

NEW WINE INTO NEW WINESKINS (LUKE 5:38):  
CHURCH GROWTH AND REVITALISATION

by

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## NEW WINE INTO NEW WINESKINS (LUKE 5:38): CHURCH GROWTH AND REVITALISATION

Individuals and organisations follow a general developmental cycle, that begins with birth, and progresses through growth, maturity, decline and death. While individuals necessarily die after a period of years, organisations may continue through many generations, though they too may die. Once an organisation reaches maturity, it tends toward decline, for sin has corrupted not only men, but all creation (Rms. 8:21-22). Though all things tend toward decay and death, they can be revitalised, for such is the power of God's grace.

Like all organisations, the church can become ineffective. Many prefer abandoning the old organisation and starting a new work. Revitalisation may be the better solution, though it is certainly the greater challenge.

This project considers the organisational life cycle biblically, historically and contemporarily. It considers how the church grows, and what keeps it from growing. It also considers the merits of creating 'new wineskins,' versus revitalising old ones.

### Key Terms

Organisational Life Cycle; Revitalisation; Church Growth; Modality; Sodality; Change; Motivation; Revival; Persecution; Change Agent; *Missio Dei*.

"I declare that *New Wine into New Wineskins (Luke 5:38): Church Growth and Revitalisation*, is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

## Introduction

The University of South Africa, Department of Missiology, considers the discipline of Missiology to be multidisciplinary, concerned with intentional extroversion, having concern for others, with intent to change and heal, able to translate between different communities, pursuing the "cutting edge," and existing as a change agent and agent of interpretation (Missiology, 2003:39). In effect, Missiology is concerned with the proactivity of God's people in the world, especially as proactivity differs from maintenance. Where contemporary Missiology is often focused on the establishment of new works, I believe it also has a place in the revitalisation of existing works.

Mature organisations intrinsically tend toward maintenance (*i.e.*, self-preservation), not proactivity. Declining organisations typically lose their bent toward proactivity. For Christian organisations, this means a loss of Missiological *ethos* and praxis. Regaining and keeping a Missiological focus is critical to the health and longevity of every Christian organisation.

There is much to be learned by considering the church as human organisation. Contributions from both the secular and religious sectors have increased our understanding of human organizations substantially in recent decades. Organisational structures are never an end in themselves, but a means to an end, which can either help, or hinder Kingdom growth. Human organisations also perform in generally predictable ways -- be they secular or sacred, which enables us to better study and understand them.

Human organizations develop in a manner (generally) analogous to individual humans, where there is birth, growth, maturity and decline. Unlike individuals, however, organizations can live many generations. The primary question this paper considers, is why do some organizations fail after a relatively short period, while others are able to prosper for many generations (*e.g.*, Roman Catholic Church)?

We will consider in addition, what might be done to prolong organisational life and increase effectiveness. Can Kingdom organisations that are in decline be revitalized, and do we too quickly abandon organisations already in decline? Finally, what organisational truth does Luke 5:38 teach us? Our quest, then, is to better understand church decline and the potentiality for revitalisation.

This project will consider Missiological revitalisation in theological, historical and praxiological contexts. Three chapters will focus on these topics, followed by a fourth to synthesize and conclude the discussion. As a North American, the discussions herein will draw heavily from that of which I am most familiar. Though many examples will be cited from a European and North American context, they are meant only as didactic tools. I readily acknowledge the damage so often caused by ethnic and national pride, and humbly offer this work, recognizing my own (inherent) weaknesses.

I assume from the beginning, that revitalisation is possible, but difficult to attain. I also assume that the Bible is inspired, infallible and authoritative. This study is valuable to the body of Christ, because it deals theoretically and practically with issues that have, or will, affect us all. Some of the terminology herein may be initially strange to the reader, but I believe sufficient explanation is given in context to afford comprehension.

### **Working Hypothesis**

I believe Luke 5:38, along with the fuller message of Luke 5:34-39, will reveal important Missiological truths concerning the life-cycle of the church, especially growth and revitalisation.

## **Chapter One** **Theological Inquiry**

Our Lord Jesus Christ was able to speak with deep profundity in brief statements, making effective use of parabolic figures. Luke 5:38 is one example, a passage that is part of a slightly larger commentary by Christ, which comprises Luke 5:33-39 (*cf.*, Mat. 9:16-17).

He (Jesus) told them this parable: 'No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, "The old is better"' (Luk. 5:36-39).

Jesus had already wrestled several times with Jewish religious leaders, and would do so many times more before His death. The Jewish religious leaders had fallen prey to one of mankind's greatest weaknesses, trying to save themselves (Isa. 2, 14) through religiosity. The hedge the religious leaders had constructed around the *Torah* was meant to protect, but instead became an obstacle that prevented those seeking *Yahweh* from coming near to Him. Surely the Pharisees would refuse to partake of this 'new wine.'

On the heels of this Pharisaical criticism, Jesus responded with wisdom so powerful that it still overwhelms the reader. Commentators are in general agreement over the meaning of the passage, believing a part of Christ's earthly mission was to produce a radical break with established religious order and practices (*e.g.*, Judaism). Jesus makes clear that He has not come "merely to add devotional routines to those already practiced, for what he brings is not a patch but a whole new garment" (Gaebelien, 1992:8:885).

Using a patch from a new garment to cover a hole in an old garment, will not work. A piece of new cloth will shrink when washed, tearing an even bigger hole in the old garment. In the same way, adding a "patch" to existing religious structures would do damage to the new message, and tear the fabric of the old. Jesus knew that to make the lasting impact He intended, He would have to keep separate the new garment, not merely

attach a "patch" to the existing one (Judaism). It is for this reason, I believe, that Christ used the destruction of the Temple (70 AD) by the Romans, to more clearly demarcate and constitute the distinction between Judaism and The Way.

The second illustration concerns wineskins, something few moderns are familiar with. The skin of an animal was sewn together and used to hold wine, or other liquids. Usually, after the newly harvested grapes were placed in vats and trodden, the juice was left in large, open vats for about seven days, while sediments settled. The new wine was then drawn off (Hag. 2:16) and poured into jars, or ovine wineskins. The wine would ferment for a couple of month's prior to use.

The skins used were initially pliable and soft. As the wine "cured," or fermented, the soft, pliable skins could expand without bursting. After much use, the skins would dry, being far less pliable. Though they could be reused to carry water, for example, they could not be reused for holding new, fermenting wine, because of its expansive and volatile characteristics. The lack of elasticity in the old wineskin would not allow it.

The illustration Jesus uses is superb. His immediate reference to the old Jewish religious structures and their inflexibility, contrasts with the new freedoms in Christ and New Covenant. The transition from the old structure to the new would not be immediate, as we see throughout the New Testament, especially in Acts. How strong is man's bent to keep the familiar, even in the face of the new and better? "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud" (2Pe. 2:22c). Traditions have protective value and are biblically encouraged (Deu. 6). There are times, however, when change is necessary, and traditions become obstacles instead of blessings (Mat.15:1f). Once individuals or organizations become entrenched in their ways, change is difficult, something Jesus knew well.

At times, the church has been full of spiritual vitality, bursting with desire and energy to share Christ with others. In time, however, every person and organisation looses its initial zeal, reaching a homeostatic level at which it can maintain purpose and functionality. Like old wineskins, individuals and organisations eventually become stiff and set in their form, unable to change. For individuals and organisations, additional stretching "tests," and quite often, reveals a faith found wanting.

One of the toughest questions the church has wrestled with over the years relates

to how completely Jesus meant to separate Judaism, from what would become Christianity. Jesus makes very clear that He has not...come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;

I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 5:17-20).

What are we to think then? How completely are we to understand this break? There has long been a school of thought in the church that believes the Church has replaced Israel, both literally and figuratively. Others reject what some have called Replacement Theology. This topic is quite involved, and goes beyond the limitations of this project.

Very briefly, I believe the Church is a wholly unique organisational entity, separate from, but related to Israel. As two unique organisational entities, they are both streams of *Yahweh's* redemptive process. The great silence following the Third Jewish Diaspora, which really begins after the Bar-Cochba rebellion in 135 AD, is not the end of Israel, but a fulfilment of the promises in Deuteronomy 28.

Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known -- wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life" (Deu. 28:64-66).

The Apostle Paul clearly addresses this error, which had arisen already in his day. "I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1). To be sure, national Israel

was nonexistent for some 1,800 years. It was during this period that Replacement Theology really took root in the Church. Since May 14, 1948, however, we cannot deny their existence. Many in the Church have assumed that Israel's disobedience was the reason for her troubles, and right they are. We cannot, however, deny the grace, mercy, and love of God to all His people.

For thus says the High and Lofty One, Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners (Isa. 57:15-18).

As necessarily harsh as Scripture is dealing with man's corruption, *Yahweh* is the God of all comfort. He extends grace and love and mercy to the undeserving (Joh 3:16-18). To suppose that *Yahweh* would be angry at Israel forever is also to suppose that He might do the same with the Church! Are we to compare *Yahweh's* faithfulness to our own unfaithfulness? As difficult as it is for us to sort out, both organisational entities exist as separate, but related. To be sure, their paths have intersected in history, and will continue to do so. While present-day Israel is hardly the fulfilment of prophecies concerning Israel in the future (*cf.*, Eze. 40-48; Zec. 14:12-21), neither has the Church reached its prophetic glory (Rev. 19). I realise others disagree with my position, but here I stand. For further reading, I suggest *Broken Branches* (Levitt, Z. [1995]. Dallas, TX), or *Jews, Gentiles and the Church* (Larsen, D. [1995]. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House).

I believe Jesus was speaking to the issue at hand (Luk. 5:36-39), and I prefer a literal interpretation. Even more, I believe Jesus is telling us some critically important truths about organisational development. Thus, Jesus is once again using common and natural matters to explain to our puny minds, complex issues.

Lastly, let us consider the theological concept of renewal. The term is found in



the Old Testament as *chadash* (1Sa. 11:14; Psa. 51:10, 103:5; Lam. 5:21; 2Ch. 15:8) and *chalaph* (Job 29:20; Isa. 40:31, 41:1). In the New Testament, the terms rendered 'renew' are *anakainizo* (Heb. 6:6), *anakainoo* (2Co. 4:16; Col. 3:10), and *ananeoo* (Eph. 4:23). Though specific use and meaning vary slightly, the undercurrent suggests a work of the Holy Spirit, not a work of man. I submit to you that revitalisation (along with "regeneration" and *Missio Dei*) is a Divine work in which man is sometimes invited to participate, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php. 2:13, NAS).

## Chapter Two Historic Inquiry Old Testament

Scripture tells us a great deal about organisational development and the organisational life-cycle. The Old Testament provides historical insight into the formation, growth, maturity and decline of national Israel, with the inter-testamental period providing additional insights. We appear to witness the death of national Israel around 135 AD, only to be amazed by the historically unprecedented re-establishment of the Jewish State some 1800 years later. Thus, with national Israel, we are able to study each phase of organisational life -- including revitalisation -- except death.

Organisations do drift from the foundations on which they were founded. The boundaries they establish, both physical and ideological, necessarily maintain their identity and *raison d'être* (i.e., justification for existence). While organisations should adjust (Contextualise) to cultural changes, they must also maintain ideological integrity. When the ideological foundation changes, as it sometimes does, we can expect changes in leadership and membership. What makes Israel and the Church different from all other organisations is that *Yahweh*, not men, establishes their foundations. The "Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men" (Dan. 4:17, NIV).

Israel's history is especially interesting for our purposes. Though Israel is a governmental body, the organisational traits of civil and religious governments are quite similar. What makes the greatest difference is whether the organisation possesses the power of coercion. At times, the Church has possessed the power of coercion (e.g., 4th Century and later), a factor that invariably turns the Church corrupt, for this spiritual organisation trusts in its own power, not Christ. National Israel is much the same way. When economically and militarily powerful, Israel's allegiance drifts away from *Yahweh*. When Israel is weak, it tends to turn back to *Yahweh*, but these are only generalities. Thus, Christ says to the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Co. 12:9b).

Israel's formative years -- their bondage in Egypt -- are developmentally

important, as *Yahweh* forms His people through the fires of trial. "For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined" (Psa. 66:10). He turns raw lumps of individual clay, into a congregation of witnesses. "The whole purpose of God was to bless one people so that they might be the channel through which all the nations on the earth might receive a blessing. Israel would be God's missionaries to the world -- and thereby so are all who believe in this same gospel" (Kaiser, 2000:20).

*Yahweh* forged a people in the fires of testing, first in Egypt, then in the wilderness. His ultimate purpose was to establish them in Canaan. The transition from Egypt to Canaan is an important trek for us to understand. It teaches us about our personal salvific experience with *Yahweh*, going from spiritual death to life in Christ. It also teaches us a great deal about the nature of organisational formation.

The trek from Egypt to Canaan teaches us, both individually and organisationally, about change and transition. Change is the physical part of the process, while transition is the emotional component. We can physically move from Egypt to Canaan, but never make the emotional transition. Throughout Israel's trek, we see them wrestling with this.

Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger' (Exo. 16:2-3).

How often since, has *Yahweh* called His people to move, only to endure their complaints along the way? How many a church leader has cried out before the Lord, like Moses, wondering how to endure the pressures? Egypt is the place where we begin. For Israel it was a literal place, for us figurative. It is not *Yahweh's* "ideal" for us, so He takes us from "here" to "there." Sometimes we begin willingly, but along the way find the "cost" to be great. "Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion (Luk. 14:28)?

Once in the wilderness -- the place of disequilibrium -- *Yahweh* crucifies our carnal desires, surely the most painful part of the process. *Yahweh* will not let us go back to Egypt, though the temptation is great. Neither will He allow us to go ahead until He

knows we are ready. Israel thought they were ready to enter Canaan (Num. 14), but soon learned they were not. *Yahweh* then took them back into the wilderness to further purge them of "Egypt," while at the same time instilling within them with His new ways of thinking and doing.

Like Israel, we undergo a catharsis of carnal desires, as *Yahweh* purges us of predominant attitudes and practices that oppose Him. At both the individual and organisational levels, there is a birthing process, followed by a wilderness period. Seldom does this make sense to our puny minds, but God in His eternal wisdom knows what needs to be accomplished. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). We must let go of the old, before we can embrace the new.

The battle to conquer Canaan is so much like the challenges every organisation faces when it is growing. Once we know where we are going (vision) and why (*raison d'être*), we focus on the doing (praxis). It is critical to understand that form follows function. Only later, when the organisation becomes "unhealthy," does function follow form, the master serving the slave, as it were. We see this with Israel, where a breakdown in organisational vision and unity occurs (Num. 32), as some of the tribes want to settle East of the Jordan before reaching their appointed objectives.

Having conquered Canaan, Israel settles into a mature pattern of living. From time to time various trials occur which both test their fibre and force them to reconsider their reason for being. Unless they are careful, their vision and sense of being begin to drift. Even under King David, Israel never does acquire the full measure of land promised to them by *Yahweh*. We, like Israel, can experience God's blessings, and become complacent. Complacency leads to stolidity and slothfulness, and thus, we arrive at Deuteronomy 8, a passage that teaches us the normative pattern individuals and organizations go through.

As God cares for His people, He provides and protects. He knows that humans are inclined to abuse privilege, and think more highly of themselves than they ought. For this reason, *Yahweh* balances blessing with discipline. Sound rearing of children requires great love and great discipline. So balancing blessing, *Yahweh* chastises those He loves,

saying, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction. For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights" (Pro. 3:11-12; *cf.*, Deu. 8:5; Heb. 12:3-11).

Because *Yahweh* allows a measure of free will to His creatures (*cf.*, Luther, M. *Bondage of the Will*), He will not always keep us from doing harm to ourselves. As such, Israel begins the downward spiral of the Judges period. God in His grace raised up a variety of leaders (*i.e.*, judges) to slow the decline; but even these were progressively ineffective.

Under David, Israel reaches great heights. David is largely obedient to *Yahweh*, but a man troubled -- as we all are -- with carnal weaknesses and failures. Scripture does not shy away from these painful glimpses into the lives of God's appointed leaders, as He reveals them to be as morally impoverished as us. With King David's death, the kingdom is strong.

The kingdom then passes to Solomon, at first strong and obedient to *Yahweh*, but too soon turning to follow his carnal passions (*cf.*, I Kings 11) and in turn, leading Israel back into decline. Godly leadership is critically important to organisational health and prosperity. The contrasts between Samuel and Saul, Saul and David, and David and Solomon, are worthy of deep consideration. Organisations (and nations) require leaders who are at once visionary, passionate, ethical, and compassionate.

The period between David and the Babylonian Exile are especially interesting for our study. Beginning with Solomon, Israel split into two separate entities. Each entity had its own set of problems. The northern kingdom of Israel follows the path of religious corruption, thanks mostly to its morally corrupt leader, Jeroboam, who is afraid the people will return to the Temple in Jerusalem to (properly) worship *Yahweh*.

It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt! And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan (1Ki 12:28d-29).

Israel was founded on corruption and would never be loosed from it. We never do see a reform king in Israel. With Israel's path set, *Yahweh* finally brings the Assyrians to destroy them (c. 722 BC).

