

Ephesians 4, Leadership Community and the Future Church

A Proposal for Leadership/Learning Communities as help us move us from Ministry to Mission and from Professional to Laos because - "the Word became flesh and entered our neighborhood." (The Message)

PRECIS

This paper argues for a leadership/learning community at the core of our congregations as a means of transitioning from where we are to the new place God invites us. God is the one who always declares, "Behold.. I do a new thing." I make use of systems theory to talk about two kinds of structures: designed, and emergent (often labeled "formal" and "informal.")

Unique conditions compel us to consider a reorientation in our faith communities: first, the collapse of Christendom, and second, the collapse of modernity. These unique conditions generate special requirements: 1. the recovery of missional imagination; 2. the recovery of missional leadership, in particular the missing gifts of Eph. 4; 3. the recovery of an interpretive community (local theology) and biblical literacy.

Finally, I close with a note on the formation of interpretive communities, "communities of practice," without which the fragmentation we experience will continue and the dualism that erodes our faith will likewise continue. In view of the powerful forming mechanisms of secular market culture, we must find a way to embody the gospel in an alternative culture with its own forming practices or "disciplines of resistance."

Introduction

*There is an age when one teaches what one knows.
But there follows another when one teaches what one does not know...
It comes, maybe now, the age of another experience:
that of unlearning..¹*

In *The Missional Leader* Roxburgh and Romanuk describe the role of leadership in our time: "to cultivate environments wherein the Spirit of God may call forth and unleash the missional imagination of the people of God."² This is one promise of a leadership community, connecting to our need to reimagine ourselves as missionaries in the post-Christendom culture we live in.

The question of leadership has dominated ecclesial imagination for the past twenty years. The result has not been renewal and the church in the West remains in decline, founded on models of religious consumerism and with more evidence of leadership cults than a leadership culture. Perhaps Canadian leadership guru Michael Fullan is right when he observes that, "the two greatest failures of leaders are indecisiveness in times of urgent need for action and dead certainty that they are right in times of complexity."³

Whatever we make of the leadership question, there are special demands made of our faith communities in these transitional times. Unusual conditions require adaptive responses, and we live during unusual

¹ Roland Barthes, quoted in Rubem Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet* (Great Britain: SCM Press, 1990)

² Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006) 75.

³ Michael Fullan, *The Six Secrets of Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) 16. Fullan observes that management theory, "... has four defects: it is constitutionally incapable of self-criticism; its terminology usually confuses rather than educates; it rarely rises above common sense; and it is faddish and bedeviled by contradictions."

conditions, often compared to the time of the first Reformation.⁴ Our first requirement is to recover a missional imagination. Missional imagination always precedes missional practice. The danger is that we pass too quickly over the needed theological work and remain merely pragmatists: a dynamic that has contributed to our loss of imagination and this current crisis.

The second requirement is to recover missional leadership. The church has largely marginalized the gifts that offer her an alternate vision of her future. Alan Hirsch and Alan Roxburgh have jointly pointed us back to Ephesians 4 and the apostolic team within Paul's view. We marginalized certain gifts when the church in modernity exchanged adaptive and innovate leadership for management. In the stable environment that has now passed away⁵ – the Christendom experiment⁶ – management and “tweaking the system” was often enough. In that environment the *sola pastora* model that currently dominates the church landscape was often adequate, and the APEs – the apostles, prophets and evangelists -- were marginalized.⁷ Yet wherever the church is recovering the dynamic of a missional movement the APE's are prominently active. We must welcome the missing gifts, innovate and change or die.⁸

The third requirement is to create an interpretive community. The immediate need is to produce local theologians; but secondly the need is for “communities of practice,” which is both an embodied apologetic (the church as the true hermeneutic of the gospel) and a new social reality. But this community cannot exist apart from the communal reality of the Table, or the practice of “binding and loosing.” I'll say a little about this here and then close with a further discussion.

An interpretive community is needed for two reasons. First, when foundations shift we are pushed to ask new questions, and to approach Scripture afresh. Much of the work done in the last century was done in reaction to secularism, and much of it was done in response to foundations that no longer exist. Moreover, it was done as a privileged elite within the edifice of Christendom, and it was done without regard to context, in the assumption that every investigation and application would have universal validity.⁹ But theology from a place of privilege and power was theology that often made compromises for the sake of maintaining a place of privilege, and a disregard for context resulted in theology that was both colonial and patriarchal. Now that the edifice of Christendom is falling down, we have an opportunity to do theological work that is not self-protective: not primarily concerned with privilege or power, but has more the character of the one who humbled himself and gave everything on the Cross.

The invitation of the Spirit in this location in time and space is to enter a clearing together, and together to become faithful listeners. Walter Brueggemann in *Cadences of Home* observed that it was as the people

⁴ See especially Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008)

⁵ Writers like Stuart Murray and John Douglas Hall document the fall of Christendom. Of course the story is much broader. Others like Ulrich Beck document the fall of modernity and the end of institutional loyalty. Others focus more on the adaptive challenge, as Ron Heifetz, Alan Roxburgh, Frost and Hirsch and many more.

⁶ I will use “Christendom” to represent the ideological mainstream of thought as systematized and institutionalized in our culture, as opposed to Christianity, which I take to be the movement that Jesus initiated. Christendom has been the dominant religious force in the world for 1700 years. Under Constantine Christianity moved from a subversive, marginalized and persecuted movement to “a religious institution with its attendant structures, priesthood and sacraments.” For more on this see Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (London: Authentic Media, 2004) or Guder, Ed. *Missional Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998) 190-195.

⁷ See especially Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003) and *The Forgotten Ways*.

⁸ See also Phil Wagler, *Kingdom Culture*, p. 50ff.

⁹ See in particular the work of Michel de Certeau. A wonderful exploration of the meaning of place with regard to the gospel is given in *God Next Door: Spirituality and Mission in the Neighborhood* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2008)

of God went into exile that their imaginations were renewed.¹⁰ They were forced to rethink much that they thought was clear; they went back to the text and listened anew to the Spirit. They did not see the extent of their own compromise until they were removed from a secure place — it seems we learn little until we are forced into an unfamiliar place.

At the beginning of the New Testament missionary enterprise we hear Jesus instruct his disciples to, “Take nothing for the journey” (Luke 9:3). The beauty of insecurity is the invitation to relearn dependence on God. But more – the invitation is to relearn dependence on one another, to actually become a pilgrim people together. We really are forced to become better listeners: to God, the wider community, and to our culture. We enter what Alan Roxburgh has called a “creative commons.”

But this is not an appeal to a new kind of hierarchy, with theology done by experts. Karl Barth comments on our preference for professionals and argues for the “minority report.” He writes,

“How disastrously the Church must misunderstand itself if it can imagine that theology is the business of a few theoreticians who are specially appointed for the task... Again, how disastrously the Church must misunderstand itself if it can imagine that theological reflection is a matter for quiet situations and periods that suit and invite contemplation, a kind of peace-time luxury... As though the venture of proclamation did not mean that the Church permanently finds itself in an emergency! The whole Church must seriously want a serious theology if it is to have a serious theology.”¹¹

Secondly, we need an interpretive community because “truth” is not what it used to be.¹² Where modernity still largely saw truth as an objective reality, now truth is largely a tribal reality. The solvents of individualism, romanticism and consumer culture leave us with only an appeal to truth that we can see and touch: truth must be embodied. Truth that is storied in tradition, an appeal to truth beyond our subjective experience because it is anchored in history, also remains a source of appeal.

This is also required of us because we live in a time of intense fragmentation. “How can two walk together unless they agree?” We lack integrity of church membership because we no longer know how or where to locate authority. Only an interpretive community existing in covenantal expression can move us beyond this. There are special challenges in getting here, noted further on.

The fourth requirement is to distinguish between the church as an organism and the church as an institution. As far back as *Community of the King* (IVP: 1978) Howard Snyder was making this distinction, but it existed in the conversation of German theology long before as *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. Snyder explored the distinction more thoroughly in 1983 in *Liberating the Church*, arguing that our dominant metaphors – the language we use – have power.

“Consumer culture is one of the most powerful systems of formation in the contemporary world... Such a powerful system is not morally neutral; it trains us to see the world in certain ways.”

William Cavanaugh

¹⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997)

¹¹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth*, 1979. 81

¹² See especially Walsh and Middleton, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be* .

Whether we choose a mechanistic image or an organic image influences the kind of community we are. He wrote that, “as man and woman become like their gods, so they become like their models. A machine model (a technosystem) produces human robots; an organic model (an ecosystem) produces healthy persons.”¹³

I would argue that the church exists in this world as *both* a living body and an institution. In systems language, the church has both designed structures, and emergent structures. This is true for every human organization. Fritjof Capra writes, “social institutions.. exist for specific purposes. At the same time, organizations are communities of people who interact with one another..” This distinction helps us to see the necessity of both formal and informal networks of interaction. The formal networks are generally designed, the informal are generally emergent. What we need to see, however, is that the informal networks are where new life and innovation arise, and the most resilient organizations have the dominant characteristics of living entities.¹⁴

But secondly it helps us understand that we are dealing with two dimensions of ecclesial life. The first, the ordered ways of being together, of managing power and information flow, are predictable and fairly stable structures that are amenable to our control. The second, the informal and emergent structures of the living community, partake of the qualities of nonlinear systems, complex adaptive systems, and are the domain of Spirit.¹⁵ Living networks are fluid and fluctuating, and knowledge is often tacit and not articulated. The stronger these networks, the more the organization can learn and grow. Supporting the growth and strength of these networks are the key to an organizations ability to thrive.

