

MOVEMENT DYNAMICS

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One of the keys to urban church development is a 'movement mindset'. What is a 'movement?'

I. MOVEMENT DYNAMICS IN A CHURCH

A. 'MOVEMENTS' AND MISSION

During the missionary movement of the 19th century it became clear that many of the new churches being started in the non-western world were locked into unhealthy pattern of dependency. They had no ability to support or propagate themselves, instead they needed the money and leadership of the western church indefinitely. Pioneers like John Nevius, Hudson Taylor, and Roland Allen developed an approach to missions that sought to plant churches which were non-dependent from the start. Allen's book title 'The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church' says it all. The goal is not to just plant individual churches but to launch a *movement*. A church that has movement dynamics. Such a church grows spontaneously from within because it has a vision for the future that is catalyzing, unifying and infectious. Then it produces its own innovative ideas, leaders, and resources to realize the vision. (To use the language of the missiologists, the church must be it is *self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-theologizing.*¹ Such a church will inevitably reproduce itself into other churches that reproduce themselves for the same reasons. With more ideas, leaders, and resources to pool and deploy, the movement dynamic strengthens. As long as the churches can keep a unified vision, the movement can build steam and grow exponentially. However, a church can lose its movement dynamics and fall back into a pattern of dependency and stagnation, becoming what sociologists call 'institutionalized.'

B. MOVEMENT AND THE CHURCH

It takes three factors for a church to be a dynamic movement- **1)** It must understand and apply gospel renewal dynamics (paper #1) **2)** It must contextualize its message and ministry to the culture around it, not over- or under-adapting to it. **3)** It must keep a balance of organism and organization, with the structure always serving the cause and not the other way around. These three factors are not unrelated! Without an understanding of the gospel either rigidity, organizational and cultural Phariseeism sets in, or there is no Biblical grounding for the church's message and ministry at all. In this paper we will only look at the last of these three factors.

C. MOVEMENT VS INSTITUTION

Sociologists have for many years noted how movements begin with a vision and a set of sacrificing, charismatic leaders, and how over time the movement becomes 'institutionalized'. It loses its inner dynamic. That is, they begin as something almost completely spontaneous, informal, 'organic,' and eventually become more formal, planned, and organizational. The extreme version of this formalization is called sometimes 'institutionalization.' What follows is a contrast of a pure movement and a pure institution with regard to four 'movement dynamics.'

¹ David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission* argues that a spontaneously expanding church should not only be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, but 'self-theologizing.' I would agree with this, if I could give it my own definition. Churches that spontaneously grow are those who have read the Bible very well in their context, and while remaining true to historic Christians orthodoxy, have learned how to communicate and apply the word to their particular culture in a way that is both challenging and winsome.

Dynamic #1- 'UNITY'/the focus

Oneness from common vision and beliefs – *A movement is driven by a vision for a particular future reality, based on common beliefs.* Example of a vision- 10-fold larger evangelical church in London. Example of common beliefs—the classical evangelical gospel.

Marks of a movement

1. Organized around a common vision for the future
2. All leaders and key players have same goals
3. Forward movement through arriving at consensus or near consensus

Marks of an institution

1. Organized around by-laws and ground rules
2. Each leader/department presses for own differing agenda
3. Forward movement through negotiated compromises.

Dynamic #2- 'CATHOLICITY'/the openness

Emphasis on cooperation across lines – *A movement is peopled by workers who put the vision ahead of other differences of aptitude, temperament, culture, and secondary beliefs.*

Marks of a movement

4. Leaders have higher tolerance for ambiguity and organizational 'messiness'
5. Responsibilities of leaders overlap. Lots of generalization.

Marks of an institution

4. Leaders have a high need for clarity and compliance.
5. 'Silo' and turf consciousness--much contentiousness

Dynamic #3- 'SACRIFICE'/the commitment

Devotion to Kingdom over self or tribe – *A movement is peopled by workers who put the vision ahead of their own interests and needs.*

Marks of a movement

6. A great deal of sacrifice is tolerated- low pay, long hours, poor conditions
7. High level of trust within the organization. Less need for accounting and evaluation

Marks of an institution

6. Individual interests more important than progress of the whole
7. Little trust. Constant meetings and time-consuming reporting

Dynamic #4- 'SPONTANEITY'/the organic

Spontaneous growth without top-down command – *A movement generates new ideas, new leaders, and new initiatives across itself—not only from the top or from a command center.*

8. Leaders do not need a lot of approval and encouragement. 'Self-starters.'
9. New ideas are solicited and incorporated quickly
10. Relationships strong-lots of 'off line' thinking done through friendships

8. Workers need rewards, perks, and heavy accountability from top
9. Innovation is seen as threatening if not coming from top
10. Few friendships-nothing happens outside of meetings

Observations on #1 and #4. Notice there are genuine tensions between these dynamics. Somehow, that is what gives the movement its movement-ness, its energy. On the one hand, the movement is marked by unity (#1), meaning that people cannot re-manufacture the essential vision and beliefs. They are the 'glue' and must be guarded and kept and re-articulated. They can evolve and sharpen but only very slowly and it must be led by the top leaders. But the movement is also marked by spontaneity (#4), new initiatives and creative ideas bubbling up everywhere, across the body. People cannot be squelched by having to wait a long time for 'orders from headquarters'. There is a tension here, between how

centralized and de-centralized to be. Yet unless you keep both, in balance, you aren't a dynamic, unified movement.

