

EXTRACTS AND THOUGHTS FROM “THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION”

(ALAN HIRSCH AND TIM CATCHIM)

THE FIVE FORMS OF MINISTRY INTELLIGENCE FROM EPH.4

The **apostle** is the custodian of the core and founding ideas of the ecclesia. The ministry is characterized by the following interrelated components:

- Extension of Christianity as a whole onto new ground
- Developing and maintaining system-wide health
- Mobilizing the movement for broad impact
- Maintaining global and local networks and relationships

Not surprisingly, apostolic types tend to favour the entrepreneurial edges of the church and have a natural capacity for adventure and risk. They are systems-sensitive types who possess a keen intuition of the systemic dimensions of people movements and what it takes to initiate and sustain them.

Prophets have always been perceived as those in the know. They are seen to be God-intoxicated, biblical existentialists, calling all to live faithfully in covenant relationship with God, and consistent with his kingdom and rule in the world. The effect of prophetic ministry is to bring our world into divine focus. Although prophets have a futuristic orientation, their real focus is a call to live in the existential here-and-now of faithfulness and obedience.

Obsessed with the idea of covenantal faithfulness, prophetic ministry can be said to revolve around two questions:

1. Who is God? (What is his nature?)
2. What does God require of us in this particular place and time? (How then shall we live?)

These questions provide the focal point of prophetic sensibility or intelligence. This fusion of God's values and reality forms the first essential element of prophetic intelligence.

The prophet's intimate connection with God and his concerns will almost always cause them to experience the divine pathos. They feel God's intense pain, his longing and his anger, and, because of this, they tend to be passionate and spiritual people. The experience of encountering two contradicting realities causes the prophet to passionately call into question the existing order of things. The prophet's recognition of this gap often requires a confrontation with personal and collective idolatry, especially in contexts where the institution has legitimized its particular worldview that makes some ideas possible and others unthinkable.. In such situations we need prophetic imagination to deconstruct and dismantle these systems of justification that so often conceal our fears and selfishness. God's people have always struggled to hear and integrate prophetic messages, which is why so many prophets are rejected and isolated from the ministry of the church. But without them, it is hard to see how we can remain a faithful, covenantal people.

As quintessential questioners, prophets play a critical role in developing a community's capacity to adapt to the environment. The prophetic function is more than a purely critical one; it can also play an animating, profoundly revitalizing role. In fact, in calling us to repent and change, the prophet opens us up to the ever-renewing encounter with God.

Because of the challenging nature of the prophetic ministry, it is important to maintain some biblical criteria for discerning the ministry of a prophet. First, the role of the prophet is to call people back to God. If the God they call us to is made known in Jesus Christ, then faithfulness must be defined as faithfulness to Jesus and his mission. Prophets in the new covenant not only call us back to God; they also call us forward to God's preferred future for the world – one defined by the work and ministry of Jesus the Messiah. The second important qualifier for prophetic ministry is love. Because prophets are the guardians of the covenant, they must maintain a deep-seated, covenantal love for God's people, no matter where and in what state they are in. Third, prophets are not infallible, and we are encouraged to always test the prophet's message to see if it is from God. As highly intuitive types, prophets have an uncanny knack for seeing things others cannot, but intuition can be right or wrong. Collective discernment by the community needs to be applied to prophetic insight.

Without the prophetic voice, we become overly pragmatic and mechanistic in our orientation towards effectiveness and success as a church. Without prophetic witness, most Western churches don't expect God to speak to us. Without prophetic imagination to show us the possibilities, we don't expect God to perform miracles in our midst and in our present era. Without prophetic urgency we don't question the status quo and are afraid to disturb social and traditional equilibrium. Without prophetic perspective, eschatological living (where, past, present and future are held together) has also been lost. Without prophetic modelling, we lose our transformational and radical edge. Without prophetic spirituality our spirituality becomes intellectual, predictable and segmented; we don't embrace mystery and the mysterious aspects of spirituality and communal life; faith takes on less and less risk and becomes simply a matter of intellectual certainty. Without prophetic longing we are content with God being a distant Saviour and Creator but lose the sense of him as Lover, Friend, Judge, Comforter, etc.