The story is only slightly different for the southern nation of Judah, and perhaps

only for two reasons. First, Judah retained the remnants of its Yahwehistic religion, and second, because Judah had a few reform kings -- namely, Jehoash, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The religious corruption of Judah is noted in many places, including this passage from Ezekiel:

So I went in and saw, and there -- every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls... For they say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land'... Between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east" (Eze. 8:10, 12, 16).

An organisation, or nation, must know and remember why it was formed and why it exists. The *raison d'être* or justification for existence is the core around which people marshal. The northern kingdom of Israel lost its *raison d'être* when Jeroboam led the rebellion against Solomon (1Ki. 11). The southern kingdom of Judah fared some better, but lost its *raison d'être* centred in *Yahweh*, and centered itself instead in a physical structure (Temple) and a tradition (history). No organisation, or nation can long survive without a *raison d'être* intact.

Following the massive moral corruption of the Omri - Ahab period, a reform king took the throne in Judah. Jehoash led the people in covenant renewal, a fresh oath of allegiance to *Yahweh*, and recommitment to the Davidic line. Jehoash also cleansed the land of Baal's temple, killed the priest Mattan, and pulverized demon idols. "Not only was pagan worship of Baal put away, but a reorganization of the temple worship followed that was in accordance with the Law of Moses and that followed the order instituted by David" (Austel, 1988:220).

This leader-led reform did not last, for even this reform king fell into apostasy following the death of Jehoiada, the chief priest (2Ch. 24:6, 15-15). "Therefore they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass" (2Ch. 24:18). Yet again, *Yahweh* sends the prophet (Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada) to confront the corruption of the people. With their predictable rebellion, *Yahweh* sends Syria who

"destroyed all the leaders of the people from among the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus" (2Ch. 24:23).

As anyone who has attempted reform can tell you, it is far more difficult than starting a new organisation. The primary reason for this is rooted in the nature of men. Once we learn a pattern of behaviour, we are hard pressed to change. Because we are born into sin, our flesh is constantly bent toward iniquity. The people of God are led by the Spirit of God, but are still flesh. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). Truly, we cannot effect reform without God's intervention.

Does God fail us then? Is He unable to fulfil His promises to us, protecting us even from ourselves? Many who read Kings and Chronicles see a God who is impotent to stop the obvious deterioration of His people. Cannot *Yahweh* help even His own?

The truth is that *Yahweh* is just, and will not tolerate injustice among His own. *Yahweh* is not unduly harsh with the nations, for His justice is equal to all, including His own corrupt children. Based on choices He has given them (*cf.*, Deu. 28), He only responds to their disobedience. "So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies, because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day" (2Ki 21:14-15). Could *Yahweh* expect obedience from the nations (*goyim*), and not from His own? Certainly not! "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God (1Pe. 4:17)? *Yahweh's* actions are justified, and His sovereignty over all is reaffirmed.

Hezekiah was a renowned reform king, whose reign was marked by obedience to *Yahweh*. "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him" (2Ki 18:4-5). For his obedience, *Yahweh* blessed him and Judah greatly. The prophet Isaiah encouraged Hezekiah greatly during Sennacherib's threat against Jerusalem (c.700 BC).

Following his death, however, his son Manasseh reigned. This regime was

marked by extreme apostasy. Manasseh "caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger" (2Ch. 33:6).

Especially noteworthy about Hezekiah's reign, is the transition from his regime to the next. Hezekiah's son Manasseh did not share his spiritual vigour. How often have kingdoms, or family businesses been passed from grandfather, to father, to son, only to see the business become weaker with each passing? The personal integrity of the leader matters greatly, and is precisely why Scripture places such emphasis on 'heart' values.

Several kings would follow Hezekiah before the Babylonian Exile. The 46 years following Hezekiah were amazing for the degree of decline that occurred. *Yahweh* would then bring to the throne, Josiah (*yo'shiyahu*), whose reign of thirty-one years "was the last surge of political independence and religious revival before the disintegration of the southern kingdom that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC" (Douglas, 1987:548). Hilkiah the priest found the *Torah* in the temple, which enabled true worship to be restored. Sadly, these reforms would not last far beyond Josiah's reign.

Again and again, Israel and its leaders are taken from the heights of blessing, to the wilderness of chastisement. A heart far from God is a vessel inadequate to share that glory with others. The downward spiral (organisational decline) continued, and *Yahweh's* anger grew. "Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst" (Eze. 22:21; cf., Eze. 22-24). *Yahweh* gives what remains of Israel to Nebuchadnezzar and the mighty Babylonians. "O LORD, correct me, but with justice, not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing" (Jer. 10:24).

'Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against those nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations... Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a



perpetual desolation' (Jer. 25:8b-9, 12).

The Exilic period shows *Yahweh* again refining His disobedient people (*cf.*, 1Sa. 3, 4; Eze. 8-13; 2Ki. 17-20; 22-23), and at the same time, effecting Missiological (*e.g.*, centrifugal) progress. Time and again, Israel rejected the 'high calling' of God. Yet, in spite of their lack of cooperation, *Yahweh* was accomplishing His purposes -- the *Missio Dei* (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28). God works through His people in both a centripetal and centrifugal manner (Jonathan Lewis, in *Perspectives: The Notebook*, 1999:40), often without their cooperation. Israel's witness was far more centripetal (1Ki. 8:41-43), than the mostly centrifugal witness of New Testament believers (Mat. 28:19).

After the prophetic 70 years (Jer. 25:12; Eze. 1:1), a remnant of Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild (539 BC). After many trials, fits and starts, the community is re-established, but with nowhere near the same splendour and vigour as before. "But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy..." (Eze. 3:12). The first century AD grandeur of Jerusalem and Israel are only thanks to the Romans. Israel never has attained the measure of blessing *Yahweh* promised them. "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates-- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites'" (Gen. 15:18-21).

Israel's decided bent toward decline is obvious. As angry as *Yahweh* sometimes is with the Jews, He still proves that He is faithful and compassionate. Should we, then, forsake and/or discard those in decline, or work toward their restoration? Surely each situation is different, but *Yahweh's* patience with Israel challenges us today.

With the coming of the Messiah, *Yahweh* creates a new organization -- the Church -- but even then, would not forsake Israel (Jer. 31:33-37). "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD" (Jer. 31:37). The re-establishment of national Israel (May of 1948) tangibly validates *Yahweh's* covenant faithfulness to the Jews, in spite of them. "It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the

wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Deu. 9:5).

How Missiologically effective was Israel? Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (*Mission in the Old Testament* - 2000) has shown that Israel was more Missiologically effective than many believe. Kaiser shows how *Missio Dei* was effected in many ways throughout the Old Testament. The plagues on Egypt, for example, were not meant to destroy Egypt, but rather to teach the Egyptians of the LORD (Exo. 7:5, 17; 8:22; 14:4, 18; 9:14, 16), and to reveal the inadequacies of the occult deities they worshipped. In the end, *Yahweh* accomplishes His purposes through Israel and the Church, as He will, and quite often, in spite of them. To Him alone be all glory, now and forever!

### **The Prophet**

*Yahweh* often worked through the prophets to call Israel back to Himself. The office of prophet was, and still is, a primary agent of renewal. Moses the leader and prophet (Deu. 18:15-22), was *Yahweh's* "mouthpiece" to the Jews, because they were afraid of hearing Him directly (Exo. 20:18-19; Deu. 18:16). From then on, *Yahweh* spoke primarily through the prophets to inform, challenge, chastise, and encourage His people. Are not the prophets, then and now, agents of reform?

The prophets are often viewed as innovators. "Of late, however, many are calling these prophets reformers rather than innovators, saying that their message was not new but had been implicit in the teachings of Israel for some years past" (Wood, 1979:74). The primary task of the prophet -- then and now -- is reformation! From the beginning, the prophets have been calling God's people back to healthy, intimate fellowship with Him.

The prophet is hypersensitive to man's corruption and becomes the trumpet (*shofar*) through which God speaks to pierce the soul of man. For "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:12-13). To no other group of people does God reveal more about the true condition of man. To them especially, the Lord reveals how far His people

have drifted from Him (Jer. 7:9-15). The words of the prophets are sometimes stern, sour, stinging and hard; but always true. Behind it all, God continually reveals His love for His own and His compassion for mankind generally, as yet distant from Him (Eze. 18:23; Isa. 35:3).

The prophet's message often begins with doom, but ends with hope. Exhortation is the constant theme. Because man's drift from God means increasingly unjust behaviour toward others, the return to justice is central to the prophet's message. Because none are without guilt, all should heed the call to justice (Job 4:17-19; 15:14-16; 1Ki. 8:46; Ecc. 7:20). Though some are guiltier than others, all are responsible. This notion of individuality, so common in western Christianity, is far from the biblical concept of community.

Chastisement has three aims: retributive, deterrent and reformatory (Heschel, 2001:238). Fear of God is encouraged as a deterrent. *Yahweh* is continually changing His people. His purpose is to refine, not destroy (Isa. 1:25-26; 4:4; 27:7-8; 28:29; 48:10; Jer. 9:7). Chastisement sometimes brings futility, even hardness of heart (Deu. 29:2-4; Isa. 63:17), as man wrestles with the Almighty. At times, the Lord hides (*e.g.*, silence). Yet, this drought of revelation (Amo. 8:11-12) does not last perpetually (Isa. 3:19-21; 29:18; 35:5-6). *Yahweh* returns when men are willing to listen, for they are eventually frustrated by silence and darkness (Isa. 30:26).

The prophet is an extremist. He shuns 'middle of the road' thinking and living. "The purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history" (Heschel, 2001:20). The prophet is only able to do this because of His intimacy with God. Being in God's presence changes our countenance and then others in turn. "There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Abraham. There are only witnesses" (Heschel, 2001:27).

Based in part on Ephesians 4:11, various other NT passages, and personal experience, I am convinced the ministry office of prophet is still active in our day. While the pastor and teacher tend to have local focus, the prophet, apostle, and evangelist tend toward translocal ministry, which is precisely why they are not present in every local church. To be very sure, none of these offices possesses the same measure of anointing as was given the Apostle Paul (*Sha'ul*) and those before (*i.e.*, the Apostles of the Lamb).

Biblical canon is closed. Therefore, none after Paul and John (presumed to have lived the longest) would have the same measure of anointing, but the fivefold ministry offices have not ceased to function.

Those with the apostolic anointing are typically involved in missions. Those with the evangelistic anointing preaching publicly, and calling the lost to Christ, wherever they may be found. The prophet is the one especially anointed to reform and re-encourage the body. Scripture differentiates between the "gifts" offices, and so must we.

### **New Testament**

Turning our attention to the post-Pentecost period and the church, we are given an insider's glimpse of the seminal development of a new religion and its organisational structures. We must turn to extra-biblical sources beyond John's Revelation (c. 90 AD) to follow subsequent (chronological) developments. Obviously, many individual churches have come and gone, but the Church proper continues, and will do so, until Christ returns.

The Church is not properly a national or state entity, as Israel was. Because Israel was both a state and religious organization, the organisational dynamics were different, in many ways, similar to the Medieval Church. Being a state, accounts for Israel's sometimes bloody history (*i.e.*, use of coercion by a state to maintain order).

As we pass beyond the 400 silent years (*i.e.*, Intertestamental Period), John the Baptist comes as promised (Mal. 4:5-6), with Jesus soon to follow. The change Jesus offers is welcomed by some and rejected by others, for so it is with change. Jesus came initially to the children of Israel (Mat. 10:5-6; 15:24), offering the new wineskin (*i.e.*, the Church; *cf.*, Eph. 3) first to the Jews. We see Jewish individuals (*e.g.*, Luk. 7:36f) and religious officials (Joh. 3:1f) welcoming Jesus. Even as some Jews embraced the "new wineskin" (Act. 11:19-21), many "old wineskin" Jews were not convinced, continuing their efforts to thwart church growth -- using lies, deceit and manipulation (Mat. 15:1f; Act. 13:45f). Eventually the time came for national Israel to stand up and be counted. They responded as prophetically anticipated, by rejecting Jesus (Luk. 9:22; 17:25) and sending Him to the cross (Mat. 26-27).

Because of national Israel's rejection of Jesus and the new kingdom form (*i.e.*, the Church), this new main stream of Kingdom activity is given to others (*goyim*).

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Mat. 21:33f). The change process continues as we come to the harvest festival Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*) in Jerusalem, with the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. Present that day are God-fearers and Jews from "every national under heaven" (Act. 2:5c). Men from Parthia, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Libya and more, all hear the gospel in their own tongue. The powerful centrifugal growth process had begun.

Because so many early believers remained tied to the old (Jewish) ways, the sovereign Lord allowed the Romans to destroy the Temple (70 AD), driving both His church and Israel from their location-specific roots. "The destruction of the Temple (70 AD) by Vespasian, followed by years of revolt (70-135) culminated in the Bar Cochba revolt (135) which signalled a real shift from a church of Jewish orientation to one of Gentile orientation" (Fruchtenbaum, 1993:43). The establishment of the church initiated a critical shift from Jewish cultural entrenchment, to a Greek-Roman cultural domination. The church would eventually be more successful than Israel in assimilating foreign cultures and transferring the Gospel to other cultures.

Are these violent detachments necessary? Sadly, it seems so. In this, we learn one of the most important aspects of change, that before embracing something new, people need to let go of the old. Without this violent separation, God's people surely would have remained culturally entrenched in Judaism and geographically fixed around Jerusalem.

A more recent example is the way *Yahweh* separated the Chinese church from Western cultural influence, following the rise of the Communist regime (*circa* 1950). The post-missionary development of the Chinese Church could be compared to Israel's formation in Egypt. Chinese believers have been largely isolated from Western influence, allowing them to forge an indigenous Chinese Church. The persecutions against them have been agonizing, but have served to establish a bond of Christian kinship and depth of purpose that would never develop under more pleasant circumstances.

African theologian John Mbiti suggests that "Christianity is supra-cultural...it transcends all cultures. Unless our cultures see this beyondness of Christianity, it will fail to command sufficient authority and allegiance over our peoples to enable them to yield unreservedly to its transforming grace" (Mbiti 1973:92). By comparison, it is Islam's inability to be supra cultural that has limited its growth to populations who are either linguistically, or ethnically similar.

In Acts, the disciples continued disputing with the Jewish hierarchy (*cf.*, Act. 4, 7, 8), efforts that suggest ongoing attempts to revitalize Judaism. Surely, part of their motivation was their Jewish cultural roots. Despite their efforts, Judaism remained change resistant.

In both Testaments, we see how critical effective leadership is to organizational success. Starting new organizations requires vision-driven, entrepreneurial leadership. Because organizational chaos is common to pioneer growth, leadership must be determined and flexible. Just consider how much of Paul's time was spent establishing and maintaining foundations.

Revitalising existing organisations (like Judaism) can be extremely difficult, requiring great patience. Church growth expert Lyle Schaller says, "[a]nyone seriously interested in planned social change would be well advised to recognize two facts of life. First, despite the claims of many, relatively little is known about how to achieve predictable change. Second, much of what is known will not work" (Schaller, 1993:14).

Clearly Jesus came to initiate change. "His mission involved a radical break with common religious practices" (Gaebelein, 1992:8:885). Were not Jesus and Paul men of great vision? Were they not men driven by the Spirit, doggedly determined to complete their course? "[B]ut I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Php. 3:12c-14).

Matthew 10 gives provides additional insights. Gathering to Himself a group of committed disciples, He sends them out with few belongings, ready to travel and focused on the job at hand (Mat. 10:9-15). Jesus warns the disciples to expect trouble (Mat.

10:16-31). They are not to fear for their lives, for what is at stake is far more important. With their purpose clear, they will endure all manner of suffering to accomplish their God-given task. Jesus reminds them (Mat. 10:34-39) that He and His followers do not bring peace on earth, but division. The message they preach -- though overflowing with God's truth and love -- will divide families and make enemies of those most dear. Only those led by the Spirit are capable of being such vision-driven, and undeterred witnesses.

## **Church History** **Early Church**

As the church developed beyond the biblical era, it became more organizationally stable in some areas (*e.g.*, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria), while remaining "pioneer" in others. "In one sense Christianity was the outgrowth of Judaism. Yet in a very real way it was not the offspring of Judaism but was new. It was the culmination of Judaism, but it was more" (Latourette, 1975:18). Christianity slowly became something quite different from Judaism, but in varying degrees has always maintained a connection to its Jewish roots. One of the greatest tensions offshoot organizations experience, is how much of the old organisation to retain and how much to discard.

For some time, it was difficult to distinguish this "Jewish sect" from others. On the heels of Jewish revolts and Rome's violent responses, anti-Jewish sentiment grew. The *Pax Romana* (*i.e.*, Peace of Rome) facilitated multicultural church growth, thanks to common language and currency, good roads, and the umbrella of safety provided by the martial might of Rome. The Empire was a melting pot of slaves and mixed races, hungry for a religion that would provide hope, enabling them to endure their often-meaningless existence. While Caesar worship provided a religious distraction for some, to many more, it failed to fill their innate spiritual needs.

