

Multiform Itinerant Ministry for a Healthy Local Church:

Considering How Christ Reigns Over His Church

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Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, R. A. Torrey. These men continue to influence, through their writings, to one degree or another, the Evangelical church in the United States. And yet none of these men are leaders in your local church. Some of these men may not even have spoken your mother tongue, nor fit theologically within your denominational affiliation. And yet they influence your church, and perhaps more directly they have influenced your theological education as you have prepared to be a church leader.

To this list could be added names like Augustine, Peter the Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, men who were and are very influential in framing theological education and the shape of the Western church. None of these men are deacons, elders, or overseers in our current local congregations.

And yet, if one were to read a chapter on ecclesiology in any Evangelical or Protestant systematic theology, one would scarcely find material that takes into account past influences, much less the broadness of Christ's present working in His bride, the church. For example, Ian Murray argued for the local church with its specific leaders and worship times as being the regular means of a work of God.¹ Catholicism and other historic state-churches revere the past and deify their Tradition. Evangelicals, while

¹“Can an outpouring of the Spirit of God occur either sovereignly at God's giving or can it be obtained by the use of the appropriate means?” (Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994], 376). For example, Murray stated that there were no unordinary services in the pre-Finney awakenings (ibid., 208), such as those promoted by “‘revival men,’ itinerant evangelists who moved from town to town” (ibid., 287).

studying local church ecclesiology in very predetermined and confined categories, practice a breadth of cooperative behavior that goes far beyond the local church. It is this latter point that is the focus of my study this evening. Perhaps it is also through this cross-generational, cross-congregational, cross-cultural, and cross-denominational pollinization that we see Christ at work as Lord and Head, guiding His church.

The standard way of teaching ecclesiology is to describe the organizational structure of the church as Congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopal. Already, from the start, this procedure is actually quite man-centered, wherein men fight over various uses of terminology in the NT and disagree over the ways in which societies of men are organized into the social institutions they call “the church.” The question almost appears to frame Jesus Christ out of His true rulership over His bride from the very start:

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’ Then He said to the disciples, ‘The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see *it*. And they will say to you, “Look here!” or “Look there!” Do not go after *them* or follow *them*’” (Luke 17:20-23).

The kingdom or rulership of Christ over His people indeed contains a mystical element. It is spiritual, not physical nor material. So, when was the spiritual element dropped from the definition of the church? Was it when the idea of a State-Church was first established? The church under Constantine took on the characteristics of another department of the government, e.g. the U.S. Department of Education or the U.S. Department of Transportation. Human organizing principles were applied to the church, and therefore human organizational models have determined how the church is viewed since that time.

So what are these organizational models?

- Episcopalian (or Bishop rule);
- Presbyterian (or Elder rule); and
- Congregational (that is, congregational rule)?

So, a good ecclesiology describes (1) the organization of the church; perhaps (2) the mission of the church; and (3) the function or functions of the church. Time is spent showing the names of the different officers within various writings in the NT, and synthetic models are offered to guide the students toward the confessional micro-model held either by the denomination, school, or teacher.

And yet, are these not are the merely the ways that humans interact and interrelate within the church? Means are put into place to keep the human society organized so that human decisions can be made and peace can be maintained within that social entity (cf. 1 Cor 14:33, 40). For example, is not *Roberts Rules of Order* a good cultural book written by a man (or edited by men) to assist various societies to properly direct democratic meetings? And do not most cultures have their own written or unwritten means for leading people in a common cause? And are these not the mere product of human wisdom, perhaps with some divine guidance at points?

And yes, peace is very important—men working together is great! But where is Jesus the Lord of His bride in any of these systems? The great tragedy was that when the church was melted into the state, the state also melted back into the church, and several grave consequences followed:

- A necessary universal salvation was presupposed; and
- A necessary human organizational structure took effect.

Both consequences were disheartening. For the first consequence, the Protestant Reformation's Diet of Spier perhaps defined it best, "His region; his religion!" Christ was no longer ruler over His church, but the king, prince, or princess of the area was. Hence,

in this view, it was as if Christ had effectively deeded the rulership of His church to human princes as vice-regents:

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ... For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing” (Rom 13:1-2, 4-6).²

Question solved. Authority structures are clear. There is a king or governor. He is “God’s minister” (3x) to rule over his church. Thus the marriage of the state-church is proof-texted from Paul, “No more questions—let’s move on!”

Now, how does this king relate to this church structure? It is through a bishop. Yes, a title had to be found in the pages of the NT which would be suitable to adorn the office of this highest overseer with the dignity of his office. “Bishop” was chosen for the task, and hence the Episcopalian style of church governance. Later as hierarchy and necessity demanded it, other names were added to the list. From the OT high priests (arch-priests) came “Archbishops”. Also from the OT came “Patriarchs”. To these were added “Cardinals” (being Primary figures) as further levels of functionaries were needed to adorn the Bride of Christ with suitable titles.