From what we can gather from observation and scripture, **evangelists** are always looking to create a positive encounter between people and the core messages of the church, especially the gospel. Evangelists have the capacity to get significant buy-in from their hearers.. They are connectors who have the kind of intrinsic confidence, curiosity, sociability and energy that draw them into new relationships.

How we conceive of conversion determines how we do evangelism and the characteristics we look for in evangelists. The American church has typically understood the nature of conversion through the lens of Paul's instantaneous conversion on the road to Damascus. Consequently, evangelistic ministry for the most part has sought to reproduce that instantaneous, sudden experience of conversion by orchestrating events where people can encounter Jesus for the first time. The experience of Jesus' disciples, however, is one of a gradual, incremental process of conversion where they arrive at the true identity of Jesus, and its implications for discipleship. Presence evangelism has a lot in common with an incarnational impulse: being with people in tangible ways so they can get an idea of what it would be like to hang out with God and Jesus.

Although process and event are two entirely different approaches to evangelizing, they are both, nonetheless, legitimate methods of bringing people to the point of conversion. If evangelism can also be framed around metaphors of journey, pilgrimage and quest, then an evangelist is not just a witty communicator who can set people on edge, or a verbal jousting who specializes in confrontational, argumentative encounters. The broader, more general portrait of the evangelist is of a person who finds great satisfaction in being strategically instrumental in helping someone else move closer to Jesus, no matter what phase of the journey he or she is in.

The term “shepherd” (**pastor**) is used throughout the Old Testament and comes to us with a rich interpretive framework that can easily fund the imagination and provoke almost endless analogies and insights about leadership and followership. The oddity, though, is that while the word *poimen* (shepherd) is used eighteen times in the New Testament, only once does it describe the ministry function of Christians, rather, it refers mainly to the person and work of Jesus. Despite this strong restriction of the term, it has pretty much captured our thinking when it comes to church leadership. This means we probably have to do a lot of deconstruction here to arrive at a biblical understanding.

At its core, the shepherd is tasked with creating a healthy community, with nurturing people in the faith, and caring for the welfare of the people. Perhaps one of the best ways to articulate the essence of the shepherding function is summed up in the word *formation* in the way of Christ, lived locally and communally. Shepherds operate primarily out of a communal impulse, they are invigorated by a sense of cohesion, inclusiveness and stability. Shepherds pay close attention to their immediate environment, noticing details about people and the state of the community. They necessarily have strong empathetic aptitudes and heightened capacities for meaningful friendship and relationships. Hence calling oneself a pastor or shepherd, yet not knowing the personal details of the people in one’s orbit, probably disqualifies one from being a shepherd in any meaningful sense of the term.

Can there be a missional shepherd/ pastor? The answer has to be yes, if we truly believe the church to be missional at its core. The function of mission (God’s purposes in the world, especially in and through the church) must determine various forms in which ecclesiology must manifest. Shepherding, like any other ministry, can never function in isolation or as an end in itself. It fulfills itself in relation to God’s purposes and by realizing its role within the body of Christ.

In many ways **teachers** are similar to prophets and apostles, in that they all deal with ideas that shape life. The difference, perhaps, is that teachers are concerned more about broad comprehension and systematic understanding as opposed to faithfulness to the covenant (prophets) and the nest of more foundational and formative ideas that apostles hover over with a strong sense of custodial responsibility. Besides, a sure sign of the difference is that teachers do not have that strong sense of urgency that instills the apostolic and prophetic ministries.

Because of its primary commitment to ideas, of all the ministries the teacher is probably the most susceptible to being ideological – something that almost always privileges ideas at the expense of people. This is especially so in the case of teachers overly influenced by the

Hellenistic tradition rather than the more existentialist Hebraic one. The teaching ministry as the bible intends it is more inclined to be oriented toward life and obedience than towards ideas divorced from life and context. For biblical teachers, their lives are to be their primary messages, and they speak with the authority of people who can live what they speak; these are the true rabbis.