Christianity had many competitors. In addition to the imperial cult were the mystery religions, and the more traditional religious and philosophical cults inherited from the Greeks and various other cultures. Because Judaism was uniquely tolerated by Rome, 'The Way' was allowed to prosper under the Jewish pretext for some time. As Christianity became more Gentile and less Jewish, Rome became more intolerant.

It is interesting how secular states will sometimes tolerate religious activity, supposing

it pacifies the masses. As long as order is maintained and the state's agenda is not endangered, religious expression is often allowed, even welcome. The Greek Empire under Alexander is but one example of this religious tolerance (Pluralism). As with Greece, Rome mostly tolerated free religious expression. From time to time, however, a Roman ruler would arise who thought himself divine, and would be less tolerant of other religious expressions.

The church had less than promising beginnings. Begun by a tradesman from a small town, in an insignificant Roman territory, He began something that would change the world. Christianity's holy book was more occasional, than systematic, where the accounts of the leader's life were brief and lacking. This Leader contended with a well established, though ethnically limited religion, that had long since come to emphasize good works in its attempts to please the Almighty, promoting the deadliest of all sins, pride (Latourette, 1975:50).

His tragic, though predictable, martyr's death produced an inspired following, so committed to the Leader's teachings, that many would perish, rather than compromise their convictions. Their courage of convictions inevitably led to further conflict with Jewish leaders, and even more ominously, with the Roman state. Further inspired by the martyr deaths of Stephen (Act. 7) and others, the new organization gained strength. So it is that persecution purifies purpose, deepens commitment to and connection with founders and foundations, and promotes a level of conviction otherwise never fully developed.

Herein lies one of the greatest organizational truths the early church provides for us today, as expressed by management guru Peter Drucker: "People work in non-profits because they believe in the cause" (Drucker 1990:183). Organizational outsiders want to know whether your organization is worth investing in, be it with time, emotions, or other resources. The bloodshed of the martyrs proved to many that this was a cause worth fighting and dying for. The same principle applies today, as believers around the world (*e.g.*, China, Sudan) give much, sometimes their lives for Christ. The courage of the early believers has challenged many throughout the history of the church.

George Otis shocked many at the second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Manila in 1989 when he asked, "Is our failure to thrive



in Muslim countries owing to the absence of martyrs? Can a covert church grow in strength? Does a young church need martyr models?" (Piper, *Suffering*).

John Piper questions further, whether the crying need in our day, is to put churches on a wartime footing. "Where is the church's concept of militancy, of a mighty army willing to suffer, moving ahead with exultant determination to take the world by storm? Where is the risk-taking, the launching out on God alone?" (*ibid.*). The answer is -- for the Western Church in particular -- that it has been swallowed up in a peacetime mentality.

Is this the forgotten lesson of the early church, especially for the largely plateaued and declining Western churches? Has organizational entropy and apathy so affected the (materially) richest members of the global church, that they have lost touch with their historic roots and their spiritual vigour? What has happened to this pioneer-spirit, the willingness to take risks, including the potential for loss of life?

By the 4th Century, the church was established as far west as Roman Britain, east to the Bahrain Islands in the Persian Gulf, and as far north as the Euxine, or Black Sea. Tradition suggests the Apostle Thomas brought the Gospel as far as India, and the Gospel may have reached central Asia. Thanks to both Greek and Roman dominion, the church remained in North Africa until the rise of Islam (7th C). Because the North African church never became an indigenous church -- only a foreign transplant -- it likely would not have survived anyway.

We cannot detach early Christianity from the persecution and suffering it endured. "It is one of the commonplaces of history that in its first three centuries Christianity met persistent and often severe persecution, persecution which rose to a crescendo early in the fourth century, but that it spread in spite of opposition and was even strengthened by it" (Latourette, 1975:81). We recall that Jesus had forewarned His church that persecution would attend expansion (Mat. 10). Pre-eminent historian Latourette further notes that Christian's "often had to face the dislike and active opposition of the pagan population against them" (Latourette, 1975:81). Following periods of heightened persecution, the church seemed to grow with gusto during the calm; but these periods were often followed by more persecution. Interesting, that moderated forms of persecution seem the fuel for a healthy, focused and committed organization. The persecution that began around 250,

for example, was very severe and threatened to extinguish the candle of faith; but God in His providence would not allow it and the church went on to multiply.

Thus far, we note that (1) new wineskins are never completely detached from their origins; people always bring their past with them. Further, (2) new organizations must be flexible and relatively tolerant, yet committed to their cause. And, (3) pioneer organizations can expect opposition, which can overwhelm and destroy, but also serve to purify purpose and strengthen convictions. Launching and building any organization can be an enormous challenge; and not all such attempts are successful.

### **Medieval Church Era**

As much as the early church era typified enterprise and resolve, the medieval era typified decline and corruption. The young, often persecuted church, was eventually embraced (c.315 AD) by the Roman State (*i.e.*, Constantine), and eventually incorporated into, and burdened with both state and religious responsibilities. Inevitably, the religious integrity of the church waned, as state imperatives, not religious matters, became the pre-eminent focus.

The early medieval period was actually quite encouraging. Into the 6th Century, the church was winning the "professed allegiance of the overwhelming majority of the population of the Roman Empire" (Latourette, 1975:187). The Gospel was being carried well beyond Roman borders, and was "developing a visible, organized fellowship" (*ibid.*), and defining the essential convictions of the faith. The mid and late medieval periods were a different story, however. "During the Middle Ages Europe was, for all intents and purposes, a self-contained island, cut off from the rest of the world by Islam" (Bosch, 2000:226).

As much criticized as the period has been, one cannot help wondering what post-Roman Europe would have been, had not the church stepped in to maintain order following the collapse of the Roman State. The church became forever ingrained with the heart and soul of (secular) Rome, that "in many ways perpetuates the genius of pre-Christian Rome" (Latourette, 1975:183). The structure of the Catholic Church State was autocratic and ecclesiocentric, clearly impacted by the form and function of Rome, and

retains such elements today. That the Catholic Church made civil order a priority is fully understandable, though it did have contrary effects on the religious focus of the church.

Bishops wielded great power in their realm -- though at times, the lines of responsibility were unclear. As the Roman Church matured, administrative lines became more certain, and inflexible. Unilateral actions became more difficult, even for the bishops. Organizational boundaries disallowed actions outside their bishopric. The "metropolitan, or archbishop, was to take no common action without the concurrence of the other bishops in his province" (Latourette, 1975:185).

Another key to understanding organizational growth comes in recognizing the significance of organizational boundaries. The more rigid the boundaries (*i.e.*, rules and regulations), the more inflexible the organization tends to become. Growth requires a measure of flexibility (*i.e.*, soft boundaries). As the Roman Church matured, it also became more rigid, losing what had been a strength of the early church -- flexibility and creativity.

Greater organizational restrictions prompted the need for the extra-ecclesial entity. Thus, the monastic orders -- though fashioned many years earlier -- became an essential part of the church extending itself. Where monastic communities had often been retreats from the world, new orders would be framed after the more Missiologically aggressive and culturally sensitive Celtic model. "The missionary expansion of Christianity was unthinkable apart from the activity of the monks" (Mulholland, 2001:19).

As lifeless as the medieval church sometimes seems, there were sparks of life throughout. "For centuries there had been a struggle in the various institutions which bore the Christian name, between lethargy and corruption on the one hand and reform and renewal on the other" (Latourette, 1975:624). Decline and corruption clearly won out between 500 and 950, and also between 1350 and 1500. The church tended to go with leadership. Under strong moral leadership, there was renewal -- under corrupt leadership, moral decline.

Following the pre-950 decline arose Nicholas II (1059-1061), who inaugurated various reforms in the church. He wrote the *Adversus Simoniacos* (1059), which outlined a program to purge internal corruption. With his death in 1061, the anti-reformers -- mostly Roman nobles -- flexed their political muscle and appointed Alexander II, who

was more to their liking. "Thus the Roman nobles and the German monarchy combined to frustrate the reformer's efforts for the independence of the Papacy of the secular arm" (Latourette, 1975:469).

One of the greatest reformers ever, Hildebrand (Gregory VII) succeeded Alexander II. An able assistant to Alexander II, Hildebrand reigned from 1073-1085. Though his theology differed little from those before him, he purposed to ensure orthodoxy and a return to high moral standards. He was a strong and gifted administrator, who set a godly example for others through his modest living. Others, like Urban II who followed, continued reform efforts. The Roman Church reached the zenith of its power during the last half of the 12th and first part of the 13th centuries, a period that also marks the high point of moral reforms.

The Avignon period (*i.e.*, Great Schism, or Babylonian Captivity [1378-1417]) indicates how great the tensions were within the church. The size, scope and complexity of the church was immense, the administrative mechanism virtually beyond control. "Pluralism (the holding of two or more benefices and drawing the incomes from them), absenteeism (not living in the post, the income from which came to the titular holder), self-seeking greed, and loose-living among the clergy mounted" (Latourette, 1975:626). Moral renewal initiated from within would be incredibly difficult, though efforts continued.

Urban VI came to the Papacy in 1378, a reform-minded leader. Not realizing how difficult it was to produce sweeping and lasting changes, he offended many of his fellows, never gaining the support necessary to effect reforms. As the Conciliar movement pulled the Roman Church back together under Martin V, reforms were mandated, but typically never enforced. With this, we note how critical it is for reform-minded leadership to have some measure of support, without losing integrity. This support must come from both the formal leadership level and from the "grassroots," or lay level, to have any hope for success.

950-1350 AD was a Missiologically active period, in spite of the ongoing, internal struggle for virtuousness. To be sure, some of these missionary efforts rode the back of military and political advances. Because Islam kept Christianity from moving east, there was little choice but to expand westward, with Christianity eventually reaching sub-

Saharan Africa, the Americas, and the Far East, via the sea.

Still, the Roman Church contended with widespread internal corruption. "Within the inner circle of the church, ill-conceived paganism was raising its head and in practice if not in word, the Christian faith was denied by many of its official representatives" (Latourette, 1975:641). The situation was reminiscent of Israel's later First Commonwealth, or Temple period, during which Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others fought for reforms. Because reform was not being effected in the Roman Church, God began raising up a faithful remnant in other quarters. Among those God raised up to fight corruption and clamour for reform, were Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Joan of Arc (1412-1431), Peter d'Ailly (1350-1420), John Gerson (1363-1429), Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), Thomas a' Kempis (b.1380), and Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419).

In response to these reformers and an even larger host of true heretics, the Roman Church responded with more resolute efforts to protect itself. Beyond Constantine, church leaders were "persuaded that the first concern of imperial authority was the protection of religion and so, with terrible regularity, issued many penal edicts against heretics" (Water, 2001:599). Once this protective mechanism was in place, it took on a life of its own. Because the Roman Church possessed the coercive power of state, it could legislate and employ whatever means it deemed necessary to protect itself, including torture and execution. Killing "heretics" began around the 5th Century, and continued into the 18th.

Sadly, the Inquisition was too often a means of silencing critics and protecting the guilty. "The more thoroughly religion had become part of the national life, and the stronger general conviction of its inviolability and Divine origin, the more disposed would men be to consider every attack on it as an intolerable crime against the Deity and a highly criminal menace to the public peace" (Water, 2001:614). Theologians and jurists alike, began to compare heresy to treason, considering heretics, 'robbers of the soul.' Regrettably, this same mentality later carried over into Protestantism, who perpetrated the same errors for years (*cf.*, Calvin's Geneva).

The Medieval church period teaches us the critical need for (1) frequent honest reassessment of purpose and practices, and of the need for continuous renewal. It reminds us of the (2) critical need for effective, godly leadership. The period also teaches

us that (3) the best intended organizational mechanisms can become corrupt, themselves requiring change, or pruning. Lastly, it reminds us that (4) God is forever at work in the midst of human affairs to effect His plans for the ages, doing that which ultimately brings Him honour and glory.

### **Reformation Era**

The Medieval church era was clearly one of plateau and decline. The period also shows how difficult internal reforms can be, especially after decline has reached an advanced stage. When organizational leadership becomes this corrupt, it fashions ways to protect itself. For the Medieval church, this included using the Inquisition to root out and often destroy those prophetic voices that called for change, indeed, any who spoke contrarily. The comparisons between pre-Exilic Israel and the pre-Reformation church are many. Without the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church "might have continued its degeneration from Christianity into paganism until your popes would have been enthroned over an agnostic and epicurean world" (Durant, 1985:940).

We can easily compare Hildebrand (Gregory VII), Leo IX, and other reform Popes, to some of Judah's reform leaders (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah). Each of these faced enormous challenges and while temporarily successful, their reforms did not last. In each situation, when that reform-minded leader was gone, the reforms went too; another reminder of how critical godly leadership is to the church.

The Reformers echoed the cries of the Humanists: *ad fontes* or "back to the sources" (McGrath, 1993:3). The call and need for an educated clergy was a major concern of the Reformers. Because so few clergy had training, it is no wonder theological instruction and integrity suffered. How could a person fight heterodoxy when ignorant of orthodoxy?

The Reformation was essentially a grassroots movement. The change agents who called for reform knew that changed thinking would lead to changed practices. Early on, these efforts were led by the likes of Wycliffe, Hus and Savonarola. Later, it was Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others. These men were highly respected in their realm, but not a part of the Roman Church hierarchy -- not organisational "insiders" as such.

The Reformers have also received much criticism for aligning themselves with regional or civic powers. Had they not done so, however, the movement would never have survived. A prime example is the way in which German magistrates protected Luther. "The mainstream reformers were pragmatists, people who were prepared to allow secular rulers their pound of flesh provided the cause of the Reformation was advanced" (McGrath, 1993:5). The Reformation also came to be linked to social reforms.

The Reformation clearly demonstrates how difficult change can be to implement, and how ruthless resistance to it can be. Roman Catholic leadership had also proven itself unable, and oftentimes unwilling, to respond to the crisis. The repression of so-called "heresy" mounted as the courage and resilience of the Reformers increased. Catholic leadership was calcified and undaunted by the charges levelled against them, convinced their conduct was legitimate.

The Inquisition process was arduous, because the church had long since reached the point where the boundaries of orthodoxy were unclear. Some who called for reform, like Jan Hus, were not of the eventual Protestant doctrinal stripe. Hus remained a doctrinal Roman Catholic, but simply could not tolerate the moral inconsistencies within the church. The account of his mock trial and death call one to remember the false justice under which Jesus was convicted and killed, giving one greater appreciation of Hus's courage and convictions. It is certain that his martyr's death inspired many more to join the cause and Hus is still remembered by his countrymen for his contributions to church and country. His is but one example of the violence used to silence these "heretics" who dared to question the doctrine and authority of the Roman church, no matter how corrupt it had become.

Martin Luther, arguably the key figure of the Reformation, came from a common family and later joined the Augustinian monastery, whose theology had no small influence on him. Unlike Hus, Luther received protection from the German Elector Frederick, allowing him to continue his work. The Reformation period was marked by predictable chaos and turmoil. It was never Luther's intention to separate from the Roman Church. His sole purpose was to promote internal reform, a return to morality and orthodoxy in the Church. Fully rejected by Roman Catholic leadership, Luther

finally agreed to begin a new church.

Following the establishment of new church organizations, tensions that had been building for at least two centuries, finally exploded into the incredibly bloody Thirty Years War (1618-1648). "Through it the Roman Catholic Church achieved some gains, but after it the territorial boundaries in Europe between that church and Protestantism remained substantially unchanged" (Latourette, 1975:881). The seeds of later revolutions were planted, with the French (1787-1799), the Belgium (1792), Italian (1796), Swiss Revolutions (1798), and two world wars to follow.

Men like Hus and Luther were reformers, not schismatics, something important to remember. They had no intention of beginning a new church. Each was firmly committed to reform. We can only guess what Hus may have done had he lived, though perhaps his death served a greater motivational purpose in retrospect. Luther was forced into his role as head of a new church, something he was well suited for. Others, like Melancthon, followed to further shape Lutheranism, but Luther's influence was crucial.

The establishment of these new (Protestant) organisations was in no small way thanks to experienced, and well-trained leadership. Yet, there are countless examples in church history of new churches and organisations being formed by inexperienced and untrained leaders. Because God is no respecter of persons (Mat. 22:16), He can and does use experienced and untrained leadership. Experienced leaders are not always the best people to establish new organisations, because of their biased connections to the past.

Reform movements often create extremism and promote a return to simplicity. We see these same tendencies in modern "revivals." The extremism is often passionate, sometimes violent. Like Jewish revolutionaries during the years of Roman occupation (*e.g.*, Bar-Cochba revolt), reformation (or revolution), is typically preceded by a considerable period of tension building and "ammunition" gathering. Much of this occurs in the emotional realm, sometimes exploding into physical violence. That South Africa, for example, did not explode into violent revolution, is thanks to the influence of men like Bishop Desmond Tutu, and others.

