

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

REDEEMED POWER IN ACTION:
A PREREQUISITE FOR A GENEROUS ECCLESIOLOGY

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Introduction

The missionary mandate is to “plant the church.” Hundreds of God’s servants, scattered around the world, are seeking, in some measure and by some method, to fulfill this call. “What is church?” has been the central focus of these lectures regarding an “Ecclesiology- to- Go.” The goal has been to expand the vision of church, allowing for more creative, innovative, and authentic expressions of the body of Christ in the unreached (and “reached”) corners of the earth.

Culture, as previously postulated, plays as important a role as theology in the definition of church. The U. S. and European vision of Pentecostal churches has largely been concretized to a combination of a building, a pastor, and a congregation—a one-size-fits-all pattern that the missionary movement has transported to the broader world.

Legitimizing this singular definition of church has confined the role of pastor and laity to one-size-fits-all paradigms. This approach limits the creativity and resourcefulness of the members to only certain roles, in spite of the Spirit’s abundant gifts. Unreached people groups (and even the younger generation), with no affinity for that particular social structure, find restricted access to the gospel as they must leap the hurdles of the organization before they can hear the Good News.¹ This vision of church often locates and identifies the gathering of God’s people with a building, diminishing the sense of relationship and blurring the relevance to life. As a result, a growing chasm gapes between the lost populations of the world and the church. With the realization that every group that confesses to be church is not a church, five communal “anchoring”

¹A young church planter in Berkeley, California told the young men living in the house where he was renting a room that he was “planting a church.” They responded, “Plant a church, what does it mean to plant a church?” The concept was totally outside of their comprehension, although these young men were successful young business people, Jeff Sandstrom, personal conversations with Anita Koeshall, October 2010.

events were presented that signify the presence of a body of believers. These five events include: (1) the presence of the triune God, resulting in awe and worship, obedience, and submission; (2) a community gathered around the Word of God for discipleship, life transformation, and prophetic answers in today's troubled world; (3) Spirit-filled members mutually ministering to one another with the gifts that God has given to them; (4) covenanted community, joined together by both their will (i.e., from below) as well as by the supernatural work of God among them (i.e., from above), and revitalized again and again in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; and (5) extroversion—a driven-ness by the Spirit into the world, with a passion for the Kingdom to come and a conviction of the truth and hope that lies in Christ who is the peace and salvation of the world.

The presence of the continually experienced and re-experienced communal events among a group of believers establishes that the gathered people are indeed part of the body of Christ and creates a freedom for an innovative and liquid ecclesiology. Reached and unreached people groups are empowered to creatively gather, to establish a worship style reflective of their own heart expressions in rhythms, scales, and instruments as the Spirit inspires, and to incorporate locally legitimate Spirit-transformed structures. We looked at two “member-churches,” a Student Ministry (SFC), and Mathew's Table as examples of “out of the box” member-churches in a city such as Berlin, Germany.

A *generous* ecclesiology recognizes and embraces diverse forms of member-churches and includes them as part of the church-in-the-city—along side of the traditional church. With Thiselton and Giles we argued that “the notion of each community as an internally *self-contained autonomous* democracy” is not part of a Pauline ecclesiology,

rather the New Testament church consisted of multiple house churches in a city or region, who would be addressed as “the church in Corinth” or Rome, or as “the church-in-the-city.”²

With the more biblical image of church as the church-in-the-city, this lecture will examine the nature of relationships between member-churches. Breaking out of long-held patterns or prejudices necessitates the return to the Scriptures, in order to tear down the prisons of cultural traditions and to see things anew. In this lecture, we will discuss redeemed power in action and its importance to the praxis of a generous church. Is it possible to describe church-in-the-city with terms such as partnership or network? What role does a theology of power play in the formation of redeemed inter-church relationships? To what end do we extend the effort of being a covenanted community? If the present ecclesiology is producing tangible results, why engage the pesky questions raised by biblical exegesis and theology?³

Goals of Community Togetherness in the Church-in-the-City

For those of us in the individualistic western world, togetherness does not come naturally. We must practice the art of connecting, for our socialization has taught us that the best way to accomplish anything is to “do it myself.” We will begin this discussion with an exploration of the *why* question. To what end do we extend the effort to be a church beyond our own ministry walls?

²Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 75. See also Kevin Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 184-187.

³My thanks to Alan Johnson for this “pesky question”!

First of all, the Lord commands believers to “love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Pet. 1:22). Peter admonishes the scattered aliens of Asia, echoing Paul’s words (Col. 3:12-14; Eph. 4:2), to be humble, gentle, and patient, bearing with each other in love. The characteristic of empathy, a Spirit-given sense of warm-heartedness and brotherly love between member-churches, replaces the isolated, silo mentality with one of community connectedness, and encouragement. A supernaturally created unity that is founded on the work of the Holy Spirit causes communities to suffer and rejoice together (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12:25-26). Thiselton, quoting Lionel Thornton, states, “It follows that in the Body of Christ there are strictly speaking, no private sufferings. All are shared because there is one life of the whole.”⁴

Second, is the realization that God’s mission in this city will not be accomplished by any single group; rather, each member-church plays a vital role as it is called, gifted, and connected to the whole body by the Spirit. A healthy admission of one’s limitations causes each group to listen carefully and actively to one another, to gain shared insight into the needs of the city, and to grasp a renewed and larger vision of what God is doing through the entire church. Ben Witherington aptly states: “Every local assembly needs every other local assembly to be complete. Just as gifted individuals cannot say to other Christians that they are unneeded, since no Christian has all God’s gifts, so, too, this is apparently true with congregations as well.”⁵ Each group can be refreshed and energized in the hope that each member is doing its part.

⁴Thiselton, 1012.

⁵Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 262-263.