This raises questions against the legitimacy of what often goes on in the name of the teaching ministry. To make speculative capacities the standard form of theological reflection, as well as an immutable basis for ministry, moves us away from discipleship to ideology and can account for our nearly systematic failure to produce disciples in Western churches. We are educated way beyond our capacity to obey.

PIONEERS AND SETTLERS

A good way to understand the spatial and relational dimensions of the five-fold ministry is to use the metaphor of pioneers and settlers. Pioneers by nature take on the challenge to go to places and contexts that others have not explored. In many ways this tracks the work of the kingdom of God as it expresses itself far beyond the confines of Christianity. Settlers, on the other hand, care deeply about guarding and maintaining the ground that the pioneers have gained, thus making sure it stays under the reign of God. Settlers ask, and seek to answer a number of questions:

- It is good that new ground has been gained and that people have come to know Jesus, but will the lives of these people be better?
- Will there be transformation?
- Will they be living into the reality of the kingdom?
- Will the Word become incarnated in their lives?

However, settlers by nature can become so settled that they are resistant to moving forward or embracing change. If we do not learn to manage the inherent tensions between pioneering and settling, we can end up damaging the missional fabric of the church.

APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Although the word *apostle* is clearly reframed in the light of the original twelve, it retains a significantly broader meaning and function in Jesus' ecclesia. It is this generic quality that allows us to see that the word *apostle* enjoyed a much wider application than that of the ones whom Jesus personally commissioned. Furthermore the generic function comes to the fore when other people outside the circle of the twelve and Paul are included in the apostolate in the New Testament. For instance Paul, himself an apostle beyond the original twelve, casually mentions a cross-section of six other people who are viewed by himself and his communities, as apostles: Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14); Andronicus (Rom. 16:7); Junia (Rom. 16:7); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6) and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6). The function (as well as the language) of the apostle is thus clearly applied to people outside the twelve and Paul, indicating a dynamic functional apostolate within the early movement.

If mission is the organizing principle of the church (and we believe it is), then the apostolic person aids the church in participating in its highest calling. By extending the gospel of the kingdom across cultural and geographical boundaries, they embody and catalyse the

expanding rule of God that will encompass the entire cosmos eventually. Like all other ministry, which incorporates and sanctifies natural gifting and acquired skills, apostolic ministry is in the end dependent on the Holy Spirit and comes to us in the form of a spiritual grace, or *charis*. The New Testament knows nothing of a separate class of believers who are specially endowed with the Spirit to minister. Ministry flows out of gifting, and because God has distributed these gifts to everyone in the body, ministry is the responsibility and privilege of every member of the community.. It is because of the Spirit-conceived nature of calling that when we use the word *apostle* we lean strongly on the functional and vocational side and veer sharply away from any notion of institutional offices.

Here are five metaphors for the function of the apostle:

Planter. A basic feature of apostolic ministry is seeding the gospel and the genetic code of ecclesia into unbroken soil

Architect. The understanding of the architect in Paul's day was that of the primary designer who also directed the building process.

Foundation layer. Paul qualifies the constructive metaphor of architect by limiting it to the initial phases of the building.

Father. Paul sees himself as father to his churches because he was the catalyst who brought them into existence by the gospel. He retains the right to step in and intervene in community affairs when he perceives they have deviated from the essential truths of the gospel.

Ambassador. The apostle is one who is fully empowered to represent the missional interests of the *missio dei*. He is an emissary of the King.