New organizations formed by reformation, or revolution, must decide -- with great intentionality -- how much of the old organization to retain. Part of the decision is deliberate; but part of it is inseparably connected to preconditioning, which is never fully



removed. A classic example of this is Lutheranism. Lutheranism was never as far removed from the Roman Church as suited Calvin and Zwingli. Luther preferred to remove the negatives of the old system, retaining a modified Roman Catholic mold (with obvious differences). Calvin and Zwingli preferred a catharsis approach that purposefully took their new organizations as close to the simplicity of the early church as possible. Herein are the differences that remain between Lutheran (and Anglican) and Reformed organizations. As such, every reformer must consider whether he or she will take the 'modification' or 'catharsis' route.

We learn many lessons from this period. Among them, the fact that (1) those who desire reform, must be prepared to endure the process. They must (2) know clearly why they desire reform and how they intend to implement such changes. They must (3) be prepared to stay the course. The reformer (change agent) must be prepared to pay the price that may be required of them -- personally, professionally and otherwise. Hence, the important axiom: vision produces discipline.

### **Post-Reformation Era**

Missiologically, the Protestants were mostly inactive for about two hundred years following the Reformation. The highlight of the immediate post-Reformation period is certainly the Counterreformation and specifically, the Council of Trent (1545-63). Considered the Nineteenth Oecumenical Council, it was the greatest embodiment of ideals expressed during the Counterreformation. After several attempts to convene such a council, it finally came together under Pope Paul III. "Many, including Charles V, had hoped that the council would heal the breach between the Lutherans and other Protestants on the one hand and the Church of Rome on the other" (Latourette, 1975:866). All hopes were disappointed.

The council resurrected and reaffirmed classic Catholic doctrine. At Session four (4 Feb. 1546), for example, the Roman Church confirmed "the validity of both Scripture and unwritten traditions as sources of truth, the sole right of the Church to interpret the Bible, and the authority of the text of the Vulgate were asserted" (Cross, 1997:1639). While this disappointed the Protestants, in God's grand scheme of things, it was enormously

beneficial to the Catholic Church and to Christianity as a whole.

As doctrinal integrity was re-established in the Roman Church, moral and ethical reforms were initiated, and the sale of indulgences was eliminated. "The celebration of the mass was closely regulated to ensure that it should be done with reverence" (Latourette, 1975:869). Clerical practices were carefully scrutinized. Education for clerics was mandated, though it would take years to fully implement. Throughout, the "administrative machinery of the Roman Catholic Church was overhauled and tightened" (Latourette, 1975:870). Included in this, the old monastic orders were purified and new ones established (*i.e.*, new wineskins). The Counter- Reformation led to the establishment of the Jesuits, which "became the spearhead of the movement both within Europe and as a missionary force in America and the East" (Cross, 1997:423). The intentional (Missiological) dissemination of the Catholic faith was once again in focus, even if some of the Catholic motivation was driven more by competition with the Protestants, than obedience to *Missio Dei*.

The changes generated by the Reformation and Counterreformation were painfully necessary to reinvigorate God's church. One of the most important, though least understood, things the Lord did through this process, was to create competition between the two, just as He had previously done between the Latin and Greek arms of the church. In His Divine wisdom, He determined it was time to fashion a new organizational branch (new wineskin -- Protestants) of the Church to revitalise the existing branch (Roman), with the rivalry between them propelling the global, or universal church forward.

Another critically important product of the Reformation was the diminishing alliance between state and church. "Protestantism, in time, helped to regenerate the moral life of Europe, and the church purified herself into an organization politically weaker, but morally stronger than before" (Durant, 1985:940). What had effectively begun with Constantine gradually came to an end following the Reformation, as religious bodies became less politically connected. Historian Will Durant's insight is incredible:

One lesson emerges above the smoke of battle; a religion is at its best when it must live with competition; it tends to intolerance when and where it is unchallenged and supreme ..... the greatest gift of the Reformation

was to provide Europe and America with that competition of faiths which puts each on its mettle, cautions it to tolerance, and gives to our frail minds the zest and test of freedom" (Durant, 1985:940).

Engagements with the Protestants had forced the Roman Church to reassess its doctrine, structure and practices. "The reforming decrees of the Council of Trent were not permitted to become empty words" (Latourette, 1975:871). The ongoing challenge presented by the Protestants made a return to former practices nearly impossible. Catholic leadership strove to maintain integrity and did all they could to make their position stronger in the face of the Protestant presence and challenge.

The Roman Catholic Church was purified and reenergized through the process (1Pe. 4:17). The process of catharsis, reassessment and regained clarity of purpose was crucial to the advancement of the Kingdom of God. An organization that had become corrupt, inefficient and self-consuming had been renewed and reinvigorated. The Lord obviously had no intention of allowing such a large, valuable, and effective vessel (*e.g.*, the Roman Catholic Church) to continue in its corrupt and ineffective form. The whole process -- as ugly as it sometimes was -- made the Roman Catholic Church Missiologically vigorous.

While Catholics regained Missiological vigour, Protestants were mostly inactive for about 200 years. "While Protestantism evidenced little missionary zeal between the years 1517-1700, the Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, won more converts from paganism than it lost to the Reformation" (Mulholland, 2001:20). Some Reformers taught that the Great Commission applied only to the original Apostles, who had fulfilled Christ's charge. While the Protestants were busy quarrelling amongst themselves, the Catholics reinvigorated their existing missionary machinery. Protestantism itself would require renewal (*i.e.*, Pietist revival) before it would become Missiologically dynamic.

Revival, or renewal, played a huge role in getting Protestant missions going. "Just as the Protestant Reformers reacted against the Roman Catholic corruption of doctrine and morals, the Pietists reacted against the barren orthodoxy and formalism of the Reformation churches" (Mulholland, 2001:20). In 1705, the Danish-Halle Mission sent out its first missionaries (Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plutschau) to the East Indies. The second thrust came thanks to the Moravians. Puritanism also fuelled missionary vision and involvement.

The hyper-Calvinism of the day kept many from the field, but certainly not William Carey, who founded the Baptist Missionary Society. The Haystack Prayer Meeting would follow, marking the beginning of American involvement in overseas missions. Adoniram Judson joined ranks and became very influential in these early works, and of course, much more followed.

We puny creatures are at once appalled and amazed, to see how God works to effect His purposes. Only by "stepping back," can we see how the Lord produced change through pruning, how He created a new wineskin and revitalised an old one. How wondrous are the ways of the Lord.

God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; the LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts. The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him. The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him. But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue His enemies. (Nah. 1:2-8)

### **Revivals and Revitalisation**

Finally, we consider briefly the impact of Revivalism in the post-Reformation period. Various authors have recounted the historical value of "revivals" and "revivalism," but few really consider the impact of these events translocally. While revivals, *per se*, can be identified throughout church history, those that occurred during the 19th and 20th Century's mark some very significant events. Even "revival" terminology has become

associated with a specific type of religious activity.

Though huge parts of the world regard the United States as a Christian nation, nothing has (typically) been further from the truth. God gave the United States three Great Awakenings, the second being the most influential. The years preceding the Great Awakenings (c. early 19th Century) are especially noteworthy for their lacklustre Christianity. For a nation that was founded largely upon the strong convictions of the Puritans, the US had drifted far from the God who had repeatedly blessed her (*cf.*, Deu. 8).

Many are familiar with great philosopher, Native American missionary and theologian, Jonathan Edwards. He, James McGready, Charles Finney and others are typically credited with being the clay vessels (2Co. 4:7) through which God initiated a mighty revitalisation of the church. These were primarily "preaching" revivals, where the Word of God was preached publicly and powerfully. There are numerous accounts of people falling to the ground and weeping in repentance, under conviction of their sins. People were convinced they were experiencing another Pentecost. Through this widespread conviction of sin, God cleansed first His Church, and then worked through His people (1Pe 4:17) to produce powerful and sweeping social changes in the US.

The Awakenings led to a greater sense of responsibility toward slaves and Native Americans, and led to the antislavery movement (pre-Civil War) that helped prepare the American church for the Civil War (1861-65) it would endure. Christians also captained changes in education, prison reform, temperance, Sabbath observance, and women's rights. Numerous new "societies" were created to help spread the gospel, including the American Bible Society (1816), the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Sunday School Union (1817), the American Tract Society (1826), and the American Home Missionary Society (1826).

Some have estimated that as much as four-fifths of the general citizenry gained a common understanding of the Christian life. Though boundaries remained between the various denominations, greater mutual respect and a catholic spirit emerged. Greater emphasis was placed on education, with many new schools started, among them, the one-time bastion of Reformed orthodoxy in North America, Princeton.

The Awakenings also helped to reinterpret and realign theological focus. Formerly

based on a strong Puritan (Determinist) theology, the Church became more response and initiative oriented (Arminian). In practicality, two "camps" emerged: the New Lights and the Old Lights. These amounted to those who fought change and those who recognized the need for it and embraced it. Among God's people emerged a greater sense of God's immanence and a concern that His return might be near at hand (Mat. 24:45f).

The connection between spiritual awakenings and missionary zeal can be noted in other instances. We might consider the Haystack Prayer Meeting, which led to the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), or to the Mount Hermon Conference and the later establishment of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions [1888] (McGee). To these revivals and many more, we add the Azusa Street Revival of 1906, in Los Angeles, California. Sparked by another globally significant "revival," the Welsh (1904-5), the Azusa Street Revival became one of the most significant spiritual awakenings of the twentieth century, laying the foundation for global Pentecostalism.

The Azusa Street revival spread to Indianapolis, Winnipeg, Dallas, Chicago, Philadelphia, and beyond. New denominations emerged, as did a fresh urgency for Missiological activity. Subsequent "waves" of revival would continue to reignite this Pentecostal awakening. Each new wave of Holy Spirit revitalisation birthed renewed commitment to Christ and increased Missiological activity at all levels. By 1908, the first fledgling missions enterprises had been established. By 1910, nearly 200 Pentecostals had already travelled overseas to initiate missionary work.

Numerous fresh outreach initiatives were begun, leading to the spread of the Gospel in many lands. The Pentecostal "wave" has also had no small impact on Africa. It came most significantly to South Africa around 1908, and continues to be a significant part of the African Christian landscape. John G. Lake, who was "touched" by the Azusa Street revival, had a significant impact on the South African church, which led to the establishment of the Apostolic Faith Mission and others in South Africa. Though still considered by many, the dark or forgotten continent, Missiologically, Africa holds a uniquely strategic position as God moves to embrace Islam and other resistant regions and people groups with His love.

We must also consider the impact these revivals have among our Roman Catholic

brethren. "Roman Catholic Pentecostalism began in 1966, when several Catholic lay members at Duquesne University in Pittsburg were drawn together in a period of deep prayer and discussion about the vitality of their lives as Christians" (Riss, 1988:159). Pope John Paul II has himself been significantly impacted by the renewal. During an audience with the Italian Leaders of the Renewal, in April 1998, John Paul II said: "The Catholic charismatic movement is one of the many fruits of the Second Vatican Council" (Calisi, 2002).

How many lay faithful -- men, women, young people, adults and the elderly -- have been able to experience in their own lives the amazing power of the Spirit and His gifts! How many people have rediscovered faith, the joy of prayer, the power and beauty of the Word of God, translating all this into generous service in the Church's mission!" (Calisi, 2002).

The Roman Catholic Pentecostal movement has become a *tour de force* of missionary activity in the world. It has a significant ecumenical dimension that, during this century, has grown from zero to over 500 million in little more than 90 years. By the year 2025 it is estimated that over one billion charismatics and Pentecostals will be dispersed throughout the world. It is becoming the biggest movement of reawakening and renewal in the history of Christianity (Calisi, 2002). Clearly this 'renewal' is having wide influence within the Catholic, having significant impact on internal revitalisation and on missionary vitality.

Among Protestants, the Charismatic Renewal (c.1960) has unquestionably impacted the church and missions. New groups, such as Youth with a Mission (YWAM), Jews for Jesus, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, Promise Keepers, and many more, are all products of the renewal. Several new denominations have formed, including the Vineyard, which is maturing as a body, and becoming more intentionally Missiological on all fronts.

It is the conviction of those in the contemporary Pentecostal/charismatic renewal that this renewal is an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Since the beginning of the twentieth century there have been three major Pentecostal/charismatic movements: (1) the classical Pentecostal

(beginning in 1901) now represented by a number of Pentecostal denominations, (2) the Neo-Pentecostal/charismatic (beginning about mid-century) with the traditional Protestant churches, and (3) the Catholic charismatic (beginning in 1967) within the Roman Catholic Church.

These three movements, according to Vinson Synan, Pentecostal historian, are three streams that basically constitute one outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Williams, 1996:4).

There is a very certain connection between "revivals" and increased Missiological activity. I must add, however, that missionary activity is not revival dependent, nor do revivals always produce significant missionary activity. True 'revivals' do always seem to affect at least the local situation, however. God works in many ways to accomplish His purposes and we thank Him for the variety of ways in which He works. To be sure, people do not all respond to the same stimuli. Some respond better to emotional appeals, others to more 'cranial' inducements. May our great God continue to challenge and inspire us to more thoughtful and passionate Missiological activity.

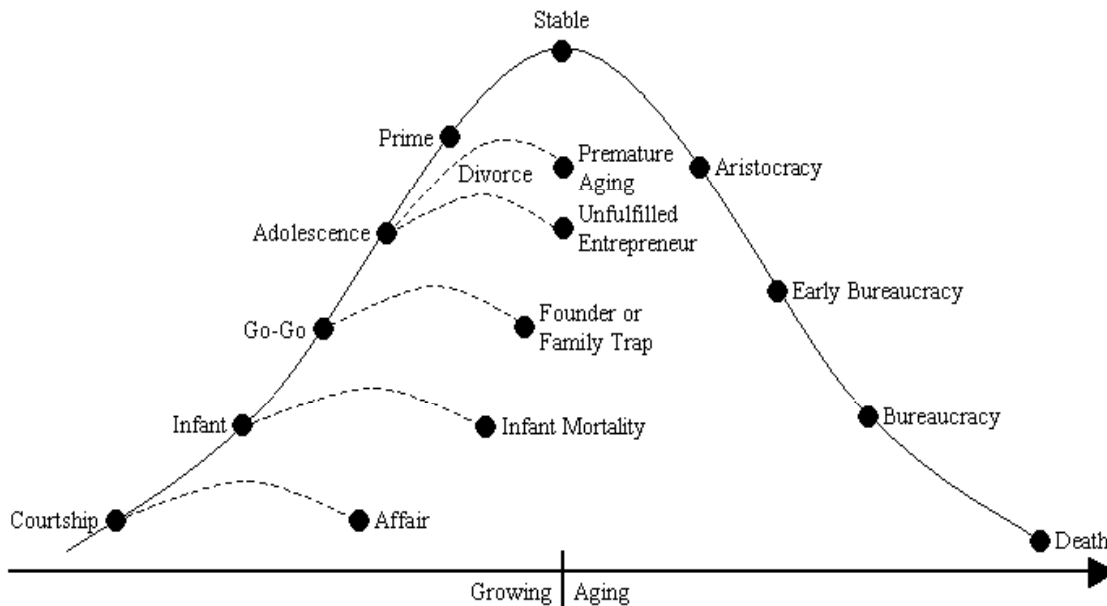


### Chapter Three Church as Organisation

Like individuals, organizations have a life cycle. The organizational life cycle is variously described as: (1) birth, (2) growth, (3) maturity, (4) decline, (5) death. Geopolitically, practically and historically, we witness this same process with nations and dynasties (e.g., Greece, Rome, Soviet Union), as they rise and fall from domination.

Order and "organization" are both biblical and godly, for *Yahweh* is orderly (cf., creation; the universe; arrangement of planets). To be orderly and organized is a good thing; but can certainly be overdone. As John Calvin encouraged moderation in all things, we also encourage moderation for organizations.

Ideally, organisations should reach peak, or optimal complexity and stay there, but seldom do. Dr. Izchak Adizes (*Corporate Lifecycles*, 1988) offers his model, which suggests that organisations are healthiest when they attain "prime," a stage just prior to the peak of the organisational curve. Adizes believes that at prime, the organisation has reached sufficient maturity to function properly, yet maintains enough entrepreneurial drive to stay healthy and growing. Please note Dr. Adize's version of the curve (cf., fig. 1):



In general, organizations move from passion to paralysis, from entrepreneurial to managerial, from apostolic to apostate. Typical to birth and growth stages is chaos, or lack of organization. By definition, chaos (growth) and entropy (decline) are different, though they often share similar characteristics and appearances. Chaos is typical to the pioneer, or entrepreneurial stage of organizational development. As the organization grows, it necessarily adds structure, becoming more "organized" and complex. This complexity can -- and often does -- become burdensome and counterproductive.

Effective leadership can keep structure serving the organization, and not the reverse (*i.e.*, form serving function, not the reverse). All organisations need to find the healthy and productive balance between chaos (disorder) and entropy (decline). Most organisations -- be they secular or sacred in nature -- will reach peak complexity and enter into decline, the result of entropy.

Dr. Adizes focuses on the balance between "flexibility" and "controllability." Young organisations are very flexible, but seldom controllable. At the other end of the curve, mature and/or declining organisations are often more "controlled" and less "flexible." These organisational realities are typically found in most organic life-cycles including the individual human's. As an organisation matures, it becomes more adept at dealing with problems, conflict and change. A mature organisation, like most mature individuals, decreases in the ability to handle problems, conflict and change.