Third, the inter-wovenness of the city compels the multiple communities of faith to understand the spiritual darkness and its effect on the whole city. For instance, a red-light district in a city is only profitable because businessmen frequent the area; the youth buying drugs near the central train station belong to families in the suburb, etc. The mission of one church links with all the others. Through carefully listening to one another, the communities come to a greater understanding of the spiritual history of the geographical location, realizing that each plays a role as the people of God in this generation and to this place.

Fourth, theologizing is a community exercise of exploring God's Word, while listening to the Spirit to hear the prophetic voice of the Lord to the local situation. However, the task is not finished until the community evaluates and changes its behavior. One can only wonder why, with the high percentage of Christians and many churches in some cities, there remains so much darkness in society. Or, on the other hand, with so much darkness and only a few sparks of Christian community, why churches would choose to stand in isolation from one another, when only a united understanding and application of God's Word in the context will initiate powerful transformation.

Fifth, aware of the human tendency toward self-deception, member-churches gather in fellowship to develop a sense of humble accountability between fellow member-churches. We are all sinners and have the continual tendency to sin. The Holy Spirit, speaking through the family, is a gift to us, not an intrusion. "Evangelicals have been suspicious of visible or organizational unity and reluctant to let any partners (even other evangelical partners) examine, critique, or question their theology."⁶ While

⁶Charles Edward Van Engen, "Toward a Theology of Mission Partnerships," *Missiology* 29, no. 1 (2001): 14.

intervention by other member-churches or by the whole church-in-the-city is counter to the evangelical ideal of the autonomous local church, Volf suggests that when the ecclesiality of the church is threatened, some kind of response or reaction is required.⁷ Regardless of the cultural discomfort that it causes, when member-churches embrace a communal identity, there should be a sense of brotherly and sisterly responsibility to raise questions concerning issues that would damage the church, such as the absence of the five pillar events or the abuse of power.

Finally, Jesus said these incredible words in one of His last prayers: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17: 23). Practical, lived-out ecumenism is a key to the world believing. Critics or puzzled outsiders often rightly perceive Christian churches as splintered factions of a religion that cannot cooperate. Living in love, harmony, and peace is surely one of the greatest testimonies to the transforming power of the gospel (Rom. 12:9-10, 15-18). “Christianity spread rapidly and impacted its world effectively in the first few centuries of the Christian era (approximately a 40 percent growth rate per decade) *largely as a result of its quality of communal life.*”⁸ The church is, after all, the “visible manifestation of the invisible, eternal, universal commonwealth,”⁹ which is singular even though it is constituted by churches from every tribe and nation. Surely the visible manifestation should accurately represent the eternal reality. Volf suggests that the interecclesial minimum consists of openness to all other churches through which “a

⁷Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 155.

⁸Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 157.

⁹Witherington, 92.

church necessarily sets out on the path to its future, a path on which it is to express and deepen its communion, that is, its differentiated unity, with all other churches through the common confession of faith and appropriate structures of communion.”¹⁰ Furthermore, he argues that the church that refuses to walk this path “shows that it is a private religious club rather than a church of God.”¹¹

Partnerships and Networks: Inadequate Descriptors

After arguing for a liquid ecclesiology, it would seem to be self-defeating to argue for a structure for the church-in-the-city! The church is a dynamic organism, not an organization; God created the church and empowers it by the Spirit, with the willing surrender of human beings. “‘Churches’ may *have* organizations, structures and buildings to further their life and work, but once one identifies the *ekklesia* with some humanly conceived or constructed organization, structure, or building there are already serious problems in understanding the character of the *ekklesia*.”¹² After examining two popular forms of organization, networks and partnerships, I will argue for character qualities of generous member-churches that are prerequisites for life in covenant community.

Individualistic cultures commonly prize egalitarian relationships such as “networks” or “partnerships.” I contend that both terms are invested with meaning and overtones that make them ineligible to describe relationships in the church-in-the-city. Postmodern and modern partnerships are contractual affairs, agreements between two autonomous, equal partners for the achievement of a specified goal entered into for a

¹⁰Volf, 157.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Witherington, 91-92.

short to mid-length period of time.¹³ Zygmunt Bauman reflects on the proclivity of today's culture to avoid long-term and binding obligations: "Nowadays everything seems to conspire against ... lifelong projects, permanent bonds, eternal alliances, immutable identities ... togetherness lasts no longer than the gratification of one of the partners, ties are from the outset only 'until further notice.'"¹⁴ The postmodern person has been trained to break relationships with more ease than to build them; only bonds that are profitable or do not tarnish reputations are formed.

Phillip Butler defines networks as "any group of individuals or organizations sharing a common interest, who regularly communicate with each other to enhance *their individual purposes*."¹⁵ According to network exchange theories: "(1) actors are dependent on one another for valued outcomes, (2) benefits obtained are contingent on benefits given 'in exchange,' and (3) exchanges with the same partners recur over time."¹⁶ The most "efficacious power condition" in networks is the act of exclusion; those who bring the most to the network often have the most partners and networking opportunities.¹⁷

¹³"Partnership," Answers.com, <http://www.answers.com/topic/partnership> (accessed October 18, 2010).

¹⁴Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences*, Theory, Culture & Society, trans. by Patrick Camiller, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 2002), 3.

¹⁵Phillip Butler, *Well Connected: Releasing Power and Restoring Hope through Kingdom Partnerships* (Colorado Springs, CO: Authentic Publishing, 2006), 34.

¹⁶Linda D. Molm, Gretchen Peterson, and Nobuyuki Takahashi, "The Value of Exchange," *Social Forces* 80, no. 1 (2001): 160.

¹⁷Mamadi Corra, "Inclusion and Ordering: The Compounding Effects of Two Distinct but Related Structural Power Conditions," *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 36, no. 9 (2008): 1175.