When the Protestant Reformation took place, Luther (wisely, I must add) reached out to Christian Princes in his treatise *To the Christian Nobility* (1520). Calvin worked with the Geneva Council beginning in 1536 and 1541, as the Reformation was ushered into that town by the preaching of Evangelist William Farel. Interestingly, since Luther was dealing with a monarchy, he developed an Episcopalian church government for his

²All Scriptures from BibleWorks 9.0 and from the New King James Bible unless otherwise specified.

church. Since Calvin was dealing with a town council, he developed a Presbyterian style of church government in his churches. And so the state's organization structure became the organizational structure of the church. Meanwhile each Christian leader used "sound exegesis" to prove his point.

In the U.S. the situation was different. While the Virginia settlement may have come first, it was the New England settlement that became the early educational and economic hub of what was to become the United States. The early settlers to New England were Pilgrims and Puritans. Both of these were names of two different Christian groups that were dissenters from the Church of England. They had no connection to the state church in England, and, in fact, they wanted little to do with the Church of England. So when they arrived in the United States, they had to decide the interrelationship of church and the state, in addition to deciding how their churches should be structured. They united together through the "Cambridge Platform" and decided that civic leaders had to be members in good standing within their local Congregational Church. They followed the two realms theory that Luther had previously penned, that the State had oversight of its realm and the Church had oversight of its realm. So blossomed the congregational form of church government and the democratic system of government, "For the people, by the people."

Yes, the American Experiment was and still is a phenomenal success, as this meeting can attest. On December 15, 1791, U.S. Congress passed the first ten amendments to the U. S. Constitution, commonly known as the "Bill of Rights." It established the separation of powers between state and religion:

“Amendment 1

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”³

With the French Revolution in 1789, with the 1791 U.S. Bill of Rights, Napoleon’s 1798 imprisonment of the Pope Pius VI, and his conquests across Europe establishing democratic Republics, the world entered into a golden age of economic and Evangelical prosperity.

But back to our original question: how does Christ really rule His church? Is it through the systems of church government devised by man that Christ ultimately rules His church? The short answer is that He rules in, with, and by His word, as well as by men who take Him at His word and propagate His word!

So let’s consider some basic definitions. What is the church? The church is the assemblage of Christ followers who are gathered in His name. This definition harkens back to the 1595 Bishops NT reading of Ephesians 4:12:

“To the gatheryng together of the saintes, into the worke of ministration, into the edifyng of the body of Christe” (Eph 4:12).

The 1616 French Geneva translates similarly:

“Pour l’assemblage des Saints, pour l’œuvre du ministere, pour l’edification du corps de Christ” (Eph 4:12).⁴

“For the assembling of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ” [translation mine].

These unique translations, although discontinued in the history of translation, actually make sense of the word *καταρτισμός* that is a *hapax legomena* as a noun in the Greek Bible. Fortunately, its root is used 15 times in the NT Greek and 17 times in the LXX Greek. It is a highly polemic word since it glues the leadership gifts of Eph 4:11 with

³“Bill of Rights”; available at: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html (online); accessed 13 Nov 2014; Internet.

⁴*Tovte la Sainte Escriure dv Vieil et Nouveau Testament* (La Rochelle: Hertman, 1616).

their purpose in Eph 4:12. Perhaps better than the contemporary word “equipping” which has a very narrow range of meaning, the term that carries more breadth of meaning which seems to unify the diversity of expressions in καταρτισμός is “for the fitting.” Hence, when James and John were only “mending” their nets (same Greek word), then they were not “assembling” or “readying” them for their next use in fishing—which does not fit the context (Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19). When Paul exhorted the Corinthian church in 1 Cor 1:10, were they not to be “brought together” of one mind? Likewise, God “fitted” the body of Christ to be the perfect sacrifice (Heb 10:5). Whatever its hues of meaning, “assembling together” seems to be part of the semantic range—which role for a leader to assemble only really makes sense in a culture where the church is not the cultural monopoly—as in a State-Church structure!

So, once Christ assembles a church by His divinely called and empowered leaders, how He remain the ruler over this gathering of His called out people? He rules His church through its submission to His words. Matthew’s Great Commission gives us the clear admonition for the church, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20). An assembled group of people remains a church as long as they remain in submission to the Word of God. The moment their leaders knowingly and voluntarily stray from the Word of God is the moment that they are no longer an assemblage ruled by Christ—regardless of their name, their building, their congregational make-up, or their organizational structure. It’s not about a human structure or name (Rev 3:1, “you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead”), it’s about submission to the authority of Christ who is head over His church (Eph 4:15; 5:23).

How are these saints so assembled together? By the cooperative work of the five leaders that are listed in Ephesians 4:11, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” So the human organizational structure seems of less consequence than the structure given by Christ as He gifted leaders to assemble His church.

And who are these five leaders in the current church? Paul thrice used the pair “apostles and prophets” elsewhere in Ephesians giving a clue to his meaning for these terms:

“By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Eph 3:4-5).

Interestingly, in Eph 3:5, Paul could not be referring to the OT prophets, since what he is sharing “was not made known to the sons of men”—past tense. He had to be speaking of NT apostles and NT prophets!

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:19-22).

This use may be ambiguous as to its implication, past or present, OT and/or NT.