Observations on #2 and #3. Notice how these traits are the direct opposite of what you find in an 'institutionalized' organization. In a bureaucracy, people do not cooperate much. They stay away from people who are different. On the other hand, they do not make major sacrifices for the progress of the vision, they are in it for the job and its benefits for them. The lack of cooperation and the lack of sacrificial commitment drain away much of the energy that makes a movement so much more effective and productive than an institution.

D. A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Does the Bible address this tension between being a movement and being an institution? It does, and the best treatment of it has been by Ed Clowney in his various books and syllabi on the church. The church is a vital organism and a structured organization. At Pentecost God comes to his people (Acts 2:1-3) and enters the church as his New Covenant temple (1 Peter 2:4-5). Pentecost vividly shows us the church as vital organism: the worship is powerful, the communication of the gospel is dynamic and spontaneous, and the conversion growth is tremendous. Yet the very same Spirit that is the source of all this spontaneous, explosive ministry and growth, is also the author of gifts of apostle, prophet, pastor/teacher (Eph.4:11) also of 'governments' (Romans 12:8)—gifts of leadership. Edmund Clowney puts it: "the Spirit is the Spirit of order as well as ardor, of truth as well as of life". The Spirit, then, not only anoints all people with power to minister, but he also appoints those who govern and lead in the church (Acts 20:28).

How do we keep both order and ardor together? Clowney gives an intriguing clue in one of his syllabi, where he indicates that the New Testament ministry offices [ordained prophets (ministers), priests (deacons), and kings (elders)] are the "carrier" of the organizational aspect while what has been traditionally called the 'general office' (every believer being a prophet, priest, and king--Rom.12:5; 1 Pet.2:5,9-10) is the "carrier" of the organism aspect. A church that over-stresses the special office (e.g. requiring that only elders may lead small groups) is strangling the organic vitality of the church, while the church that under-stresses the special office (e.g. no church discipline, no doctrinal evaluation) will promote a disorder that will eventually quench the ardor.

What is the 'general office'?

1. Jesus is a prophet, priest, and king. Jesus Christ has all the powers of ministry function in himself.

Prophetic ministry. Jesus was the ultimate prophet. The function of prophetic ministry to speak the truth and apply it to men and women on behalf of God. Thus all Christian ministry has a prophetic aspect--in power bringing God's Word to people. **Priestly ministry.** Jesus was the ultimate priest. While a prophet is an advocate for God's cause before humanity, a priest is an advocate for people before God. All Christian ministry has a priestly aspect--in mercy and sympathy bringing people in their need to God. **Kingly ministry.** Jesus was the ultimate king. He orders the life of his people in a revealed way through his law. Thus all Christian ministry has a kingly aspect--ordering all of life under the healing lordship/rule of Christ.

2. Every believer is a prophet, priest, and king. **a)** The Bible calls all believer prophets. (Numbers 11- "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets..."; in Joel 2:28,29 this is clearly predicted for the Messianic age.) Each believer has the duty to interpret the Scriptures, to judge the church by the Scriptures. Each believer has the duty to witness to the truth confess their faith. Each believer has the duty to admonish, counsel, nourish, and encourage other believers from the Scripture. (Col. 3:16; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25) Look at John the Baptist, the greatest prophet in history, yet every single believer is greater in position and calling (Matt.11:9-11) **b)** The Bible calls every believer a priest. The veil of the

temple is rent (Matthew 27:51) so that now the people of God need no human priest to open the way into the presence of God. We are all priests having access in the name of Christ, the great High Priest, to the presence of God (Heb.4:14-16). We are given the priestly work offering ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2) offering sacrifices of deeds of mercy (Heb. 13:16) and offering praiseful, adoring worship (Heb. 13:12). Every believer has the right to participate in public worship. **c)** The Bible calls every believer is a king. We all rule and reign with Christ (Eph. 2:6); we are kings and priests (Rev. 1:5,6). This means, first of all, that the power of government of the church rests first of all in the people. The people elect officers. Every member rules. It means that every believer has the authority to fight and defeat the world, flesh, and devil.

What a truth! See how all the facets of the office of believer are brought together in I Peter 2:9. We are kings and priests - "...a royal priesthood" who are to "declare the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness", which is the work of a prophet.

Keeping a balance between the ‘offices’

A tightly ‘top-down’ controlled church is not a movement, it is institutionalized. Innovation, initiative, dynamism is stifled under a kind of bureaucracy. Lay people need to be ‘released’ to do ministry if there is to be a dynamic ‘gospel movement’ within and through your church. Yet, a movement must be unified. The basic gospel vision must be held in common. If ‘everyone does what is right in his own eyes’ the movement dissipates, dissolves. There must be common cause and connection. And this unifying vision, based on commonly held doctrines and truths, comes chiefly from the ministers and leaders—‘the top.’ How difficult it is to maintain this dynamic balance! Churches, lay persons, and ministers constantly have bad experiences in imbalanced churches and, in response, flee to or establish the other kind of unbalanced ministry. So when a free-wheeling, lay-driven ministry goes off the rails, its victims tend to move toward a much more authoritarian, tightly controlled ministry. Meanwhile the refugees from the ‘top down’ churches often flee to the opposite kind of church as well. Each kind of imbalance chokes the *movement-ness* of the church from one direction or the other. What wisdom this takes!

E. A PRACTICAL ANALYSIS

On reflection, then, a movement is not something that has no organizational structure at all, that is pure spontaneity. Pure spontaneity cannot last long. For a movement to stay a movement, it needs a balance of organization and organism. A church that is a dynamic movement needs to have it’s ‘X’ somewhere in the bracket below. Usually it migrates toward the right and has to be brought back to the left.