All organisations have problems. The more flexible and growth oriented they are, the more problems, conflict and change are common to organisational life. The organisation that has grown weary of problems, conflict and change will seek to gain further control over these variables. To seek controllability beyond a healthy balance with flexibility is to stop living. Without question, only the dead have no problems, conflict, or changes to face.

The goal is to attain "prime," or the healthy organisational balance between flexibility and controllability, and to stay there. This is the organisation that maintains a state of continuous renewal. The earlier along the curve one seeks renewal, the easier it is. This is because the organisation, or individual is still somewhat flexible. Going past the top of the curve, renewal becomes increasingly difficult, because controllability now dominates flexibility.

Will not a process of continuous renewal produce an erosion of stability in the organisation? The answer is yes, but only if your foundation was never firmly established. This is why we emphasize individual and organisational *raison d'être* or reason for existence. If you do not know why you exist, you will not long succeed in anything. External pressures alone, will eventually loosen your resolve, and make you a person, or an organisation driven by others. Note the old axiom: "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything." Note also, Jesus parable of the wise and foolish builders -- Matthew 7:24-27.

Of the many sources I have researched concerning the decline of the mainline churches in the US, one theme is recurrent: not only have the churches lost people (a symptom), they have lost their centre of gravity, or the foundations upon which they were founded (real problem). Without knowing who you are and what you stand for, you will eventually be consumed by the ever-changing flow around you. For this reason, churches must be anchored in Christ, but always sensitive to cultural changes. Contextualisation as a sub-discipline seeks to find a similar balance. Does culture determine our message, or does our message seek to influence culture? To what degree does one affect the other? Should Contextualisation mean embracing culture (accommodation) to such an extent that we lose, or compromise the integrity of the message we share? Organisations face this very challenge, to Contextualise, and to maintain organisational integrity.

Growing organizations become fatigued ("burnout"), as people grow weary from the strains and battles of growth. Consider, for example, the children of Israel who preferred to settle east of the Jordan (Num. 32). Once the organization reaches the mature or plateau stage, it becomes increasingly set in its ways, or *status quo*. Organizational change is often needed -- though seldom welcomed -- during the plateau stage. Change is most often accepted during the growth process, while there yet remains some pioneering spirit.

Organizational revitalisation can be initiated and accomplished during any stage, though it is needed more during and following maturity. Periodic reassessment and revitalisation can help growing organizations avoid the pitfalls of becoming stagnant or rigid. Young organizations -- like new wineskins -- are the most flexible and open to new patterns of thought and practice.

Once the organization has reached the mature or plateau stage, it will begin the decline process. There is no such thing as 'treading water,' for the world around us is in constant flux (change). Thus, by standing still, we are actually losing ground, or in decline. The only way an organization can remain healthy is to be aware of this reality and to intentionally pursue both contextuality and contemporality. This is why organizational experts encourage a posture of continuous renewal -- the organization that is ever renewing.

The decline process is affected by entropy. Entropy, in the scientific realm, is the loss of energy. In organizational dynamics, the same process occurs (again), when organizations lose focus, *raison d'être*, and *esprit de corps*. The farther the organization declines, the more difficult it is to revitalize. Along with entropy comes factorisation, which is the loss of direction, purpose, and cohesiveness, where resources are overtaxed, or mismanaged.

Organizational decline brings loss of energy and resources (people, money, *etc.*), making it more difficult to begin fresh growth initiatives, or change direction. Further complicating the process is the increasing burden of administrative "machinery" that should serve the organization. Instead, the machinery becomes a beast to be served (function serving form). Wise leadership will reduce the machinery (staff and budget decreases), though doing so may still not "save" the organization.

Every organization needs to reassess its position about every three years. Proper assessment often requires input from outsiders. This is why hiring organizational "outsiders" periodically is good, for they can bring objective, healthy, fresh ideas into an organization that may be more "stale" and "closed-minded" than leadership realizes. This principle might be illustrated by considering small fish living in an aquarium. The fish living inside the aquarium cannot properly assess their place in the world, similar to the axiom that one cannot see the trees for the forest (sub-optimisation). Those within the organization are restricted to a narrow, biased perspective and cannot be expected to properly and fairly assess conditions.

### **A Case Study**

An excellent case study from recent history is the ongoing decline of mainline

denominational churches in the United States. It is estimated that about 1,000 churches per year close in the United States, with new church starts compensating for only a fraction of the overall loss. The Presbyterian Church - USA, for example, once a bastion of orthodoxy, allowed Liberal theology to erode its doctrinal integrity to the point, that many evangelicals would no longer tolerate it. Thousands of members transferred to other churches, or quit attending church altogether, while still others formed new denominations (*e.g.*, EPC, PCA). These new groups can be considered 'new wineskins,' or the product of pruning (Joh. 15:2).

Through its growth years, the hierarchy of the PC-USA allowed its administrative "machinery" to become more burdensome than necessary. As the denomination plateaued and declined, necessary and timely, administrative reductions were not made and the organization began serving the machinery (form serving function). A lack of effective, insightful leadership, and a sure sense of denial, has allowed the decline process to progress far too long. In November (2002) the denominational mission budget was slashed more than \$4.2 million, "including the elimination of 66 jobs in Louisville and 34 international mission workers" (Kibler, 2002). An additional \$5 million will be cut over the next two years, with more job cuts "a possibility" (*ibid.*).

The missions department was not the only one cut, as the denomination faces a \$5.3 million deficit. "Since 1966, the average membership loss has been more than 50,000 a year, the equivalent of closing 250 churches with 200 members each annually" (*ibid.*). In spite of the massive cutbacks, the denomination has yet to discuss cutbacks in unpopular and controversial programs. Clearly, the PC-USA has lost its *raison d'être*, and organizational stability. The PC-USA situation is just one of many examples, where organizational entropy has led to Missiological decline and ineffectiveness.

Even more interesting are PC-USA giving trends. While general giving to local and denominational programs are down substantially, individual giving to support PC-USA missionaries is substantially "up." Several conclusions are possible. Among them, the fact that many members do not agree with the priorities leaders have established for distribution of funds, and the general policies and direction of the denomination. As such, members are making a statement with their money, withholding funds from distributions they do not agree with, while channelling funds to those particular functions

they do support. At very least, this seems a clear indication that leadership decisions are not respected. This undercurrent of disrespect will fester like a cancer, and could be the "undoing" of a once strong and influential church body.

One sure reason for this massive denominational shift is simple demographics. All over the globe, population trends show people moving to urban areas. Years ago, "missions" was often done in rural areas. Today, more than one-half of the global population lives in urban areas, and the trend continues. In Two-Thirds World countries, this has typically meant trading rural poverty for urban poverty, with its accompanying higher crime rates.

Many of the "Old First" churches were established in the inner city regions of the US during the days (c. 19th Century) when immigrant populations were predominantly from Europe. As the white, middle-classes migrated to the suburbs (c. 20th Century) they were followed by both churches (mainline and Evangelical) and businesses. When the predominantly white middle class moved "out" to the suburbs, lower class minority groups -- usually African-American and Hispanic -- moved in. Because the remaining churches were geared culturally toward the white, European, middle-class, many could not, or would not change, or Contextualise, to these demographic changes.

A wonderful opportunity was missed by many of these denominations to truly become multiethnic. Mainline denominations went "out" to the suburbs and built many new churches among the white, middle-class. Because they did not stay among the inner city ethnic and poor, they have now lost their trust. There are still some mainline church initiatives to "plant" churches among the urban, ethnic, poor, but they are seldom welcome, or successful, viewed more as efforts to appease their guilty consciences.

The predominantly white church groups, who are principally composed of mainline and Evangelical denominations, have shown little true interest in the inner-city regions. This is especially sad, because these lower-class inner city regions are not only where the poor, ethnic groups live, they are also typically where new immigrants to the US live. Millions of immigrants come to the US every year, mostly people of Hispanic and Asian origins. Who is left to reach these new immigrants?

Interestingly, it is not the predominantly white, middle-class churches, but the predominantly African-American and Hispanic churches. The reasons they remain in the

inner city have a great deal to do with ethnic, cultural, and social divisions. The African-American middle class is growing steadily, making for certain class distinctions within that ethnic group. The number of middle-class Hispanics is growing as well. The lower class African-American's, Hispanic's, white's and various others who live in the inner-city, necessarily endure a much higher crime rate, thanks to higher unemployment, fewer job opportunities, cultural pressures, and a larger society that -- in spite of what is politically correct to say -- keeps these lower classes in a depressed state.

Not only are most of these inner city churches dominated by people of colour, they also tend toward Pentecostal - Charismatic worship (no matter the sign out front). Worldwide, Pentecostal-type churches tend to focus more on the lower classes. What began at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, where black and white mixed routinely, continues to be a predominant trend among Pentecostal groups. To be sure, these groups have impacted the broad middle-class spectrum, but their base of support continues to be among the lower classes.

A lot of people still do not like Donald McGavran's *Homogeneous Unit Principle*, but discussions such as we are having, certainly gave credence to it. Dr. McGavran's principle is that people "like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers." We like to think of the church as being somehow "better" than the rest of society. At times the Church does show the better way. At other times, the Church is a mere reflection of normal human patterns, including, our propensity for keeping class, racial and linguistic divisions. The church must show the world how to desegregate and reconcile racial, cultural, and class differences, but surely the task is larger than we are; we are wholly dependent upon the Lord in such matters.

Is the condition of the church in the United States serious? In 1988, Win Arn wrote that four out of five churches were either plateaued or in decline (Arn, 1988:41). In 1995 Lyle Schaller wrote, "two-thirds to three-fourths of all congregations founded before 1960 are either on a plateau or shrinking in numbers" (Frazee, 1995:11). In 1997 Charles Truhart wrote that small congregations of 100 people or less were closing their doors at the rate of 50 per week (Truhart, 1996:38). The situation in Canada is worse.

Other sources, however, disagree, claiming that church attendance has remained fairly stable since the 1960's. Some studies show that church attendance statistics from

the 1950's were inflated, and perhaps unreliable. Another source, Princeton Religion Research Center, shows that church attendance in the US has remained at about 40% since the mid-1930's. The Barna Group found that on average (2004 survey) about 43% of Americans (not including Canadians, whose weekly attendance is less than half that of the US population) attend church weekly (Barna, 2004). Other researchers show some variation, but are in general agreement. More certain is research data showing that those claiming to be Evangelicals have grown from 34% in 1976, to 46% in 1999 (Barna, 2004).

While hundreds of churches in the US do close every year, many more open. The number of churches seems to be keeping pace with population growth, but again, not all agree with these numbers. According to the "1993-1994 Almanac of the Christian World" there were 27 churches per 10,000 people in 1900 compared to just 12 churches per 10,000 people in 1990. Church growth expert Lyle Schaller, reports that churches, on average, have three times as many members as in the previous century (Schaller, 1993).

With the continued decline of the mainline denominations, other groups are attempting to counter through aggressive church planting programs (*e.g.*, Missouri Synod, Evangelical Covenant, Southern Baptist, Vineyard). Of great interest and encouragement, are internal reform groups that have formed within the PC-USA, United Methodist and other declining US denominations. They are otherwise known as "Confessing Church" movements. These are prophets crying in the wilderness for a return to orthodoxy and missio-centricity, which are keys to church health and growth. Again, the best time to re-assess and renew is well before decline reaches critical stages -- though by God's grace, revitalisation is possible at any stage.

### **Systems Thinking**

We must also consider the importance of systems thinking, specifically the Field Paradigm. In simplest terms, the Field Paradigm contemplates the 'ripple effect.' Field thinking "encompasses the science of the whole. It represents the positions of maximum unity among elements, the most extreme of which is holism, which has no place for individuals distinct from the whole. It is the opposite extreme from the atomism that



underlies the dynamic paradigm and takes the individual element as primary (McWhinney, 1993:51). Field thinking seeks to maintain a balanced understanding of the place of the individual within the larger field, or community. Organizations are actually subsystems within the larger 'field' or grouping of organizations, all of which are subsystems of the global community system.

Within organizations are individuals who necessarily interact with one another, affecting the organization as a whole. Organizations necessarily interact with other organizations -- just as planetary bodies necessarily influence one another in space (*e.g.*, gravitational forces). These interactions between individuals, systems and subsystems comprise the whole. As part of the 'field,' they cannot avoid interacting with one another at some level: the body concept.

Also pertinent to the Field paradigm is the concept of boundaries. Individuals and organizations have boundaries. These boundaries can be well defined, or loosely defined (soft <> rigid). Boundaries affect the manner of the interactions that take place.

Boundaries help to distinguish one system or element from another. Systems thinking considers the necessarily interactive relationships between systems and subsystems, systems and elements, *etc.* Study of systems theory and the Field paradigm, helps organizational leadership to better understand the natural, logical and necessary dynamics of systems.

Let us consider briefly the nature and effects of "boundaries." Organisation A, for example, practices softer boundaries. It has comparatively "loose" organizational ties to its regional offices, with whom they sanction significant autonomy. This gives the regional offices the flexibility they require to be creative and entrepreneurial in their respective ministries. The organizational relationship means that Organisation A does not manhandle, manipulate and otherwise over-dictate policy to their regional offices. This kind of soft boundary relationship provides for mutual accountability and maximum flexibility within the framework of a limited boundary structure. Organisation A places great trust in God and in those with whom God aligns them in organizational relationship.

Consider the other end of the continuum, the organization that maintains rigid boundaries and tight controls (*e.g.*, late Medieval Church). Organizations who establish and maintain rigid boundaries are those who require close scrutiny, a high level of

personal accountability, and a low trust level in God. Over the years, their policy manuals (organizational rules and regulations) become large and complex, themselves an unmanageable burden to individual and organization alike. This organization allows little flexibility and does not encourage creativity -- except perhaps that which originates from the highest levels. Such organizations fail to empower their staff by allowing them decision-making power. These organizations are typically bureaucratic, over-structured, rigid, closed-minded, and cumbersome. Their resistance to change is resolute, and they would usually rather perish than change.

Consider what kind of organizational boundaries existed during the early (pioneer) years of church expansion. Under what organizational structures has the church been most effective in creatively pioneering new works? Are the "mature" organizational structures of many churches today of the sort that promote growth, or hinder it? Such questions must be pondered by every organisation with some regularity.

Considering the local church as a subsystem of the larger whole helps us to better understand the Body of Christ. It reveals how this subsystem (local church body) cannot exist without affecting others, or conversely, by being impacted by others. Like standing on a great trampoline, inter connectivity cannot be avoided. In fact, it encourages elements and subsystems to work together: interactive field cooperation. The study of systems theories can reveal important insights into the nature of "body" life and our mutual need to work together for the good of all. Consider, for example, how the theology of one generation necessarily impacts subsequent generations. Consider how the actions of one church in South Africa can affect churches far distant; often without realising it.

How can systems thinking and organizational dynamics benefit the church and missions community? Two-thirds world church leaders in particular must consider the implications, for their impact on the global church is growing. For example, the 2003 rift in the Anglican Church over the appointment of a homosexual bishop (Gene Robinson) by the Episcopal - US branch (led by Rev. Frank Griswold). Anglican churches from Africa and Asia have severed ties with them (US branch), though they intend to remain under the global Anglican covering. The North American church, for example, does not live in a vacuum. What it does, affects many others, though they are not always able to

see beyond their existence (fish in the bowl principle).

Consider another situation that systems thinking could help improve: the Ecumenical Movement. The body of Christ universal, has always been a diverse group, and keeps getting more diverse all the time, due to global population increases and the growth of the church universal. Today, there are basically two branches of the Ecumenical Movement: the mainline branch and the Evangelical branch. Evangelicals have historically been the least cooperative, but this trend is changing. Following Vatican II and Lausanne II in Manila (1989), far greater cooperation has developed between the various branches of the Church universal. How can they work better together?

The church exists in many forms, and is presently composed of wheat and tares (Mat. 13:24-30), but the true church (*e.g.*, the wheat) is spiritually united in Christ (*Ecclesia Militans* - "faithful on earth"). Oftentimes, it is fear that keeps us from unity. While we must be faithful and diligent stewards of the Kingdom, we can still maintain our organisational integrity and be in healthy fellowship with others whose Christian beliefs vary from our own. I may not be Roman Catholic, for example, but I can (and do!) love and appreciate my brethren.

### **Modalities and Sodalities**

To many Protestant's there is the church, and the para-church. I suggest to you that this division should not exist, nor should the so-called para-church organisations continue to be relegated to the substandard place they typically are. For many centuries, the monastic communities operated within the larger organisational framework of the Roman Church, often doing things the typical parish ministry could not. Neither structure is "better" than the other -- they simply have different functions.

With the Reformation came the removal of monastic structures from newly formed Protestant organisations. It is interesting, that it took para-church, or extra-ecclesial organisations (*e.g.*, the Moravians) to awaken the Protestants from their post-Reformation slumber (Moreau, 2000:660f). The Pietist revival and the subsequent formation of extra-ecclesial structures proved the elimination of these groups was unwise.

