as a term to describe people as "exposed to the gospel" (they heard it) or even the percentage of "born-again members of Evangelical churches." However, we have entire countries that, if we take certain evangelistic reports seriously, are many times over born again and again. Kenya is said to be 82% Evangelical but is the third most corrupt nation on the planet. In Rwanda, 80 percent of the people claim to be Christian, but what kind of disciples would kill each other in the genocide of April 1994? My second home town, Chennai in India, has seen every possible evangelist that you might know and then some, and it has been "reached" house-to-house, door-to-door, person-to-person, with dozens of evangelistic strategies many times over. Is the city now discipled? Not a chance.

Many of us have discussed the concept of a "critical mass," describing a certain quality and size of a substance within a larger entity that has the potential to change the entire entity. As I have been pondering this question again and again, I recall once asking Jesus this direct question: "Lord, how will it be when you come again? How many will have been won for eternal life in the Kingdom?" And he spoke directly to me from Matthew 24:40-41: "That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken, and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left." And in a parallel verse in Luke 17:34 Jesus adds: "On that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left."

Statistically speaking, Jesus predicts a 50-50 situation when he comes. 50% of the planet -- half of all women, men and couples "sleeping in one bed" will be taken; half will be left. And as he is the Lord of the harvest and has insights in things that we don't, I accepted this as a direct prophetic statement in response to my question. If this is a divine prediction about the quantity of the harvest by the Lord of the harvest, it means in plain and simple terms that

we need to ready ourselves for a harvest of 50% of the world's population. For many, if not most, of us, this is a dimension that far supersedes any evangelistic vision that has ever crossed our path. And it would require that we grasp this goal not with our eyes that calculate only what is "realistic," but with our eyes of faith -- eyes that see the way God sees and act on the basis of inspiration, not information.

Let us have a look at what this actually would mean in practical terms. According to the US Census Bureau the current world population (Oct 2009) is 6,787,570,618 (see www.census.gov), and the number is growing at roughly 100 million people per year. UN estimates indicate that today's 6.8 billion people will grow to reach 7.82 billion in 2025. 93% of that population growth happens outside the West. Let's say the world population in 15 to 20 years is eight billion, we need to look at a task of discipling half, that is, four billion people. Mission statistics speak globally of about 650 to 700 million Evangelical, born again Christians across the board of all existing denominations, including charismatic Christians in traditional Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox churches. Evangelicals are those who claim a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. At best, the number of Evangelicals globally comprises slightly more than 10% of the population. This leaves a staggering 80% of the task of discipling half the planet yet undone. Let us say we have another 20 years of harvest ahead of us, and Christ would return in 2025 (which I am not saying he will do. It may be earlier or later). Half of the world's population would then be 4 billion. If the current Evangelical population is truly around 700 million, and if it keeps on growing at the same rate (according to David Barrett, the current growth rate of Evangelicals is 2.11% per year), their number will reach around 853 million by 2025. (Barrett speaks of "Great Commission Christians" who are defined as active church members of all traditions who take seriously Christ's Great Commission and his call to mission. To study more on global trends, look up www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/globalchristianity). But in order to make sure that all this growth will not be only in China and India, the West, especially, will seriously have to wake up. According to Patrick Johnstone, only 2.8 percent of the 515 million people of Europe, historically a "Christian" continent, are Evangelicals. Let us also assume that there will be great unexpected revivals, evangelistic breakthroughs, many new churches planted in the traditional style, youth movements, etc., that surprise us all, and propel the number of "great commission Christians" to a staggering one billion in 2025. This would leave still three billion people outside the framework of half of the population that Jesus wants to take. In other words: **even if CAWKI should win, we would still lose.** Barrett and researcher Todd Johnstone have estimated that 250 plans for world evangelization have been proposed from the time the church has been founded by Jesus until the year 1900 AD. Since then until about now, another 1200 new global evangelization plans have been fielded. To the best of my knowledge all these plans have been based solidly on CAWKI and its inherently flawed mission concepts.

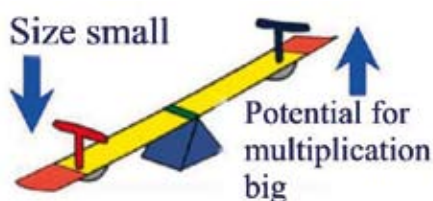
Is any scenario thinkable that allows us to believe that one billion "Great Commission Christians" will grow to four billion in the foreseeable future? I believe there is. Respected mission thinkers like James Engel and William Dyrness

Grasping this goal cannot be done with our natural, calculating eyes that scream to be "realistic," but with our eyes of faith, seeing the way God sees, and acting based on inspiration, not information.

have pointed out in their book *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* that the missionary movement is badly off track and needs to rethink its core assumptions, and embrace a “gracious revolution” in missions. So, even if the traditional church and its missionary wings should reach a full one billion people within the next two decades, how would this ever come close to the situation that Jesus predicts, that 50% of the world’s population would go with him when he returns? If this were to become true, and if CAWKI would, in an amazing flurry of revival and missions, grow to comprise one billion people, **we would lose out on three more billion.** We would reach 25% of the task, but lose 75%. Could it be that Jesus has a Plan B, in case our human Plan A fails? I think he does. The core of it hinges on two things: organic multiplication, and obedient love towards the healthy apostolic patterns for ekklesia that he has already revealed.

The power of organic multiplication

Someone said: Humans think addition, God thinks multiplication. The multiplication potential of anything organic – fruits, vegetables, plants, animals – is so explosive, that “nature” is balanced and self-regulative, preventing individual plants or animals from growing all over the planet, like the well known rabbit plague in Australia. God created plants (and animals) that carry their own seed in them. A head of wheat carries between 75 and 120 wheat corns. Female carps lay up to 1.5 million fish-eggs. Bacteria and viruses often double every hour, and certain mushrooms, like *Langermannia gigantea*, with five to fifteen billion spores, hold the world record in multiplication. Amazingly, nothing that humans have ever created has had the power of self-multiplication. Only through more human activity can we increase production. Products that produce products that in turn produce more products producing more products do not exist. Things that are created by humans, therefore, grow by addition. Things that God created usually have the ability for organic multiplication. As a result, there is *exponential* growth, as opposed to the *linear* growth we know from human inventions.