Christians variously redefine the term partnership to strengthen the relational bond between entities while maintaining a negotiated feel: “An association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship, and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.”¹⁸ Ivan Satyavrata points out “that the language of partnership may fall short of the biblical ideals of family and friendship so integral to the Church’s body-life. For partnership still implies the existence of racial, ethnic, or national distance between partners.”¹⁹ Van Engen, too, in reference to partnership argues that “the unity of which the apostle Paul is speaking cannot be restricted to corporate, organizational, administrative, financial, or structural unity.”²⁰

Although partnerships and networks may be important collaborative paradigms, they do not describe the relationships appropriate for the church-in-the-city. Both the ideas of partnership and networks are joint efforts with self-interests in mind and with built-in walls of protection and escape doors. Indeed, when Paul describes the community of faith he employs much more binding terminology: fellow citizens with God’s people, members of God’s household (Eph. 2:19), and family (Eph. 3:15; Gal. 6:10). In every instance when unity in multiplicity is the urgent theme, Paul employs the metaphor of the “body” in reference to the church. “*sōma* (body) has a specific meaning in Paul which no longer refers to an individual but to a group. He speaks of the *sōma Christou*, the body of

¹⁸William D. Taylor, ed. *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 4. Quoted in L. Bush and L. Lutz, *Partnering in Ministry: The Direction of World Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 46.

¹⁹Ivan Satyavrata, “Friends in Mission: Following the Wind and Riding the Wave” (lecture, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO, November 3, 2009), 23.

²⁰Van Engen, 18.

Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12). Paul takes up the picture of the body to express the essential character of the Christian church.”²¹

Specifically in reference to Christian relationships, the term “body” implies a life-essential connectedness that leaves no possibility for stubborn independence. It is common knowledge that a thumb alone will not survive; not even the “important parts” such as the heart or the head can survive when severed. Each is dependent on the other!

Lest the individualists among us are alarmed at such an expectation, the body of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit: for we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, the Spirit gives grace and gifts freely and indiscriminately to all (Rom. 12:6); the Holy Spirit’s great power is at work within us, to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20 ff). “The church is a participation in the Spirit in the loving communion enjoyed within God’s triune life.”²² Macchia explains that Spirit baptism grants the church the capacity for *koinonia* and engenders a “diversely-interactive charismatic structure of the church in the church’s living witness to the kingdom.”²³ The individual entity (whether a person or a member-church) is not swallowed up in the whole, rather each is specifically and beautifully formed with a particular “measure of grace” (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 3:2), gifted to participate in the group dynamic.

²¹Siegfried Wibbing, “Soma G5393 (*sōma*), Body,” in vol. 1 of *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Collin Brown, 232-238 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 236-237.

²²Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*: 164.

²³*Ibid.*, 165.

Paul pronounced that a new polity, bond, and kinship between the Christ-followers had been birthed by their common faith in Christ; this new society would stand in stark contrast to the polity, value systems, and thought paradigms of the Roman Empire. He desired to see the diverse member-churches embracing one another and understanding their part in a community under new headship, thereby reflecting the realities of the coming Kingdom.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the New Testament displays a very “relaxed attitude toward church structures and leadership;”²⁴ however, the character of the cruciform lifestyle is central to whatever structure is applied in every culture. Therefore, the next argument of this lecture is that, lacking a redeemed theology of power, any structure is broken, making member-church relationships difficult if not impossible.

Prerequisite for Generous Ecclesiology: Redeemed Power

God is omnipotent; people are not—nor was that ever God’s intention. Rather, men and women are called to employ their God-given power, the ability to make a difference, to act otherwise, and their authority, the freedom to exercise their gifts in the service of the community.

God, as revealed in the Scriptures (Gen. 1-2; Isa. 40:26, 29; Jer. 10:12; Col. 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-3), is all-powerful by all sociological definitions of power. He has full capacity to make a difference, to act otherwise;²⁵ He created and controls all resources.²⁶

²⁴Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 121.

²⁵Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1984), 14

²⁶Richard Newbold Adams, *Energy and Structure: A Theory of Social Power* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1975), 12.

Through the Holy Spirit, He has unlimited “networking” capacity;²⁷ He defines and embodies all truth and is the writer of the operative narrative.²⁸ He is the only one who can claim high power distance²⁹—being of a higher essence, living according to a higher rule. He has charismatic power and legitimate power,³⁰ but He refuses to use His power in a Macchiavellian way.³¹

Trustworthy and responsible, God invests His power “otherwise,” contrary to the self-protecting, self-aggrandizing, and self-serving human tendencies.

Being in very nature God, [he] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:6-8)

God employs His power to serve, as Jesus clearly stated: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).

God demonstrates a particular concern for the poor, the oppressed, the downtrodden, the widow, orphan and alien—people who are disadvantaged by the power holders in the world (Deut. 15:11, Psa. 82:2-4, Isa. 58:7-10; Luke 6:20). He poured himself out,

²⁷David Willer, Michael J. Lovaglia, and Barry Markovsky, “Part 1: Power and Influence: A Theoretical Bridge,” in *Network Exchange Theory*, ed. David Willer, 229-247 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 230.

²⁸Eric J. Wolf, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance in Crisis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 90.

²⁹Gert Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 81.

³⁰Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, trans. H. P. Secher (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1993), 25.

³¹Orin E. Klapp, *Models of Social Order: An Introduction to Sociological Theory* (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1973), 107; Peter Lassman, “The Rule of Man over Man: Politics, Power and Legitimation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83-98.

embraced suffering by going to the cross; He became the perfect sacrifice and the great High Priest by offering himself and becoming the servant of all.