A Leadership and Learning Community in Post-Christendom

*In times of rapid change, the learners inherit the earth,
While the learned find themselves well equipped
to live in a world that no longer exists. Eric Hoffer*

If the fall of Christendom and the shift from modernity to post-modernity are the two primary conditions of our time, together they generate the conditions that push us to consider the requirements of a leadership and learning community. We live in a time of wildly increasing complexity and the explosion of information. No single wise leader, nor even a small team, can master these conditions. Any organization which would thrive in this new world must learn to maximize its learning potential, cultivating knowledge and flexibility by becoming a *learning community*.

This requires a new kind of leadership, and a new relation between leaders and learners. During the predictable environment of the industrial revolution it was possible for one or two experts to analyze a situation and set direction from the top. In the complexity of our time this is no longer possible. We must find ways to harness the knowledge and good-will of entire tribes of people in order to find our way forward. And we must decentralize decision making power in order to maximize adaptability and the speed at which we can respond to a changing environment. *There is no way forward in the missio Dei apart from liberating the power of informal networks*¹⁶. Sally Morgenthaler writes that, “Groups that are too much alike find it harder to keep learning because each member is bringing less and less to the table.

¹³ Howard Snyder, *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 1983) 43.

¹⁴ See the research of De Geus for the Shell Group, “The Living Company,” *The Harvard Business Review*, 1997.

¹⁵ Note the connection here to Irenaeus dictum: “word and Spirit as the two hands of the Father.”

¹⁶ This point is also strongly made in Steve Addison’s recent work, *Movements That Change the World* (Smyrna, DE: Missional Press, 2009) 71ff.

Homogeneous groups are great at doing what they do well, but they become progressively less able to investigate alternatives..”¹⁷

In one of the studies of learning communities in Tasmania in the late 90s they described the leadership vision of a dynamic learning community like this: "leadership is a dynamic and collaborative *process* in which leadership roles are not defined. Here, leadership is a group rather than individual process dominated by a designated 'leader'. Leadership is therefore *created* as individuals and groups interact and collaborate.”¹⁸ In this view, a view developed in the midst of increasing complexity and rapid change, leadership is a *process* and something more like *an intervention* rather than the characteristic of one or two individuals.¹⁹

*The most powerful organizational learning and collective knowledge sharing grows through informal relationships and personal networks—via working conversations in communities of practice.*²⁰

In Ephesians 4 language, “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” 916). It is the point of connection that is critical. We have to connect every part of the body in a healthy way to the other parts so that the gifts can function appropriately to bring maturity. Looking through the leadership lens we could recall the words of Mort Ryerson, chairman of Perot Systems:

“we must realize that our task is to call people together often, so that everyone gains clarity about who we are, who we’ve just become, who we still want to be. If the organization can stay in a continuous conversation about who it is and who it is becoming, then leaders don’t have to undertake the impossible task of trying to hold it all together.”²¹



A second requirement that pushes us to consider the value of a leadership/learning community in transitional times is mutual support. Many commentators have described the place we are in today as “traveling off the map.” When we are off the map we feel insecure, and are apt to default to familiar answers and familiar ways – precisely when we should lay them aside in order to become learners. As John Paul Getty is rumored to have quipped: “in times of rapid change, experience is our worst enemy.” Our need for security can sabotage our ability to learn and adapt. However, if we travel together into the unknown, we can reduce this

¹⁷ “Leadership in a Flattened World,” in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007) 183.

¹⁸ Kilpatrick, Falk and Johns. “Leadership in Dynamic Learning Communities.” (Tasmania: University of Tasmania, 1998)

¹⁹ Peter Senge, the international consultant on leadership, organizations and change, has described leadership as “the capacity of the community to bring forth a new reality.” There are two metaphors that can help us envision the change we need. The first is the movement from hero to host. The second is the movement from Director to Producer.

²⁰ Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: The Science of Sustainable Living* (New York: Random House, 2002)

²¹ Quoted by Margaret Wheatley in “Goodbye Command and Control.” In *Leader to Leader*, July, 1997.

tendency even as we increase our ability to learn by multiplying the effective listeners and observers.²²

The experience of the small community examining quantum particles in the 1920's is a similar case. The physicists discovered properties of matter that made no sense within existing frameworks, and even their language failed them. Many experienced this as an intense emotional crisis. But from their intellectual and emotional crisis emerged a new field of science, and new insight into the nature of created reality.

However, they could not have made the leap alone. Important discoveries nearly always take place within a wider "community of practice." By analogy consider the properties ascribed to the VLA in Socorro, New Mexico. The VLA (Very large Array) is a series of radio lenses featured in the movie *Contact*. The radio lenses are synchronized, so that they work together to increase the resolution of any signal they track. The listening power of the lenses doubles with each one that is active. This is a great analogy for a leadership/learning community. When we collaborate, submitted together to one Lord and one purpose, we increase our faith even as we increase our ability to see – to gather knowledge and so to respond and adapt effectively to the changing context around us.

A huge component of cultivating imagination is cultivating safe environments to explore new questions and new challenges. This requires a "creative commons," a safe space where we leave the safety of our offices and roles and titles and become vulnerable together. We must listen together to the rhythms that lie just beneath the surface, and we must take the risk of moving outside the safety of our fortress walls into our neighborhoods. It is as we go out together, vulnerably "taking nothing for the journey," free of the limits of our old frameworks and expectations, that we may hear the Spirit afresh and learn the questions that will bear fruit for the next generation.

So this task initially falls to leaders. The first step in opening a creative commons is leaving behind the tacit agreement that we will not express our fears and anxieties around change and leadership. To the extent that these hidden agreements are not expressed they limit our ability to grieve the loss of familiar places and to explore new territory together. We become bound by realities we cannot name and assume those boundaries are communal norms. Roxburgh and Romanuk write, "Missional leadership involves recognizing these barriers and facilitating articulation of habits and practices that block the capacity to name what is experienced."²³ One of the key functions of future leadership is to name these tacit realities while offering hope that God's future is truly among us if we have the eyes to see.

In his primer in theology Barth tells a story about a series of lectures given in the postwar ruins of the Kurfursten castle in Bonn, Germany. In the summer of 1946 Barth began his lectures. Every morning at seven they met to "sing a psalm or a hymn to cheer us up." By eight o'clock "the rebuilding of the quadrangle began to advertise itself in the rattle of an engine" as the engineers went to work to restore the ruins.²⁴ This is where vigorous theological work is always done, in the ruins of an old world with hope for a new.

The leadership community thus creates a bridge between two worlds. One intention is to move away from traditional definitions of power to generate new kinds of partnerships, new leadership "spaces" and a "culture" of leadership, as opposed to the pyramidal structure where decisions flow down and trust and hope flow up – where learning is never maximized and the average believer is relatively passive.

²² "If we dream alone, it remains merely a dream. If many dream together, then it is the beginning of a new reality..." Elisabeth Fiorenza quoted by Rosemary Neave in "Reimagining the Church," Women's Resource Center, NZ. Study Report Leave, 1996.

²³ Opt Cit. 77.

²⁴ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1959) 7.

Finally, two qualifiers are important. While we do need new structures, new wineskins, our primary task is not to create new structures. Elizabeth O'Connor reminds us of our need:

“We are not called primarily to create new structures for the church in this age; we are not called primarily to a program of service, or to dream dreams or have visions. We are called first of all to belong to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and to keep our lives warmed at the hearth of His life. It is there the fire will be lit which will create new structures and programs of service that will draw others into the circle to dream dreams and have visions.”²⁵

Secondly, we create and maintain our worlds with language.²⁶ This constructivist insight points to the power of words. It also demonstrates the huge challenge we face as we attempt to recontextualize and redeem words that have been colonized by modernity and technocratic practices: words like *leadership, pastor, apostle, missional, and church*.²⁷

Some will argue that these words are beyond redemption. There are many who want to leave the language of “Christian” or “church” behind. I think we have little choice but to fight for the redemption of words that are ours by divine gift. Language and the way we use words changes, and it’s our right and responsibility as poets, pastors, apostles and prophets to reconnect and *re-member* language. In the process of wrestling with these symbols and reconnecting them with meaning we become an interpretive community. In order to recover the best of our common heritage and move forward together we must communicate across boundaries, across *worlds of language*. This is difficult if we insist on defending territory; so we have to work to move beyond ideological frameworks and genuinely engage the other.

That task will be much easier if we remember the stories we share. To the extent that we are rooted in shared memory, we will find the task of listening together easier and more fruitful. Even in these times of tremendous fragmentation, we will have to hear the stories of Scripture as our stories in order to work together. Yet we have to listen with ears that are also tuned to our culture, because God is at work around us today. He is the God who says, “Behold, I do a new thing.”

Finally, the word “Apostle” requires a separate apologetic (more on this below). Suffice it to say that “apostolic” asserts much more than an individual vocation. As Jurgen Moltmann put it, “The historical church must be apostolic in a double sense: its doctrine and testimony are founded on .. the first witnesses, and it exists in the carrying out of the apostolic proclamation, the missionary charge.”²⁸

The Five-Fold Ministry - *Then and Now*

As I browsed through the last chapters of *The Sky is Falling* on Sunday afternoon, I found myself

²⁵ E. O'Connor, *Call to Commitment* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1963)

²⁶ I value the insight that organizations are heliotropic: they move toward the energy. Mark Lau Branson writes in *Memories, Hopes and Conversations* that, “we socially construct our world.. and ..we have the power to create what we imagine. It follows that a process for facilitating organizational change would consciously focus on empowering employees to believe they can make a difference; rewarding leaders who know how to empower others; and directing the energy of the system towards the positive, generative, and creative life forces ..” (39)

²⁷ I think it was Jacques Ellul who coined the term “technocracy.” Ellul understood that one outcome of technology was the proliferation of means, where ends become secondary. We forget who we are and where we are going even as we work harder and faster to get there. See Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom and The Technological Society*. As far back as 1869 John Stuart Mill spoke of the tendency of religious people to abuse language and shape it according to their own need (his essay “On Liberty”). See also George Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984)

²⁸ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 358.

remembering a variety of conversations around leadership, mission, renewal, reformation and vocation. I'll state my bias up front, which connects to my purpose here.