The smaller the church, the faster the growth

A friend of mine, German Church Growth researcher Christian Schwarz, has researched what he calls the “growth automatism” of God (according to Mark 4:26-28). Looking at the typical formats of individual congregations based on CAWKI, Schwarz, in one of the largest church research projects ever done, comes to a simple conclusion: the larger the church, the smaller its potential for growth.

Here are some of his findings:

Church size (Attendees)	new members after 5 years	size after 10 years	growth rate in percent
1-100 (average 52)	32	133	63
100-200 (average 150)	34	185	23
200-300 (average 250)	39	293	17
300-400 (average 350)	25	375	7
1000+ (average 2,856)	112	2,970	4

What Schwarz did not research at that time was the amazing growth potential of organic house churches. Typically, such churches double in number (not size!) every twelve months. This means a house church of twelve people can, in only ten years, grow into a movement of 3,456 persons (more on the subject in *The House Church Book*). If we pencil that into the above statistics, the line would look like this:

House church (average 12)	132	3,456	1,100
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This means that an average house church has a growth potential that is seventeen times higher than the average CAWKI-congregation of around 50 members, and a staggering 275 times higher than a classical mega-church. If we begin to realize what amazing potential for multiplication God has placed into church as he had planned it, a new and wild hope will begin to return to us. If we dare to go back to the original organic and apostolic patterns of ekklesia, an explosive multiplication would be able to happen that absolutely has the potential to achieve what CAWKI would not even dare to think it could achieve. Let us again visualize this by comparing two special creations of God, elephants and rabbits.



Elephants

Only one baby per pregnancy
22 months gestation time
Reaches sexual maturity in 18 years
Only fertile four times a year
Increase in 3 years from 2 to 3

Rabbits

average of seven babies
1 month gestation time
mature in 4 months
almost always fertile
increase in 3 years from 2 to **476 million**

200 million new churches by 2020

Another way to illustrate the same principle is the difference between starfish and octopi. Church planter Curtis Sergeant once described the reproductive abilities of a starfish with those of house churches. An octopus, for example, is able to replace a tentacle that has been cut off, and grow another tentacle. If the head of the octopus is destroyed, the animal dies. Curtis compares the octopus with a church or a cell within a traditional church. Such

churches or cells rely heavily on the superstructure for teaching, leadership, and authority. In times of pressure, problems, or persecution, the cell dies; it cannot survive without its head. A starfish, however, has the amazing ability to not only grow back a leg that has been cut off; but the leg that has been cut away can grow back into an entire new starfish! If we cut a starfish into five pieces, each piece has the reproductive ability to grow back into a new starfish, altogether into five starfish! Starfish are almost impossible to destroy, and even using chemical or biological means to kill them, they show an amazing resilience and power of survival. Curtis says: "But, with an octopus, if the head is destroyed, the octopus is dead.

In a mega-church, if the senior leadership of this church is imprisoned or dies or falls into sin or some other problem, the church is typically seriously damaged or even killed. Whereas there is no problem like that with house churches, because each unit is not reliant on the organization but is self-sufficient for feeding and growth. Starfish are simple and non-specialized, whereas octopi are complex and specialized. This is true of cell churches and house churches. A cell church or mega-church that is complex and specialized can provide a myriad of services and opportunities, which can never be offered by the house churches because the house churches are simple and non-specialized. They simply meet the simple, basic, straightforward needs, not the highly specialized needs."

Maybe one of the key reasons why God has created starfish after all, is to give all of us a powerful symbol in nature to challenge us to do something like this ourselves. Imagine a church that grows under pressure, expands the more it is squeezed, multiplies as it is persecuted, and typically doubles its numbers once a year, and you have a church that can do what has previously been unimaginable – and can do so in a breathtakingly short time.

It is true that there are "house churches" that do not really deserve that name. There are house groups and self-help-Christian groups that are centering on their own needs, or are going through a rehabilitation or de-tox period. They hibernate, stagnate, or, worst case scenario, are run by a contemporary disciple of Diotrephes, "who wants to be first and have nothing to do with us, gossips behind the back of other Christians, refusing to welcome the brothers and even stops those who want to do so and excommunicates them" (3 John 9-10). I am speaking of little empires, run by a strong or manipulative personality that refuse any governance in the wider ekklesia, reject basic Kingdom principles, and fail to give and receive fellowship with other churches around them, and can quickly become religious, strange, or finally cultic. If you find such groups, beware, and if you are in them, get out. Such groups will play little or no role in the larger apostolic tasks ahead.

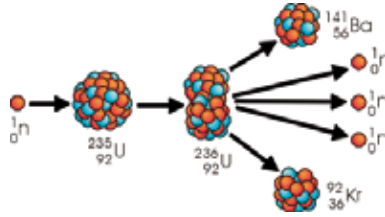
But healthy house churches that are born out of a passion to reach the lost and do their part within a wider apostolic framework will usually reproduce after their own kind. Sometimes, depending on context and situation, house churches can double or triple their own number in only a few weeks, sometimes days. Sometimes, in phases of consolidation or challenges, the time between reproduction – when one house church becomes two or more – can be up to 2 years, but usually not more. The statistical average of reproduction, as missionary research shows us, is around twelve months. A typical house

church has an average of around fifteen adult members. Once it grows beyond that size, it typically will multiply into two or more house churches. Given these factors, this leads us to a crucial question: how many new house churches will be necessary to disciple the three billion people who will not be won even if each and every method within CAWKI succeeds? The answer is: **200 million** new house churches.

Below is a list of new house churches that, to the best of my knowledge, have emerged over the last 8-10 years in selected countries. This does not include China, where the number of house churches may have crossed three million already.