1. Movement is foundational. On the surface, the description of a movement seems far more attractive than the description of the institution. In the movement, the structure serves the cause; in the institution, the cause serves the structure. And ultimately, that is how it should be. The vast majority of church or ministry structure is human-made and negotiable. (Some of it is directly Biblical, but not much! The Bible may direct, for example, that you have elders, but it tells you virtually nothing about how they are to be organized.) Since it is human-made, we cannot let it become an idol. An idol is a relative, finite thing elevated to the status of unquestioned, divine authority.

2. Movements can’t stay ‘pure’ to have long-term impact However, experience shows us that both a “pure movement” and a “pure institution” are very uncomfortable places to work in for the long-term. Often the pioneers of a movement are ‘agitators’ or catalyzers who are not concerned about details. (That is why they have been so effective and decisive—they never see so they don’t get mired in the details.) But as time goes on, and an organization grows, the details matter, and if they are not attended to, it brings chaos. If the original leaders insist on keeping things as dynamic and spontaneous as they were, there will be continual mutiny. That is why there is always pressure on movements to

become more organized but then why there is always counter-pressure on institutions to “repent and renew” themselves. Both extremes are dysfunctional. Often leadership moves from the “agitators” to the “reformers” to the “managers”. Once we get to managers, everyone is more secure and comfortable but complains that ‘we’ve lost the excitement.’ Some movements lose their “movement mindset” largely or altogether when managers and the general maturing of the movement pushes the original leader/agitators out. Then the slide into institutionalism is very quick and acute. There is no one to remind the whole body of the original “bottom lines”--which (in a church) is not the budget nor the by-laws, nor holding services, but winning the world for Christ, conversions, seeing the Lord’s name honored more and more.

Some ‘institutionalization’ is bad. For example, any failure or breakdown in a movement usually draws a response-- a new rule where there wasn’t one before. This indeed prevents the incident from happening again. But often the rule has other hidden effects--it usually makes some job harder or slower or more time consuming to do. On the other hand, some institutionalization is good. Growth in size means unavoidably: a) communication has to become more formal, and b) jobs have to become more specialized, c) the team meetings can no longer be so general and comprehensive. (They become so clogged with details best done by individuals instead of the whole group, that much decision-making is delegated to individuals.) All this is good stewardship. But all of these ‘good stewardship’ moves mean that leaders can drift apart and individual agendas develop without input from others in the organization.

Conclusion: Maturing movements have to trade off some of their charismatic traits *in order to stay a movement*, to get continuity and lasting impact. Why? **1)** On the one hand, a movement is made by **dynamism and commitment**, literally everyone from top to bottom identifies with the vision, makes sacrifices for it, carries it out. Much of what happens is unplanned and unplannable. This comes from the grassroots of your organization. To keep people engaged they have to feel that they ‘own’ the vision, have freedom and responsibility to strategize, innovate, and act, and are not just taking orders from the top. **2)** On the other hand, a movement is made by **unity and cooperation**, it means that people cannot make up new vision or beliefs. The leaders have to keep articulating the beliefs and the vision ‘from the top’ if the movement is to have coherence and not break into a million disparate, disconnected pieces. In other words, you have to be organized (institutionalized?) enough to dictate vision, yet give great freedom to people to carry out that vision through their own strategy and tactics.

How? First realize that no one leader has the full range of abilities to be agitator (“catalyzer”) and reformer (“organizer”) and manager (“operator”). So these leaders have to work together and not push each other out. In particular, the agitators must not kill the “managers” and vica versa! Second, there needs to be a continual organizational “renewal dynamic” which parallels the way an individual person is spiritually renewed. In short, there needs to be seasons in which we renew our movement vision, in which we revisit our vision and goals and make all our procedure negotiable, asking “is this working?” These are times of great upheaval, reminiscent of the “early days”. Then there needs to be times of consolidation, of setting up procedure and settling in. There needs to be times of “messiness” and then times of “cleaning up the mess”. Some leader types will be much happier in messy times, and others will be much happier in consolidation times. No one can have their way all the time!

II. MOVEMENT DYNAMICS IN A CITY

How can the churches of a city become unified enough to be themselves a movement of the gospel, and hopefully, a movement of movements?

A. THE ‘CATHOLICITY’ OF THE CHURCH.

Many evangelicals choke on the line in the Apostles’ Creed about the ‘holy, catholic church.’ The Greek term *katholikos* is not used in the New Testament to describe the church, but nevertheless it expresses

a Biblical teaching, that the as a whole is more than the local church.² First, in the book of Acts, the various local bodies of believers are constantly called the church in a city or region. ('So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria has peace and was being built up.' Acts 9:31; cf. also Acts 11:22, 15:3 and other places where all the various gatherings of Christians in a city or a region are called 'the church.')

Clowney writes: 'Catholicity means...we cannot exclude those whom he welcomes, or welcome those he excludes....**1)** Sectarianism denies catholicity, for by its refusal to recognize other communions as true churches of Christ, it denies the fellowship that Christ requires....**2)** Racism also denies Catholicity. Not long ago, white American churches stationed 'color guards' to bar black worshippers, directing them to a suitable congregation on the other side of the tracks."³ He also writes: **3)** 'The catholicity of the church may also be denied, not out of prejudice but in order to facilitate church growth. It has been convincingly demonstrated that numerical growth takes place most readily when appeal is made directly to one 'people group'—one unit sociologically defined...It has the effect of making the church a sub-set of secular society rather than the manifestation on earth of the kingdom of Christ."⁴

Looking at Clowney's statements—**1)** Catholicity denying **sectarianism** means *unnecessary* division. If two churches differ on their beliefs about and practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper, then two different churches they will have to be. But that shouldn't mean they cannot work together in all sorts of other ways. To stay apart and be non-cooperative because true believers are members of the 'wrong' denomination is to fail to 'welcome those that Christ has welcomed.'