Nothing is more closely associated with the "apostle" than the gospel. No apostle can separate his or her calling as apostle from their core purpose – to serve the gospel. The terms apostle and gospel are more than just intimately connected, they are functionally related. The gospel is itself the norm and source of apostolic behaviour. When we say that apostles are the custodians of the DNA of the gospel, we are not just pointing to issues of doctrinal integrity. The gospel also has a functional quality of extension and renewal of the Faith. The apostle's calling to open up new territories for the gospel aligns them with the explicitly ground-breaking nature of the gospel itself. The gospel must be taught, explained and engaged with by all within the community of faith. But until it breaks out of the enclosed system and comes into direct encounter with new groups, it remains one-dimensional, church-bound, captive to a people's collective fears and insecurities, and therefore unable to achieve what it was designed to achieve in the first place: the redemption of the nations.

If the gospel really is the basis of the salvation of the world and the root of all possible future movement, then seeding that DNA requires much more than simply the evangelistic task of sharing the gospel verbally with others. Viewed apostolically the task requires actually embedding the very genetic codes of the church so that it views itself correctly, engages the world in a certain way, and remains true to its missional (that is, apostolic) calling.

DIFFERING APOSTOLIC MODELS OF PETER AND PAUL

Ministry is never a one-dimensional affair. It is always nuanced by an individual's distinctive calling, personality, culture, context, and relationship to the other influencers in his or her orbit. The distinction between Petrine and Pauline apostleship might well prove worthy of deeper reflection. In modern equivalents of apostolic ministry in Western contexts, the Pauline is called to extend and establish Christianity onto new ground in the West, while the Petrine is called to reframe the nature of Western Christianity itself. The one form is thus primarily pioneering and cross-cultural, and the other innovative and intracultural.

The Pauline model represents those who are called to pioneer and explore unreached peoples. The apostle is the one who is most translocal, and its function requires a more itinerant lifestyle. Pauline apostles are natural entrepreneurs, constantly scanning their context for new opportunities. Petrine apostles tend to have a somewhat more internal ecclesiocentric focus, are less missionary in the truly cross-cultural sense, and are called primarily to serve the already existing people of God. It seems the Petrine types exhibit a greater tolerance for more traditional contexts and flourish in reframing and reinterpreting an existing institution and its organization. "Tempered radicals" are quiet leaders who act as catalysts for new ideas, alternative perspectives and organizational learning and change; they balance organizational conformity with revolution. Whereas Pauline apostles tend to cross cultures to pioneer new missional communities, Petrine apostles tend to mobilize existing communities to become and remain missional.

The Pauline *Pioneer* takes an active role in advancing the gospel into new territories. These explorers' capacity for risk, along with a deeply internalized passion for the lost, combine with their distinct vocational imperative to drive them to plant the gospel among previously unreached people groups. Pauline explorer are thus the quintessential missionaries: as boundary-crossers, they embody the most radical and undomesticated form of pioneering missional leadership. Pauline explorers seem to be able to thrive on the edge and find their most satisfying environment in the wide-open frontiers of untouched territories.

The Petrine *Miner* is more concerned with home base. They are less boundary-crossing missionary pioneers and tend to be missional mobilizers or engineers. That is, they tend to focus their energies around issues intrinsic to the faith community. They play a role much more akin to internal meaning-maker, focussing on issues relating to rootedness in the faith, intrinsic motivation, and the identification of unused sources of human capital and identifying and removing internal barriers to the mission of Jesus' people. This is still a form of exploration, but instead of the wide-ranging, culture-crossing ministry of the Pauline explorer, the miner explores and unearths the deep structures of that either impede or assist an organization in developing responsiveness and agility for mission.

In many ways, the apostolic exploring of both Pauline pioneers and Petrine miners is about maintaining and sustaining movement. More specifically, it involves cultivating a movemental ethos (a high-energy, decentralized network where all adherents, or most of them, are active agents) and developing an increasing momentum.

Petrine miners go deep down into the organizational culture to unearth the controlling scripts, myths, paradigms, language and dominant metaphors that make up their collective thought world – its basic assumptions that powerfully shape the way an organization sees itself, other people, God, and their place in the world. This is often a difficult process because it inevitably involves bringing the hidden assumptions or ignored problems in a community to the surface so that they can be dealt with. True to their calling, miners not only excavate the organizational culture; they also identify the dormant and unused potential within the ecclesia. Sometimes this potential is being suppressed by organizational systems and needs to be unlocked and drawn out.