Country	Approx. number of known house churches		
	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2007
India	20,000	100,000	500,000
Pakistan	1,000	5,000	7,000
Bangladesh	3,000	20,000	40,000
Egypt	400	3,000	4,000
Israel	40	100	150-200
Middle East (excl. Egypt and Israel)	300	3,000	5,000
USA	500	10,000	40,000
Canada	100	1,000	3,000
Spain	5	50	200
Switzerland	50	300	500
Germany	100	1,000	2,000
Austria	10	50	100
Albania	3	20	50
Finland	10	50	100
Philippines	500	1,000	2,000
Indonesia	1,000	20,000	40,000
Australia	50	500	1,500
Myanmar	100	200	3,500

A conservative estimate of the sum total of all existing housechurches worldwide (outside China) may already be around 700,000. If current events are any indication, then the number of house churches in these and many other countries will continue to grow at a steady rate. Now imagine what would happen if more and more of these new house churches grow into this present apostolic-prophetic reformation; if the house churches are regularly exposed to prophetic intelligence, inspiration and impartation; if they are also exposed to apostolic foundations, DNA, architecture, and principles. What would happen?



Fissional U235

It was Antoine Henri Becquerel who first discovered radioactivity, in 1896. Other scientists like Marie and Pierre Curie, Ernest Rutherford, Werner Heisenberg, and many others contributed vital new insights into atomic radiation. Niels Bohr, born in Copenhagen, was a theoretical physicist who made such significant contributions to the field of quantum mechanics that he was considered to be one of the most prominent physicists of his time. He was one of the major contributors to the creation of the atomic bomb and atomic energy. Bohr helped to develop the theory of nuclear fission with the assistance of his colleague John Wheeler. Fission is the process where a large atom is split up into two smaller ones while releasing a large amount of energy in the process. Some particular atoms can go through this process after various chemical reactions. However, some atoms go through this process naturally. Bohr was the first person to show that the isotope uranium-235 can go through fission by way of neutron creation and not the normal atom, uranium-238. In 1939, the first theories about atomic energy were published. Leó Szilárd, Albert Einstein, and Eugene Paul Wigner wrote a letter in August of 1939 to warn US President Franklin D. Roosevelt about the development of an atomic bomb in Germany. In 1940, the famous "Manhattan Project" was launched, and in 1942, under greatest secrecy, "Project Y," an experimental lab, was started in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Led by the scientist Robert Oppenheimer, several thousand people worked hard, and on the 16th of July, 1945, the first atomic bomb was ignited close to Alamogordo (known as the Trinity-Test). On the 6th and 9th of August, 1945, atomic bombs were released against the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The rest is history.

In other words: only 70 years ago, atomic power that was previously unknown and unavailable, suddenly came onto the scene, and changed the face of the world. Central to this was the discovery of the so-called enrichment process, bombarding safe uranium in the form of U238 with neutrons until it experiences a supercharge, an enrichment, and becomes U235. In the form of U235, uranium becomes fissional, explosive, similar to plutonium, another metal that can be used for atomic power generation.

For me, this is a prophetic picture of what is happening today with the rediscovery and reinstallation of the long-lost prophetic and apostolic ministry within the ekklesia. Just like atoms become fissional by being exposed to an enrichment processes, (one of them being the bombardment with neutrons), individual believers, disciples, churches, and entire networks will experience a similar enrichment, an impartation, a change of thinking, an upgrading in their existence. This will bring them to a similar point like U235: it will be difficult to

remain in containers. Technically speaking, Christianity will become *fissionable*. Again! And instead of releasing atomic potential, apostolic potential will be released such that a healthy scattering process of disciples and churches will again set in, in answer to millions of prayers to Jesus to “cast out laborers into the harvest.” I see the re-emergence of biblical prophetic and apostolic ministry to be as similar and as significant towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission as the discovery of atomic energy a few decades ago.

And rather than only rejoicing about it, let us not forget **Hafnium**. There are two types of atomic explosions: controlled ones, and uncontrolled ones. Uncontrolled ones are bombs that inflict unspoken harm and disaster on mankind. Controlled ones are explosions “with the handbrake on,” and create useful atomic energy in reactors. One of the key elements in the process of controlling atomic energy is Hafnium. Named after the Latin word for Copenhagen, Hafnium (Hf) is a silvery transition metal, chemical element number 72 in the periodic table, that is found in zirconium minerals. Hafnium has an amazing ability as a neutron absorber in control rods in nuclear power plants – 600 times more than zirconium. It therefore functions as a “brake,” a short leash to control otherwise uncontrolled explosives.

I believe this is an important lesson to hear, right at the beginning of an explosive apostolic and prophetic revolution and reformation. We will see the emergence of many extremely energetic people who could, Shamgar style, single-handedly solve many problems. But they will need to be reined in, to function within the healthy framework of Kingdom relationships and Kingdom principles, otherwise they will become loose canons, uncontrollable individuals who can inflict much more damage than good. I believe God is using financial constraints, Tarsus-type experiences, sound pastoral advice, and many other elements to be a “spiritual Hafnium,” a controlling element for otherwise uncontrollable elements. And as we all accept or exercise these controlling elements of humility and discipline for our own benefit, chances are that this “apostolic explosion,” as some have started to call what is happening, will remain a healthy one, under the headship and control of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

Discipling possibilities of CAGWI

This brings us to an interesting conclusion. Imagine that we are able to grasp this and develop regional apostolic and prophetic networks, together with gifted, skilled, and willing Kingdom-minded pastors, evangelists, teachers, deacons, and elders. Imagine, we come up with adequate recruiting and training that can serve as a healthy implantation of missional DNA into many individuals, churches, and movements. Imagine that an apostolic and prophetic enrichment process is made available at local and regional levels worldwide through multipliable training. Imagine if we would all give up our independence of each other and start to work in synergy. Imagine we would relinquish our control of any of this to the only one who can control it, Jesus. Imagine if God, through his Holy Spirit, would give his blessing for fruitfulness, multiplication and global impact to us all; and imagine if God would steer all this through timely emails from heaven, through prophetic intelligence, supernatural directives that do not come from human mission headquarters – what would be possible?