Since that time, Protestants have become increasingly outreach oriented (Missiological).

Two terms are pertinent to our discussion. The term secular (Fr., *secular*) means something related to worldly, or temporal concerns. In the church, it is one not bound to monastic vows, or belonging to an order, a secular ecclesiastic (parish priest). The term secular priest was long ago given to clerics in the local churches, and the term regular priest for those in the religious orders. The term "regular" is used because the order is bound by regulations, and the term "secular" is used because the group is defined by a specific temporal location. "By the term 'secular clergy' or 'seculars' is meant those clergy who are not members of monastic bodies but who live in *saeculum*, namely, in the world" (Latourette, 1975:441).

Early monastic communities were very often retreats from the world. While generally Missiologically ineffective, they served a greater, less obvious purpose. Monastic isolationism protected Christian writings and practices, especially during periods of extreme social decay and upheaval. Many monks worked hard to keep and strengthen the church, among them, Bernard of Clairvaux (*cf.*, Robert of Arbrissel). "In an age of insecurity, disorder, and barbarism, the monastery embodied the ideal of spiritual order and disciplined moral activity which in time permeated the entire church, indeed, the entire society" (Bosch, 2000:232).

There are many instances, where monastic communities were focused on Kingdom growth. Research in recent years, has shed new light on the Missiological passion and praxis of the Celtic church, for example. Conventional wisdom of the day did not know how to address the Barbarian "problem" -- so little effort was made to evangelise this people group. Thus, the Lord raised up St. Patrick, who had spent time as a youth enslaved by the Barbarians. He eventually led an army of contextualised witnesses into the midst of these people, turning the region (Ireland) into an eventual Christian stronghold.

Patrick's goal was the establishment of new churches, which in turn became sending bases for further outreach. St. Patrick and the Celtic church employed "unconventional" methods to reach the Barbarians, which amounted to an enormous Missiological breakthrough for the period. Eastern monasteries "organized to protest and escape from the materialism of the Roman world and the corruption of the Church; the Celtic

monasteries organized to penetrate the pagan world and to extend the church" (Hunter, 2000:28). Not only were Celtic mission bases contextual and accessible, they were often built near high traffic areas, which meant the sea-lanes, for overland traffic was as yet slow and sporadic.

"The Celtic church movement proceeded to multiply mission-sending monastic communities, which continued to send teams into settlements to multiply churches and start people in the community-based life of full devotion to the Triune God" (Hunter, 2000:35). For example, they established a significant mission community at Iona, staffed with about 100 people. From this seashore location, they reached out to the dreaded Picts of Scotland. Their methodology involved learning the local language and culture, making Christ real to the indigenous population.

Celtic missionary communities were outreach oriented. They were not bound by the conventional and rigid organizational thinking that too often crippled the Missiological effectiveness of the Roman Church proper. The Celts even sent missionaries onto the Continent, where the Roman Church assumed itself well established. Among these great Celtic leaders was Columbanus ("an Irish apostle"), who inspired a missionary surge into Barbarian Europe, where many were converted, or reconverted. "Through several generations of sustained mission, Celtic Christianity thus evangelised Europe, helped bring Europe out of the Dark Ages, fuelled Charlemagne's Carolingian Renaissance, and ushered in the 'Holy Roman Empire'" (Hunter, 2000:39).

After the Synod of Whitby (664), the Roman Church absorbed the Celtic Church, and Benedictine rule was ordered throughout Christendom. Rome insisted that all the church be "Roman" culturally and linguistically, effectively ending the Missiological progress the Celts had made. Under Benedictine rule, the Celtic mission centres became isolationist retreats from the world, losing their Missiological focus. Coming under the organizational umbrella of the Roman Church brought an end to the once Missiologically dynamic Celtic Church and a wonderful, progressive chapter in church history closed. "Not until the Renaissance and Reformation would indigenous languages, cultures, and religious expressions resurface across Europe. Not until Vatican II would the Roman Catholic Church affirm the idea of indigenous Christianity" (Hunter, 2000:43).

"Before the end of the thirteenth century, the Popes had, by successive steps,

made the friars independent of the bishops and responsible only to their own superiors and to the Holy See" (Latourette, 1975:442). The division of labours was by no means clear. Clerics were in frequent conflict with one another (*e.g.*, Territorialism). Some Popes realized the need for a division of labours. "At times when the tide of life is running low, few new movements appear. When the Christian faith is coursing with vigour through its visible manifestations, old movements are rejuvenated and new ones are born" (Latourette, 1975:416).

While Benedictine rule was still the standard, a new stream emerged: the mendicant orders. The orders were comprised mostly of the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians. "[T]hey were missionaries both to the nominal Christians of Western Europe and to the non-Christians in various parts of the globe" (Latourette, 1975:428). The similarity between them and today's "para-church" entities is astounding, a wonderful example of creative subsystem structuring. "When Boniface was consecrated bishop by Pope Gregory II in 722, it was not to a particular see, but to a very wide commission of preaching to heathens..." (McManners, 1990:103).

Where there is freedom to pioneer new, orthodox works, there is also the freedom to promote heterodox beliefs. The Medieval church was ill equipped to deal with heterodox challenges, because few clerics, and consequently even fewer lay people, knew what orthodox doctrine was. Too often, energy was poured into fighting heterodoxy, instead of promoting orthodoxy. Parish priests "possessed little ability to regulate the society around them, and the laity had little instruction about the requirements of the Christian faith" (McManners, 1990:206). The monastic arm of the church was often the primary growth and education oriented element within the church. One never runs out of darkness to fight; so our always-limited resources must be principally focused on spreading salt and light and strengthening the faithful. To chase the darkness is to scatter our already thin ranks; a strategy the enemy (Satan and his hordes) uses repeatedly against us.

"Only monasticism, says Niebuhr (1957:74), saved the medieval church from acquiescence, petrification, and the loss of its vision and truly revolutionary character" (Bosch, 2000:230). The tension between order and flexibility is a continuum. While order is necessary to prevent chaos, too much order stifles the flexibility ("controlled

chaos") needed to be creative and entrepreneurial. In many ways, these tensions are resolved via the existence of these two unique, though intimately related, organizational arms: the secular and sacred, or as we shall next discuss, modalities and sodalities.

### **Post-Reformation Developments Modality - Sodality**

Missiologically, the Reformation did two primary things: (1) it caused the Reformers to entirely dismiss the notion of extra-ecclesial organizational entities (monastic communities); and (2) compelled the Roman Church to rethink, reorganize, and reinvigorate its outreach efforts. A former Augustinian monk, Martin Luther seems the one who would have promoted the continuation of monastic forms, but he did not. At the same time, the Roman Church regained a missionary mind set, due to the challenges presented by the Protestants. While their motivation for becoming outreach oriented was less than virtuous, God used the situation to propel this great organization back into Missiological activity.

Protestant inactivity (outreach) lasted about two centuries, for a number of reasons (Bosch, 2000:255f). Among them, some (1) hyper-Calvinist teachings, which argued that missions ended with the Apostles, that if God wanted the heathen saved, He would take care of it. Also, (2) Protestantism's innate connection to magisterial powers hindered the freedoms necessary for Missiological proactivity. The Protestants had worked with and through state powers to survive the Reformation, but afterwards found themselves rather dominated by state powers. In addition, (3) Protestant lands were surrounded by Catholics, and other resistant and hostile peoples, like the Muslims. Only thanks to the Moravian Church, Count von Zinzendorf, William Carey and others, would Protestantism break out of its Missiological slumber.

Mennonite Missiologist George Peters argues "that the history of Protestant missions is predominantly the history of missionary societies and individual pioneers, rather than the church in mission" (Murray, 2001:107). Peters attributes this to four Reformer features: (1) lack of a coherent Missiology (and theology of missions); (2) failure to establish churches free from state control; (3) missions was individual rather than a

church group, or community responsibility; and (4) their lack of spiritual vitality. The Reformers themselves needed the revitalisation brought by and through the Pietist movement before becoming Missiological!

We find throughout church history, that the mainstream (secular) church cannot remain wholly given to outreach; it is not a sustainable model. At various times, the secular arm of the church has been very outreach oriented; but it does not last long (*e.g.*, Moravians, Waldensians). To be sure, Roman Catholic missions would never have flourished as it did, without the monastic arm working as assiduously and assertively as it did (*e.g.*, Dominicans, Jesuits). The Counterreformation led to the establishment of the Jesuits, who "became the spearhead of the movement both within Europe and as a missionary force in America and the East" (Cross, 1997:423). Protestants finally acknowledged their need for such organizational entities, though restructuring came slowly and painfully. "A frequent response to the perceived need to engage both in mission and maintenance has been to develop specialist groups to engage in mission with the support of the church" (Murray, 2001:106).

Dr. Ralph Winter (Moreau, 2000:894) proposed new language for these organizational constructs a few years ago. Borrowing from Sociology, Modality refers to the typical parish body, and Sodality, refers to an individual, or group formed, when a "visionary believes that either the church is not doing an adequate job in, for instance, reaching a particular segment of the community, or for whatever reason, the church is unable to do it" (Moreau, 2000:722). Each entity has unique characteristics.

The modality, or 'local' church, is parish oriented. It is typically stationary and tends toward being centripetal. Its ministry is typically "general," broad-spectrum and basic. It is also very often, building, or structure oriented, with the building playing an important role in its life. This orientation means that a modality typically uses many of its resources to maintain property. Its ministry focus is typically localized, or location specific, though its influence may be quite broad.

The sodality typically has more organizational flexibility and tends to be further removed from the daily life of the modality. Sodalities tend to be situation, or need specific (*e.g.*, student, prison, missions). They are often considered specialists in their realm, having a more narrow, sometimes prophetic, focus, which can be beneficial to the



modality. Sodalities tend to be more centrifugal in nature. They are typically less oriented to fixed property, with its subsequent overhead and maintenance requirements; meaning the sodality can operate with less overhead.

Dr. Winter suggests that this division of labour is God-ordained and quite necessary to the effective operation of Kingdom (*i.e.*, not just church) activities. Parachurch, or extra-ecclesial organizations are quite often, inter, or trans denominational. They promote, and in some ways force, interaction between denominational groups, who by nature (fear and entropy) become closed, or rigid systems, and extremely protective of their own doctrines and territories. While diverse unity in the Body of Christ is proper (after the model of the Triune Godhead) the sectarianism that promotes division and lack of cooperation is not pleasing to God; neither should it be promoted (Mat. 12:25; Luk. 9:49-50; 11:14f).

We see sodalities -- be they individuals or organizations -- often used by God, to challenge the *status quo* of the modality. Because the modality is typically tied to structures and locations, they tend toward "maintenance," or "occupation" (Luk. 19:13) thinking and practice. This is only wrong when it hinders Kingdom growth. Sodalities, because of their flexible organizational nature and mission specific ministry, tend to help modalities keep from ossification, or organizational rigidity.

Perhaps the greatest criticism of sodalities has been lack of accountability. This criticism has sometimes been perception only, and sometimes well earned. "Because of the tendency toward entrepreneurial leadership, there is often a lack of accountability outside the organization and particularly to the local church" (Moreau, 2000:723). Modalities tend to perceive sodalities as disconnected from mainstream church life, and sometimes they are. One of the things that tend to keep sodalities 'connected' relationally to modalities is their need for funding. Here again, God effects His designs in spite of us (*cf.*, Num.12).

Nondenominational sodal organizations can promote Kingdom growth, not sectarian growth, which can help the global church to work together (Joh. 17:11; 1Co. 12). Sodal organizations must guard against the same closed, rigid and uncooperative postures that affect modalities. One example of a sodality's tendency toward detached, and at times irresponsible behaviour, are the Jesuits at several points in their history (*cf.*, Papal brief: *Dominus ac Redemptor* -- 1773).

Organizationally, modalities stress unity, commonality, community and broad-spectrum ministry. The sodality is most often, focused on a specific kind of ministry, which -- like contemporary foreign missions -- requires great specialization and an exacting focus. Acts 13:1-3, for example, shows how God calls certain individuals (*e.g.*, Paul and Barnabas) to specialized ministry. We must never assume that these individuals are better than any other believer, for they are called by God to a particular task, or ministry (1Co. 12).

One pastor sees a helpful analogy in the medical profession, where there are general practitioners and specialists. A general practitioner is trained, staffed, and equipped to handle a wide variety of needs, but has neither the time, expertise, nor desire to perform specialized tasks. They will often refer a patient to a specialist, who does have the time, expertise and desire to focus on a specialized task. The sodality can be compared to the specialist. He is no better than the general practitioner, only different.

There is a need for two organisational arms in the church: modal and sodal. Because both modal and sodal structures are prone to entropy (ossification) and narrow-mindedness, each needs the other to be the complete Missiological whole God intends for the church. The necessary connectionalism between the two, promotes, and at times demands, cooperation. Diversity is necessary and must be celebrated, not ignored and criticized. The global church must keep this in focus; for the challenge of reaching remaining people groups is far too great for any one group to accomplish.

### **Dynamics of Change**

We must approach "change" two ways: supernaturally (metaphysically) and naturally (physically). The Christian who forsakes either dimension, will necessarily lack a balanced understanding of change dynamics, and Scripture clearly supports this dual dimensionality. We begin with the change agent, John the Baptist, who had come in the prophetic image of Elijah to call Israel back to *Yahweh* and to prepare the way for the *Mashiach*. With Jesus' arrival and the rise of His ministry, John's ministry diminished: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Joh. 3:30). Questioned about John, Jesus replied (Mat. 11) that John's ministry did not tickle the ears or whitewash the truth. He

was not a "reed shaken by the wind." John was forthright, uncompromising and tough, as his conflict with Herod reveals. Jesus adds, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Mat. 11:12).

Matthew 11:12 has provoked various interpretations. The Greek clearly indicates violence (*biaetai* and *harpazousin*). I prefer D.A. Carson's interpretation of the text, who says, the kingdom comes "with holy power and magnificent energy that has been pushing back the frontiers of darkness...the noun *biastes* is rare in Greek literature (only here in the NT), but where it occurs it always has the negative connotations of violence and rapacity" (Carson, 1992:8:266).

I believe Matthew 11:12 is best understood through a properly balanced natural <> supernatural hermeneutic, and by further comparing II Corinthians 10:3-6, I believe Jesus meaning becomes clear. As the Apostle Paul instructs, our warfare is not carnal, but supernatural, a principle supported elsewhere (*cf.*, Eph. 6:10ff; 1Ti. 1:18; 4:7; 6:12). Jesus never condones the carnal use of violence to advance the kingdom of God (*cf.*, Joh. 18:10-11; Psa. 11:5; Rom. 1:30; 1Ti. 3:3; Jam. 4:1). In spite of His righteous outburst in the Temple (Mat. 11:15-19; Luk. 19:45-48), physical violence was not to be considered normative.

Violence comes many ways, including verbally. Resistance to change agents is a variety of violence, and it comes in other ways also. Change can be thought of as the reordering of things, throwing down one thing, in favour of another. Thus, change does not occur without violence, and change is often violently resisted. Jewish religious leadership resisted John, who "wanted a kingdom, but not the kind Jesus was offering" (Walvoord, 1983:44). Change is violent, no matter how it comes, for it upsets *status quo*, or homeostasis.

The believer must remember, that there is great warfare taking place in the heavenlies, warfare that directly affects our natural lives. These realities are poignantly revealed in the book of Daniel (*cf.*, 4:28f, 5, 6, 10). With this proper balance of natural and supernatural realities we (Missiologically) march forward to advance God's kingdom, knowing that through it all, the toughest battles are fought in the heavenlies, as we do our part on our knees in prayer. The Lord prefers that we do violence via spiritual warfare.

In natural terms, change is a challenge to homeostasis, or equilibrium (*status quo*). We must realise that nothing new begins without the ending of something else. Let us consider the difference between change and transition. As defined, by several authors, change is something we can accomplish rapidly, while transition may take a long time, if it ever comes. To illustrate, consider moving your family from Cairo to Moscow. The change itself can be accomplished in perhaps a few weeks. Emotional transition, however, may take a long time, or never come at all. Transition is the psychological embrace of Moscow as home, leaving Cairo behind, as a fond memory.

One can move to Moscow and never consider it "home," though the change has taken place. This is exactly the process the children of Israel (Exodus - Numbers) went through; and precisely the same process our ministries and we go through. "Change is situational.... transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation... change is external; transition is internal" (Bridges, 1991:3).

Consider, for example, the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes, the conqueror of Mexico. Upon finding a suitable location, he decided to establish what would become the city of Veracruz. "He then had his ships run aground and dismantled, a fact which gave rise to the legend that he burned them" (Benton, 1964:6:555). Cortez knew that change first requires letting go of the old, before people will embrace the new. A simple illustration of this is the trapeze artist, who must let go of one swing in order to travel to the next.

We also consider the critically important "wilderness," or neutral zone stage. The neutral zone is "when the old habits that are no longer adaptive to the situation are extinguished, and new, better-adapted patterns of habit begin to take shape. It is the winter in which the old growth returns to the soil as decayed matter, while the next year's growth begins to stir in the root underground" (Bridges, 1991:6). The neutral zone is sometimes a catharsis process, but always a dying process (old and new wineskins). "It is the chaos in which the old form of things dissolves and from which the new emerges...Nothing undermines organizational change as the failure to think through who will have to let go of what when change occurs" (Bridges, 1991:4, 6).