2) Catholicity denying **racism** means *lack of cultural flexibility*. To embrace people of different races and cultures means that every cultural group within the church needs to flex and bend and serve the others. Cultural differences go from the small (punctuality) to the great (the form and words of the music, the illustrations and applications of the Word preached.)

3) Catholicity denying **marketing** means the opposite of #2—it means choosing one narrow demographic slice out of your neighborhood and reaching out to it alone. As much as possible, your church should try to reach the people who live in your neighborhood.

Summary- Why So Important?

For the movement dynamism. As we have seen, it is crucial for a movement to have the dynamic of cooperation, so people of different temperaments and perspective come together because of their common vision and goals. In fact, part of the dynamism of a movement is people who 'knock heads' and come up with creative new initiatives *because* they are both unified (by the overall vision) *and* very different (from different denominations, temperaments, personalities.) If this is not happening in a city, the movement dynamic is stalled or eroded.

For the witness of unity. But there is another reason that 'catholicity' and non-sectarianism is important. In 'Christendom', when it seemed like 'everyone was a Christian', it was necessary (perhaps) for a church to define itself over against other churches. That is, to get an identity you had to say, "we are not like that church over there, or those Christians over here." Today, however, it is much more illuminating and helpful for a church to define itself over against 'the world'—the values of the non-Christian culture. It is important that we not spend our time bashing and criticizing other kinds of churches. That simply plays into the common opinion that Christians are all intolerant. If we are not unified, the world writes us off, and perhaps, in light of Jesus' high priestly prayer of John 17, they have a right to! (Father, make them one, as we are one, that the world might know you sent me. While we have to align ourselves in denominations that share many of our theological distinctives, at the local level we should cooperate and reach out to and support the other congregations and churches in our local area. This will raise many thorny issues, of course, but our bias should be in the direction of cooperation.

² E.Clowney, *The Church* (IVP, 1995, p.91.

³ Clowney, *The Church* p.96.

⁴ Clowney , *Living in Christ's Church*, p.120-121

Test case: Redeemer Presbyterian Church has for a number of years given money and help to churches of other denominations who are planting churches. In other words, we have given money to start Pentecostal churches, Baptist churches, Anglican churches, as well as Presbyterian churches. We have gotten some sharp criticism for this, and a lot of amazed stares. We believe it is one innovative way to practice the kind of 'catholicity' that turns a city of Balkanized Christian churches and denominations into a movement. It adds one of the dynamics.

B. CATHOLICITY AND CHURCH MODELS

However, despite Clowney's third warning, there is a limit to how broad will be the appeal of any one church. Why? **1)** First, the limits of culture and language. As soon as you choose a language to preach and worship in, you are making it easier for some people to understand. As soon as you choose illustrations and music, you are privileging some sensibilities and cultures and making others work harder to connect to you. **2)** Second, the limits of gifts. Any minister or set of lay leaders will have different types of gifts and therefore a particular range of people they can reach.

Therefore, it is crucial to realize that there is no single way of doing church that is the right Biblical or even the right cultural model. What the Bible tells the church to be—witness, serve the needy, preach the Word, disciple the people, worship—is so rich and full that no one church will be able to do all of them equally well, for the simple reason that no one church has all the spiritual gifts in equal proportions to do this. So while no church can stop trying to do all God calls it to do, no one church will do all things equally well. That is why in the whole city, we need all kinds of churches. A recognition of the reality of 'church models' humbles us—we see we can't be all things to all people. It also encourages us to reach out and cooperate with other churches.

I. Here is one way to schematize church models—not the only way! But a suggestive way. Note: The strong version of each model is a church that, while doing one aspect of church ministry better than the others, keeps the other ministries in relative balance. An unhealthy model almost completely specializes in one aspect of ministry and ignores the other Biblical functions of the church, and, on top of that, is highly critical of anyone that doesn't have their exact specialization.

#1 - Institutional model (Dulles); Doctrine-driven (Lovelace)

The emphasis is sound doctrine, theological depth and tradition, and church authority.

- The healthier versions usually contains: 1) strong education, teaching and discipling, 2) lots of very solid, contentful teaching, 3) ample energy given to theological thinking and reflection, 4) well-thought out and executed church policies that cover most contingencies, 5) clear lines of authority and structure; jobs well-defined, 6) usually a very strong emphasis on and support for traditional family life, 7) good discipline and accountability. The ordained minister in the healthy model must be highly trained theologically, and (for Protestants) teaching ability is all important. Even in the healthy versions of this model, however, the minister is more of a 'teacher' than a 'preacher' with sermons being very theologically heavy and more like academic lectures.
- The unhealthier versions usually contains: 1) legalism, 2) authoritarianism and abuses of authority and power, 3) theological rigidity, 4) allergy to any ecclesiastical change, automatic suspicion of innovation. Tends to become 'Christian sub-cultures' with a very heavy overgrowth of theological jargon in public and private discourse that is difficult for newcomers to penetrate. Growth slow or comes almost exclusively from attracting believers from theologically 'flabbier' churches who want 'more meat.' The ordained minister in the unhealthy model must also be highly trained theologically, but tends to operate more as a 'theological lawyer' and is deeply involved in proper procedure. Dulles says in this model the ministry is "juridicized". Involvement in judicial and legislative procedure is perceived as being the real work of ministry.