Pauline pioneers are classic cross-pollinators and networkers. As he criss-crossed the empire, planting the gospel, establishing communities, knitting them together, developing and sending leaders, and resourcing and catalysing the movement, Paul was cross-fertilizing the Israel story with that of the various Gentile nations. The result was the creative generation of new forms of ecclesia unbound from the distinctly Jewish template and culture and allowing them to follow the indigenizing cultural logic of the incarnation. In order to advance the gospel onto new ground, Paul's cross-cultural interpretation revealed ever deeper understandings of the person and work of Jesus. By rubbing the Jewish religious concepts up against those in Greco-Roman culture, he formed an understanding of the gospel that was truly universal in scope. It was through the extension of the gospel into new cultural contexts that Paul was forced to work out the fuller meaning of the death of Christ in relation to the Gentiles. It appears that not only is mission the mother of good theology, but mission, along with the networking of the apostolic catalyst, is the mother of adaptive ecclesiology.

Petrine catalysts are likely to develop an approach designed to address the community's inherent capacity for mission. To generate an urgent reaction in God's people, mobilizers have to generate motivation internally, by connecting believers to the church's core theological truths. That is why their contribution to the organization can be described as catalytic. The transformative potential of these leaders lies in their ability to define shared social identities. It is through redefining identity that they are able to shape the perceptions, values and goals of group members. Petrine catalysts accelerate the process of mobilization for mission by helping a community become inherently more creative and entrepreneurial. Effectively they are optimisers; they help mainly established communities become more focussed on purpose and geared toward their missional calling. Working with existing faith communities of churches requires relational, political and organizational intelligence, as well as a fair bit of patience.

MISSION AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

Left to their own devices most organizations tend toward a sort of sociological conservatism that will increasingly forgo engagement with their context in favour of preserving what they see as their repository of inherited ideas. In other words, they turn away from missional engagement and toward an increasingly traditionalist, sentimental interpretation of reality. Instead of looking forward to a possible future of which they are called to be a part, they look back to an idealized past.

If we think that the primary purpose of the church is to sustain a common liturgical life, offer pastoral care and deliver teaching and that the mission of the church is secondary to these purposes (as is the commonly held view), then these functions set the agenda for how we organize ourselves. The net result is that we end up with an organization that deliberately prioritizes these more internally focussed, service-oriented agendas and outcomes.

Apostolic movements require that we see church beyond its more institutional forms – as a movement of the whole people of God active in every sphere and domain of society. Seen through the lens of institution, the whole church will be conceived of as being primarily made of its external forms and not its inner nature – as being made up of a combination of theological preferences, professional clergy, elaborate rituals, denominational templates, distinctive buildings, and the like. Clearly this is not what the New Testament itself means by *ecclesia*, and it is not what we mean by apostolic movement.

Apostolic movements generally manifest the following characteristics:

- They begin at the periphery of the institutional church
- They are motivated by a transforming experience (grace) of God by an individual or group
- The result is the desire for a more authentic Christian life that often leads to a concern for the church and the world
- Face-to-face groups for prayer, Bible study and mutual encouragement are important
- New methods of selecting and training leaders, that are less institutional and more lay oriented, emerge
- There are theological breakthroughs with the rediscovery of aspects of the biblical message that have been forgotten or overlooked by the church
- There is a levelling effect as distance decreases between clergy and laity, social classes, races, genders and denominations
- The movement tends to be countercultural in reaching out to those who have not been valued by their society
- Consequently, there will be opposition by many in the dominant culture of the church
- There will often be manifestations of spiritual warfare
- At times there will be unusual manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit
- More flexible structures of church and mission will be needed and often emerge, different from traditional structures
- There will be a growing concern for those who are marginalized, often expressed in ministries of compassion
- As the movement matures, there will be concern for the renewal of the broader church