Let me paint a picture of this just in regards to the number of new house churches, the families of the Kingdom, that will be the backbone of the ekklesia as it develops into an apostolic movement that takes garden after garden, people after people. The “nations of this world;” “created by God to bring glory to his name” (Psalms 86:9) are often referred to in the Bible with the term “*sea*,” meaning sea of nations, a picture for the conflation of all of humanity. As of today, 510 million km², or more than 2/3rd of the world is covered by water. Could it be possible that the knowledge of the glory of God truly will cover the earth “*like water covers the sea*” (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14)? That these ancient prophetic words will actually come true? That more than half of the global population be covered with the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ?

Imagine a process that would start in the year 2010 where a few hundred or thousands of apostolic and prophetic people – in partnership with evangelists, pastors, teachers, and deacons, whom God has been calling to such a task for a long time - recognize the need to synergize, work together in the harvest. Imagine such people helping each other pull in the nets because they are too heavy for just one boat (Luke 5:7), and being made by God into a global net that catches all “the 153 large fish,” then the known number of people groups in the entire world? What if we would all start working in our God-given jurisdictions, be that local, regional, or global? And imagine if it would start with only about 100,000 house churches around the world that are ready to participate and engage personally and decidedly in this process?

How long would it take to see the task fulfilled?

Year	Number of possible house churches	their combined members
2010	100,000	1.5 million
2011	200,000	3 million
2012	400,000	6 million
2013	800,000	12 million
2014	1.6 million	24 million
2015	3.2 million	48 million
2016	6.4 million	96 million
2017	12.8 million	192 million
2018	25.6 million	384 million
2019	50 million	750 million
2020	100 million	1.5 billion
2021	200 million	3 billion
2022	?	?

What architecture do we need to build?

In only eleven short years, such a process would have the ability to disciple half the planet. And should God not place a stopper on it and let this go for another few months, it would be even more than half the population, maybe reflecting the two thirds of the earth (to be exact: 70.2%), the amount that is physically covered by the sea. This would, of course, have extremely serious implications for those governments that refuse to align themselves with this Kingdom development, and would create the very real pressure and threat to a possible one-world government -- a government that would legitimize such freaky actions like the introduction of 666-type security and other Big-Brother type responses, so they would not be in serious danger of losing control of the

planet. But this is not the real challenge. Much more important will be: what kind of roads will we need to build to achieve these goals? What structures are necessary and helpful towards this? Let me conclude this by pointing out four of them.

1) Building on momentum that already is there

One of the greatest dangers of any new movement or initiative is a disruptive start, a breaking away from healthy foundations and traditions, a cultic mindset that believes “church history starts with us.” This is why it is paramount for a truly global and healthy apostolic movement to connect solidly with its own historic roots, and rather than burning bridges, use existing bridges and foundations of those who have gone before.

The early and following apostles of Jesus took the original great commission seriously for a time. Soon after, the global perspective had died down. Great regional missionary movements became the order of the day, through men like “Gregory the Illuminator” who converted King Tiridates of Armenia, and much of his empire followed. Christianity became firmly established in Armenia and Gregory became the first Armenian bishop. He died in AD 332. Patrick of Ireland, who died in AD 461, was instrumental in seeing almost all of Ireland converted, and his movement became an apostolic sending base for much of the conversion of the Barbarians, the Vikings, and the Germans. “Boniface was the first to ever develop what we today would call a well-developed mission strategy, complete with aggressively defying the gods of the Germanic pagans, demolishing their shrines, cutting down their sacred trees, and building churches on their former holy sites,” says missions historian Pierce Beaver.

“Young man, sit down!”

For over 1,000 years, no known person had ever suggested a global missions strategy, until a young shoemaker in London named William Carey decided, in 1792, to publish a groundbreaking missionary manifesto called *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. It was not only a theological justification for missionary activity, but also a history of missionary activity, 26 pages of tables, listing area, population, and religion statistics for every country in the world, and a call for the formation of a missionary society. Carey’s most famous quotation became: “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” But such an idea did not come uncontested. When Carey, who is now considered to be the father of modern missions, first stood up in a pastors’ meeting, he was immediately shouted down by a Christian Reverend, Dr. Ryland, who exclaimed: “Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen world, He will do it without your help or mine.” It seems that throughout history, any such suggestions of global implications, whether by the young Jesus or young Careys, have been shouted down by the Dr. Rylands, by the so-called theological elite, of their days. This should be expected, but not feared.

Global Missions Advocates

Ralph Winter, himself a missionary statesman and founder of the US Center for World Mission, describes the history of global missions extensively. He says: “William Carey, in 1806, thought that it would be a good idea if all of the missi-

onaries in the world were to meet together four years later at the Cape of Good Hope, in 1810. The purpose of such a meeting would have been very simply to plan together to finish the task of world evangelization. His proposal may have been the first time any human being thought in such concrete and planetary terms. Despite his considerable influence, his idea of a world-level gathering of missionary strategists in 1810 was dismissed by one of his followers as merely 'one of William's pleasing dreams.' But Carey's dream for 1810 didn't die. It went off a century later at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910."

Todd M. Johnson, director of the World Evangelization Research Center in Richmond, Virginia, has looked into the same issue. He writes about A.T. Pierson, Presbyterian pastor and close colleague of well-known evangelist Dwight L. Moody: "Pierson tirelessly advocated finishing the task by 1900, sparking a debate in 1881 with his article 'Can the World Be Evangelized in Twenty Years?' By 1885, Moody, Pierson, and evangelists, pastors, and missionaries meeting at Moody's Northfield Conference, penned a joint declaration, 'An Appeal to Disciples Everywhere,' in which they announced the strategy. 'If but ten million out of four hundred million nominal Christians would undertake such systematic labors as that each one of that number should in the course of the next fifteen years reach one hundred other souls with the gospel message, the whole present population of the globe would have heard the good tidings by the year 1900!' Pierson recognized the need to coordinate such a plan and further proposed an international conference in 1888 in London to divide the remaining task. After the London Conference, Pierson and mission leaders continued stressing the possibility of an evangelized world by 1900."