#2 - Sacramental model (Dulles); Worship-driven (Lovelace)

The emphasis is highly charged worship--either of a mystical high-church variety or an emotionally expressive low-church variety--and much prayer.

- The healthier versions usually contains: 1) frequent/daily services of worship and prayer (in high churches, venues of contemplation, in the Charismatic, emphasis on corporate praise and intercessory prayer) 2) strong development of the use of music, 3) great theme of hope running through it, 4) a stress on and confidence in the ministry of healing emotional and physical ills. The ordained minister in the healthy model is seen as a 'priest' (even if the term is missing in some Protestant versions)--the one who mediates the presence of God. The minister must have a high degree of personal spirituality and personal holiness, and be able to lead others in worship into God's presence.
- The unhealthier versions of this model have huge 'back doors'. Many who are initially attracted and helped by the dynamism or mysticism (or both) of the service eventually slip away because of a need for more accountability and well-thought out theology. Both forms of the model (high church and charismatic) put more emphasis on the spiritual experience of worship than teaching and doctrine. This model can become very weak on discipleship. Another way this model can become unhealthy is by the 'spectacle' of the worship service becoming all-consuming of the church's time, money, and energy.

#3- Mystical communion (Dulles); Community-driven (Lovelace)

The emphasis is committed, intimate community and the mutual-ministry of laypeople to one another.

- The healthier versions of this model contain: 1) great stress on fellowship and intimacy, 2) insistence on the ministry of every believer, 3) strong life-accountability (but mutual- horizontal rather than top-down-vertical as in Model#1), 4) usually major emphasis on small groupings, house churches, 5) much sharing of property and possessions, 6) a very democratic and consensus-seeking style of decision-making. 7) People live in close geographical proximity or even communally. The ordained minister in the healthier versions is very, very strong in all the pastoral skills. Strong preaching is always a 'plus' but not critical, and so this model takes pressure off! Leadership skills are important, but it is facilitating, dialogue-promotion, and community-building that are the key skills, not 'vision-casting' and strategizing. The minister must be good at creating consensus. The minister's most valued ability is to release every other member's ability. Many churches in this model tend to be small and stay small deliberately. Ordained ministry much less important in this model.
- The unhealthier versions of this model have some of these traits: 1) They can become ingrown. It becomes very hard for outsiders to break in. 2) Because it is a super-democracy, almost any individual can absorb the whole community's time with either resistance to a decision or personal problems. 3) It can become very claustrophobic and develop some of the legalism and authoritarian abuse of an unhealthy Model #1. 4) While model #1 can be very cognitive, oriented to doctrine, and uncaring, this model can make the church a giant 'support group' with disproportionate emphasis on people's hurts, problems, and feelings.

#4- Herald model (Dulles); Evangelism-driven (Lovelace)

The emphasis is the proclamation of the gospel and creative outreach to the unconverted.

- The healthier versions contain: 1) emphasis on the core-truths of the gospel that lead to individual conversion (rather than pushing denominational distinctives), 2) usually good preaching with broad appeal, 3) a church more able to process change than in any of the other models, 4) a high percentage of lay people engaged in outreach to un-churched and non-believers, 5) usually more of a willingness to offer multiple options to people rather than demand uniformity, 6) the model most likely to grow larger with new Christians rather than pulling believers out of other churches. The ordained minister in the healthy version usually (but not always) has evangelistic gifts. If not, there must be at least the ability to preach sermons accessible to a broad range of people, not just

advanced Christians. The minister is usually also a good 'vision-caster' and is very open to change and experimentation.

- The unhealthier versions contain: 1) shallowness and repetitiousness in the preaching, 2) an unhealthy individualism that puts all the stress on conversion and slights (especially) community-building and social concern, 3) an emphasis on growth virtually for growth's sake, 4) so much change that there is instability, 5) an over-reliance on the celebrity-status of the pastor. The ordained minister in the unhealthier version may succumb to the pressure to attract uncommitted people by a) playing down 'unpopular' doctrines, and/or b) by playing up doctrines that presented alone produce a lot of guilt, and/or c) by going directly for the emotions with stories and rhetoric that evoke strong responses but do not really convict and change people. Another mark of 'un-health' is the minister who gives in to the 'celebrity'-model of the culture in various ways, takes the pressure on, and burns out. This is possible in Model#2 as well, less likely in models #1 and #3 which tend to be smaller churches.

#5- Servant model (Dulles); Social-concern-driven (Lovelace)

The emphasis is being a sign of the kingdom by seeking peace and justice in society in Jesus' name.

- The healthier versions contain: 1) strong emphasis on serving the poor in non-patronizing ways, 2) strong emphasis not just on compassionate ministry meeting individual needs but 'justice' ministries addressing social inequities, 3) major emphasis on racial reconciliation and the ideal of a multi-ethnic congregation, 4) a value placed on simpler lifestyle and a healthy call to generous giving, 5) and an overall stress on the goodness of God's creation. The ordained minister in the healthier versions has the most well-developed skills for building relationships "outside the church walls"--out in the broader community and neighborhood. As in Model#3 communication skills are a plus, but not as important as pastoral skills. Finally, the particular leadership skills needed are not as much 'vision-casting' nor 'administration' but strategic thinking and patient building of ministries and institutions. (Not 'catalyzing' or 'operating' but 'organizing'.)
- The unhealthier versions are unbalanced because of how all-absorbing and emotionally/financially expensive service/justice ministries can be. Basically, the social justice and counseling side of the ministry can squeeze out the building up of the congregation. Evangelism, church growth, personal discipleship of believers can be all neglected. And this is in the doctrinally evangelical churches. In the mainline churches, seeking social justice literally replaces evangelism and conversion, leading to the eventual death of the church. The ordained minister in the unhealthier versions of this model becomes almost exclusively a 1) community organizer, 2) counselor (maybe), and 3) fund-raiser.