However, the two general interpretations of the pair “apostles and prophets” are:

- The “apostles” are limited to the 12 apostles (Rev 21:14), thus referring to the NT authors and their writings; whereas “prophets” refers to the OT authors and their writings; or
- “Apostles”, as in 1 Cor 12:28-29, refers to a constantly contemporaneous cadre of leaders, perhaps missionaries (for “sent ones”); similarly “prophets” refer to those who speak prophetically to the church, though likely not in a futuristic sense (e.g. a “revivalist” or “exhorter”).

Indeed, both categories of leaders are needed and necessary for the proper functioning of the church. So, while the Bible may not fully distinguish between the two interpretations, it may be that the lack of clarity allows it to be applied both ways. Other Scripture can

and probably should be used to affirm the absolute authority of the closed canon of the Bible as the only inerrant Word of God, the complete and unchangeable foundation and only sure source of truth of the church.⁵

With that said, we move to the three other leaders mentioned by Paul as specific gifts of Jesus Christ for the assembling of His bride in history. The three are: evangelists, pastors, and teachers. As for evangelists, Calvin wrote in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, originally penned for the King of France, that evangelists were temporary in the history of the church. He likely considered them to be the authors of the four Gospels, as his Catholic training would have taught him. Yet, Calvin made an interesting admission of a need for another type of leaders in addition to pastors and teachers, “Apostles, or at least Evangelists, in their stead, as has been done in our time”:

“By *Evangelists*, I mean those who, while inferior to the rank of the apostles, were next them in office, and even acts as their substitutes. Such were Luke, Timothy, Titus, and the like; perhaps, also, the seventy disciples whom our Saviour appointed in the second place to the apostles (Luke x. 1). According to this interpretation, which appears to me to be consonant both to the words and the meaning of Paul, those three functions [apostles, prophets, and evangelists] were not instituted in the church to be perpetual, but only to endure so long as churches were to be formed where none had previously existed, or at least where churches were to be transferred from Moses to Christ; although I deny not, that afterward God occasionally raised up Apostles, or at least Evangelists, in their stead, as has been done in our time. For such were needed to bring back the Church from the revolt of Antichrist.”⁶

Calvin’s lack of political correctness toward the Catholic Church aside, he personally experienced that Jesus Christ had raised up those he called “Apostles, or at least Evangelists ... in our time”! Was he not speaking of the ministries of his contemporaries Martin Luther, William Farel, and Ulrich Zwingli?

⁵For a paper related to the authority of the Bible and interpretation, see “Worldwide Bible Translation and Original Language Texts”; available at: http://www.evangelismunlimited.com/ubs-spcu_text20090116b.pdf (online); accessed: 13 Nov 2014; Internet; and “Virtualized Biblical Authority: A 50-Year Megashift from Biblical Inerrancy to Automated Bible Translation”; available at: <http://www.evangelismunlimited.com/documents/virtualized-biblical-authority.pdf> (online); accessed: 13 Nov 2014; Internet.

⁶John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; trans by Henry Beveridge (London: Clarke, 1957) 2:319.

So Christ as ruler of His bride, the church, raised up an important group of leaders, in the mind of Calvin, who did not fit his categories pastor, teacher, elder in the local church structure. And it was clear that their role was beyond that of a mere teacher. So he had to assign to them the biblical names of either Apostles or Evangelists.

Interesting!

As was mentioned earlier, while these men continue to have an impact on the church, they are not listed in any modern church constitution as pastors, deacons, or elders. So how do they fit into Christ's rulership of your church? Ecclesiology is actually far more complex than we may presume.

As to pastors and teachers. No one has an issue with these two persons being a part of the ministry of a local church. It is really the evangelist that is the red-headed step-child of the three. And yet, consider how the five fit together for the fulfilling of Christ's Great Commission:

Chronological	Matt 28:18-20	Eph 4:11
Christ's rule	"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"	"And He gave"
Missionaries: going forth to the nations	"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations"	"Some <i>to be</i> apostles"
Revivalists: preaching repentance		"Some prophets"
Evangelists: winning souls, preaching faith in Jesus Christ		"Some evangelists"
Pastors: congregational-izing, planting and establishing local churches	"Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"	"And some as pastors"
Teachers: training and equipping the saints in local churches and in many other ways!	"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"	"And teachers"

All the Christ-given leaders work together to fulfill His Great Commission: assembling, fitting together, and building up that edifice that is Christ's church (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11)!

Now, the incipient notion for this paper came as a result of the recent "New Calvinism" movement. In 2013 John MacArthur gave the first annual Spurgeon Lectures at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In one of these lectures he mentioned that he considered that we were in the midst of a Great Awakening and that we perhaps did not realize it. He described this awakening as an awakening of interest in biblical truth all across the world, giving the example of large numbers of people in the "rice fields of Thailand" downloading Podcasts of his sermons. Further, he acknowledged that his "Grace to You" ministry was not the only one having this type of a response on the Internet. To MacArthur, it was nothing short of an awakening of interest in hearing biblical truth.