In the act of creation, God delegated power to the earthlings. By planting the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden, He granted them the possibility to discern, evaluate, and act according to their judgment. He drew boundaries for humankind's power and designed the focus of the exercise of that power. God's command to eat from any tree except the one "defined the range of acceptable behavior."³² The human beings, both male and female, were given delegated authority to care for the garden and to have dominion over the fish and the animals as stewards assuring the "ongoing activity of God's ordering and creating in the world and in civilization."³³

The Genesis 2 narrative provides a significant foundation for Christian relationships and informs our discussion of member-church interaction. Although it has been argued that a patriarchal hierarchy is rooted in the Genesis 2 narrative, more convincing are the arguments that "man and woman share equally in God's image and bear the same responsibilities."³⁴ The freedom to decide for oneself constitutes power,

³²Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 27.

³³Richard S. Hess, "Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3." In *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, 79-95 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 82.

³⁴The two sides of this argument are delineated by the gender issues between the "Biblical Complementarians" and those who support egalitarianism or equality between male and female. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Wayne Grudem and John Piper, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006). Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of 118 Disputed Questions* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2005). Grudem and his followers support a "complementarian" view, arguing that the Son is eternally subordinated to the Father, and therefore laity are subordinate to pastors, wives to husbands, etc. Groothuis, Fee, Volf, Giles, and others argue that the Father, Son and Spirit are equal, reciprocal, mutual—egalitarian, in their eternal relationship (all would agree that the incarnated Christ was indeed subject to the Father) with the extension that human relationships, when transformed by the gospel relativize human hierarchies. In Christ, the divisions between male or female, slave or free, Jew or gentile become unimportant as the Spirit gives gifts

and serves as a sign of equality, as each had the possibility and capacity to decide to eat or not to eat of the forbidden fruit. No expectation or command is present that one or the other of the two human beings were to have dominion or rule over the other one. If pre-Fall, man is not to rule over woman, nor vice versa, and if only a man and a woman existed at that time, then it would appear that a human being “ruling over” or having dominion over another human being lies outside the created “shalom” that God intended for human existence.

However, the Fall of Genesis 3 radically alters that scenario. When Adam and Eve chose autonomy and self-determining autarky over a mutual, reciprocal relationship in submission to God, social organization became a human task. The desire to dominate was born and has been reified through the generations in forms of physical (and material) strength, patriarchy, the hierarchy-egalitarian dialectic, leadership strivings, and gender clashes. In the arenas in which humankind transacts, social organization becomes a necessity due to impending chaos caused by fallen characteristics such as:

- a. Plurality of truths—the lack of a grand narrative whereby individuals, nations and races have an agreed upon understanding of good and evil;
- b. Competing interest groups—instigating territorialism, manipulation, and control;

indiscriminately. The argument supporting a God-intended biblical hierarchy is critical far beyond the discussion of the gender subordination; indeed it reaches into Trinitarian theology and all other church relationships. For a broader discussion of this see Anita Koeshall, “A Missiologists Contemplation on the Social Organization of the Trinity: The Trinity as a Model for Life Together,” in *Global Missiology English*, 2, no. 7 (2010) available at [Global Missiology.org](http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/4/9), <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/4/9> (accessed October 18, 2010). Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God’s Women Then and Now* (Springfield, MO: Grace & Truth, 2004), 38; Hess, 79-95; Hess, 85.

- c. Limited resources—causing a zero-sum power game;³⁵
- d. Divided wills—differing goals, not only influenced by the material world but also by the spirit world;³⁶
- e. Broken trust;
- f. Need for self-protection—necessitating the exchange of loyalty for protection, building walls, withholding information, and signing contracts.
- g. Myth of equality.

As a result, every culture in the world has developed some mode of social control, whether hierarchies or egalitarian networks (both of which are fallen), that are legitimized and incorporated as part of the socialization process.³⁷ As Hofstede said: “The human species belongs to the category that shows dominance behavior. Human pecking orders are part of the ‘universal’ level of human mental programming.”³⁸

God was not uninterested in humanity’s attempts to self-organize—He liberated a group of ragtag slaves from the oppressive rule of the Egyptians, He gave them the Law and the Covenant through Moses, and called them “My People.” Judges, prophets, and kings came and went as God patiently persuaded, disciplined, and guided His people to

³⁵Simply defined, a zero-sum power game is one in which, since desired resources (be it power, gold, land, prestige, etc.) are finite, person B must lose in order for person A to win. Obviously, this is a human problem, not God’s!

³⁶Shuster, Marguerite. *Power, Pathology, Paradox: The Dynamics of Evil and Good* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 106.

³⁷Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 6. Here I am not implying that the modes of social control are static, rather they are being formed and transformed by agents, even as they are a given in the society.

³⁸Geert Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 80.

choose to remain faithful to the covenant. Finally, the agony of the incarnational process clothed Jesus with human relational structures. His earthly identity was framed by the social relationships of Middle Eastern, first century culture: a Jew under Roman domination, the oldest (albeit illegitimate) son of a lower class carpenter, most probably lacking in formal education (Luke 2: 41-52)³⁹ with little social capital in relationship to the religious ruling class. A subversive, but non-power seeking leader, he was an unusual Rabbi to a band of followers leading them toward Jerusalem and self-sacrifice, a thorn in the sides of the Priests, Sadducees and Pharisees, and trouble to Pilate, the Roman governor.

In the incarnation, Jesus made himself nothing and took on the nature of a servant in human likeness (Phil. 2:7-8), an existence that starkly contrasted the perichoretic relationship of the Trinity which He had forever known. Outside of the above-mentioned fallen human characteristics, the communion of the Father, Son and Spirit was free of the necessity of social organization. Miroslav Volf describes the Trinitarian Father and Son fellowship

as persons standing in reciprocal relationships to one another ... [which] ... allows us to infer the fundamental equality of the divine persons in their mutual determination and their mutual interpenetration. ... The structure of Trinitarian

³⁹“We have exactly one childhood story about him that’s authentic. In that story, he demonstrates a keen mind and good grasp of Scripture, but it doesn’t mean he was formally educated. On the other hand, the Jews assume he didn’t have an education in John 7.