1. I don't believe the five-fold ministry as we know it is the five-fold ministry of tomorrow. Paul's list in Ephesians 4 is not exhaustive or final. The Spirit of God is not bound by history. However, our own history and practice often limit our vision. Your personal experience of "five-fold gifting" and its usage may be positive or negative. If you are in a typical Evangelical setting, you probably don't have much history with the language or the form. If you are in a charismatic setting, you may have a very good idea what is meant, and you probably have a strong opinion.

2. The purpose of governance (and therefore leadership) in the NT is to form a people who both perform and proclaim the good news of redemption. Leadership is intimately connected to spiritual formation, which is intimately connected to mission.²⁹

Lloyd Ogilvie in 1967 asked three questions to help his community re-imagine its life in mission:

- what kind of people do we want to deploy on mission?
- What kind of community creates such people?
- What kind of leader cultivates such a community?

These questions explicitly connect the task of gifted ministry to the formation of a particular kind of people, who embody the good news of God's saving work in Christ.³⁰

Paul's most fundamental teaching on the ascension gifts is found in Ephesians chapter 4. These gifts or *charisms* of Jesus to his body are generally understood to be foundational ways of leading by equipping. They are "foundational" because they are intended to establish healthy *ekklesial* expressions that are kingdom outposts, incarnating the message of the gospel. Those five gifts for equipping the saints for the work of ministry are apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists.

In some five fold conceptions, the gifts are ranked. Apostles are sometimes seen as primary, and sometimes they are understood as holding special authority.³¹ This isn't supported by the text where the emphasis is on unity in plurality (the chapter opens with an emphasis on the body and loving relationships, and closes with exhortations to preserve the integrity of the body). Furthermore, Paul's own exercise of apostolic authority is clearly not a hierarchical style but is characterized by sacrificial service, fatherly affection, persuasive argument and the gift of wisdom.³²

In the last generation of Evangelical churches, leadership has been characterized by *sola pastora* models.³³ The pastor/teacher has been the key leadership gift, and anything like biblical eldership and plurality has generally disappeared. However, there are signs of change and renewal. I'm not going to survey those signs and changes here, but rather move directly into an argument for a new type of five-fold ministry. But we can lose that language now, and simply talk about apostolic teams.

²⁹ If you are a theological thinker, the word "Trinity" will now be ringing in your ears. See Newbigin, *The Open Secret or Trinitarian Faith and Today's Mission* (John Knox, 1964) or more recently Seng-Kong Tan, "A Trinitarian Ontology of Missions." *International Review of Missions*, April, 2004.

³⁰ As Martin Buber noted, "the wise man will become a teaching."

³¹ The simple reason that this gift appears first in the list is that apostles are oriented toward mission. Mission, in turn, is the reference point for every gift in the Body.

³² See in particular the early church scholar Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*

³³ A great summary is narrated of this development in western culture in chapter 7 of *Missional Church* (Ed. Darryl Guder, Eerdmans, 2000).

Apostolic Teams and Poetic Leadership

In some circles an apostolic expression is being recovered viewed through the modern lens of authority and hierarchy ie. the New Apostolic Reformation or NAR. I believe that movement is both wrong-headed and dangerous. At the same time a healthy parallel movement exists to recover apostolic teams.

A variety of scholars have pointed out that in the New Testament church a plurality of elders existed. Moreover, certain types of leaders appear to have held currency across churches, and the church existed as a brotherhood in a given location. In a similar way we are seeing the rise of apostolic teams today.

Our language of “teams,” like other language, is heard through the frame of our experiences. A team is not the same as a community. In one environment a team is formed to assist leaders to develop and implement their vision. In the second environment a community is formed around a shared sense of passion and purpose (belonging). In the team environment success is understood as empowering the group to reach agreed goals. In the community environment success is understood as empowering individuals to belong and to reach their creative potential.

In the team environment roles tend to be set in concrete and leaders are indispensable. In the community environment leaders may be invisible, and leadership roles and functions are often shared. In his take on leadership as process Dwight Friesen observed that, "Leadership is about conversation. Leadership has less to do with the clarity of vision, and much more do to with the quality of conversation. How one fosters conversation is everything. Bringing self to the table, creating open space, speaking, naming, surrendering the need to be right, etc. Hidden agendas, unstated vision, passive aggressive needs to control, and rigid categories are just a few of the many ills ready to subvert [a learning] conversation."³⁴

The language to describe these teams and their functioning varies according to received tradition and present context. But the roles that are appearing have familiar traits, and I am going to build on the description Alan Roxburgh employs in *The Sky is Falling*.³⁵ Alan describes five leadership types. First, he describes the poet.

The poet helps people make sense of their experiences. The word in the prologue of John tells how Jesus “became flesh and lived among us.” In a similar way, the poet shapes words so that what was hidden and invisible becomes known. Poets remove the veil and give language to what people are experiencing. This is only possible when the poet him/herself lives within the traditions and narratives of the people - “living reflexively in the traditions...The poet listens to the rhythms and meanings occurring beneath the surface.” (164)

But the poet also has a prophetic bent: “poets immerse

“Poets make available a future that does not exist as yet; they are *eschatologically* oriented. From this environment, a missional imagination emerges.”

Alan Roxburgh

³⁴ From the blog at <http://dwightfriesen.blog.com> June, 2005 . Note also that German sociologist Niklas Luhmann describes human community as “a network of conversations.” From this perspective the best way to nurture community is to facilitate and sustain conversations. Organizational analysts Brown and Isaacs asked effective leaders to describe quality conversations. The characteristics were listed as * a sense of mutual respect * taking time to talk and reflect on what is really important * listened even when there were differences * accepted and not judged by the others in the conversation * exploring questions that mattered * developing a shared meaning that wasn't originally there.

³⁵ Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Eagle, ID: ACI Publishing, 2005).

themselves in the multiple stories running beneath the surface of the culture.. feel the power of these stories and critique their claims and pretensions on the basis of the memory and tradition of the community.” (165)

The leadership of poets, however, is not expressed in a modern manner. Poets “are not so much advice-givers as image and metaphor framers... What churches need are not more entrepreneurial leaders with wonderful plans for their congregation’s life, but poets with the imagination and gifting to cultivate environments within which people might again understand how their traditional narratives apply to them today.... Many of the programs on church health can only lead the churches down more of the same utilitarian and technological dead ends that have contributed to the current malaise.” (166)

Finally, “poets make available a future that does not exist as yet; they are *eschatologically* oriented. From this environment, a missional imagination emerges.” (167)

As we would expect, poets had little value in the churches of modernity. In modernity we sought to define problems toward a solution. But poets don’t bring solutions; rather they bring questions that invite dialogue. Poets do not accept the view of a congregation as a tool for impacting the world, but as the location of God’s work of redemption and the incipient present-future of the kingdom.

Alan’s second leadership type is the prophet. Prophets desire is that the people of God rediscover the Word of God. “While poets invite dialogue in awareness and understanding, prophets call people to act on that knowledge. Liminality is the rich soil of prophetic imagination. It provides an environment where people are aware that they’ve lost their world and the connection with their most determinative stories.”³⁶ (169)

In liminal times prophets do not develop strategies for returning to the past, but rather they cultivate an environment that enables reengagement with God’s story. In a time when the gospel has been reduced to morals and values or to spiritual experience, it is difficult to encounter the sovereign Lord of history. But the prophet creates situations that compel the community to reinhabit its foundational stories. (170)

“The poet’s primary concern is for the people and the desire to inspire in them new insight. The prophet’s primary concern is giving tangible expression to what God is saying to the people.”³⁷

Alan’s third leadership type is the apostle.

“Apostles have a clear sense of calling, urgency and direction. They hear the voices of the poet and prophet and set about to make what God is saying through them a reality. Judah did not remain in exile; out of the Liminality emerged leaders with new vision for God’s plan. The apostolic function is to lead God’s people into the *missio dei* - the “mission of God.” Apostles stand at the doorway between an old world that has died and the transition world that lies ahead and call people to action.” (171-2)

Alan makes it clear that by apostle he does not mean the strong, entrepreneurial leader who has a

³⁶ “Liminal” is a Latin word used by Victor Turner to describe threshold experiences and transition in primitive cultures. (*The Ritual Process*, Cornell University Press, 1969). It has also become part of the dominant conversation around change and renewal. *Communitas* describes an intense feeling of social togetherness and belonging, often in connection with shared ritual. In *communitas*, people stand together “outside” society, and society is strengthened by this otherness. *Communitas* describes a later, potential phase of liminality. See especially Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* and Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*.

³⁷ Roxburgh, Op Cit. 171

plan and program for people. The apostle says to the people, “We know we have been called to be the sign, witness and foretaste of the kingdom [and the] *missio dei* in this community. Here is how we can act on what God is saying, forming and calling forth among us.” (173)

Alan distinguishes between the apostolic call and the pastoral. “The heart to care pastorally is present; but the drive toward action is primary.” Furthermore, “when an organization is stuck in its own interior life or confronted with the crisis and chaos of liminality, the apostolic leader is an essential member of the leadership team.” (174)

The problem is that these sorts of people have long been marginalized within the older churches and many have moved outside those systems. Apostolic types are deeply aware of the captivity of the church by outmoded systems and structures and their call for reform is often heard as criticism and a threat to stability. It is that and more! The apostle brings focus to outward engagement with the culture and carries an unshakeable conviction that God’s future is among His people.