Note 1 – When surveyed, this outline shows how comprehensive is the Biblical mandate for the church, and how impossible it is for any one church to do them all equally well. Why? Just as no believer has all the gifts of the Spirit, it is unlikely that any congregation would have all the gifts of the Spirit in the church in equal proportion. This goes for small churches as well as huge ones. So no local congregation should think of standing alone as "the church" of a community, but must see itself as only part of the city-church that God has raised up in that place. A church's gift mix and context will dictate that what it will most do well at certain ministries and at certain seasons of its life.

Note 2 - It should be obvious by now that as helpful and as common as these models are, there are a substantial number of churches today that are so effectively 'balancing' themselves that we must say they are successfully bridging the categories and 'rising above' them, as it were. That is, there are churches that are so good at two or three of these five emphases that you cannot truly say there is one emphasis driving all the rest. This is as it should be. In these cases you may have to talk of Community/Social Justice church, or an Worship-Evangelism church. Wonderful. But the value of studying the classical models remains. It is a 'starting point' that gives our minds the concept or paradigm. From there we can begin to find new and better ways of understanding, describing, and developing models.

Note 3 - It may be that these five models are able to account for many congregations in western culture. But as Christianity becomes more and more an Asian, African, Latin-American, and global/multi-ethnic faith—my guess is that we will find an increasing number of churches that 'bridge' the old categories and combine strengths that used to exist more often in different congregations.

In summary--the value of this exercise is that it shows us the inevitability and nature of church models. It helps us see how they develop and how they 'go bad'. But we cannot assume from this exercise that these five categories are going to stay the best ones to use forever. The rise of non-Western Christianity will make them more and more obsolete until someone writes up a better set of categories to help us understand the strengths and weaknesses of current church models.

2. The dangers of thinking in terms of models.

All through this discussion we have spoken positively of church and ministry 'models'. I believe there are important Biblical reasons for them. 1) First, there is the Biblical understanding of the unity of the church. No one congregation in a city is the church. No denomination is the church. The whole Body of Christ in a city better reflects what God wants the church to be. 2) Second, and closely related, is the theology of spiritual gifts. Specialization of a church's ministry according to the distribution of gifts is as Biblical as the specialization of an individual in ministry according to the distribution of gifts. Different people groups and different communities will require different kinds of churches and ministries.

Having said all that, there is always a great danger when stressing the specialization of ministry and/or the contextualization and "incarnation" of ministry. We have noted above the severe problem of 'imbalance', i.e. over-specialization--of being untrue to the Scriptural comprehensiveness of the ministry of the church. In the same way, there is a great danger in over-contextualization. This is not a small matter. In the Bible, over-contextualization is called 'worldliness'! In our desire to adapt to the context, we over-adapt and over-assimilate. Listen to this remarkably prescient passage from Avery Cardinal Dulles, written now 30 years ago, before the rise of the 'mega-church.'

In a class society, the church tends to become more hierarchical and aristocratic; [ministers] appear as 'princes' of the church. In a professionally organized society, ecclesiastical leaders take on the attributes of professionals. They are compared with lawyers, doctors, and professors. They study Greek and receive...degrees. In a media-dominated society, such as is emerging in our time, church leaders may be forced to assume a more personal and spontaneous style of leadership. They will be judged on the basis of whether they can create powerful religious experiences, compete with TV celebrities, and project the kind of image that evokes popular enthusiasm.⁵

That quote is rather scary. Society can mold the ministry in subtle ways that 'fly under our radar'. I am not saying that the process of contextualization should be abandoned--far from it! If you don't carefully and deliberately contextualize you will be shaped unconsciously by your culture and times! What I am saying is that we should be equally concerned to be "Biblical" as we are to be "contextual". Very few people put equal emphasis on these--because we are all on a 'trajectory'. Many of us are reacting to conservative church circles that put too little emphasis on the contextual, or to liberal or pragmatic circles that put too little emphasis on the Biblical. If you over-adapt to a new cultural situation, you 'buy in' to the idols of the new culture, not just into its language. But if you under-adapt to a new cultural situation, you 'buy in' to the idols of your own culture and setting. The key is to use the Scripture carefully and exegetically so you will neither over- nor under-adapt. No one can do this

⁵ Avery Dulles Models of the Church, (Image, 1978) p. 168.

perfectly of course. But to the degree you contextualize Biblically (neither over nor under adapting) you will be effective in ministry.