He was presumably taught the law and he seems to have a good grasp of the prophets and the OT in general (if people like N. T. Wright are to be believed, he drew his vocation and his unfolding identity from studying the Scripture). So, I would assume he could read, knew the Torah inside and out, was familiar with traditions, and had a good grasp of the rest of the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms and prophets, and Jewish history. I am not sure any of that implies he had formal education though. While His parents might have sought that—considering the circumstances surrounding his birth, they might also have simply been pious people who “raised him right.” There were synagogues, but we don’t know a lot about formal or informal education for lower-class people; maybe he hung out at the one in Nazareth? (You can kind of creatively imagine a semi-precocious little boy, full of questions and observations, hanging around the synagogue leaders, just like in Jerusalem in Luke.)” Personal email: Daryl R. Jump, October 26, 2010.

relations is characterized neither by a pyramidal dominance of the one ... nor by a hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many ... but rather by a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many.⁴⁰

It is little wonder that Jesus savored the hours of prayer with the Father—His equal, of the same essence, with the same goals and passion, embodying the same truth, sharing all resources, mutually giving glory to one another!

Christ was confronted with the same power temptations of all humanity (Luke 4: 1-13), but chose to use His power in a redeemed way. All-powerful though He was, He invested His rights and privileges, His riches and glory, His control of nature and humanity for the sake of the redemption of the world. The call to His followers consists of a life where the power that one possesses is to be expended that others can live.

Employing power in a redeemed way is a true measure of the transformation of the heart and the submission of the will to Christ of an individual, an organization, a city, or a nation.

Almost without exception, the social definitions of power presuppose that human beings will maneuver others in such a way as to attain their own will in spite of opposition. Mauk Mulder, a Dutch sociologist, describes the effects of the attainment of power on the individual. He theorizes that those with power will strive to increase it; the greater their power, the greater their striving. At the same time, those without power will strive to reduce the power distance between themselves and those with power. The smaller the distance, the greater will be their striving.⁴¹ According to Hofstede, those with

⁴⁰Volf, 217.

⁴¹Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 83. Power Distance is described as the unequal distribution of power. It is the difference between the ability of the superordinate to influence the actions of the subordinate in comparison to the ability of the subordinate to influence the actions of the superordinate. According to Hofstede, the Power Distance index measures the “extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.”

greater power in cultures that legitimize a high power distance, begin to view themselves as of a more noble essence, exempt from common rules, with the right to special privileges (see Table 1). In light of these observations, high power distance relationships do not appear to be appropriate within the body of Christ.

Table 1. Low and High Power Distance in Light of Trinitarian Relationships

Low Power Distance	Trinitarian Model	High Power Distance
All People are interdependent	Father entrusts the work to the Son of giving life and judgment, even as the Son does only what the Father does	Some should be independent, all the rest are dependent
Leaders and followers are of the same essence	Father and Son are of the same essence—I and the Father are one	Leaders are existentially of a different, more noble essence
Rules and expectations apply equally to leaders and followers	Character and actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit correspond to truth	Leaders have special privileges and are exempt from rules
Leaders and followers consider themselves equal	Phil. 2—Jesus was in fact equal with God, but it was not something that He held onto, but emptied himself	Leaders and followers are unequal, and the inequality is good for both
Leaders try to down play the differences—share rewards for accomplishments	The Father and Son are eager to mutually glorify one another	Leaders display differences with dress, office, they receive honor for accomplishments
Power is subject to the ruling of law, good, and evil	Father and Son exemplify good and their actions correspond to goodness	Power can be used by leaders exempt from judgment by law or moral obligation to good and evil
Leadership tries to decrease power distance	Trinity includes Jesus' disciples as friends	Leadership tries to increase power distance
Hierarchy is pragmatic	The subordination of the Son to the Father's will was for the divine purpose of salvation of the world.	Hierarchy is emotional and polarized

Source: Data Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 98, 107-108.

If, following Volf, we allow the Trinitarian relationship to model life together for the church-in-the-city then the following characteristics should mark the inter-church relationships:

- Self-aggrandizement and compiling of power, prestige, possessions, honor, or glory do not belong in the community of faith. Member-churches as well as leaders or followers who are flourishing and seeing the Lord's work accomplished, should be giving glory to the Father, even as Christ did! (John 17:1)
- The will of the church-in-the-city is to be molded by the mission of the Father and the operation determined by the gifts given to the various liquid churches by the Holy Spirit. In correspondence with the philosophy of action of the Trinity, self-giving and self-sacrifice is the *modus operandi*.
- The Truth, or the greater narrative of God, continues to be the story in which all churches strive to be embedded, allowing that narrative not just to be told, but to be lived out in its particularities in local communities, the Church-in-the-city and the church universal.
- Sharing in power as given by the Holy Spirit to be a witness, not only in word but in social organization and action, such that life-giving churches-in-the-city are formed and a prophetic voice is raised against the abuse of power in the world.

In conclusion, redeemed power goes against the rationality of social power theories and, in fact, they would become non-functional as viable theories if power were habitually exercised in a redeemed way. Redeemed Power is: the freedom (*exousia*) made

possible by the Spirit's gifts and the recognition of them by others in the community who create space for them to function in the service to others; the capacity and ability to act (*dunamis*) as a result of Spirit baptism, physical strength, talents, and intellectual and material resources that have been integrated and developed through discipline and maturity. Redeemed power is embodied in redeemed agents invested in a cruciform lifestyle of self-emptying for the sake of others.

The theology and practice of power in the inner and private lives of the believers will be revealed in public and social relationships. The sum of the individuals creates the power-giving or power-keeping personality of the member-church. It follows that inter-church relationships will expose the extent to which the power of member-churches is redeemed. Church planters' theology and practice of power will be reproduced in their progeny, whether generous or stingy, self-centered or other-centered.