Individuals and organizations are like well-trained elephants. Once "conditioned responses" are established, it is difficult to "re-train." This is why change resistance is

not always rational. It is a process buried deep within the individual or corporate psyche, and why an attitude of "change" is healthy for the individual, or organization to maintain (continuous renewal). The less often change is faced, the less the change process is understood, and the more frightening it is. Individuals and organizations can become conditioned to accept change, especially when done incrementally (*i.e.*, prayerfully and patiently).

Missiologial change can also be better understood using a paradigm borrowed from counselling. The Grief Model -- Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance -- can very easily be applied to the change process. As the change agent introduces change, there must be a letting go of the old in favour of the new. Thus, in a very real sense, there is a death and grieving process people must work through. As change is introduced, people will often display the same kinds of emotional reactions typical to their grieving the loss of a loved one.

Another counselling model that can help us to understand the Missiologial process of change is the Crisis Intervention paradigm. As crisis, or stressors enter the person's life, a state of disequilibrium, or instability is created. The person innately desires to return to equilibrium or a state of stability. The person -- realising it or not -- wrestles with both realistic and distorted perceptions of reality. What kinds of support they have through the crisis process can have significant impact on them. Eventually, the crisis abates, or is resolved and stability, or equilibrium returns to the person's life.

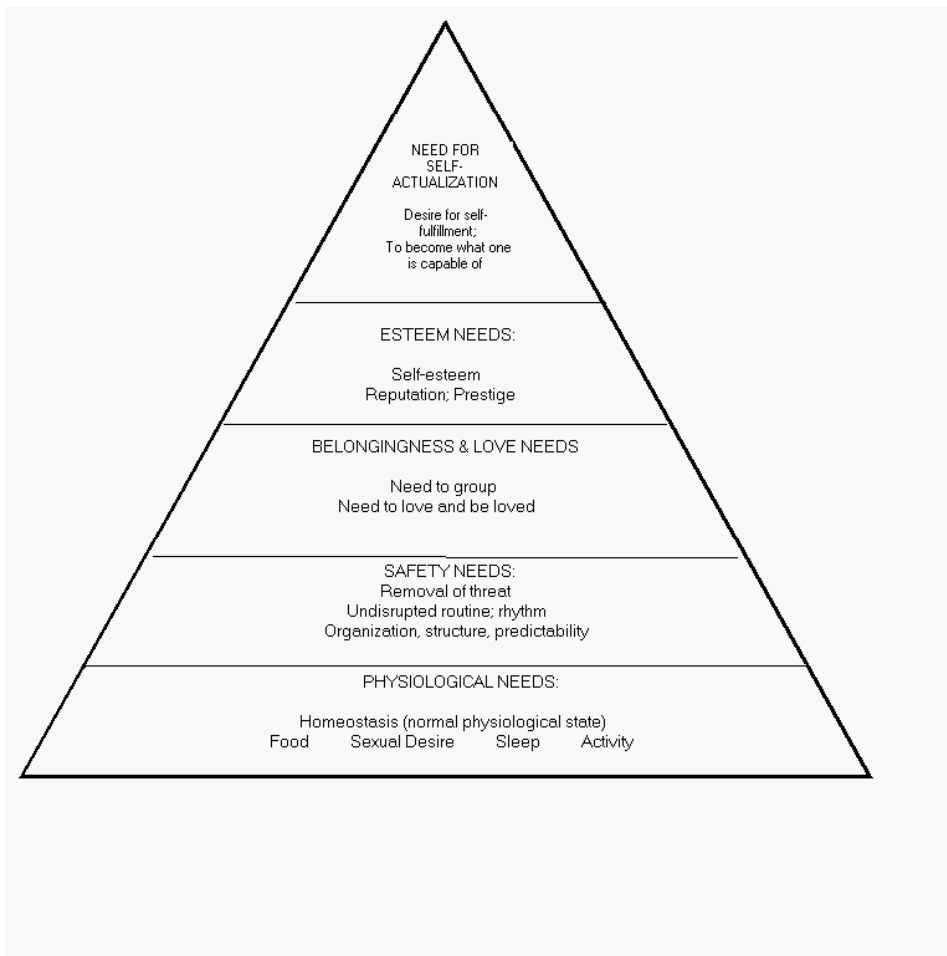
Instability, crisis, destabilization, or disequilibrium in a person's life, can be wonderful opportunities to introduce healthy change. It is during these times that people can be the most receptive to the Gospel. These can also be very dangerous situations that, if improperly handled, can lead to irreversible and lasting damage. The change agent needs to be sensitive to the potential for individual or organizational change *via* disequilibrium, or destabilization. During such times, people who have been enormously resistant to change may be far more pliable, or receptive, open to new possibilities and ideas (*i.e.*, Gospel). Every change agent (missionary) needs to be aware of these dynamics and be alert to such opportunities when they arise (*i.e.*, storms, war, family crisis).

Destabilization opportunities are not predictable. As such, the change agent cannot always (normatively) wait for them. Facing normal life patterns and levels of resistance,

the change agent can attempt to destabilize, or introduce a sense of discontent for what is (*i.e.*, way of life, religion). Creating instability or disequilibrium in individual, or organizational thinking -- which can be a lengthy, painstaking process -- can lead to the receptivity in which new concepts will be considered. The wise change agent is also aware that abusing or manipulating this process can be counterproductive, even dangerous, for it can actually create defensiveness and violent reactions. It is best to remember that without the benefit of crisis in a person's life, change must be introduced slowly and patiently, for that is typically the only way it is accepted.

Organizationally, change can be either leader or 'grassroots' initiated (*c.f.*, Galpin [1996]. *The Human Side of Change*). The Reformation is an example of an essentially 'grassroots' initiated change process. Though many of the reform leaders were influential in their immediate realm, they were not Roman Church hierarchical "insiders." By comparison, the Council of Trent and Counterreformation process was largely leadership initiated.

Individuals and organizations tend toward balance or equilibrium. Stasis means the cessation of advance, or Missiological activity. Change agents challenge individuals and organizations to abandon the comforts of equilibrium, to press forward, to gain new ground, to do things differently. Change agents are frequently resisted, because they upset *status quo*. The challenge to change threatens our inherent need to realise physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualisation needs (see fig. Maslow).



The slide into apathy and rigidity comes gradually, almost imperceptibly. The frog in the water experiment helps us understand the process. Simply put, a frog taken from room temperature and placed in very cold, or very hot water, will react violently. Then, place the same frog in room temperature water, and slowly increase the temperature. The frog will not react in time to save himself. He will gradually become accustomed to the temperature change -- though dangerous -- and will die.

The decline process, which is really negative change, helps us to better understand what we, as change agents, must do to introduce and promote positive change. The English philosopher Francis Bacon said: "He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils" (Bridges, 1991:2). As Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests, we all crave stability and safety. Thus, even good and necessary change seems to threaten our stability and safety. As change agents we must remember that our efforts to bring changes in thought and practice can stir great fear and defensiveness within people.

Though change may be desperately needed (*e.g.*, 10-40 Window), patient resolve and much prayer are required. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (Jam. 3:17-18).

### **Motivation in Organisations**

We next consider what motivates people individually and organizationally, and conversely, what keeps them from being motivated. Organisational revitalisation cannot occur without change and change seldom occurs (albeit by accident, or Divine intervention) without an understanding of what motivates people. As Christians, we must (again) consider organizational motivation on two levels: natural and spiritual. At the spiritual level, a person is either a born-again believer (Joh. 3) or not. If not, then he or she remains under the full sway of the corrupt nature of man (Gen. 3) and of their father, Satan. "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (Joh. 8:44).

From the beginning, it is imperative that we assume an orthodox understanding of man's condition, for unless we do, we cannot understand human motivational factors and consequently, the dynamics of organizational motivation. Mankind's corrupt, or fallen nature is at the heart of his problems. Like Satan, man is always inclined toward sin and away from God. This is the heart of Martin Luther's noted work, *The Bondage of the Will*. In Romans 3:7-8, the Apostle Paul "appears almost to personify sin as a cruel tyrant who holds the human race imprisoned in guilt and under judgment. Sin is on top of us, weighs us down, and is a crushing burden" (Stott, 1994:99).



By means of God's common grace (Mat. 5:45; Act. 17:25), those far from God can do good. Even the born-again contend throughout their lives with their corrupt flesh (Pro. 14:12; 16:25; Rom. 7:13-25; Jam. 4:1f). People behave as they do because the fall (Gen. 3) has corrupted man and nature (Rom. 8:18-22) and all things tend toward corruption, not godliness. Because this is true, we know that individuals and organizations will behave according to their nature, except as counter-influenced by the incredible grace of God. May He be praised forever!

In addition to man's propensity for ungodliness, is the biblical reality that God is sovereign over all creation. While He allows sin and evil to exist, He is neither overwhelmed, nor limited by them (Mat. 19:26; Rom. 5:20). "God, as creator of all things visible and invisible, and the owner of all, has an absolute right to rule over all (Mat. 20:15; Rom. 9:20f), and he exercises this authority in the universe (Eph. 1:11)" (Thiessen, 1979:119) (*cf.*, 1Ch. 29:11; Psa. 115:3; Isa. 45:9; Eze. 18:4; Dan. 4:35; Mat. 20:15; Rom. 9:14-21; 11:36; 1Ti. 6:15f; Rev. 4:11).

While God sometimes moves in dramatic ways (1Ki. 19:11-12), He also moves in equally mighty, but less noticeable, or spectacular ways, by influencing our thoughts (Psa. 37:4). As thoughts are influenced, so consequently, are actions (Pro. 23:7a). God influences all of creation in ways we neither realize, nor understand (Isa. 55:8-9). "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD. Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Pro. 21:1). With this reality in mind, we remember there are three powers greater than we and/or our organization, constantly at work, influencing all we think, say and do: sin, Satan and God.

On the natural level, we have other factors to consider. Among them, the primal drives within us all. While others may have improved upon it, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs remains a solid model from which we can gain a greater understanding of what motivates man's behaviour. Maslow's model begins with physiological needs and works up through self-actualisation needs. People have basic survival needs as well as needs for safety, love, and esteem. These drives unconsciously influence our behaviour. For example, the need for security is the basic reason why it is so difficult to get people to leave their safe surroundings and comfortable, fairly predictable lives to go onto the mission field. Base needs can be overcome via natural reasoning, or influence; but more

often, they are only overcome via God's influence in their life.

We must also acknowledge that ability and willingness are two very different things. Behaviour is "generally motivated by a desire to attain some specific result" (Blanchard, 1996:25). Goals and rewards are critical to individual and organisational motivation. "Heaven" is the ultimate goal and reward for the Christian. Other religions use mythic constructs to motivate their faithful.

Resignation and apathy "occur after prolonged frustration, when people lose hope of accomplishing their goal(s) in a particular situation and withdraw from reality and the source of their frustration" (Blanchard, 1996:31). If people in our church or missions organization are resigned and apathetic, what is frustrating them? Are the goals too high? Are we blocking them from being involved, as they desire? These, and many additional questions must be asked.

Too many church leaders assume that the promise of our future -- heavenly reward -- is enough to keep the Body of Christ motivated. We must keep in mind the natural obstacles and weaknesses that plague us all. Sometimes, we need a word of encouragement, a pat on the back, or a warm embrace. The flock is never to be motivated through manipulation, but encouragement, edification and comfort (1Co. 14:3). "Motivation is getting people to do something out of mutual advantage... Manipulation is getting people to do what we want them to do, primarily for our advantage" (Berkley, 1994:280). Manipulation often carries a hidden agenda.

People typically do things that make sense to them (Gangel, 1989:155). If our people are frustrated, perhaps they do not understand their role, or what is expected of them. They may feel inadequate and need additional training or instruction. It may also be that they have never been properly challenged. A clergy-dominant ministry model is to be blamed for much of this, as sometimes insecure and domineering church leadership keep laity from being involved, as they should.

There is a continuum that runs from duress, to compulsion, coercion, duty, obligation, expectation, desire and finally fulfilment (Gangel, 1989). Shepherds charged with the care of God's flock (1Pe. 5:1-11), must be very careful how they lead. While force and manipulation can be used to get things done, this is not God's way (Mat. 20:20-28). "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be

your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mat. 20:26-28).

According to McGregor's (management) Theory X and Y, there are two positions we can take about motivation from a leadership perspective: (X) people are not naturally motivated and cannot be trusted, requiring constant supervision and prodding; and (Y) people are naturally motivated, wanting to help others, requiring empowering supervisory guidance. There is certainly an element of truth to both. For God's people and for those He has called to positions of leadership, however, we are to understand the corrupt nature of man, while embracing the potential each person has -- in and through Christ.

God's people can be trusted and want to be needed. Investing trust in our people does not always produce positive results; but it is the approach God prefers (1Co. 13:1-8a). Our people want to learn new skills, to be able to contribute. They want to belong and be accepted. They want self-esteem and affirmation. They want to grow in their faith and to share their God-given gifts. They want to avoid loneliness and to support a cause they believe in (Gangel, 1989:168-9). Leadership is biblically compelled to trust God.

Motivation is unleashed, not superimposed. It builds on the basis of need fulfilment and tends to follow positive ministry satisfaction. The flock responds and relates to dynamic, servant leaders who are open, honest and hardworking. Godly, effective leaders speak and exemplify "we," not "me." Effective leaders "[e]nable performers to perform their way - not your way" (Peter Drucker). Effective leaders affirm loudly and correct quietly. They praise in public and reprimand in private. "People work in non-profits because they believe in the cause" (Drucker, 1990:183).

"A satisfied need never motivates anyone" (Berkley, 1994:276). That is why godly, effective, servant leaders keep challenges and vision before their people, as they work together to advance the Kingdom, as God leads, and in the strength and favour He provides. We work together, as a team, or community of believers, each doing our God-appointed and equipped jobs for God's glory, not ours.

A strong sense of purpose is critical to success. The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk said "[w]rite down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will

not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay" (Hab. 2:2b-3). The specific message is for Habakkuk's situation, but the general principle applies to all, because people need direction that is clear, well defined and kept before them -- the importance of redundant communications!

There is no more important question any organization can ask itself than, "Why do we exist?" Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Consider the vision that drove Jesus: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and loose heart" (Heb. 12:2-3).

In *The Tyranny of the Urgent* (1994), Charles Hummel reminds us how focused Jesus was. "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me... I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me... I always do what pleases Him" (Joh. 6:38; 8:28-29). Knowing and following priorities is imperative for every believer and every ministry (organization). For each of us, this simple axiom has enormous power: vision produces discipline.

## Chapter Four Synthesis and Conclusions

A process of cultural transformation has been underway in North America for decades, much of it rooted in Pluralism and Postmodernism. The general population is increasingly Neo-pagan, post-Christendom, right-brained (*e.g.*, feelings driven) and as desperately in need of Christ as any generation before it. Along with this, many North American churches are stuck in Modernity and “Christendom.” They do not seem to know, or want to know, how to deal with contemporary cultural challenges. The attitude among too many North American Christians is that society must conform to them, not the reverse (Contextualisation). Many churches have for decades been oriented to centripetal ministry, where people seek them (*i.e.*, fish jumping into the boat, as it were). Faced by changing cultural trends, churches are increasingly challenged to be more centrifugal (*i.e.*, outreach oriented), and Contextualised. "True Contextualisation happens when there is a community which lives faithfully by the gospel and in the same costly identification with people in their real situations as we see in the earthly ministry of Jesus" - Leslie Newbigin (Murray, 2001:154).

The effects of Liberal (not Liberation) theology on the North American church have been deep, widespread and daunting. Because Liberal Theology severely and deceptively undermines the authority of Scripture -- the historic foundation of the Christian faith -- many Christians have lost their *raison d'être*. No organisation can long exist without a firm understanding of why it exists and what it stands for. As an old axiom says, “if you don’t know what you stand for, you will fall for anything.” Having lost touch with the reasons for their own existence many churches (necessarily) lose their desire to share the pearl of great value with others -- the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus (1Co. 15:3-4). What, if anything, can be done to reverse these trends?

Perhaps drawing from history will provide some insights. The Celtic church knew what it believed and was an outreach-focused church; a group of believers with clear purpose. They may have lacked the doctrinal sophistication many seek today, yet their lives remind us that spending time pursuing doctrinal sophistication is not always as important as sharing the simple Gospel -- in word and deed. Church leadership in their day did not believe the Barbarians could be converted, for a "population, by definition,

had to be literate and rational enough to understand Christianity, and cultured and civil enough to become real Christian's if they did understand it" (Hunter, 2000:17). This is exactly the trap many Western churches have fallen into!