One of the most serious proposals was drafted by pioneer missionary J. Hudson Taylor in 1889, who asserted that an army of evangelists could blanket China and reach the entire nation in five years. The 20th century began with an ecumenical conference at Carnegie Hall in New York City attended by more than 20,000 church leaders from around the world. The conference surveyed the status of the un-evangelized world as well as the excitement of the largest movements of students toward missions in Christian history. This culminated in the first missionary conference with a global strategy to evangelize the world, called "The World Missionary Conference" and held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. A survey commissioned by the conference produced a clear vision of the unfinished task. In the words of Ralph Winter again: "John R. Mott, one of the 'Northfield 100,' stood up in August of 1886 and made his proposal 20 years later after tramping the world for over a decade on behalf of the Student Volunteer Movement. By 1906, John R. Mott wielded an enormous influence. He had attended a regional meeting of mission leaders in Madras, India, in 1900. By 1906 (exactly 100 years from the date Carey made his suggestion for a world-level meeting of mission leaders) Mott announced his resolve to attempt to head up another Decennial popular meeting."

During the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, Ralph D. Winter said nearly half the world's population was still beyond the reach of the gospel. By 1980, at the second Edinburgh conference, the slogan, "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000," had emerged. The focus on people groups rather than either individuals or political countries gave a new strategic boost to the principle of diffusion." Since then, a growing number of voices have all done the same thing: rallying the Christian troops to finish the task. I can still

hear Keith Green sing about it, John Scott teach about it, Jim Montgomery write about it, Thomas Wang and Luis Bush preach about it, or see George Otis make films about it, but what needs to happen is for the Body of Christ to wake up, take action and corporately *do it*.

Towards this, it will be necessary to work not exclusively, but inclusively, in synergy, recognizing those who have gone before as fathers and mothers in Christ, tirelessly networking the networks. We must take on board the many excellent insights and missionary resources and tools that have already been developed. I believe God is calling a global “Starfish Partnership” into existence, a vision-based movement that is birthing and rising up everywhere with solid apostolic-prophetic foundations for corporate obedience of the body of Christ to the head, Jesus, in order to finish the task that started several millennia ago when God himself stepped into the garden of Eden and said: “Adam, where are you?” And if this is the case, I am ready to join it, especially as long as this is not controlled by some larger-than-life personalities, and I am ready to do my part, as long as the reins are firmly in the hands of Jesus.

2) Centralized Swarm Intelligence

As the mission-sending base changes, so does the mission. Networks of house churches will reproduce more networks of house churches in other places, and start networking the networks. Traditional churches sending out traditional missionaries to reproduce traditional churches have created traditional mission structures. They recruit, train, send, finance, and care for people ready to work with or for them. Missions here is usually a one-way street, sending out people from A to B. As CAWKI is fading and CAGWI emerges, new structures of mission, an apostolic architecture, has to emerge. This will lead to a reformation of missions itself. The challenge to cross boundaries, enter into people groups, cultures and social strata yet unchallenged by the gospel and undisciplined by followers of Christ absolutely remains. But the way this will happen will change significantly. Times have changed entirely, and we now find ourselves in a world where no single human missions headquarters will have either the potential or the credibility to lead or direct anything of that nature, no matter how many people of integrity may assemble there. It is an age of missions from everywhere to everywhere – an age in which the Chinese house church movement will have to make its “Back to Jerusalem” contribution in the same way that the African church has to contribute insights into power and prophecy. The Latin American church will have a huge contribution to make in the area of passion, joy, pastoring or celebrations; the North American church will add its pioneering spirit, financial resources, and logistical connections, and the Europeans will add their soberness, their conceptual teaching and their redeemed stubbornness.

One thing is clear: it is a natural consequence that the emerging apostolic movement, and one of its components, the global house church movement, will have to grow up and make its mission contribution. Otherwise it will become a fad, a waning blip on the radar of history, shown to be a selfish and ingrown religion. Classical mission agencies or even loose networks will not be enough to express its substance. It will have to be a global missions partnership that has no gurus, headquarters, or policies, but is bound together by the same vision, Kingdom values – and deep friendships.

Traditionally, missions, or sending structures, have been set up in three ways. Justin Long calls them skyscrapers, pyramids and swarms. **Skyscrapers** are huge and elite structures like Taipei 101, immovable and powerful, static and characterized by a certain amount of pride. Skyscraper-type mission sending models attempt to build a huge, monolithic missionary empire, effectively run from one huge spot, a global “situation room” and headquarters. Many of the world’s well-known and larger mission agencies function like this. However, they might be brought down in their own 9/11-type catastrophes, as the Twin Towers in New York demonstrated.

Other mission structures are more like pyramids. **Pyramids** are mid-size structures, significantly smaller than skyscrapers, and essentially tombs for someone great who died some time ago, monuments to past personalities. Many missions today are carried on “in remembrance of” their great founder, although the spirit of the woman or the man has long left the building. If it is true that God gives out personalized special missions to people like Paul, Mark, Barnabas, but also to Adoniram Judson, Samuel Zwemer, George Muller, Hudson Taylor, Greg Livingstone, Bill Bright, Loren Cunningham, or George Verwer, then it is correct to build structures that empower this very mission to be fulfilled. After the man has stepped down or died, usually no one is there to fill his or her shoes, and it might be better to close up shop altogether in order to free up an entire generation to be inspired by the passion of a great missionary person, but not be destined to be swallowed up by forever trying to make past solutions fit future challenges. The greater the founder, the more difficult it seems to be for people to come out of the shadow of the institution built by him or her, and many seem to be tied to such a missionary pyramid for all too long. They are in danger of failing to identify and acknowledge their own creative contribution to missions that might be completely different from an admired father in the faith.

Swarms, like a swarm of birds, fish, or ants, have an entirely different organizational system. Ants communicate through means of scent by dropping a smelling substance called pheromones they leave behind on trails; these pheromones are then discovered by other ants, broadening the trail, and soon it may become a highway. My friend Andrew Jones even has developed an “antology”, a theology based on the biblical command to “go to the ants, you sluggard, consider its ways and be wise. It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest” (Prov. 6:6-8). Justin Long says it like this: “With their incredible reproductive rate and simple standards for workers, ant colonies can easily take over an area. In 2002, the largest super-colony known was on the Ishikari coast of Japan, with 300 million worker ants, one million queens and 45,000 interconnected nests in an area measuring 3 km², until another, bigger one, was discovered in Melbourne, Australia. Ants have a collective or swarm intelligence, a collective behavior of decentralized, self-organized systems. Swarms have many advantages; among them is that they can operate without any centralized control; swarms don’t see a big picture first, but develop their own map as they go; they capitalize on randomness and spontaneous creativity, and are very flexible.”