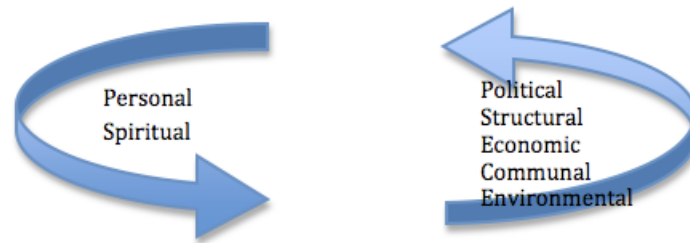


Figure 1: Linkage between inner to outer, public to private power⁴²

Praxis of Redeemed Power:

Redeemed human structures are those that bring all participants to a full level of maturity and wholeness in accordance with God's plan. Structures are habitual patterns of relational power between participating entities. Working together in a covenant

⁴²A. Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1994), 13.

relationship, does not happen automatically once people profess loyalty to Christ; when the body of Christ is constituted by a variety of cultures, generations, and traditions, the complications are exacerbated. Social organizations, whether hierarchical or egalitarian, in which the roles are filled by unredeemed agents acting in power-keeping ways will be non-life giving; while on the contrary, redeemed agents are capable of transforming any human structure. Whatever culture defines as a legitimate way of life, life-giving relationships will seek to implement practices that will bring all member-churches to maturity, so that “the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4: 16). These practices are played out in the dialectic of submission and freedom and the dialectic of leadership and followership. Both of these sets serve to test Christ-likeness, protect against power-keeping tendencies, and call God’s people to holiness.

The Dialectic: Freedom to Choose and Grace to Submit

The freedom to choose is a fundamental human characteristic. God did not withhold this from Adam and Eve; in fact, as was mentioned above, he was the instigator of the possibility of choice in the Garden of Eden. Human social structures that are designed to require participants to surrender their right to think and require passive followership appear to be out of sync with God’s intention for humanity. Therefore, whether in reference to laity within an individual member-church or to member-churches in a regional arena, it is the responsibility of leadership to teach, encourage, and lead in such a way that members are invited to participate in the multi-faceted activities required in the life of the church. In healthy structures, members wrestle with issues of truth, thoughtfully study and critique a situation to determine validity of a course of action,

initiate action in cooperation with the community, and freely commit and engage because of their belief in the mission. Structures, therefore, should serve to draw member-churches towards maturity, reflecting biblical thinking, and increase efficiency in mission through the total participation of the body of Christ.

The indigenous church principles are an expression of the freedom to choose. Church-planters and missiologists have reified the process by which a community of believers becomes mature, internalizing the responsibility of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. The three-selves, formulated by Henry Venn (and then later expounded by Melvin Hodges), give the newly planted churches integrity, self-worth, and responsibility.⁴³ Hodges firmly believed that “the standard of doctrine and conduct must be an expression of the converts’ own concept of the Christian life as they find it in Scriptures.”⁴⁴ The mature capacity to theologize, set a course for the community of faith, recognize the God-given mission, and develop a culturally legitimate, efficient organization in order to accomplish that mission reflects the capacity of the freedom to choose.

Tempered by the freedom-loving individualistic society out of which they were born, the indigenous church principles fail, however, to give integrity, self-worth, and responsibility in societies that do not value autonomy and independence and ignore the other side of the maturity equation—the capacity to suffer, submit, and covenant. To put

⁴³Wilbert R. Shenk, “Henry Venn’s Legacy,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 1, no. 2 (1977): 16-19, 18.

⁴⁴Melvin L. Hodge, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 27.

it briefly, self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating must be grounded in the notion of self-sacrifice.

Therefore, we turn to the other side of redeemed power-giving; the grace to submit—the correlate to the freedom to choose. The often-misunderstood term “submission” carries with it the overtones of subjugation and oppression, but as with other scriptural terms, Paul “switches the semiotic code” and creates in our imaginations a different meaning despite his use of the same vocabulary and phrases.⁴⁵ Wrongly applied, submission gives permanent authority for one person to be the boss while assigning the other person to obey, on the basis of gender, status, age, or some other culturally defined characteristic. Such was the social organization of the culture during Paul’s lifetime. Slaves and women were restricted by “radical systemic and structural disadvantages.”⁴⁶ Today, cultural underpinnings define the extent to which a person is expected to obey while another leads; in Europe and other western cultures, the capacity to submit is a neglected art, while in other parts of the world, subjugation of large portions of the population is the very basis for the way of life.

In Ephesians 5, Paul embeds submission in a Spirit-filled household, depicting it as a grace or gift received from the Holy Spirit and passed on to other members of the community. Submitting is the fourth participle that Paul uses to describe what it means to obey the imperative “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18). The members of the house-churches in Ephesus are to fulfill their daily tasks by: (1) speaking to one another with songs and hymns, (2) singing and making music in their hearts, (3) giving thanks to God

⁴⁵Thiselton, 325.

⁴⁶Ibid., 490.

the Father, and (4) submitting to one another. One can only imagine how being filled with the Spirit would transform the atmosphere in the household where the extended family, slaves and servants, the family business, and the church were all housed in one close-knit cooperative!

Furthermore, on the basis of the new relationship with Christ, Paul relativizes the assigned role held by the one person with the culturally legitimate position of commanding while others obey—the one man who was the husband, father, and master.⁴⁷ Filled with the Spirit, he was to love his wife and give himself up for her, devote himself to training the children without exasperating them, and treat his slaves as fellow brothers in the Lord. As Fee points out, the role of the powerful partner in the relational dyad was under the greater scrutiny and required the greater transformation. Rather than lording it over the weaker partners for his own self-importance, a new sense of mutuality, love, and respect was to permeate his actions toward them. Paul did not intend to destroy humanly created social organization (remember, it is a human necessity), but to fill the roles with redeemed agents. Wives, children, and slaves knew their culturally legitimized roles, but now they were to fill them with a new motivation, out of love for Christ. A yielded-ness and cooperative spirit was to mark the attitude of the less powerful—or the church-household would fail and bring shame to the name of Christ in that socio-cultural setting.