The words of MacArthur harkened back to a series of ten articles by Mark Dever in 2007 called "Where'd All These Calvinists Come From?" In that series, Dever provided a historical-theological outline of ten personalities and issues that shaped modern Calvinism:

"(1) Charles Spurgeon; (2) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; (3) The Banner of Truth Trust; (4) Evangelism Explosion; (5) The inerrancy controversy; (6) The Presbyterian Church of America (PCA); (7) J. I. Packer; (8) John MacArthur and R. C. Sproul; (9) John Piper; (10) The rise of secularism and the decline of Christian nominalism."⁷

⁷The ten articles are named: (Justin Taylor, "Where'd All These New Calvinists Come For? A [Serious] Top 10 List from Mark Dever"; available at: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2012/08/27/whered-all-these-new-calvinists-come-from-a-serious-top-10-list-from-mark-dever/> (online); accessed: 8 Nov 2014; Internet).

Then in October 2013 Dever gave an hour long lecture on the topic of the “New Calvinism,” inserting into his 2007 ten two more influences, as numbers 10 and 11: “(10) Reformed Rap; (11) Influential parachurch ministries.”⁸

The words of MacArthur and Dever have resonated with this author, and have markedly colored how I have approached not only this paper, but also the subject of Awakening. In the past I have construed that a spiritual awakening consisted of a larger response to the gospel invitation when it is given.⁹ However, if my understanding of MacArthur’s intent is not skewed, he was describing an awakening of preachers and hearers. Then, if we add the second half of Bill Bright’s definition of evangelism: “and leaving the results to God.”¹⁰ Rather than an awakening being described by levels of response to the gospel, should an awakening should be recognized by the increased number of people proclaiming the gospel, an increased number of obedient hearts among the Christians?

Rather than a “results-oriented” approach to awakening, what we are describing is a “means-focused” approach to awakening. The hearing of the word preached being the primary, preeminent, and only means by which a soul is saved. Therefore, Paul wrote:

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:16-17).

So, if my logic is correct, the present day awakening is not primarily an awakening of responders, rather it is marked by a proliferation of preachers and of receptive hearers. If

⁸Matt Smethurst, “Where Did All These Calvinists Come From?”; available at: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/where-did-all-these-calvinists-come-from> (online); accessed: 8 Nov 2014; Internet.

⁹Perhaps an extension of Jonathan Edwards’ definition, that revival is an “extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of God” (Murray, 20).

¹⁰“Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God” (Bill Bright, *Witnessing Without Fear: How to Share Your Faith With Confidence* [San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1987], 69).

this is truly the case, then it changes the typical equation of revival and awakening, whereby God's people wring their hands and cry out to God to save sinners—as if God is unwilling to save sinners without human prayer. While prayer is vital, important, and necessary,¹¹ and whereby God's word is always effective, something much more basic is needed. The issue consists of blood-bought Christians willing to take God at His word, and “Go out into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” as commanded by Jesus Christ. Then:

“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached unto all the world as a witness to all creation, and then the end shall come” (Matt 24:14).

By the way, it is universal preaching of the gospel that will mark the end of the age, not a universal response to the gospel!

- So: More preaching to more hearers = more opportunities for salvation;
- And its corollary: Less preaching to less hearers = less opportunities for salvation.

A posited alternative may be seen as:

- More prayer + no change in our current efforts
= requesting God to anoint our current means and efforts in order to bring a greater response.

Further, effective evangelism at any major awakening in history has always included proclamation by many people, most of whom are unknown, and that not only inside the church, but especially outside of the four walls of the local church.

So let us our way back from the current awakening of the proliferation of biblical Christianity to ascertain how Christ has been building His church through this awakening. We then back our way into the promise where Jesus said, “I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:19)—seeking to

¹¹Ronnie Floyd, *Pleading with Southern Baptists* (Ronnie Floyd, 2014).

perceive from hindsight where Christ is ruling over His church, while simultaneously not seeking to fall prey to mere functionalism or pragmatism.

So, in the early 2000s, while the Seeker Sensitive Movement was still in vogue and the Emergent Church movement was redefining the foundations of Evangelical doctrine, Christ had already set in motion the “New Calvinism.”¹² While finding a beginning point in the constant synthesis of people is difficult, consider the following:

- 1986: John Piper wrote *Desiring God*, setting a standard against the wind during the Seeker-Sensitive movement in vogue among Evangelicals;
- 1987: D.A. Carson and John Woodbridge publish their first of two book on biblical inerrancy, XXX, YYY, ZZZ
- 14 Oct 1993: Billy Graham preached in chapel at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) on “Can Revival Come?”
- 15 Oct 1993: R. Albert Mohler, Jr. inaugurated as ninth president of SBTS;
- 199X, Wayne Grudem first published his *Systematic Theology* influencing a new generation of English-speaking students;
- 1994: Louisville hosted the Billy Graham sponsored “North American Conference for Itinerant Evangelists” (NACIE ’94);
- 1994: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary inaugurated its Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth;
- 1994: John Piper and Jon Bloom founded Desiring God Ministries;
- Reaction against Evangelicals and Catholics Together;
- 1996: Mark Driscoll, Lief Moi and Mike Gunn found Mars Hill Church;
- 1997[?]: “To Tell the Truth” Postmodern Evangelism Conference organized by D.A. Carson, resulting in a book by the same name XXX;
- 1997: John Piper spoke at the inaugural Passion Conference, founded by Louie Giglio and Jeff Lewis, with a massive reach among youth;
- 1997: Mark Dever wrote *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, appealing to those looking for biblical depth and truth;¹³
- 1998: Mark Driscoll founded the Acts 29 as a church planting movement eventually to be fueled by college-aged church planters;
- 2005: Tim Keller and D.A. Carson founded the Gospel Coalition;¹⁴