All of these three structures have their advantages and disadvantages. What

I believe will emerge is a fourth structure that combines a strong headquarters with a swarms intelligence. If prophetic intelligence and apostolic architecture function in tandem, hearing from God and doing what he says becomes the central element of missions again. As we learn to walk in personal and collective obedience, while respecting our corporate head, Jesus, as well as our designated space in the missional swarm, we will actually be able to: first, combine the clear directives of a central command post by connecting to a missions headquarters that is not really on earth, and second, we will be able to make best use of the advantages of a swarm. This will make missions an “open source project” where anyone can contribute anything that God has given him or her anywhere, and will find an easy entry into the system, as there will be many access points and nodes in the net to enter.

3) A global resource function

For such a global vision to be carried out, it needs to be translated into a mission, and broken down into strategic developments that happen region by region, garden by garden. Some men and women of God are called to fuel this by their passion, knowledge and ministries, and will become resources for such a movement. If God is the true author of the age-old idea of discipling the planet, we will need to expect him to raise up people like you and me, and empower us to empower others. Beyond all our personal presence, materials like books, manuals, tapes, videos, DVDs, films, music, prophetic messages, and encouraging stories and more will be extremely useful and instrumental to fan the flame, as well as bring resources for training, inspiration, and encouragement to places that need them.

One of the bottlenecks of classical missions has been that many of the books, tapes, or films simply have been hidden in a great number of smaller or larger publishing houses, mission agencies or churches, and have been difficult to access by the general public. Plus, to order, buy, ship, and pay for materials has not only been a limiting factor, but has resulted in many great resources being lost in competition, lost in translation, or even lost in distribution channels. Many of the strategic, apostolic, and prophetic resources that are being produced have forever struggled to be heard and read. They were drowned out and literally shouted down by the myriad of four-color, flashy, consumer-oriented materials out there “that the market wants”—resources that may be pleasing to the eye or ear, but ultimately are not at all necessarily dedicated to empowering the generations to disciple the nations of the globe. This situation will need to be changed permanently.

I have lost count of how many times I heard how an apostolic or prophetic book has been literally censored, edited to death, cropped, and blunted to fit what people are ready to read, until it lost its original edge. That simply cannot go on. No well-meaning editor has ever softened the blow of the Old Testament prophets, or strategically adjusted the apostolic teaching of Jesus or Paul to better speak to today’s audience, and make their books more sellable. Let us not allow the marketing principles of Mammon or the personal preferences of publishers, donors, or denominational boards still dictate the general way that apostolic or prophetic messages and resources are produced and distributed. In recent decades, most of these resources have had to be self

No well-meaning editor has ever softened the blow of the Old Testament prophets, or strategically adjusted the apostolic teaching of Jesus or Paul to better speak to today’s audience, and make their books more sellable.

published, lacking good distribution, and have failed to make an impact that many of these resources would deserve.

Let me be blunt: because the subject of missions is such a ridiculously minute little margin of the huge Christian market, where novels, self-help books, CDs, posters, T-shirts, or mugs are the big sellers, for most who have given their heart-blood to produce missional resources it has not been a fair or even interesting financial reward for their time and energy at all. Many have seen simply nothing for their efforts, or so little they hardly noticed, not more than pocket change. All this needs to change. This is why, in this time of reformation, we need a global resource function that is actually owned by the resource providers themselves, and that sets up necessary structures like an editorial board, new distribution channels, and financial systems that support them. This is why “Starfish Resources” is a publishing and a resource-providing function to exactly that end. It will be mainly Internet-based, allowing quick global access and providing a resource portal that gives seed materials away freely as an investment to anyone in line with the starfish publishing agreement, no longer asking payment for materials, but personal involvement in the greater vision. In addition to digital media like e-Books or music, hard copies, i.e., printed versions of resources, will still be necessary for many countries. This is why we invite anyone who wants to become part of the Starfish distribution network in a given nation to become a logistical center for such resources, and help in distribution. If you are a writer or artist, specifically with an apostolic or prophetic calling, you are invited to submit your manuscript or contribution for consideration by the editorial board. Visit the website www.starfishportal.net for details.

I have chosen the name “starfish” as a logo and symbol for this vision for two reasons. Not only is the starfish a prophetic type of animal that symbolizes the amazing reproductive abilities of what God creates; being not exactly the most attractive fish in the sea it is also such a ridiculous name for a new movement that I hope no one will even think of it as a new mission agency, or even a new denomination. It is a vision that, should it be from God, requires all of us who have been called by God for such a time as this, to partner together in the spirit of friendship, and give each other “the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9).

4) Prophetic-Apostolic Nexus

If God is putting together an organic global missions network of people towards the goal of seeing half the planet discipled in our time, it needs a conciliar element. Some of us need to meet, regularly and irregularly, pray together, inform each other, listen to God’s prophetic directives and warnings, interface with each other, both globally and regionally, and give each other “hands of fellowship” in the spirit of Galatians chapter 2 or the apostolic councils in Jerusalem. This calls for a dynamic interface, a knowledge base, a place to discern the times, deal with challenges, and make strategic decisions. In other words, it calls for connectivity in the spirit of decentralization. Nexus is the Latin word for connection. A nexus is defined as a means of connection; a link or tie; a connected series or group; the core or center or the means of connection between things linked.

When I recently visited Tarsus in today’s Turkey, God started not only to speak to me about the role of Tarsus as a vital place to kill any selfishness and

individual ambition that the apostle Paul might have ever had, but also about the role of Antioch, today only a few hours away by car from Tarsus. Antioch, a regional church, was the place where intentional missions started under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The original church in Jerusalem, although commissioned to become an apostolic center, from which movements to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth should emerge (Acts 1:8), became a place from where almost all followers of Christ were finally not scattered by apostolic commission, but dispersed by persecution, except for the apostles who, amazingly, stayed behind (Acts 8:1).