Alan’s fourth type is the pastor-teacher. After the Enlightenment the role became more deeply embedded in the western imagination. Schleiermacher redefined the role as an educated professional and that mode has been with us ever since.³⁸ Sadly, with the exception of some experimental groups there remains “an inability to imagine leadership other than *sola pastora*.”³⁹ It is NOT POSSIBLE to cultivate missional communities based on this leadership form. “Pastoral leadership can function as the primary identity of leaders only within long periods of cultural stability.”⁴⁰

To meet the adaptive challenges of discontinuous change, the Lord is reforming and releasing new kinds of leadership teams. But there is another gift to consider. Alan closes this chapter with a recommendation for cultivating a *communitas* of leaders.⁴¹ Number ten reads,

“A leadership *communitas* requires a synergistic interrelationship between the various gifts in order to function. This does not happen by chance but requires the presence of a leader with the oversight and wisdom to guide the work of such a network. This leads to the introduction of one final, but critical leadership type— The Abbot/Abbess.”⁴²

Part II Leadership, Liminality and Change

In Part I we considered the five-fold ministry and the new expression of those ascension gifts we are seeing in the west in our day. We looked at the leadership of poets, prophets, apostles and pastor-teachers. In Part II we’ll consider the context of these gifts and then add the fifth gift: the synergist.

³⁸ See the clear discussion in Guder et al, *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann, 1998)

³⁹ Roxburgh, Op Cit. 176. See also Phil Wagler’s notes on this issue in *Kingdom Culture*. Wagler notes our specific need to recover the apostolic-prophetic team in the preaching/teaching ministry (Winnipeg: Word Alive Press, 2009) 56ff.

⁴⁰ Similarly, see Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2002).

⁴¹ *Communitas* is a term coined by Victor Turner who was examining African cultures with an interest in structures that aided transitions. It is roughly similar to the German usage *Gemeinschaft* in contrast to *Gesellschaft*.

⁴² Op Cit. 178

In the closing chapters of *The Forgotten Ways*⁴³ Alan Hirsch uses a number of word-pictures to describe the challenge of a changing environment, including the “fish bowl” analogy (a closed system). Picture “Finding Nemo” where the safety and stability (living death) of aquarium life is contrasted with the expanse and adaptive challenge of the untamed ocean.

A fish bowl or aquarium is a stable environment. It is safe and predictable (and relatively boring) and requires constant maintenance in order to survive. Food and oxygen must be supplied from external sources. The system is stable but stability hangs by a thread (turn off the air pump or quit supplying food or change the temperature) and there are no natural stressors.

The ocean is a somewhat different environment! It is always changing, and always dangerous.

In the Industrial age we had relative stability and predictability and our churches became fishbowls. We could drop a new fish in from time to time and pretend we were having exciting times, but for the most part there was little change and no perceived need to change. Suddenly the fish bowl has been dropped into the ocean - the boundaries and rules have changed, and we now face all kinds of adaptive challenges to our survival. These stressors will either make us stronger —or destroy us — depending on our ability to respond.

In chapter 4 of *The Sky is Falling* Alan Roxburgh describes the change process using the lenses of systems theory and organizational theory. To this end he outlines five phases: 1) Stability (and equilibrium); 2) Discontinuity; 3)Disembedding; 4) Transition; 5) Reformation.⁴⁴

Alan’s diagram looks like a figure eight turned on its side, or a racetrack. Stability is below the first circle on the left, which then climbs left and up around the first ring to become discontinuity. Roxburgh suggests that the process itself is non-linear, where we cycle out of and into periods of stability and transition.

1. Systems seek stability. One of the ways they accomplish this is by forming traditions and standardizing roles. Change during stable phases of cultural life is marked by gradual and manageable change. The role of leadership in these phases is well understood.
2. When stable phases shade into instability, or discontinuity, patterns emerge that alter the way the world works. Leadership roles generally fail to change much, however, instead trying to respond to discontinuity with known skills, failing to question fundamental frameworks, leading inevitably to burnout as leaders try harder.
3. Discontinuity increases until the power of tradition can no longer withstand the forces of instability. Relational alliances shift; new networks grow up; power struggles and blame shifting ensue as the system breaks down. This disembedding is painful and necessary, both local and cultural. Alan notes that it is in

“Apostles stand at the doorway between an old world that has died and the transition world that lies ahead and call people to action.”

⁴³ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006) 230

⁴⁴ I find myself thinking of “Presence” (Senge et al) and the seven capacities for embracing a new paradigm: Suspending, Redirecting, Letting Go, Letting Come, Crystallizing, Prototyping, and Institutionalizing.”)

this phase that many break with the past, leading to further disorientation. Leaders in this phase often revert to old skills which cannot enable a meaningful engagement with the new context.

4. When stability, predictability and control are gone the transition phase has arrived. (Interesting that “transition” is the word used by mid-wives to describe the fearful sense of loss of control moments before birth). One common response is pragmatic.. to search for what is working, here or elsewhere. At a similar point Israel wanted to return to Egypt.. but there is no going back. This is a painful and potentially creative time.

“Strictly speaking one ought to say that the church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it...” David Bosch

In times of uncertainty and transition, prophetic leaders enable us to reengage with God’s story. Key narratives of change and liminality are found in the exile, Joseph in Egypt, the Exodus and the period of the Judges (in the NT both Peter and Paul offer such pictures of change and growth).

The function of apostolic leaders is to hear the voices of the poet and prophet and set about to make what God is saying through them a reality. Apostolic leaders like Nehemiah emerged in the exile with new vision to make God’s plan a reality. The apostolic function is to lead God’s people into the *missio dei* - the “mission of God.” “Apostles stand at the doorway between an old world that has died and the transition world that lies ahead and call people to action.”⁴⁵

	Functional 20th Century Church Technical Skills	Emerging Missional Church Adaptive Skills
<i>Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stable * Predictable * Developmental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Unstable * Discontinuous * Emergent
<i>Organizational Culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Hierarchies * Bureaucracies * Managers/Experts * Top-down flow * Strategic Planning * Linear * Fragmentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Networks/Teams * Dialogue/Conscious Learning * Cultivated Diversity * De-Centered * Converging Conversations * Bottom-Up * Non-Linear * Integration
<i>Leadership Functions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Manage People * Optimize Performance * Control Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Empower People * Nurture Teams * Invite Participation * Cultivate Environments

Diagram adapted from *The Sky is Falling*

The pastor-teacher became the dominant mode of leadership during the relatively stable period following the Industrial revolution. These leaders, trained with the managerial skills appropriate for stable and predictable times, are increasingly lost and confused, often reacting defensively to the challenges they perceive. So long as leaders react and retreat into silos or attempt to defend authority that accrues to position or education they will be unable to enter the *communitas* that is offered by the new challenges we

⁴⁵ Sky, Op. Cit. 171-72

face. Any time the system is disturbed, we have an opportunity to enter a liminal space together. (As with the fish bowl, equilibrium is death).⁴⁶

Most of us love to be the bearers of good tidings. This was the experience of Neville Chamberlain who faced a war weary public with the announcement of “peace in our time.” The adaptive leaders like Churchill had been frozen out. No one wanted to believe his prophecies of impending war with Germany. Heifetz notes that, “followers often turn to authority as a bulwark against the associated uncertainty and risk. The essential work of adaptive leadership is to resist these appeals. Instead they must hold the collective feet to the fire, regulate distress... manage avoidance mechanisms...”⁴⁷



Adaptive Leadership and Apostolic Teams

Adaptive leadership is required during times of discontinuous change. The challenge is to learn to thrive in instability, constantly adapting to a hostile and changing environment. This will not be possible with the *sola pastora* model. Not only does a single leadership type lack the competencies needed in periods of discontinuous change, but also the tendency is to offer solutions and retreat into a new (and deadly) homeostasis.⁴⁸ The lifecycles of organizations typically move from Man –> Movement –> Monument –> Museum.⁴⁹ In the latter stages prophetic and apostolic gifts are quickly marginalized.

In his recent dissertation Dan Steigerwald writes,

“Alan Roxburgh and others argue that the *sola pastora* (single pastor) model of church has not only sapped the missional impulse from the church, it has cast many pastors into relative isolation. Roxburgh claims that this model, with its focus on one dominant, usually shepherd-type leader, is “killing pastors,” leading to “terrible discouragement and loneliness, and creating a deep sense of personal failure.”

“As a result of this prevailing leadership arrangement, many lead pastors lack a day-to-day interface with peer leaders who share some things in common, but who are otherwise very different from them in perspective, giftedness and experience. Lead pastors are often expected to embody numerous roles and capacities, without much regard for their need to be sharpened and challenged by the breadth and depth of perspective of other local leaders, in and beyond their church. Indeed, they may have elder teams and staff teams who care deeply about them. But pastors, nonetheless, are often viewed as the lone, anointed point leaders who are supposed to

⁴⁶ See the discussion on the evolution of the clergy in *Missional Church*, (Guder et al) 190ff and in *Leadership Next* (Gibbs) 47ff.

⁴⁷ Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Harvard: Harvard Business School Press, 1999) 250

⁴⁸ In *The Up Side of Down*, Thomas Homer-Dixon points out that it is often established leaders who hold a vested interest in the status quo. He writes, “From the point of view of those with a vested interest in the status quo, efforts to manage our problems can actually be a useful diversion.: such efforts provide a focus for research, discussion, and countless meetings for academics, politicians, consultants and NGOs, which in practice nothing really changes.” (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007)

⁴⁹ This taxonomy is from Richard Rohr. The best discussion is found in Lawrence M. Miller, *Barbarians to Bureaucrats*, 1990. Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost offer a helpful discussion in *The Shaping of Things to Come*.

develop all the other leaders. Too many never consciously pursue a leadership pool to foster their personal formation.”⁵⁰

The only way to escape this cycle is to cultivate the diversity of apostolic teams and move beyond professional models of ministry.

The managerial tradition in the Industrial Age was built on the premises of social engineering:

- * Leaders as Head, Organization as Body
- * The Premise of Predictable Change
- * An Assumption of Cascading Intention

But these tenets are not compatible with living systems.

“Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path. Unforeseen consequences are inevitable. The challenge is to disturb them in a manner that approximates the desired outcomes.”⁵¹

Note that I am not arguing for teams in the secular business sense. There is no “ranking” in the apostolic team, and roles are flexible and adaptable. The team is not ordered or directed by a manager. Instead of the industrial or mechanistic metaphor, think of a *living system*.⁵² An apostolic team is a living and growing organism, sharing a common purpose, that flexes and adapts to a changing environment. In a secular team roles are often set in cement; in an organic team roles are functional not positional and leadership is shared.

According to Lawrence M. Miller⁵³ the key to holding together diverse communities of leadership types is the synergist. Miller describes a synergist as “... a leader who has escaped his or her own conditioned tendencies toward one style and incorporated, appreciated and unified each of the styles of leadership on the life-cycle curve. The best managed companies are synergistic.”

The synergist guards this ethos and her role is to foster and maintain a creative and open space within the team so that no one role dominates. She helps maintain clarity of vision and her investment is in internal capital. As Mort Ryerson put it, the primary task of being a leader is to make sure that the organization knows itself.

“That is, we must realize that our task is to call people together often, so that everyone gains clarity about who we are, who we’ve just become, who we still want to be. If the organization can stay in a continuous conversation about who it is and who it is becoming, then leaders don’t have to undertake the impossible task of trying to hold it all together.”⁵⁴

A healthy functioning AT may look different tomorrow than it did today. It exists as an expression of a growing set of relationships in a living network, in the way marriage partners regard their marriage itself as if it were a living and breathing soul.

The Synergist might be found in the description offered by Jen Lemen,

⁵⁰ Daniel Steigerwald, “Ordering Missional Communities for Life Transformation and Missional Impact.” Unpublished dissertation submitted to George Fox Evangelical Seminary, April, 2009.

⁵¹ Pascale, Milleman, Gioja, *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000) 6

⁵² Both Roxburgh in *The Sky is Falling and Frost* and Hirsch in *The Shaping of Things to Come* rely heavily on systems language and concepts.

⁵³ Lawrence M. Miller, *Barbarians to Bureaucrats* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1990)

⁵⁴ Quoted in Margaret Wheatley, “Goodbye Command and Control” In *Leader to Leader*, July, 1997.

“I wonder if the point of the post-whatever-pastor is simply about holding space. Not space so you can examine me and try to be just like me as your leader, but space so that you can think about who you need to become, about who you are already in relationship to this alternate reality we call the kingdom.”⁵⁵

The Importance of Context

One of the requirements of a renewed missional movement is the recovery of place. The church in modernity largely ignored place and context, in the false belief that the universality of Spirit (related to the doctrine of transcendence) rendered place irrelevant. This theological error was a failure to maintain the relationship of immanence and transcendence, or to take into account the meaning of the incarnation. Simon Carey Holt writes in *God Next Door*:

“The Incarnation is about much more than God revealed in human experience, but God revealed and encountered in place—and in the most domestic of places one can imagine.

“First, to pursue a placeless faith is to render theology impotent to address the real struggles of ordinary people in the here and now. For every struggle we face is one experienced in the daily places of life. In fact, those places themselves are often a part of the struggle. That’s certainly true of neighborhood.

“Secondly, as most indigenous theologies remind us, rendering theology indifferent to the physical locations of life is what has long enabled theology to ignore the sacredness of the earth and to remain silent as local environments and societies were systematically devastated. If local places are so devoid of spirit, then what is lost? Thankfully, contemporary theology is now taking the natural environment much more seriously.

“Thirdly, and perhaps most potently, the Christian faith is one of God’s interaction with the physical world. From the stories of Creation and Incarnation to the transforming presence of the Spirit in all the earth, it’s hard to fathom a Christian theology that does not treat the neighborhood as significant. God is revealed and encountered in place. For too long we’ve judged the places of encounter as though they are simply innocuous containers that have no impact upon the relationship. But they do, and profoundly so. The radical liberation of our encounter with God is in its impact upon every aspect of life, from our daily work to the food we eat, from the places we choose to inhabit to the relationships that colour our lives. God is a God of place. Our call to mission is a call to discern, embody and proclaim the presence of God where we are. It’s a call to neighborhood.”⁵⁶

This is more than a call to re-enter our neighborhoods, however, it is also a call to contextualize mission and ministry. This means, in part, entering a theological conversation in place.

The Incarnation is about much more than God revealed in human experience, but God revealed and encountered in place ..

Simon Carey Holt

⁵⁵ Jen Lemen. Online, 2001.

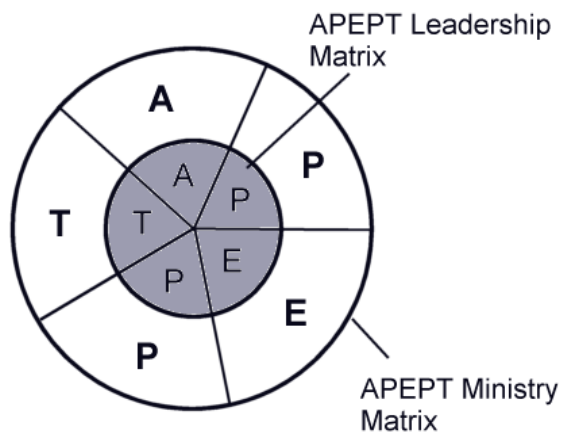
⁵⁶ Simon Carey Holt, *God Next Door: Spirituality and Mission in the Neighborhood* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2008) 63.

One of the destructive legacies of the church in modernity was to impose universal theology and universal models. Typically for Canadian church leaders this meant importing the ideas and models of the latest American guru into a Canadian context. This was tantamount to importing palm trees from Hawaii and planting them in downtown Saskatoon with the confidence that they would thrive and grow. It was naïve at best.

In systems language, emergent solutions are always created within the unique context of the specific organization, and they cannot be transferred willy-nilly into a new context. Fritjof Capra writes that, “what business leaders tend to do is.. to replicate a new structure that has been successful without transferring the tacit knowledge and context of meaning from which the new structure emerged.”⁵⁷

In other words, we must generate local learning in order to generate effective and local solutions. But this also returns us to the question of leadership, because as noted above, different kinds of leaders are needed to support emergent structures than designed structures. The first step in this process is always building and strengthening feedback loops. Capra writes that “facilitating emergence means.. building up and nurturing networks of communication in order to “connect the system to more of itself.”

One of the historical approaches to leadership in missional community was seen in one of the strongest missional movements of the last two thousand years. The Celts united two roles at the center of the team: bishop and abbot. The bishop was the missional (apostolic) leader, the abbot the pastoral leader. These two shared equal authority, the bishop stewarding the outward life of the community, and the abbot its inward life. This is similar to the structure we have adopted for FORGE hubs, where every local hub has both a hub leader and a hub pastor.⁵⁸



It is important to remember the wider context of gifted ministry. Ministry differs from leadership by matter of degree and function. Ephesians 4:7-12 assigns the five fold gifts to the entire church (“to each one of us grace has been given..”) Leadership is then a calling within a calling. Frost and Hirsch diagram this as a leadership matrix with a ministry matrix, as at left.⁵⁹

Moreover, it is rare that any person has only one of these ministries in operation. Callings are generally expressed as a complex of ministries, with a particular dominant gifting. We thus have pastor-teachers, apostolic-teachers, and prophetic-apostles and a variety of other combinations. These sometimes appear strongly

linked to context. But as noted above, the Ephesians list is probably not intended to be definitive.

Finally, it is important to remember that change always requires us to leave behind something that has become familiar, even dear to us. When any kind of emergent solution is deemed viable, it requires us to change, even to shed roles that have provided privilege and satisfaction. Capra writes that, “Since power

⁵⁷ Capra, Op Cit. 119.

⁵⁸ This old structure is also mirrored in the contemporary new monastic community of Northumbria, as documented in *Encounters on the Edge*, No. 29, published by the Sheffield Center, 2008. 28.

⁵⁹ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 171.

is embedded in all social structures, the emergence of new structures also challenges power relations; the process of emergence in communities is also a process of collective empowerment. Leaders who facilitate emergence use their own power to empower others.”⁶⁰

Part III Discovering and Inviting Synergy⁶¹

Alan Roxburgh describes the role of the Synergist in comparison to the leaders of Celtic communities in the fifth to ninth centuries. These Abbots and Abbesses did not function as authoritative command and control personalities,⁶² but rather they were people who best embodied the living ideals of the community. They were concerned more with cultivating healthy environments rather than shaping specific actions or developing programs. They were not managers, but spiritual elders. Joseph Myers writes that the leaders of tomorrow “shape environments as opposed to creating groups. When the environment is healthy, people will find connection on their own.”⁶³

But how do we find such people? The Abbots and Abbesses are already in training, mostly outside of the organized and inherited church system. They are people who understand process, they are ready mentors, and they are friends of time. They have gifts of wisdom and walk with a deep sense of the living presence of Christ. They are natural fathers and mothers to those around them. They regard life as sacramental and they are lifelong learners. I believe that most of these people are working in trades, though some are professionals. Many have felt rejected by the Church they love, marginalized as disloyal critics because they do not accept the status quo and they ask uncomfortable questions.⁶⁴

*When you focus on winning, you will lose.
When you focus on not losing, you will lose.
Pay attention to your inner balance.
Then perhaps you have a chance to win.*⁶⁵

Boundary-Crossers

There are other leadership roles being discovered as the church, often insulated from the neighborhoods in which it is rooted, seeks to become a learning community and reconnect with its mission. In one of the studies of learning community in Tasmania in the late 90s they described the leadership vision of a learning community like this:

"leadership is a dynamic and collaborative *process* in which leadership roles are not defined.. a group rather than individual process dominated by a designated 'leader'. Through the leadership

⁶⁰ Capra, Op Cit. 124

⁶¹ Perhaps we need to learn to pray, “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”

⁶² This squares well with the best research being done on leadership in companies making a successful transition to postmodern reality. One of the best known, VISA, was founded on the network model by Dee Hock. Hock writes, “Purpose and principle, clearly understood and articulated.. are the genetic code of any healthy organization. To the degree that you hold purpose and principle in common you can dispense with command and control.. The organization will become.. a creative.. vital, living set of beliefs.” *Birth of the Chaordic Age*.