3. Models and ministry practice.

It is extremely important for the ordained minister to identify the features of the church model where he presently works. Many problems come from ministering as if you were in one particular model when you are really in another. When I was in college and seminary I participated in churches that were very fairly healthy and close to the Doctrine-driven classical model. The stress in these churches was on excellent public teaching and preaching gifts, and on intense Bible study. My first church was a church in a blue-collar, small, factory-town in the South that had been a church of 100-150 people for 30 years. It was a relatively un-healthy church closer to the Community-driven model. Almost none of its members had been to college and most of the older members had not finished high school. I had an strong idea of the difference between un-healthy/stagnant and healthy/renewed. But I had no concept of church 'models'. I had only seen healthy churches within the framework of one particular church model, and only in college-towns filled with professors and students. My vision for renewal of this church was great Bible exposition, seminars and classes all over the place on Christian subjects, and intense small group Bible studies. Over the years I came to discover that this was a congregation filled with diaconal ('priestly') gifts (not 'prophetic' gifts of teaching and knowledge and evangelism), and which fundamentally was a Community-driven model. Learning this was a slow and frustrating process for me. As I look back, my emphases did help the church because 1) it helped "balance" their community model with better (but never excellent) teaching, education, and evangelism, and because 2) eventually I stopped trying to 'force' things and began to accept more what the church was. I was very slow and stubborn, but ultimately I gave in before anyone got too mad at me. A key to this was that I stayed at the church 9 years. Many years after I left the church, the congregation threw a reception for Kathy and I on the 25th anniversary of my ordination. At one point in the festivities everyone shared one thing they remembered me saying to them during my ministry among them. After the sharing time was over it struck me that not one person quoted a sermon! Every single person shared something I had said to them during one-on-one pastoral care. That vividly illustrates a difference in church models. In New York City, people let me pastor them because they are impressed with my preaching. In Hopewell, Virginia, people let me preach to them only because they were impressed with my pastoring. In a Community-driven model like my church in Hopewell (which fits the blue-collar Southern culture), the pastoring 'sets up' the preaching--'earns you the right' to preach. In a 'Herald' model (using the Dulles terminology) like Redeemer in New York City (which fits the extreme white-collar culture), the preaching 'sets up' the pastoring and even the leading. People will let you in to their lives and will follow you if you demonstrate your expertise in communication.

Summary: Why is an understanding of church models so important if the churches of a city are to work more together in unity? **1) There won't be catholicity in your city.** Unless you see there is no one perfectly Biblical concrete model of a church, you will not see the need to have strong fellowship and connection to other denominations and networks, which usually embody different emphases and strengths than your model. **2) There won't be catholicity in your church, denomination, or movement.** Unless you see there is no one single model, your own movement and network might plant similar 'cookie cutter' churches in neighborhoods where that model is less appropriate, or with leaders whose gifts don't fit it. So your own movement will become too homogeneous, reaching only one kind of neighborhood, or one kind of person, and not reflect catholicity—the diversity of humanity in your church and churches.

C. CITY-CHANGING CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS.

1. Recap: as global cities go—so goes the world. Globalization is the exponential increase in mobility of people, capital, and ideas, across geopolitical barriers.

- Globalization makes cities far more **powerful**. Cities, as the seat of multi-national corporations, financial institutions, and media networks, are now have more influence than nation-states on what global residents see, think, do, and consume. A relatively small number of metropolises now exert a strong influence on global economics, culture, and politics.
- Globalization also makes cities more **connected** and **alike**. Strikingly, the center-city residents of New York City, Hong Kong, London, Tokyo, Paris, Sao Paulo, and Johannesburg are more like one another (and more connected to each other) than they are like and connected to the residents of suburban and rural areas in their own countries. Never before has ministry in one city (New York) been more transferable to the other cities of the world.
- If you seek to evangelize the world, if you seek to shape culture, if you seek to meet great needs, if you want to pursue justice, if you want to develop leaders---you must go to the center of global cities and plant new churches.

2. It takes a movement to reach a city. To reach a whole city takes more than some effective churches or even a burst of revival energy and new converts. To change a city with the gospel takes a self-sustaining, naturally growing movement of ministries and networks around a core of new church multiplication. This renewal can happen only when the right agent is combined with a self-generative force. The agent is “gospel DNA,” and the force is a “gospel ecosystem.”

- a. GOSPEL DNA.** The churches that can tip gospel movements don't all share the same worship style, come from the same denomination, or reach the same demographic. But they all share the same basic “DNA”: they are gospel-centered, urban, balanced, missional/evangelistic, growing, and self-replicating.
- **Gospel theology.** A theologically rich way to read and preach the Bible that combines **a)** classic evangelical doctrines--the law/gospel distinction, forensic justification and penal substitution—along with **b)** an understanding that God's saving purpose is to restore all of creation.
 - **Christ-centered preaching.** A way of preaching that is expository and doctrinal, but which also **a)** always makes the gospel itself clear by preaching Christ from every text, **b)** aims at the heart and life, making the truth not only clear, but *real*, and **c)** applies the text to both Christians and non-Christians, so both can sit profitably under the preaching.
 - **Gospel renewal dynamics.** A way to bring about personal character growth through applying gospel to every area of life, making permanent changes in the heart through repentance and growth in faith, rather than simply pressing on the will to try harder to live according to Biblical principles. When there is a ‘critical mass’ of converted nominal believers and renewed sleepy Christians in a church, the whole body is marked by a balance of theological depth, vibrant worship, intimate fellowship, vigorous evangelism, care for the needy, and cultural impact.
 - **City Vision.** In a church growth model, the ultimate goal is to increase our numbers, to multiply converts, groups, and churches. But in the city growth model, we seek converts through vigorous evangelism, but then we turn Christians outward to serve the city and engage the culture. The goal is not just a great church, but a great city.
 - **Church-culture model.** Neither a sharp separation from the world (so ministry is strictly saving souls and living within our enclaves) nor a triumphalism (‘taking back the culture’ by literally taking power) Instead, we disciple all believers to not seal off their beliefs from their public life, but integrate their faith with their work. We counsel cultural *presence* (not absence) yet primarily seeking to serve the common good, overtly pointing to the resources of Christian beliefs and love as our inspiration for doing so.
 - **Contextual and missional.** Being ‘missional’ is not less than being extremely evangelistic, but it is more. It is a church which has contextualized every part of its life and message—education,

preaching, worship, discipleship, decision-making, public discourse, evangelism, spiritual formation, community structures—so that it connects effectively with the culture and the people in a secular, pluralistic global center-city.