Today, almost 2000 years later, would Antioch not be a proper place in geography and also in spirit to come together as those who want to join hands in the global endeavor ahead of us? To come full circle back to Ground Zero, square one of the intentional apostolic movements of all times, to thank God, celebrate and review what has happened in the past, and join hands for the finishing of the task that God has designed? To fall on our knees and faces to be truly quiet before God, the author of missions, to listen to his agendas and prophetic directives? And then get up again, in a spirit of friendship and partnership, and hear from each other, inform each other, celebrate breakthroughs and make and adjust timely plans, projects, and initiatives -- plans for a movement that no one owns, no one controls, and does not serve a denominational purpose anymore, but a movement that serves God's purposes as purely as possible? In 2009 some of us will meet in Antioch, the historical stepping stone of Missions, to be part of a Starfish convocation of exactly such nature.

I believe that this, like most truly strategic meetings in church history, does not require huge gatherings that make sure that, in political correctness and following parliamentary logic, needs everyone named and famed present, but will gather those called and gifted by God for today's apostolic and prophetic tasks. We will need some global meetings, and some regional meetings, because some of us will have a more global role to play, and others a regional role. Sometimes these roles might even change.

See you in Jerusalem

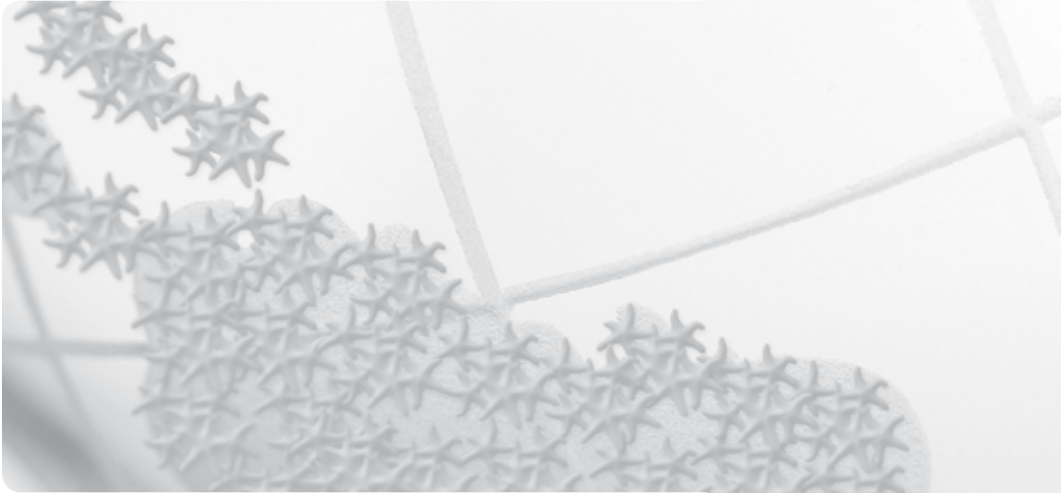
The central action principle, after giving up human control and staying away from building any empires, is to hear God and obey, to listen prophetically, and act apostolically. This is where Jerusalem might, again, be of crucial significance. It was not only the physical place where God promised to Abraham to give him the nations, where God chose for his name to dwell. It was also the place where he sent his son to live, preach, heal and die, resurrect and commission the ekklesia to finish the task of discipling the nations, in fulfillment of the prophecy to Abraham. And if we today are in such desperate need for directives from heaven, not from men, in an age where we want to do missions not by information, but by inspiration, what better place to consider as a central meeting point in the future than Jerusalem. Isaiah as well as Micah says: "In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains, and will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many people will come and say: 'Come; let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. The torah will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem'" (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2).

The “torah” does not mean, like in traditional Judaism, the five written books of Moses as well as an “oral torah”, what Moses heard from God as he spent 40 days on the mountain with him and did not write down, today the Mizwah, a collection of religious do’s and don’ts in Judaism, but speaks of the instructions of God to his people. In many ways, Jesus is the Torah that came in the flesh, the Torah in person. And if he is the true author of the apostolic mission of the ekklesia that he builds, the “head from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow” (Col. 2:19), he is supposed to be in charge.

Jerusalem has a prophetic place in this, and that is why I propose that each year, from AD 2010 on, we (those that God calls for this, and it might include you) will start to meet not in Antioch, but in Jerusalem. This is the place where God has already spoken to a number of us prophetically that he wants us to climb up the mountain there, meet with him, receive his Torah, his prophetic instructions for special apostolic assignments, and go and implement this in corporate, long-term obedience to the revealed pattern from heaven among the nations – and in Israel.

So we may see you in Jerusalem. And even if you are not called and commissioned by God for a global role (yet or anymore), but assigned to a local or regional role, let us all be in the place where God wants us, not where we or other humans want us to be. I invite you to ponder this, pray, seek God’s face about this, ask him how you, your family, your group, network, church, organization, business, or institution should be involved, what your contribution should be. And then give yourselves first to God, and then to the task of seeing the fulfillment of God’s age-old apostolic mission come true in our days, a mission that countless precious souls have already given their lives for.

What a day to be alive, and what a joy if we were to look backwards one day, and see it all from a perspective that will blow us all away: when the great historian will take our hands, and walk us all through mankind’s history, from Adam and Eve to the consummation of time, and look us straight in the eyes and say that one sentence that will have made it all worthwhile for us: “Well done, you faithful servant!”



Appendix

**Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.**

**But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where moth and rust do not destroy,
and where thieves do not break in and steal. Mt 6:19, 20**

Appendix

The Starfish website is www.starfishportal.net.

This is the internet warehouse, the place where you will find existing and new Starfish resources to download, where you can sign up for newsletters like *Starfish News*, *Kingdom Economics Update*, find training concepts and also an electronic investment portal for the Starfish Foundation.