¹²Josh Byers and Tim Challies, *The New Calvinism: Where Did All These Calvinists Come From? A Visual History*; available at: <http://www.joshbyers.com/blog/2014/3/the-new-calvinism-a-timeline-infographic> (online); accessed: 3 Nov 2014; Internet.

¹³The nine marks are: (1) A concern for promoting discipleship and growth; (2) Biblical church discipline; (3) A plurality of elders (biblical church leadership); (4) A biblical understanding of church membership; (5) A biblical understanding of evangelism; (6) A biblical understanding of conversion; (7) A biblical understanding of the gospel; (8) Biblical theology; (9) Expository preaching (“Archive sorted by ‘Nine Marks of a Healthy Church’”; available at: <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/audio/category/nine-marks-of-a-healthy-church/> [online]; accessed 15 Nov 2014; Internet).

¹⁴The Gospel Coalition (TGC) originated from a discussion of D.A. Carson and Timothy Keller at a Manhattan sidewalk café in 2002. “In 2004 the pair started a Pastors’ Colloquium, which formed the basis of TGC. This colloquium produced foundational documents—doctrinal confessions and a theological

- 2006: the Desiring God National Conference featured Timothy Keller, John Piper, D. A. Carson, and Mark Driscoll;
- 2006: the first “Together for the Gospel” (T4G) was held;
- 2007: the first “The Gospel Coalition” (TGC) conference held, and its launched its very popular website
- 2014: The TGC site currently contains over 80,000 audio, video, and text resources.¹⁵

These and many other influences have congealed and coalesced around the message of the word of God to form the “New Calvinism” movement.

The “New Calvinism” movement is young. It is vibrant. It is planting doctrinally sound, Bible-preaching churches. “New Calvinism” has its hymnody and its choruses—always a mark of a movement of God among any people.¹⁶ It has birthed and propelled forward new networks of churches, pastors, and even a new generation of church-housed schools. Looking back over the last 15-20 years, it is really quite amazing to see the “New Calvinism” movement and consider its many ancillary activities!

How did Christ orchestrate this movement? Where was His headship in evidence? Where was His sovereign hand guiding His church, even as He has through the ages? And even more focal for this paper, how has Christ used the spiritual gifts that He has given His church to fan the flames of this movement? Where has His anointing been evidenced?

As has been noted, most ecclesiology focuses on how man rules the local church structure. In a human-oriented approach to ecclesiology, arguments swirl around

vision for ministry—which remains the banner over all TGC does. The organization was officially created in 2007” (Joe Carter, “9 Things You Should Know about TGC”; available at: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-tgc> [online; uploaded 18 May 2014]; accessed: 15 Nov 2014; Internet).

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶“Music, especially the hymn, also greatly served the cause of evangelism. Every revival, it seems, brings to light new songs inasmuch as revival leads people to spiritual experiences which the literarily gifted are moved to express in some exalted fashion” (Paulus Scharpff, *History of Evangelism: Three Hundred Years of Evangelism in Germany, Great Britain, and the Unites States of America*. Helga Bender Henry, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, 1966], 53).

determining where the “anointing oil” is found. The Episcopalian model accepts only the anointing oil poured out of the man-made flask by a previously anointed bishop, who then passes on his “charism” to the next anointee normally based on (1) some kind of human training, (2) certain human abilities, (3) the human choice of the candidate, and (4) the need for human leadership in the territorial or parish based church model into which the candidate is being inducted. The biblical precedent for this model emerges primarily from the pages of the OT, where the anointing was strictly reserved for the sons of Aaron and his descendants. Anyone who violated this observance, or who failed to submit to the rightful high priest at that time, was to die.¹⁷ It is not, we are told, for common people to go up the mountain upon which the Lord came down, nor to ever to question, nor even to consider the issues considered by this special class of anointed clergy.¹⁸

The Presbyterian style of church leadership, based on the hard lessons resulting from the Medieval era and that of the Protestant Reformation, in which was clearly seen that “absolute power corrupts absolutely,” decided upon rule by a plurality of elders, chosen by prior elders or by the congregation. In this model the human element falls upon the congregation to decide from among their parishioners those men (or women, in some cases) showing human potential both in areas doctrinal and in areas of leadership skills.

¹⁷Consider Deut 17:8-13.