If submission means giving orders and blind obedience, then mutual submission is nonsensical. Rather, I would suggest that submission is a grace, part of the package of gifts granted by the Spirit to *every* believer. Each person, community, or organization

⁴⁷Gordon D. Fee, “The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18-6:9: Is there a Divinely Ordained Hierarchy in the Life of the Church and Home that is Based on Gender Alone?” *Priscilla Papers* (Winter 2002) 16, no. 1:3-8.

expends their power to lift up those with whom they have relationship so that all will flourish in the community of Christ.

The Christian household described by Paul is a nuclear representation of the larger Christian community. Would Paul today have pointed words for the more powerful entity that is unaccustomed to the idea of submitting? 1 Corinthians 12:21-31 seems to be written for just such a situation, for one member-church could, but must not, say, “I have no need of you” or “If you do not come under my control, I will just ignore you.”

If Paul is concerned about the health of the body of Christ, which is implied in Ephesians 5:21ff, and if the body of Christ is constituted by the many member-churches, then, indeed, a new fragrance of mutuality, love, and respect is necessary. Submission, in the sense of giving life, energy, and strength for the good of the other, is a gift that one community of faith gives to the other, even as they yield to one another for the common goal as the eschatological community within their city. Without mutual submission, there is no possibility of community response to the Lord’s presence in worship and obedience, no community theologizing, and limited Spirit-gifted ministry between member-churches. As a result of broken relationships, the mission task will dissolve into territorial bickering.

The two poles of submission and freedom produce harmony in the body of Christ. The gift of freedom enables member-churches to act independently. On the other hand, the gift of submission calls each member to yield his or her “right” of independence in order to theologize and envision in community.

Dialectic: Leadership and Followership

Very closely related to the submission-freedom dialectic is that of leadership-followership. The mature nature of any community depends on the healthy dynamic relationships between leaders and followers in reciprocal service to one another—balanced in asymmetrical tension, as first one leads and then another, depending on the gifts given by the Spirit. In order to create a church-in-the-city with liquid and generous ecclesiology, individuals with roles of responsibility and influence are vitally important in the formation of ecclesial identity. However, the health of any church depends on the followership, the common lay people, who constitute the majority of any organization.⁴⁸

Paul reminds the members of Corinth, who are quarreling over who has the most spiritual leader,⁴⁹ that they do indeed have human leaders, but this leadership is redefined, against “this worldly evaluations of their roles.”⁵⁰ One can imagine the various house-churches meeting together, perhaps at Gaius’s home and comparing their primary teachers—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and even Christ! “No more boasting about men!” Paul ordered (1 Cor. 3:21). Do not confuse boldness, assurance, human wisdom, enthusiasm, and Weberian charisma for spiritual leadership. Let the multiple builders, with their various gifts, build with care, for their work will be judged. Thiselton summarizes that “each minister is perceived as part of a comprehensive range of gifts and resources, all

⁴⁸R. E. Kelley, *The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow and Followers Who Lead Themselves* (New York: Doubleday Currency, 1992).

⁴⁹In this case, the term leader is not used in the 1 Corinthians text, rather, the divisions among them seem to have to do with giving personal loyalty to one of the gifted men, who it is argued, is the most spiritual; Thiselton, 121.

⁵⁰Thiselton, 326.

lavished upon them as a corporeity or plurality to be used without picking and choosing the gifts”⁵¹

In New Testament cities, the church, comprised of multiple house churches, had poly-centric leadership,⁵² which Paul describes as the various gifts given to the church by the Spirit, embodied by men and women (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). Volf argues that the life and structure of the church “is not monocentric-bipolar community, however articulated, but rather fundamentally a *polycentric community*.”⁵³ Ultimately, “no one human being can correspond to the Trinitarian relational network.”⁵⁴ Volf argues for greater poly-centricity than just multiple pastors; he presses for full participation by the whole congregation in mutual interdependence and communion.⁵⁵ In a non-liquid ecclesiology, the church tends to assign all the gifts to one person, the pastor, and to prescribe to the members a role in the church that supports the pastor’s or a centrally created church vision. Such a church structure engenders passive or angry followers and

⁵¹Ibid., 326

⁵²I shrink from using this term, as popular culture has turned it into a demi-god, where that particular role is the one to be strived for. It has tones of a monarchy—a one-man (or woman)-rule, which one must attain in order to see one’s own vision come into being. Even under the guise of “servant leadership,” the “leader” is often still the one who strives to maintain power distance, only this time, for the sake of the others, rather than allowing others to move into mature positions of serving, theologizing, and envisioning.

⁵³Volf, 224.

⁵⁴Ibid., 217

⁵⁵hJgeomai in *Louw and Nida Greek Lexicon*, Accordance Bible Software (Version 8.0.5). Altamonte Springs, FL: Oak Tree Software, 2008. In the New Testament, the actual word “leader” for Christian relationships is used to describe gifted members in only two instances— in Romans 12: 8 and in Hebrews 13:17. The Greek word indicates helping or giving aid, or to influence others to follow a recommended course of action. This stands in contrast to the words translated in reference to worldly leadership which indicate domination or governance by the powerful, those of higher status, or the most important. The Greek lexicon notes an important linguistic reality: “In some languages it is difficult to distinguish readily between expressions for ‘leading’ and those which refer to ‘ruling’ or ‘governing,’ but it is important to try to distinguish clearly between these two different sets of interpersonal relations.”

self-sufficient leaders.⁵⁶ Or as Robert Kelley quoted, “A Nation of sheep begets a government of wolves.”⁵⁷ It is better to enable laity to be creative critical thinkers, to envision God’s work where they interact daily with colleagues and neighbors, and to empower them to craft ways of ministering in their daily arenas.