The Starfish publishing philosophy

Starfish Edition is an entrepreneurial publishing concept. It exists to make vital apostolic and prophetic materials towards the goals of Mission Starfish easily accessible and globally available for the empowerment of anyone. Starfish Edition is a decentralized distribution network and is based on the philosophy of a Christian gift economy. Materials cannot be bought. You can only get them as an investment into you personally; in return, should you benefit from the material (if not, please delete it or discard with no further obligations whatsoever), we would ask you to honor the following risk-free moral agreement: 1) pay it forward and 2) get involved yourself.

1) To “pay it forward” is a philosophy that embraces the value of an advance investment, asking readers not to pay a fee for the resource itself (that would be to “pay it back”), but encourage them to re-invest in at least ten others who should be exposed to this material freely as well and therefore not just consume, but pass on the blessing. Instead of consuming media only for our personal use, we want to encourage you to pass on to others what has encouraged you. You will know best who this should be. This is how blessings from God do not end up sitting on our bookshelves, but grow like an epidemic by us passing it on to others.

Although it is their intellectual property, the authors specifically release their materials for intentional global distribution in line with the Starfish publishing philosophy. Everyone is not only encouraged, but also entitled to freely distribute; however we ask that the materials shall not be sold at any time. *If you agree to these simple terms*, you may:

- forward this e-Book to as many people as you can (we suggest at least ten others)
- make it available for free download on any website/blog you own or have access to
- self-print and distribute free hard copies
- freely quote and re-use materials contained herein in your own publications or other publications as long as it remains in context
- bulk order and freely distribute the printed book version, once available, and become a regional distributor/resource outlet for this and other Starfish materials yourself (see below)

All electronic Books (in PDF-format) are password-protected. You will have to type, “ok” to open it. We consider this signature (the fact that you type “ok”) to be a moral agreement, a handshake of mutual integrity. This also means that we make ourselves intentionally vulnerable if someone wants to take advantage of this. We consider this risk of possible exploitation to be a necessary part

of the needed change we desire -- the breaking away from the materialistic, Babylonian selling-and-buying principles of this world. We reckon that in this regard there are three types of Christians in this world: a) outright consumers who take anything for free; b) followers of Christ who lack integrity who quickly say 'yes' but practice 'no'; c) and finally morally sound people of character and integrity, in other words: *people like you*.

2) What does involvement in Mission Starfish look like?

Pray for this vision to be carried out quickly. Pray that the mission, the practical implementation of the vision, will happen swiftly and unhindered. Pray for godly connections, strategic relationships, healthy biblical guidelines. Pray that the work can be done without competition or pride, in a spirit of humble and vision-oriented friendship, and that Jesus will be and remain the Lord of such an initiative.

Invest financially in this vision. Instead of paying for products, you can become a sponsor of the overall vision. Through your investment in a strategic financial pool you can express your agreement and become a financial partner with this vision. For this to happen, we need to create financial instruments that allow this. This is where the Starfish Foundation comes in (see below) which specifically exists to mobilize others towards the Starfish Vision. The foundation is responsible to use all of the dedicated capital for three specific purposes:

1. To practically finance the goals of the Starfish Mission, for example the mobilization of others to become a part of this, to invest in future generations, to finance necessary travel and Starfish gatherings, etc.
2. Logistics for the preparation, printing and distribution of Starfish materials;
3. A fair contribution towards the authors.

As a rule of thumb we recommend that each Starfish sponsor invest one daily wage per year, or more. There are biblical reasons for this. Harvest workers in biblical times never received salaries; they have traditionally been paid a "daily wage." In essence the Starfish Partnership exists to mobilize "harvest workers for the big harvest", of which Jesus spoke in Lk 10. In order to answer "the cries of the unpaid wages of the field workers" (James 5:4) and to respect biblical harvest principles, we have chosen the daily wage principle as well. A daily wage typically is a monthly income divided by 20. For a student with 600.- support per month, this would be 30.-

As an individual or as a family, we ask you to invest a daily wage (or more) per year into the Starfish Foundation. As a house church (or company, group, ministry conference, etc.), or if you are having considerably larger financial capabilities, we would ask you to discuss an appropriate Starfish investment with your King. In addition to the daily wage concept, you are of course invited to contribute financially as God would direct you according to your abilities.

Participate yourself in the Starfish Mission. As all of us have something unique to contribute to God's ultimate mission, we invite you to follow the recommendations in response to the Starfish Vision, and above that, be as creative as God made you to come up with ideas, concepts and initiatives no one has ever thought of. "For God's sake", do something unheard of. You could

**“For God’s sake”,
do something unheard of.**

“open up your house, your kitchen and your fridge” for your neighbor, or be the birthplace of a movement to disciple unreached people groups – in your own area or on the other side of the planet - by helping to plant multipliable house church networks among them. You could start and multiply inspiration-based businesses, model Life 2.0 in the area of family, education, culture and politics. You could take training in the area of your giftedness and your life’s calling by finding a mentor or coach in your area. At some point in your own growth process you will become a mentor or coach for others yourself and become a trainer for many.

And, if you have the necessary logistical abilities (space and energy), you could - as an individual, a house church, a network of house churches, or a business – become a local/regional distributor of Starfish materials. Those materials would be stored in an adequate and dry space you might have, and then would have to be sent out in parcels when people order more of them, or distributed across entire churches, mission organizations or at appropriate seminars, conferences and meetings. Contact us for details at distribution@starfishportal.net

Starfish Foundation

In 2009, the Starfish Foundation was set up as a financial instrument of the Starfish Partnership, including the goal to facilitate the development of similar apostolic foundations in many other regions of the world. The Starfish Foundation is registered in Switzerland and directed by a regional board (amongst them Thomas Giudici and Wolfgang Simson) as well as an international senate of persons of integrity and experience, functioning as an advisory board.

To financially participate in the Starfish Vision, you can send checks made out to “Starfish” to the following postal address: Starfish, PO Box 1248, 79397 Kandern, Germany.

Or you may wire amounts directly into the Starfish account:

Switzerland: Starfish Verein, Postfinance Bern, account Nr. 60-516665-9

IBAN: CH1609000000605166659

SWIFT Code: POFICHBEXXX

Clearing Nummer/BLZ: 9000

Or you may use the Starfish website online donation portal:
www.starfishportal.net