¹⁸“3. The faithful—especially those who are simple or uncultivated—should be kept away from dangerous and narrow paths upon which they can hardly set foot without faltering. The sheep should not be led to pasture through trackless places. Nor should peculiar ideas—even those of Catholic scholars—be proposed to them. Rather, only those ideas should be communicated which are definitely marked as Catholic truth by their universality, ambiguity, and harmony. Besides, since the crowd cannot go up to the mountain [Exod 19:12] upon which the glory of the Lord came down, and if whoever crosses the boundaries to see will die, the teachers of the people should establish boundaries around them so that no word strays beyond that which is necessary or useful for salvation. The faithful should obey the apostolic advice not to know more than is necessary, but to know in moderation [Rom 12:3]” (Clement XIII, “In Dominico Agro (On Instruction in the Faith)”; Rom: 14 June 1761; available at: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/C13INDOM.HTM> (online); accessed: 8 Sept 2004; Internet).

While the oil of “charism” in this model is often reserved for the Teaching Elder in collegial relationship with the plurality of elders. Hence while the charism remains on one person, the decision-making power is shared with qualified men who are elected or chosen by other men for that purpose. This view also has its biblical precedent in Deuteronomy 1, Acts 14, Titus 1, and in other places.

The congregational style of church government is a third approach at human-oriented policies and procedures for best overseeing a particular flock of God assembled in one location for the purpose of worship, for the administration of the ordinances of Christ, and for “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20). This model is the preference of my denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, and I wholeheartedly subscribe to it as the best way to divide the power among those who are truly saved. In this model, every person who is born again has the Holy Spirit, and, after they are biblically baptized, can and should, with the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit, have a say as to how the local church should be administered. Usually in this model deacons are raised up as leaders in the church and ordained to this task. They must have shown themselves to follow the 1 Tim 3 qualifications of a deacon to be considered for this spiritual leadership; likewise for pastors, as overseers of the church. While it may be said that Christ will supernaturally supply pastors and deacons for the ongoing ministry of His church, yet the procedure is still in the hands of men to comply to the biblical admonitions.

Therefore, all three of these approaches to ecclesiology appear to be more-or-less man-centered—with a microscopic focus on the local church. And yet, a church that does depart from teaching or preaching the Word of God, still maintains its human

organizational structure. [Yet while the departure from Scripture may be hidden from the eyes of men, it is very much noticed up in heaven!]

Three further potential leadership categories that have not yet been mentioned may exist that are not quite so man-centered:

- Charismatic-Pentecostal;
- Evangelistic-Revivalistic; and
- Bibliocentric-Revivalistic.

In the Charismatic-Pentecostal model of church leadership, there can be a searching for or longing for visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit in a person or group.¹⁹ When such a person or group becomes evident, by spiritual manifestations, often independently of education or vocational training, that person or movement gains the attention of a wider audience among those who pursue such manifestations.²⁰ Some call such manifestations evidence of an “anointing”—referring to a special anointing by the Holy Spirit.²¹ The

¹⁹“A move of God which includes manifestations of the Holy Spirit, must always be welcome in the Church. Yet we must be careful to keep our focus and desire on Jesus Christ rather than on any manifestation. In our seeking we must willingly obey God’s Word in everything we do. We must also realize that when God creatively pours out His Spirit on a person in a way that is not recorded in Scripture, it is not intended to be a normative experience for either the individual or the church” (“Modern Day Manifestations of the Spirit: What is the Assemblies of God position on reported modern day manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as dancing in the Spirit, being slain in the Spirit, etc.?”; available at: http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/sptlissues_manifestations.cfm (online); accessed 11 Nov 2014; Internet).

²⁰“We cannot adequately express with our own words the ecstasy experienced in the baptism of the Spirit. Only through unaccustomed words of heavenly coherence can we utter what our souls would express. ...

“The Apostle Peter made it very plain in his message on the Day of Pentecost that the gift of the Holy Ghost is for everyone: ‘For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call’ (Acts 2:39). (See Luke 11:13.) Our faith, obedience, and submission to the Lord Jesus and His gospel qualify us for this most joyous of all experiences. (See Acts 5:32; 11:15-17.) As Isaiah 12:3 states, ‘With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.’

“Seek Him today, for ‘he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him’ (Hebrews 11:6). ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters’ (Isaiah 55:1). This means you!” (“The Gift of the Holy Ghost”; available at: <http://www.upci.org/resources/instructional-devotional-leadership/84-the-gift-of-the-holy-ghost> (online); accessed: 11 Nov 2014; Internet).

²¹“I encourage you, find every reference that uses the word Christ in the New Testament. Each time Christ is used translate it into ‘the Anointed and His Anointing.’ Then meditate on the new revelation of this meaning in each scripture. Start with the verses that say ‘in Christ’ or ‘through Christ’ and translate them ‘in (through) the Anointed and (through) His Anointing.’ It will change your life.

“If you’re ‘in Christ,’ there’s an anointing for everything you’re called to do, no matter how small or how great the task. That’s what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, ‘I can do all things through Christ

person may be a pastor, a travelling evangelist, a healer-evangelist, or lay person. He/she may have a stationary ministry or a travelling ministry. As churches are planted and impacted by his ministry, his role may then be considered apostolic.²² This approach focuses more on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit resulting from the ministry of the person than it does on hierarchy, education, or position. While great discernment is needed here, the Charismatic-Pentecostal model focuses on a results-oriented approach, specifically on the anointing evident through the preaching and miraculous manifestations accompanying the ministry of an individual.