⁶³ Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003) 79

⁶⁴ Apostles and prophets are always strongly in evidence in the birth of new movements, but then are thrust aside as the movement becomes established. Charism gives place to charisma – teachers and systematizers rule. Teachers and administrators standardize roles and functions and the builders and synergists are marginalized. As time passes the organization shifts to maintenance mode. Finally, authority is encapsulated in office, innovation is too risky and the bureaucrats rule.

⁶⁵ Pascale, Milleman, Gioja, Op Cit. 242



process, which involves influencing, compromising, and sacrificing, a new shared vision for the future is gradually developed to reflect the collective needs of the group. Leadership is therefore created as individuals and groups interact and collaborate. The concept of leadership as a process represents a more recent leadership paradigm which challenges thinking about traditional leadership practices and training."⁶⁶

What does this re-vision of leadership promise in terms of missional potential?

One of the key roles discovered in the Tasmanian study is "boundary-crossers." The role is very similar to the "connectors" described by Malcolm Gladwell in *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*.⁶⁷

Boundary-crossers are often "lay" leaders, often working on the margins, and are usually connected to multiple communities. As a result, they are less ghettoized than established leaders, and many of them are already living missionally. The gap from the old Christendom world to the new world is thus shorter. This leadership "from the bottom up" generates collaboration and new knowledge and imagination if existing (titled and recognized) leaders are genuinely open.

The University of Tasmania study was interested in innovation and problem solving that had sustained impact in communities. In other words the interest was not in leadership in stable times but "adaptive" (Heifetz) leadership. An outcome was an expanded lens for leadership and the discovery of a new (probably old) leadership type: boundary crosser.

These people bridge certain groups and interests, they legitimize wider partnerships, and their interpersonal skills strengthen key relationships across boundaries. Interestingly, one of the key traits of these people, "is their ability to speak multiple languages" (the language of business and school in the Tasmania case -- but it could equally be the language of business and kingdom, or the language of therapy and kingdom, or the language of leadership and kingdom.)

So these people are edge walkers, they speak multiple languages, and when they exist in our communities we sometimes wonder if they are "in" or "out." Their function on the margins is critical to the life of our communities, helping to keep the boundaries permeable so that air can get in and life can flow out. I believe this role is especially needed when communities have been ghettoized and isolated for too long, thus sacrificing bio-diversity. As the systems theorists tell us, "equilibrium is death." Boundary crossers challenge the status quo indirectly by opening channels of growth and interaction on the margins.

Furthermore, in legitimating wider partnerships, boundary crossers enable accelerated learning. Since the church has largely stopped learning, and is largely using old maps that no longer describe the territory, it must engage in "risky negotiation" as it reconnects with the surrounding culture in order to witness to an alternative (kingdom) culture. We need navigators and bridge builders and we must find ways to harness the learning ability of entire tribes of people.

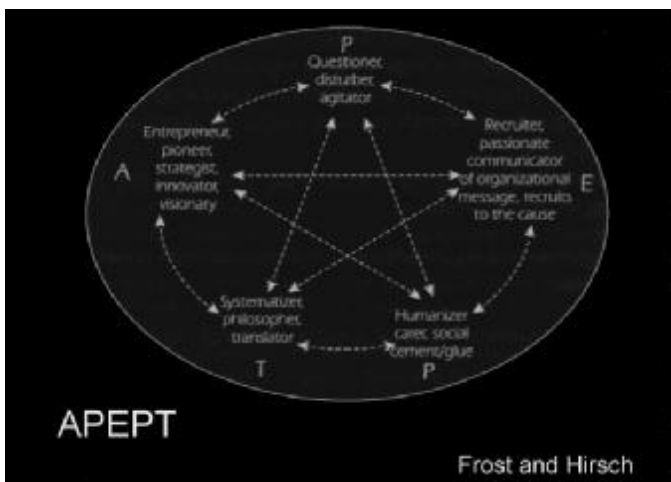
⁶⁶ Op Cit.

⁶⁷ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (London: Abacus, 2000) 51.

In the film *Field of Dreams* Kevin Kostner plays Ray Kinsella, the son of a baseball player who never completed his first season in the big leagues. He hears a voice while working in his corn field, “If you build it, he will come,” and then later, “ease his pain.” He doesn’t know the full meaning of these strange directions, but he risks everything to follow his intuition and mows down acres of corn to build a full size baseball field on his farm.

“If we build it, they will come.” At [FORGE Canada](#) we are working on founding a missional order⁶⁸ around a shared rule, not unlike the Celtic monastic movement, or the Benedictines. These orders provided a new wine skin that anchored missional engagement and societal transformation in living communities for centuries. The key is to enable rhythms of practice that maintain the healthy cycle of inward (community) and outward (missional) life. Whenever this rhythm is lost our communities become dysfunctional.

Part IV Synergists and Abbots – Something Old, Something New



Sometimes it is easier for people to see the wisdom of this fivefold structure when it isn't presented in religious language. If we apply a sociological approach to the differing ministry styles, we discover that Paul's missional ecclesiology is confirmed by the best current thinking in leadership theory and practice.

In most organizational systems, there is acknowledgement of the importance of these leadership functions:

- **Apostle: The entrepreneur:** Innovator and cultural architect who initiates a new product, or service, and develops the organization.
- **Prophet: The questioner:** Provocateur who probes awareness and fosters questioning of current programming leading to organizational learning.
- **Evangelist: Recruiter/communicator:** Recruiter to the organization who markets the idea or product and gains loyalty to a brand or cause.
- **Pastor: The humanizer:** People-oriented motivator who fosters a healthy relational environment through the management of meaning.
- **Teacher: The philosopher:** Systems-thinker who is able to clearly articulate the organizational ideology in a way as to advance organizational learning.⁶⁹

Abbots and spiritual directors are nothing new, just something old that we misplaced. In the early days of the church elders were given honor and authority through their sacrifice and their care for the flock.

⁶⁸ See in particular the Northumbria Community online: www.northumbriacommunity.org

⁶⁹ M. Frost and A. Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003) 175.

During the industrial age this role was increasingly awarded to competent managers, because churches were increasingly run as corporations.

As a result, those whose gift was to guide, shepherd and care for people found themselves marginalized, and the communities in which they lived were increasingly a kind of soil that did not produce mature and healthy spiritual leaders. Consequently, leaders who attempted to function as spiritual guides often lacked either the wisdom or maturity necessary.

We have continued to have spiritual elders among us, but they are too few and have often gone unrecognized and have rarely occupied official positions. Even when office and person were congruent, systemic issues have limited healthy functioning. The body has suffered as a result.

Earlier this year I relocated Elizabeth O'Connor's *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* on my book shelf and I found myself in the chapter on "preparing for mission." In their "School of Christian living" in the 1960's Gordon Cosby examined the three types of relationships we need in order to keep growing. We need those who are further along the way; we need peers and fellow pilgrims; and we need those who are not as advanced as we are — a little flock to tend and nourish. Elizabeth quotes Gordon Cosby,

"We will feel that it is pretentious for us to be guides to others at the point of their life in Christ." He then outlined three reasons why we shrink back and commented on each. 1. a sense of unworthiness; 2. fear of involvement; 3. a sense of the impossible. "Be a spiritual director? Who am I to do this?" But there will be thousands who will be open to no professional, when they will open to you."⁷⁰

Sandra Cronk uses Moses as an example of this leader who does not know his own gifts.

Moses did not (indeed, could not) sit down and identify his skills as ones that would make him a good liberation-leader. Just the opposite was the case. When God spoke to him from the burning bush, telling him that he was the one called to bring forth God's people from slavery, Moses replied, "Who am I?" He presented every argument he could think of to show that he was not gifted for the task... Paradoxically, it was ultimately by obeying God's call and relying on God's power that Moses was able to use skills and strengths he never knew he had.⁷¹

Compartmentalize life into private and professional spheres .. [makes] ministry a task. It prevents a full relationship with another human being in which redemption can happen."