Macchia explains that the church has a “charismatic structure [which] is fluid and relational, because spiritual gifts are graced ways of relating to each other that depend on the will of the Spirit at work among us and the contextual needs of the ministry of the Word of God (1 Cor. 12:11).”⁵⁸ Redeemed power, working through redeemed agents in member-churches in a city will form dynamic relationships, receiving and giving, leading and following, each in their turn according to the need of the mission. The dialectics of freedom and submission, leadership and followership serve as God-given means of protecting His people against the power-keeping tendencies inbred in human beings. *Every person and every organization will use power to their own ends if they are not transformed daily by the Spirit and held accountable in submitted, covenant relationships.*

Practices of the Church-in-the-City

There is no “right” structure for a generous church-in-the-city, but power-giving relationships generate community openness among God’s people. The church-in-the-city

⁵⁶Anita L. Koeshall, “Toward a Theory of Dynamic Asymmetry and Redeemed Power: A Case Study of Reflexive Agents in German Pentecostal Churches,” Ph.D. diss., School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2008, 180.

⁵⁷Kelley, 34.

⁵⁴Frank Macchia, “Signs of Grace in a Graceless World: The Charismatic Structure of the Church in Trinitarian Perspective,” European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism, <http://www.glopent.net/Members/jhaustein/macchia-2006.pdf/view> (accessed October 20, 2010), 5-6.

begins—with a man or woman having a heart full of encouragement, with a prayer circle of two or three, with a responsible group of pastors and laity who are generous and courageous enough to recognize the body of Christ in others. Their relationship is marked by a reciprocal mutuality of submission and freedom, leading and following, reflecting the signs of redeemed power. They practice hospitality toward one another and toward strangers. Romans 1:11-12 says, “I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually strengthened by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.” “Here is the idea that everyone will bring gifts to this meeting, but that the content of these treasures and talents may not be known, even to their bearers, until they are exchanged in an atmosphere of hospitality.”⁵⁹ Hospitality is an opportunity to listen to the stranger and to be known in an open-hearted atmosphere, where life stories are exchanged and table fellowship shared before embarking on mission together. Not to be forgotten are churches of other traditions, who are perhaps “strangers,” yet are awaiting hospitality as God’s appointed workers in our cities!

Laity and pastors serve the city together, with sleeves rolled up painting schools, cleaning parks, serving the homeless, mentoring youth, ministering to boys and girls, and sharing the life of Christ in the dark corners of the city. Together, they plant churches filled with redeemed agents who employ redeemed power in their structures. Together, they exegete the spiritual condition of the city, envision a liquid church for each particular need, and empower gifted men and women to the task. The Spirit does a new work—among the planters and the lost!

⁵⁹John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission*, vol. 17 of *Overtures to Biblical Theology*, ed. W. Brueggemann and J. R. Donahue (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 8.

The Challenge

We began this series of lectures in search of an ecclesiology-to-go with the question: “What is Church?” We have sought to pry us away from the concept of church as a pastor plus building plus congregation, and to envision church as a living organism, made of many parts, each uniquely different but working in unity under the headship of Christ. The church-in-the-city is constituted of many liquid forms, such as Students for Christ groups on university campuses or Matthew’s Table, but each is marked with the DNA of the five anchoring pillars. As redeemed agents employing redeemed power, they embrace the diversity of multiple member-churches, and generously lay down their lives, going to the cross so that every community of believers flourishes. With a new understanding of submission and freedom, leadership and followership in the light of redeemed power, “being church” becomes an adventure. Church planting agents are free to be creative and energized, to breathe life into the church as Christ would have it for a particular people group and generation. To that end:

1. I challenge our Bible Schools, Master’s Commissions, graduate schools, yes, and even AGTS, to prepare pastors and laity for innovative “ministry.” I challenge you to practice and teach redeemed power, so that students do not leave your doors with only one image of church, pastor, and laity. Send them out, not as individuals, but as covenanted partners who will hold one another accountable to be generous and to live a cruciform lifestyle. Open your eyes to the laity, who have often been limited to passive roles and empower them to fulfill their important place in the church. Implant in tomorrow’s church members a liquid, Spirit-driven vision with the courage to achieve the ideas born in their hearts.

2. I challenge the big and powerful entities in our cities to strengthen the hidden, vulnerable, and weak without subsuming them. Train people under your influence to envision and theologize, so that the laity not only recognizes non-liquid churches outside of their own walls, but is prepared to envision and embrace them—as their calling. An extroverted, centripetal, encouraging, and power-giving mindset should characterize each member-church, whether small or large. The Spirit empowers every member to serve.
3. I challenge those who work cross-culturally, whether at home or abroad, to not duplicate a one-size-fits-all type of church, with leadership models purporting to be scriptural yet which constrain God’s family on earth to one leadership style. Rather, let us listen carefully to our brothers and sisters who are much more attuned to contexts and community relationships than we are. Let us submit to their lead and ask the Spirit to help us model redeemed power rather than pre-fabricated roles. Let us exemplify church as a living organism, freeing missionaries, inner-city workers, chaplains, and even “normal” Christ-followers to be the Church of Christ in all its multi-faceted forms. Let us be Spirit-filled, creative followers.
4. Because the church is given life by the Spirit, because it is framed in many cultures, and because it is liquid, fitting into many diverse contexts, the church is improvisational. Because our Head is Christ, the power-giving, embracing incarnation of God, the church, too, must strive towards His perfection. Our ecclesiology must be liquid, generous, and empowered to plant the church and flourish in the far corners of this green earth until Christ returns when humanity can surrender the task of social

organization to the Lord, for we will be united in His presence as every knee bows to our all-powerful, crucified Lord.

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