Another results-oriented spiritually-centered gift to the church is that of the Evangelist-Revivalist. These itinerant preachers travel from church-to-church preaching revivals or open-air evangelistic services. Often as their notoriety increases, so do their crowds and their venues. The effectiveness of these preachers is often measured by their power in the pulpit and the number of decisions that are made as a result of their ministry. Theirs includes a harvesting gift. Most of the men listed in the first paragraph of this paper were traveling evangelists. They lived a difficult life, but were compelled by Holy Spirit to do so.

The third spiritually-focused gift to the church is the Bibliocentric-Revivalist. His ministry has similarities with that of the Evangelist-Revivalist, but his may not be a

(the Anointed and His Anointing) which strengtheneth me' (Phil 4:13). Notice that he didn't say 'who strengtheneth me' but 'which strengtheneth me.' He was talking about the anointing. The same anointing that enabled you to be born again will heal your body, help you succeed in business, and empower you to prosper spirit, soul, body and in every aspect of your life. (See Luke 5:20-24.)" (Kenneth Copeland Ministries, "Understanding the Anointing"; available at: <http://www.kcm.org/real-help/article/understanding-anointing> (online); accessed 11 Nov 2014; Internet).

²²Later in his life, C. Peter Wagner called these men apostles, and wrote of a new apostolic movement (see C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches* [Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1998] and *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* [Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2000], as well as David Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement: A Biblical Look at Apostleship and How God is Using It to Bless His Church Today* [Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1998]).

harvesting gift. He may not see the numbers of converts that the Evangelist-Revivalist does. However, he is used by God to constantly call the church back to the Word of God. Some men with whom Christ has gifted His church in this way seem to be: Theodore Epp, founder of Back to the Bible, John Piper, founder of Desiring God Ministries, J. Vernon McGee of Thru the Bible Radio, and many others like them. Theirs is also a gift to the broader church, although not that of harvest evangelists. Their ministry encourages devotion to and obedience of the Bible.

It appears that when Christ ascended, and gave gifts to men, He has called out a large variety of leaders from all sorts of groups and beginnings, who equally are committed to the Bible and to the gospel. Indeed Christ constantly calls leaders for His church to fuel revivals, start churches, denominations, schools, and publishing houses. They are Rap singers like LeCrae, church planters like Darren Patrick, street evangelists like Ray Comfort, and mission board heads like David Platt. They may have various titles that they go by, but Christ makes sure that they are there for His church. When they are absent, die, or do not exist in a certain church culture, that church feels the desperate void resulting from their absence.

Somehow Christ raises up special leaders for special times, as Calvin noted for his time. Who are these men? What are they to be called? Are they a part of Christ's sovereign and gracious oversight of His church? Absolutely.

Theirs is a pluriform ministry: sometimes on the fiber optic cables of the Internet; sometimes traveling from town to town preaching tent revivals, living out of a trailer; sometimes knocking on doors in the slums, sharing the gospel and hugging the homeless; sometimes struggling to learn a new language to communicate the gospel to an unreached

people group. These are the called out ones of Christ that may not fit into our three human categories for the church. But are they a part of the church? Absolutely. Are they important for the church? Absolutely. Is Christ the One calling them and sending them out? Absolutely.

Are they not the apostles, prophets, and evangelists who do not fit into our human local church structures of Congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian? Why do they not fit into our local church structures? Should not our local churches conform to the NT, and not visa versa?

When discussing a church as a State-Church, it is quite understandable that their big issue is control. They cannot tolerate competition with their monopoly nor being exhorted by untrained laymen who are filled with the Spirit. The State-Church wants absolute power over all that is said and done in the church! And yet such human control is not how Christ runs his church!

The free enterprise Evangelical churches in the United States have faired quite differently from their State Church counterparts in Europe. In the U.S. Evangelical churches have flourished, Christ has brought amazing times of revival. Spirit-filled men fanned the flames of revival by intentional evangelism and the constant preaching of the word of God to thousands of people. Many who were led to Christ, then joined a variety of different churches, and often new denominations were founded.²³

Christ has seemed to control the U.S. Evangelical church more closely to what we read in the Book of Judges, 2 Chronicles, and the Book of Acts. In the Judges, there was no glue of commonality in the tribe, location, or ministry of the judges—other than the

²³See for example, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America (1776-2005): Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (Rutgers, NJ: University Press, 2005).

sovereign design of God. We read of the cycle of apostasy and revival, time and time again in the Book of Judges. The same God who raised up Judges also raises up Evangelists, Revivalists, and Teachers. Then in the Book of 2 Chronicles, we read particularly of kings, good and bad. There are kings who led revivals and kings who led their people into apostasy. With these kings we also read of various prophets who minister to them, good and bad. But in all of these we read of the leaders, and from among these leaders God shows those that are approved over time.²⁴ In the Acts, we jump from the Apostles, to the Deacons, and then focus on the Apostles Paul's itinerant ministry and prison ministry. In all these cases very little is said about the exact organization of the movements led by the men (and women) highlighted by the biblical authors. In fact, so little is said that it often has to be reconstructed from conjecture by comparing with other Bible passages.