Sandra Cronk

As FORGE Canada moves toward the founding of a missional order, we are watching for people who have this special kind of authority. Many of these people have experienced multiple failures in ministry. They are broken and often lack confidence; but there is something special in them. In the western church we have had many teachers, not many fathers. I believe the Lord wants to change this. We have some work to do to rediscover leadership as primarily a spiritual vocation, and we have other work to do to unlearn a professional model of ministry and relearn a vocational model. Sandra Cronk talks about this same struggle within the *Society of Friends*:

"The professional model assumes that ministry is primarily a skill or body of knowledge that is

offered to recipients. These skills are part of a job. But in earlier years Friends saw ministry much

⁷⁰ Elizabeth O'Connor, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1968)

⁷¹ Sandra Cronk, "Discovering and Nurturing Ministers," *Festival Quarterly*, Winter/Spring 1989.

more as a way of being and relating. Ministers were recognized for their skills, to be sure, but they were leaders more because their whole way of being pointed toward God or conveyed God's love and caring. Their words, actions and relationships were their ministry. In this old Quaker conception, *ministry is not just a matter of doing but of being.*

“There are problems with the kind of structure which compartmentalizes life into private and professional spheres. This kind of division tends to make ministry a task. It prevents a full relationship with another human being in which redemption can happen.”⁷²

It won't be an easy task to recover this older model, because we have seen so many abuses of spiritual authority. Given our negative experience with authority and the fear generated from these, we have work to do to rebuild trust.⁷³

Given the individualist culture we live in and our natural desire to center our world around our own small selves, we have work to do to rebuild our common life. Bonhoeffer writes that, “The desire we so often hear today for ‘episcopal figures’ .. springs from a spiritually sick need for the admiration of men.. because the genuine authority of service appears so unimpressive.” (109)

And later he writes, “The question of trust.. is determined by faithfulness to the service of Jesus Christ.. never by the extraordinary talents [one] possesses. Pastoral authority is attained only.. by the brother among brothers.”⁷⁴

Finally, Alan writes, "In a city or town, a combination of congregations, church plants, and house churches would form a common leadership *communitas* under the direction of an Abbot/Abbess. It functions for all the communities to call forth missional life in, and among, between and across the groups... They function as a missional order..." (182) Alan closes with a vision for a local *communitas* of leaders. The *communitas* is a missional order composed of men and women committed to the rule of that order. Some components of the rule would be:

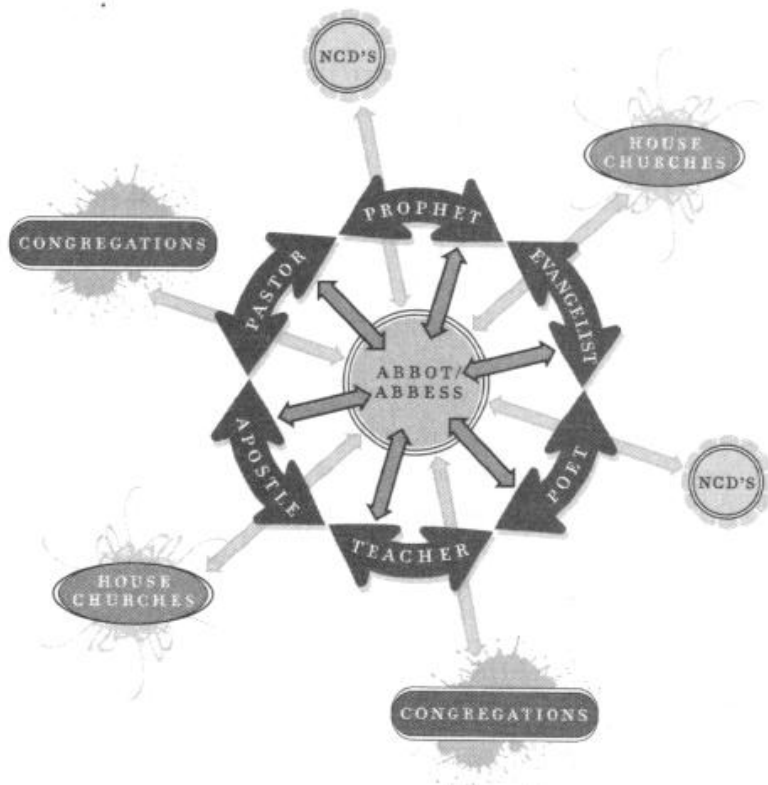
Diagram: Alan Roxburgh

⁷² Cronk, Op Cit.

⁷³ See [Brad Sargent's](#) summary of the five “core needs” for transformation from Kathy Koch: *Finding Authentic Hope and Wholeness*. The core needs are: Security - Who can I trust? Security is the state of being or feeling secure. It involves freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, doubt. Identity - Who am I? Identity is the characteristics and qualities of a person. Our identity can be stuck in the past (who WAS I?) or lost in the future (who do I WANT to be?), but is healthiest when it is rooted into who I now AM. Belonging - Who wants me? We belong when we are related and connected. Also, we say something “belongs” when it has a proper or suitable place. Purpose - Why am I alive? Purpose is something we intend toward doing, what we aim at. Without purpose, or when our purpose is dashed, we feel we have nothing to live for. Competence - What do I do well? Competences are developed strengths. They are things we are well qualified and capable to do, but not perfect at doing. These strengths can be used either for good, or for evil. Also related, Stephen Covey, “[The Speed of Trust.](#)”

⁷⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954) 109

- a commitment to place – the geographic area and its neighborhoods – more than just the congregation, house church or new church expression
- Keeping the Daily Office as a community, which is an appropriation of an ancient practice observed daily by millions of believers worldwide⁷⁵
- Commitment to the oversight and authority of the team by the Apostolic team
- The order is focused on discerning the form of the *missio Dei* in the various worshipping communities



- Callings and gifts are shared for the sake of the whole rather than any specific group within the overall community of believers

Alan describes this kind of leadership as displayed in Acts 13 where the Antioch church was comprised of an assortment of leaders working together. Practically, we see a great need for such a leadership *communitas*. Many congregations, house churches and new church expressions (NCDs) tend not to have the leadership types they need among themselves. The result: burn out, decline, discouragement. This means not just a loss of needed leaders, but also a loss of small, local congregations rooted in their neighborhoods. We therefore need a new imagination for the local church.

Part V: Leadership and Homelessness, Worship and Witness

In the late 1970's Canadian sociologist Richard Quebedeaux saw a disturbing trend in the midst of a deep need. He observed a deep rootlessness and loneliness in Canadian society. At the same time, he saw an increase in easy answers based on charismatic authority. He saw the inevitable result of these two trends in a gospel that distorted the good news and a church that was superficial and increasingly a purveyor of religious goods and services.⁷⁶ Quebedeaux wrote that we need strong leaders, but beyond the celebrity or pragmatist, to show us the way to the abundant life.

⁷⁵ Peter and John visit the Temple for the afternoon prayers (Acts 3:1). Psalm 119:164 states: "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws." Wikipedia states: "Canonical hours are ancient divisions of time, developed by the Christian Church, serving as increments between the prescribed prayers of the daily round. A Book of Hours contains such a set of prayers."

⁷⁶ George Hunsberger, "Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God," in *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, 1998) 83ff.

No medium or method of conveying the Christian gospel can meet people's basic needs for recognition, involvement, worthiness, growth, and indeed salvation itself without the loving give and take of person-to-person interaction over a long period of time. This is what community really means, and this is exactly where popular religion and its leaders are not successful.

In a secular society, in a world where homelessness is the norm, the only way religion can really be "successful" is to provide a home for the homeless -- a family that includes not just my kind of people, but God's kind of people, who love him with everything they have, and who love their neighbor as much as they love themselves. The church does need to become God's ideal family, both in word and in deed.⁷⁷

While the cult of leadership is stronger than it has ever been, it's nothing new. Paul himself warned us against self-promoting prophets and apostles. He warned us against following men because of their popularity or position...

*For God has chosen the foolish things of the world
To put to shame the things that are wise.
And God has chosen the weak things of the world
To put to shame the things which are mighty (1 Cor. 1 v.27).*

Jesus taught us that there should be no "Lords" among us but only friends and fellow servants. Unfortunately, the modern secular business models we imported into the church have largely taken precedence, and hierarchy is the norm. In the name of leadership and efficiency we have continued to give life to a clerical model that disempowers the people of God from a true priesthood. This in turn prevents our being able to embody the good news that we proclaim.⁷⁸ Inevitably, the church is seen as shallow and inauthentic.

It seems we have a simple option: create something that endures because it is built into the fabric of our communal life, or create something that is temporary because it is built around a strong personality. We may build either a leadership *culture*, or a leadership cult.

Some leaders fail to create a culture of leadership, and instead foster a personal cult. A cult is a rudimentary, incomplete, inherently ephemeral phenomenon that fades away when the personality that creates it departs. A culture is much more durable and robust than a cult, because its survival and power do not depend on the presence and personality of a single individual.⁷⁹

We need enduring communities that witness to the reality of the Gospel and its life transforming power. These communities will not be built by charismatic leaders, because those leaders build audiences and followers, not leaders and priests.

We still need strong leaders, but not "the hero." In an interview in 2001 Margaret Wheatley argued that we need to move *from hero to host*. In an interview with the Robert Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership she said,

⁷⁷ Richard Quebedeaux. *By What Authority: the Rise of Personality Cults in American Christianity*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1982) 177-183.

⁷⁸ As William Cavanaugh put it, "The church is meant to be that community of people who make salvation visible for the rest of the world. Salvation is not a property of isolated individuals, but is only made visible in mutual love." "The Church as God's Body Language."

⁷⁹ Deering, Dilts and Russel, "Leadership Cults and Culture," in *Leader to Leader*, Spring, 2003.

“We need to move from the leader as *hero*, to the leader as *host*. Can we be as welcoming, congenial, and invitational to the people who work with us as we would be if they were our guests at a party? Can we think of the leader as a convener of people? I am realizing that we can’t do that if we don’t have a fundamental and unshakable faith in people. You can’t turn over power to people you don’t trust. It just doesn’t happen. The other part about the timelessness of servant-leadership is, what do you do if you can’t control events? There is no longer any room for leaders to be heroes. I think one really needs to understand that we have no control, and that things that we have no control over can absolutely change our lives. I think it will take a little while for Americans to really accept that there is no control possible in this greater interconnected world. There are lots of things we can do to prepare, but there is no control.”⁸⁰

Worship, Truth and Witness in a Post-Modern World

"A church that can't worship must be entertained and men who can't lead a church to worship must provide entertainment." AW Tozer

"Consumer culture is one of the most powerful systems of formation in the contemporary world... Such a powerful system is not morally neutral; it trains us to see the world in certain ways." ⁸¹

Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*, notes that every five hundred years or so the Church holds a great rummage sale. Every five hundred years the foundations of culture shift, and each time the same great questions are on the table: what does it mean to be human? Where is the authority?⁸² These questions are in the background of all theological reflection, and theological reflection undergirds every conversation we have within church circles on the gospel, culture, church, leadership and mission.