- **Integrated, balanced ministry.** A church with a unique balance of four ministry fronts: Evangelism and worship connect people to God, community formation intimately connects people to one another, faith-work integration connects private beliefs public life and work, justice and mercy connect resources church and Christians to the needs of the city. Our churches are committed to both the peace and welfare of our neighborhoods and city (unlike traditional conservative churches) and to converting people and making them into disciples (unlike traditional mainline churches.)
- **Unity and catholicity of spirit.** The practice of visible unity among all gospel-believing Christians. Making thoughtful decisions to work and cooperate as broadly as possible. Show others that you are not there strictly to increase your tribe, but to enhance the Body of Christ and bless the city by your presence.
- **Church planting.** Every church should plant churches routinely. Preparation for church planting should be going on like any other ministry. Every church does music, education, pastoral care, preaching, worship, discipleship—so it should do church planting. It should be as natural and routine as all the others.

b. GOSPEL ECO-SYSTEMS.

- What does it look like when gospel DNA penetrates all aspects of a city? Christians live in the city in a posture of service. New businesses and nonprofits are launched that renew their slices of culture in large and small ways. Believers integrate their faith with their work so that every vocation becomes a kingdom activity. Campus ministries and other evangelistic agencies produce new Christian leaders organically who stay in the city and move into the churches and networks. Influential people use their power, wealth and influence for the good of others on the margins of society, to advance ministry, and to plant new churches. Churches and Christians support and commission the arts.
- It is, however, new churches that are at the heart of gospel ecosystems. They provide spiritual oxygen to the communities and networks of Christians who do the heavy lifting, over decades, to renew and redeem cities as well. They are the primary venue for discipleship and the multiplication of believers. And they are the financial engine for all the ministry initiatives. This ecosystem is, therefore:
 - (1.) A critical mass of new **DNA-carrying churches**. They must be gospel-centered, urban, missional/evangelistic, balanced, growing, self-replicating—in diverse forms, across traditions, integrating races/classes. This is the most basic and the core of the eco-system.
 - (2.) Networks and systems of **evangelism** that reach specific populations. Campus ministry is especially important, since campus ministry serves as an organic **new leader** development engine for cities. Other very effective, specialist evangelistic agencies are usually necessary (reaching the certain elites, reaching the poor, reaching Muslim, Hindu, other particular cultural/religious groupings.)
 - (3.) Networks and organizations of **cultural leaders** within professional fields such as business, arts and media, government, academia. It is crucial that all are active in churches who thoughtfully disciple and support them for public life. But in turn leaders must network and support each other in own fields, spawning new cultural institutions and schools of thought.
 - (4.) Agencies and initiatives produced by Christians that **serve the peace** of the city and especially the poor. Hundreds and thousands of new non-profit and for-profit companies must be spawned that serve every neighborhood and needy population.
 - (5.) United and coordinated **church alliances and institutions** that serve Christian families and individuals and support their live long-term in the city (e.g. schools, theological colleges, and other family-support institutions that make city living sustainable for Christians over the generations.

(6.) Overlapping networks of city leaders. Church movement leaders, theologian/teachers, heads of institutions, and cultural leaders and patrons with influence and resources know one another and provide vision and direction for the whole city.

3. Eco-systems, when intact, reach tipping points. Isolated events or individual entities crystallize into a growing, self-sustaining movement when they reach a ‘tipping point.’ For example, neighborhoods stay largely the same if new kinds of residents (richer, poorer, or culturally different than the rest) comprise less than 5% of the population. However, when the percentage of new residents reaches somewhere between 5-25% (depending on the culture,) the whole neighborhood shifts, undergoing rapid and significant change. When does a church planting movement reach a ‘tipping point’ and become a self-sustaining movement?

a. The gospel movement tipping point. A church planting project becomes a movement when the elements of an eco-system are all in place and most of the churches each have the vitality, the leaders, and the mindset to plant another church within 5-6 years of its own beginning. When the tipping point is reached, a self-sustaining movement begins. There are then enough new believers, leaders, congregations, and ministries being naturally produced that the movement grows without any single command and control center. The body of Christ in the city funds itself, produces its own leaders, does its own training. Enough dynamic leaders are always rising up. The number of Christians and churches doubles every 7-10 years. What is the number of churches that must be reached for this to occur? It is impossible to give a number that would hold for every city and culture. However, all the elements in the eco-system must be in place and very strong.

b. The city tipping point. When a gospel movement tipping point is reached, it is a matter of time before a whole-city tipping point is reached. That is the moment when the number of gospel-shaped Christians in a city becomes so large that Christian influence on the civic and social life of the city—and on the very culture—is recognizable and acknowledged. In New York City, groups such as Jews, Chinese, gays, and others have a palpable effect on the way life is lived in a city when their numbers come to at least 5-10% and when the members are active in public life. There is no scientific way to exactly determine where a city’s ‘gospel tipping point’ is—the point at which the gospel begins to have a visible impact on the city-life and culture. But as a rule of thumb, we pray and work for the time that 6% of the center-city population is involved in a gospel-centered church. (For Manhattan, this would be about 60-100,000 people. That number has risen from 1,000 to 7,000 over the last 20 years, but we are not close to the goal.)