Saint Patrick went against conventional thinking and accomplished what was considered impossible. He fraternized with sinners (*cf.*, Mat. 9:13; 11:19) instead of nobles. He was criticized and sorely misunderstood by his revered superiors. Patrick was a well-organized and able administrator, yet his Missiological practices did not follow conventional forms. "They [Celtic believers] seemed vulnerable, but proved to be more enduring because of their rootedness in the culture" (Murray, 2001:92). Theirs was a movement, not an institution. Patrick exemplified Jesus in so many ways, and is clearly a man to be studied and admired. Sadly, in the end, the conventionalists had their way. The great Missiological sagacity and vigour of the Celtic church was lost, via "proper" church practices, politics and administrative considerations, as the Celtic Church was absorbed into the Roman Church at the Synod of Whitby [664].

How do we respond to these serious challenges? Are new church plants the only answer, or perhaps the easy answer? Should we be more focused than we are on the revitalisation of existing church structures? Aubrey Malphurs acknowledges the harsh reality, that changing existing churches -- revitalisation -- is an arduous task. While he has not lost hope for churches that need revitalisation, he does maintain, "church planting will be the future for the American church because it's far easier to plant a new church than to renew a dying one" (Malphurs, 1998:16). Is this "easier" path, truly the best path?

Those of the Church Growth movement (*e.g.*, Donald McGavran, C. Peter Wagner) have done much to infuse Missiological thinking into the North American *ethos*, in spite of ongoing criticism that their constructs overemphasize "natural" solutions. Planting new churches has now become a greater focus for several groups (*e.g.*, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Evangelical Presbyterians, Vineyard USA, Evangelical Covenant), though none of these are of the old "mainline" family. While there have been successes, there have also been many failures.

There is strong evidence suggesting that many attempted church plants fail, perhaps as high as 1 in 8, or greater (unpublished sources). A variety of reasons are suggested to explain these failures, including, "unclear vision, insecure foundations, unrealistic

expectations, inadequate leadership, limited training and lack of ongoing supervision" (Murray, 2001:18). Obsession with proper methodology alone cannot assure success.

Of those that have succeeded, data increasingly indicates that most North American 'church growth' is transfer, or redistributive growth, not conversion growth. This suggests, that the thousands who are leaving the former mainline denominations are simply transferring their membership to other, more (currently) vibrant churches. This fact alone is enough to give one pause.

I also wonder how much American Pragmatism has influenced global Missiological thinking. Long ago, America became a "throw away" society. Rather than fixing a broken item, we simply throw it away and get a new one. We do this with almost everything. Have we taken the same approach where the church is concerned? Do we just not want to be bothered with the imperfect?

Further, we consider "edifice complex," the obsessive focus on structures (*i.e.*, buildings), rather than mission. Edifice complex infects the church with a compulsion to build the Kingdom according to carnal wisdom (Gen.11), not God's. Driven by an edifice complex *ethos*, a large portion of available resources go toward maintaining structures, not advancing the Kingdom Missiologically, for available resources are committed first to structure maintenance. Structures and forms become the end, not a means to the end. It was one of worst traits of Medieval Christendom (*e.g.*, indulgences to build St. Peter's basilica). Edifice complex is a sure sign of organizational ossification, and often an unnecessary burden for a congregation.

Another indicator of church health is giving levels. Churches in the Two-Thirds world contribute a higher percentage of their income than First-World churches, who certainly have more to give (*esp.* in disposable income), amounting to crumbs from the table (Mat. 15:26-27). While Western churches boast in grand structures and expensive programs, I seriously doubt their spiritual vitality compares to what believers in the non-Western world possess. God wants a church whose focus is Him and His -- not me and mine. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

### **Persecution as Change Agent?**

We cannot leave our discussion about organizational revitalisation without

mentioning the significance of persecution. Again considering Matthew 10, we note: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of Me but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another." (Mat. 10:21-23a,b).

For some Christians, persecution means living in fear for their lives and loved ones. These people have little control over their situation. For others, persecution means withstanding those who threaten a preferred way of life. For them, power and control are necessary to secure and assure a way of life. Christianity as a political power provides security. Thus, when Christendom is threatened, it is equated to an attack against both religious and national foundations. Religionists, even Christians, can be very intolerant -- even violent -- when their way of life is threatened. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9).

Rev. Jim Killgore, president and CEO of Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment (ACMC), served as pastor of an international congregation in Pakistan for several years. It was an eye-opening experience for him. He learned what it meant to live under the threat of losing one's life for Christ's sake. After returning to the US, he has been something of a champion for clearer 'global' thinking in the church. In a recent commentary written for World Pulse, Rev. Killgore commented on the "great divide" that culturally exists between Westerners and the rest of the world. "North American cross-cultural workers face a great disconnect. The issue is not only one of wealth and technology, but attitude and commitment. As young (and not so young) missionaries are being sent out from our churches, we need to address the serious problem of relating to a world that is increasingly different from us" (Killgore, 2002:7).

Rev. Killgore highlights our (North American) culture of pain avoidance. "When that attitude is brought overseas, we react with a similar pain avoidance value. This climate is too oppressive -- I need to leave. My co-workers and I are out of sorts -- I need to join another team. The persecution is growing in intensity -- it's time to go back to the US" (Killgore, 2002:7). Is pain avoidance an American-only problem?

I've heard some of my contemporaries waxing "theologically," that God won't give us more than we can bear. Perhaps this is an Americanism. Would Job, Jeremiah, Jesus, or



Paul have agreed? While the Lord does promise to be with us through our trials (2Co. 12:7-10), I'm not aware of any promise He made to help us avoid pain. "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2Co. 4:8-10). You can be very sure that problems, conflict and pain accompany Kingdom growth; while security, comfort and apathy accompany plateau, decline and (organisational) death.

Church history reveals an indisputable connection between church growth and persecution, confirming with painful clarity, the prophetic premise Jesus puts forth in Matthew 10. What is sad, and perhaps ominous in a way, is that so much of the church fails to understand this connection. Perhaps for them, it is too far from their present reality. I know this is true in North America.

Pastor Chung, of Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, South Korea is concerned about the 'danger of success.' He says the South Korean church is experiencing the same lack of zeal and apathy for others that are all too common with western believers. Chung says, "[w]hen we were in a needy situation, we were eager to pray and have a deeper relationship with God. But as our economy has improved, our zeal for prayer and evangelism has gotten weaker. Our economic blessings have become a challenge for the church" (Barton, 2002:3). Is this not the heart of Deuteronomy 8?

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe His commands, His laws and His decrees that I am giving you this day..... when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, ...." (Deu. 8:10-11, 13-14d).

Dr. Greg Livingstone, former director of Frontiers, notes that severe persecution can prevent church establishment and decimate what exists (Livingstone, 1993:14f; 226). This has been true throughout church history. It is interesting, that more moderate forms of persecution seem to fuel a healthy, focused and committed church. Dr. Livingstone

says a critical mass -- or a large and strong enough group of believers -- is necessary to withstand the pressures that come against it. Certainly, when the coercive powers of a state come to bear against the church, survival is difficult, as we have seen repeatedly (e.g., Rome, China, Soviet Union, Albania).

Persecution can also occur within the institutional framework of the church. The Medieval church, for example, sought to protect itself from heterodox challenges, but also persecuted those calling for internal reforms. Change agents like Jan Hus were eventually killed because they could not be silenced.

Religionists -- including Christians -- who seek to control, rather than influence, sometimes employ violence (e.g., radical Islam). Once coercion is used to control organisational integrity, it is easier to take the next step, using coercive powers to control those outside normative organizational boundaries. With the power of coercion comes the temptation to use it -- not only to keep peace and enforce jurisprudence, but also to control patterns of thought. This equates to intolerance for the beliefs of others. A general historical axiom is that those with power (esp. coercive) tend toward intolerance; those without power tend toward tolerance.

Persecution (*dioko*) means "to put to flight, drive away...to pursue" (Unger, 1985:468). We find the concept in both verb and noun forms in Mat. 5:10-12, 44; 1-:23; 23:34; Luk. 11:49; 21:12; Joh. 5:16; 15:20; Act. 7:52; 9:4-5; Rom. 12:14; 1Co. 4:12; 15:9; 2Co. 4:9; Gal. 1:13, 23; 4:29; 5:11; Php. 3:6; 2Ti. 3:12; Rev. 12:13, etc. The connection between persecution and martyrdom, and church growth and revitalisation is inescapable. It is true that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church (*Semen est sanguis Christianorum* - Tertullian). "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Rev. 12:11).

Christianity was carried eastward to China and "planted" there in the seventh century. By 845 AD, severe persecution greatly weakened the fledgling church. Though nearly decimated, Christians were reported in "some of the parts of China in 877-878, while not far from 987 Nestorian monks sent to China to assist the Church there declared that they could find no Christians in that land" (Latourette, 1975:274). Again, as Dr. Greg Livingstone suggests, severe persecution arrests growth.

In the late 19th century, new waves of missionaries went to China (*e.g.*, Hudson Taylor). By the 1950's, the new Communist government ousted all foreign missionaries and began systematic persecution of Christians, which continues today. For several decades, many "experts" believed the church was doomed in China, especially because expatriots were not there to help.

In January 1950, a directory published by the National Christian Council said there were 834,000 Protestant communicant members. Today, the Chinese church is estimated to be as large as 40 million (estimates vary greatly)! To the amazement of many, God had worked through determined, and often severe persecution, to grow a large, strong church. Certainly, it did not look (forms and structures) like the Western churches, but the Chinese church had and has, what other believers envy -- courage of convictions and a strong, vibrant faith.

Jonathan Cho suggests some by-products from persecution, which have all contributed to church growth in China. First, was the destruction of ecclesiastical, educational, and medical institutions established by foreign missions by the Chinese communists. Second, was the development of voluntary, lay ministry and training models, radically different from those in the so-called free world, which are so ecclesiocentric, or cleric dominated (necessarily restricting growth).

More specifically, persecution: (1) deepens a Christian's spiritual life, (2) can purge the believer of his inward sins and confirm his faith in Christ, (3) causes the larger house churches to split into several smaller groups, all necessary for security reasons, (4) and prevents the leadership "bottleneck" so common in free countries. As leaders are arrested and killed, new leadership must arise -- seminary degree or not. This situation (5) forces believers to grow into close solidarity and leaders to develop a fluid, tight organizational structure and communication network, which (6) has turned the church in China into a people of fervent and persistent prayer. Persecution also (7) produces testimonies, as those who have suffered long under persecution become a source of inspiration and encouragement to others (Cho). Persecution purifies and congeals purpose, dedication, conviction, and resolve.

Persecution is something God uses to grow and revitalise His church. It is seldom something we can control, but is something we must seek to understand. No sensible

person seeks persecution; yet, we realise that growth often comes through pain and struggles. "It is common sense that unless people are dissatisfied with their present integration of social, emotional, and religious factors, they generally would be quite unmotivated to give consideration to another religion" (Livingstone, 1993:147). May our gracious Lord give us the grace to endure, that His church may grow as He desires, and that He may be justified and glorified in all things.

### **Finally**

Finally, I conclude that both church planting and revitalisation are necessary. Further, it is not always obvious, especially to organizational "insiders," when revitalisation is necessary. Periodic "self-examinations" are good for individuals and organizations, seeking prayerfully to determine their condition. In the end, only God really knows which route is best, and the what timing should apply. For that reason, as the Apostle Paul suggests in Romans 12:1-3, we should remain humble before God.

The organisational life-cycle shows that revitalisation should be an ongoing process -- and that typically, the need for revitalisation is not acknowledged until more serious problems arise. No true revitalisation will occur unless and until, the organisation agrees there is a need for it and surrenders itself to the necessity for change, personally and corporately. I am also firmly convinced that "missions" and Missiology cannot be relegated to one, specialized corner of God's Kingdom, hidden away, as it were, from the "mainstream" of Christianity. For the faith to survive and prosper, it needs the proactive convictions and challenges that are so often provided by the Missiological community.

What is an "effective" Christian organisation and what are some practical steps we can take to promote effectiveness? Size, or numbers cannot define effectiveness. Some large organisations are very dysfunctional and ineffective, while some small organisations are very well run and effective. Size does not mean effectiveness. To my mind, this has been the greatest miscalculation emanating from the Church Growth Movement -- the obsession with "numbers." For all the good intentions, the Church Growth Movement has focused on a few successful churches -- nearly all, big (North American) churches, in large metropolitan areas. To say the least, these success stories

do not translate into functional models for everyone else. Let us rather, define "success" and "effectiveness" by changed hearts and lives, with well-run and properly functioning organisations. Otherwise, the pastor of "First Faithful" in Backwater, North Dakota (fictitious) will forever be ashamed of himself and the ministry he and his flock are doing, for there are no "big numbers" to potentially reach in such an isolated locale.

What are some positive traits we should seek to emulate? Researcher George Barna does as well as anyone in this regard, so let us consider his findings. He suggests nine (9) highly effective habits, which are: strategic leadership, well organised ministry, significant congregational relationships, genuine worship, strategic evangelism, systematic theological growth (Christian Education), holistic stewardship practices, service in the community, and equipping others to do ministry (Barna, 1998:16).

For leadership, Barna (and others) suggest that leadership should be vision-driven, competent, courageous, passionate, and intentional about respect-based relationships. Being a "superb" preacher, or teacher is seldom listed by those polled as most significant: being a caring shepherd is. For all the demands that are placed upon leadership, the congregation needs to remember that they have not hired Jesus Himself; they have before them a simple, frail, fault-ridden human being. As such, expectations should be realistic, and measured with great love and respect. Many problems between shepherds and flocks can be resolved by acknowledging our common weaknesses.

There are leaders who are very strong -- too strong, in fact. They may be insecure, afraid of failure, arrogant, competitive, or any number of other combinations. Contemporary management literature and Scripture suggests ... that shepherds should seek to equip and empower their flock to "do" ministry (Eph. 4:12). When a shepherd is doing most, or all of the "ministry," that church will be ineffective and unbalanced, especially where potentialities are considered. The organisational key for leadership is to "push authority down," to "decentralize," and to "delegate."

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away (1Pe. 5:2-4).

My purpose here is not to dampen congregational support for the many thousands of true shepherds around the world, who work for small pay and long hours to serve God and their flock. May God bless them richly! The point here is to remind the body of Christ, especially in parts of the world where the Church is yet young, to be very careful of whom they set over them in leadership. Remember these words from the Apostle Paul:

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Act. 20:26-32).

What then about church revitalisation? The death of many churches is avoidable. The death of some is inevitable. "The typical experience seems to be that, once a church loses its momentum, the most probable outcome is either death, or stabilization at a much smaller size" (Barna, 1993:17). Barna also lists some common reasons for church decline: Inadequate leadership, pastoral "burnout," poor management, pastor-centered ministry, "old blood" (lack of new members), building campaigns, resistance to change, divisive internal politics, dilapidated facilities, absence of ministry opportunities for the flock, denominational meddling, a shift away from Bible-centered teaching, more.

What do we do? Very often, new leadership is required, likely at both the professional and lay levels. The old leadership is either part of the problem, or perceived to be part of the problem. The organisation has probably already experienced too much shepherd-flock tension. If leaders don't love the flock, you might as well shut the church doors. Without question, there must be a committed core of leaders, who are "team"

oriented. No success is even potentially possible without this committed core group.

Leaders must be a godly example, establish intentional, strategic priorities for change and growth, and empower the flock to be involved in the greater work of the local ministry. People will support what they are involved in, and in the long run, will only support a non-profit organisation when they have some say in the decision-making process.

It is (again) sometimes very beneficial to bring into your organisation, an objective "outsider." This is the fish-in-the-bowl principle. Invariably, organisational insiders cannot gain an objective perspective of the organisation. It requires someone from outside the "fishbowl" to come and help you see what your situation, and problems really are. Here again, be careful to invite a consultant who is sound and trustworthy.

The new leadership must be aware of, and sensitive to, the history of the church. A new future must be built on the successes of the past. At the same time, the problems of the past must be acknowledged and learned from, albeit with a good dose of love and grace.

Some organisations get into trouble because they are "spread too thin," trying to do too much, with too few resources. This is typical of organisations in decline. They try to keep doing everything they were doing before, but no longer have the people, or money to do so. Their efforts then become mediocre and ineffective. New leadership should "go back to basics," closing down functions that are no longer functional, or well done.

If there is anything an organisation in decline needs, it is some good news. By narrowing the focus and activities of the organisation, and by stressing excellence and hard work, success is far more likely. One success leads to others. People who are used to "loosing," need to learn how to "win" again. It is true in sports, and it is true in the church.

The "potholes" and challenges will be many. You must acknowledge from the start, that your efforts to revitalise an organisation in decline may fail. Nonetheless, if you are committed to it, you must persevere, giving the effort your very best.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character; and

character hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:3-5).

Last, but certainly not least, do not think for one moment that you will accomplish this "turnaround" without God's help! No power of man can build anything that will last (*cf.*, Gen. 11).

Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, just as we hope in You" (Psa. 33:20-22).

I believe the hypothesis has held true, that Luke 5:38 has proven a valuable insight and source of truth. As Jesus suggests, it is typically easier to start over than to fix what is broken, yet God's grace is greater than any "brokenness." Surely this project only begins to consider the range of issues involved in church, and/or organisational revitalisation. I am ever more convinced of its place within the discipline of Missiology.

*Soli Deo Gloria*



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