Here we are five hundred years after the Reformation, with the foundations we built on for five hundred years now crumbling. No wonder we feel insecure! Many of the structures we built in modernity are now dissolving as if built on sand. While we have no maps for the way forward in this strange land, we do have voices full of wisdom, both old and new. Most of these voices tell us that in order to move forward, we must reach back. Both the Scriptures (the first witnesses) and the church Fathers and Mothers (tradition) can offer us resources for our future.

The common forms of church life are nearly universal in western culture. We major on ministry, not mission. We gather as communities of faith for perhaps four hours a week. This includes our Sunday gatherings and the common home group or prayer meeting or ministry team meeting which for many of us form a primary connection to our church. But for somewhere around 85% of believers, the Sunday gathering is the primary place of formation, memory, and learning.

The challenge is obvious: how do we form disciples of Jesus in two hours a week? How do we compete with Hollywood and Madison Avenue? The REVEAL study⁸³ demonstrated that we are failing to create disciples in the midst of this powerful consumer culture, and in fact the harder we have tried to attract people to our meetings, the more we have reinforced a message contrary to the gospel. The message we have given our people is this: “We do it all for you.”

⁸⁰ Online <http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/herofhost.html>

⁸¹ William Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008)

⁸² Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008)

⁸³ See in particular the commentary of David Fitch [HERE](#)

Saints cannot exist without a community, as they require, like all of us, nurturance by a people who, while often unfaithful, preserve the habits necessary to learn the story of God.

The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas, John Thompson

The result is the creation of religious consumers and a passive audience, further increasing the burden on pastors and leaders to be and do everything, further damaging the priesthood of believers and further compromising the mission of the Church.

At the same time, secular visions of success have pushed us to build bigger,⁸⁴ and we have sought economies of scale by surrendering to the technological god of efficiency.⁸⁵ We didn't see that success is not equal to faithfulness, and we didn't recognize that community is by necessity *inefficient*. (Love compels us to go the extra mile). Our faith communities are filled with consumers, but few disciples. And the very qualities of love and faith are often lacking. The practices that anchor us in living memory – confession, the Table, speaking the truth in love, the exercise of spiritual gifts – these have often been sacrificed because they are impractical in large gatherings. “Bigger is better” has nearly destroyed the very heart of ecclesial life. At the same time, abstracting the congregation from its context -- the living neighborhood – has damaged mission, so that the larger a church becomes the more likely that it becomes insulated from its context and the more likely it has absorbed transfer growth.

But intuitively we sense that something else is wrong. The train is off the rails. I opened this section with a quotation from William Cavanaugh. Consumer culture forms our imaginations. It does this primarily by offering a particular definition of humankind and our *telos*: our final destination. It tells us who we are, why we are here, and it defines the good life. Then it seeks to manufacture consent by a host of visible and invisible means, both social pressures and social practices.⁸⁶ Because many of these shaping, or disciplining, mechanisms are symbolic, they tend to be transparent to us. James K. A. Smith writes,

By using representation, images, and other strategies – all of which communicate truth in ways that are not cognitive or propositional – marketing forms us into the kind of persons who want to buy beer to have meaningful relationships, or buy a car to be respected, or buy the latest thing .. simply to satisfy the desire that has been formed in us .. these disciplinary mechanisms transmit values and truth claims .. covertly. They .. form the body, as it were.⁸⁷

Smith closes this thought with reference to embodiment. This pushes us back to the very basis of life in the world: *spirit that is enfleshed*⁸⁸. This incarnational reality pushes us back to the importance of context, and the importance of concrete practices. William Cavanaugh writes,

Attraction to the Christian life occurs when one can see a concrete community of people living out salvation, living reconciled and hopeful lives in the midst of a violent world. Rarely are people converted by well-argued theories.

People are usually converted to a new way of living by getting to know people who live that way and thus being able to see themselves living that way too. This is the way God's revolution works.

⁸⁴ Robert Bellah and associates note that the doctrine of unlimited growth was a result of Adam Smith's economics. In living bodies, however, growth without a reference to purpose is called “cancer.” R. Bellah and Associates, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 114. See also Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2004).

⁸⁵ See especially David Fitch discussion in *The Great Giveaway* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005)

⁸⁶ *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomski and the Media*. Mark Achbar, Ed. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1994)

⁸⁷ James K.A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 105.

⁸⁸ Nearly all the contemporary teachers on spiritual formation emphasize the material nature of our spiritual existence, as against the duality we inherited from the Enlightenment. I am thinking of Dallas Willard and Eugene Peterson in particular. See Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2002) and Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005)

The church is meant to be that community of people who make salvation visible for the rest of the world. Salvation is not a property of isolated individuals, but is only made visible in mutual love.⁸⁹

We live in a time when “the good life,” is defined by Hollywood, and not by the Scripture. Meanwhile, the foundations of belief have shifted. We aren’t sure who has authority to declare the truth. Everyone has an opinion, and every preacher tells us something different. Moreover, we believe (in practice) that truth is something found in words and propositions. Therefore it is objective and we can sit and judge it. We sit in a Sunday gathering and trust only ourselves to assess truth. But if I am the sole judge of truth, which truth do I choose? So many opinions, so many experts: even self as the center has collapsed. Who has authority? We live with tremendous fragmentation within multiple communities of interpretation and communities of practice.

All this only reinforces the culture of individualism. When the question of spiritual practice then arises – how and when and why to pray, how and when to study Scripture, what it means to be God’s people on mission together – we feel only more lost. We have lost any sense of being a people covenanted together. For the most part we have allowed our leaders to tell us what is good and right, but here in late modernity we no longer believe or trust our leaders either.

David Fitch argues convincingly that our gatherings in western Christendom have two primary cultural forms: the lecture hall or the rock concert. In one setting we take notes and leave feeling better informed, and in the other setting we leave with warm hearts and feel closer to God. But neither setting, in this strange space in late modernity, is capable of forming us as followers of Jesus. This is because we were *already formed when we entered these spaces*: formed to view the sermon (lecture) as just one more expert giving an opinion to we who are sitting in judgment on the quality and truth of the presentation; or formed as a consumer of a religious experience, for the sole purpose of having an emotional experience that tells us that God cares for us. In both settings, self is firmly at the center, leaving no possibility of encountering the living God – who is good – but not SAFE – and who demands that we lay down our life for the sake of His kingdom and His life.

But the rabbit hole goes deeper still, because all this affects not only belief, but practice, and love takes practice. In these days when tradition has lost authority because it is no longer anchored in communities of practice, and with the self as sole judge of truth, we don’t know which practices to choose. Especially in the generation under forty, this leads to analysis paralysis: inability to choose, so that spiritual practice has no rhythm, and without rhythm, there is no consistency, and no learning or growth.

This last page of analysis is the state of affairs as assessed by a good number of spiritual teachers: Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, David Fitch, Jamie Smith, Richard Rohr and more. Their solutions also run in parallel, and I will merely summarize them here. We must..

- rediscover liturgical practice, and preferably also the liturgical calendar. We enter an ongoing story and it chooses us.
- rediscover truth as beauty. Immersive worship requires art. Use of image, sound, metaphor is critical in shaping a Christian imagination
- the law of prayer, the law of belief. One first learns to pray. Immersion in the life of the practicing community is critical. We belong, then believe. We are formed in and for the living community.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ William Cavanaugh. “The Church as God’s Body Language,” *Zadok Perspectives* (Spring 2006) 150.

⁹⁰ We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions, *but through them*. We never get to the bottom of ourselves on our own. We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others in work, love, and learning. All of our activity goes on in relationships, groups, associations, and communities ordered by institutional structures and interpreted by cultural patterns of meaning.

- Worship must be an enculturated living place of God where we are formed into his faithful people. Even our desires are formed in the soil of culture. Faith then becomes our participation in the truth embodied in the living community.
- Enter a covenant community that embraces a rhythm of spiritual practice. Every good teacher knows that nothing forms us like practice, and nothing grounds practice like shared rhythms. Rhythms of prayer and study, community and mission, hospitality and rest have anchored faithful communities through the centuries.

In these strange times of transition, one of the most common reactions is fear. We don't know where we are, exactly where we need to go, or how we will get there. Our leaders are confused, burning out, or emotionally absent.

When we are fearful we tend to circle the wagons and our options narrow, exactly at the time when they need to expand.

But what would it look like to give up fear.. and trust.. really trust.. that God will lead us forward?

I close with the words of Samir Selmanovic:

Paradoxically, Christianity professes to trust the most peculiar deity of all religions, the God who has incarnated, become a servant, and died for the sake of something more important to him than his own life.

The future of Christianity depends on its willingness to serve something larger than itself. If Christianity is to be resurrected into a new life, it must aspire to be like the God it professes and take a backseat to something more dear than its own life. And what can be better than Christianity? The kingdom of God, of course! This kingdom supersedes Christianity in scope, depth and expression. This is true regardless of whether we talk about "Christless" or "Christfull" Christianity. Even in its best form, Christian religion is still an entity in the human realm.⁹¹

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⁹¹ "The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*. Op Cit. 194.

Exhibit: The Daily Office – Morning Prayer

+ *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Opening sentences

*One thing I have asked of the Lord,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life;
to behold the beauty of the Lord
and to seek Him in His temple.*

Call: Who is it that you seek?

Response: We seek the Lord our God.
Call: Do you seek Him with all your heart?
Response: Amen. Lord, have mercy.
Call: Do you seek Him with all your soul?
Response: Amen. Lord, have mercy.
Call: Do you seek Him with all your mind?
Response: Amen. Lord, have mercy.
Call: Do you seek Him with all your strength?
Response: Amen. Christ, have mercy.

Declaration of faith

To whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that You are the Holy One of God.
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.

Prayers for others here..

Christ, as a light
illumine and guide me.
Christ, as a shield
overshadow me.
Christ under me;
Christ over me;
Christ beside me
on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks to me.
This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Christ as a light;
Christ as a shield;
Christ beside me
on my left and my right.

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.
May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.
May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.

+ *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*