Yet, these contemporary Evangelist-Revivalists and Bibliocentric-Revivalists follow in the footsteps of these men of old. They found a wide assortment of ministries that assist and enhance local churches in their ministry. They found:

- Bible schools and seminaries;
- Radio stations and television stations;
- Internet sites, blog sites and other platforms;
- Publishing Houses, Sunday School boards, and Children's ministry societies;
- Youth societies and Christian camps of all types;
- Bible societies and tract societies; and
- Christian recording labels for music of all types.²⁵

They are:

- Church planters;
- Itinerant evangelists and street preachers;

²⁴Luther quoted 1 Cor 11:19 on the need for factions, "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (1 Cor 11:19).

²⁵In addition, consider the work of Baptist Builders and Builders for Christ, or NAMB's telephone ministry switching center called the ERC (Evangelism Response Center).

- Christian musicians of all stripes;
- Youth workers;
- Artists, making Christian jewelry, t-shirts, paintings, or sculpture;
- Bible teachers, conference speakers, and seminary professors;
- Bible software technicians and app developers; and
- Godly businessmen.

They are gifts from Christ to His church.

And these men are particularly needed in each generation for new start-ups.

Unfortunately, a sad topic of past study is that of spiritual drift: schools drift, denominations drift, and every manner of Christian society will eventually drift from its founding purposes. Arnold L. Cook's book, *Must My Church Die*, discussed the uncomfortable reality of institutional drift.²⁶ David O. Moberg delineated stages of institutional drift in *The Church as a Social Institution*, in a section titled, "The Life Cycle of the Church." He posited the following five stages:

- Incipient organization;
- Formal organization;
- Maximum efficiency;
- Institutional; and
- Disintegration.²⁷

So, it appears that, Christ, knowing that spiritually founded human institutions drift from His word, injected and injects into his church leaders to regularly start-up organizations of all kinds. These are the Evangelist-Revivalists and Bibliocentric-Revivalists.

Using today's world digital media, John Piper is an example of one who has influenced a generation of U.S. Evangelicals through his ministry, assisting the "New Calvinism" movement. Whereas in days of old, Methodist circuit-riders itinerated on horseback, and early 20th Century evangelists traveled on trains, now the conduit for

²⁶A good overview for drift is Arnold L. Cook's *Historical Drift: Must My Church Die?* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2000).

²⁷David O. Moberg has a helpful section in his book *The Church as a Social Institution: The Sociology of American Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962, 1984), 118-25. See also J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (London: MacMillan, 1970).

communication are Ethernet cables and fiber-optic lines. The message of the gospel is traveling at the speed of light all across the world, 24/7, with 97% of the 7.2 billion people in the world now having access to a cell phone. Paul's prayer request in 2 Thess 3:1-2 may have been granted modern day preachers far beyond anyone's expectations:

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (2 Thess 3:1-2).

Let us now consider the possibility and impact of including outside influences on local church ecclesiology. In the Episcopal system, outside influences on the local church are funneled through the authority and approval of the local bishop with very few exceptions. Therefore, local church authority is not vested in the local church, but outside the local church in the office of the local Bishop.

In the Presbyterian system, authority is vested in the elders of the church, but some decisions are brought to the Session, a group of XXX, YYY, and ZZZ who make decisions for the cooperating Presbyterian Churches in their Session. Presbyterians through hymnody, publishing, and education are much more open to broadly Protestant or Evangelical cross-polinization.

In the congregational system, no outside authority is accepted in decisions regarding the administration and oversight of a local church. In practice, however, a tremendous amount of outside influence exists in contemporary congregational churches:

- Foreign missions: The International Mission Board (for Southern Baptists) and/or a number of other independent mission boards provide avenues for their congregants to be involved in foreign missions;
- Local missions: The local association of a church provides certain services to a local church, then there are the inner-city rescue missions, women's shelters, pregnancy centers, the Ronald McDonald House or equivalent, etc.;

- Music: Local Christian radio stations are often supported by believers, as well as their steady and regular nurture being provided by the Christian musicians to which they listen;
- Publishing: The Sunday School resources used, as well as the Christian books that our people purchase and read are written by people from a variety of Evangelical denominations;
- Ministries: Christian movies, specialty Christian ministries (such as camps or youth ministries);
- College Ministries: Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators, Baptist Student Union, all minister of various college campuses throughout the United States, these are outside the local church ministries;
- Great Commission: Evangelists, evangelism resources (such as Gospel tracts), follow-up resources, discipleship resources, and small group resources;
- End of life care: Retirement homes and retirement facilities and agencies have also fallen under the broad purview of the general church.

Most all of the above come from outside of the local church context, and are outside the direct local church authority and decision-making structures. Local churches, if they do have any authority over the use of any of these, it would only be through a veto when it is directly a part of its ministry and oversight. Most of the above are by the discretion of the individual member of the local church.

Where the church has been strong, these outside agencies and ministries have multiplied, to the great benefit of the church.

Surely, “He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men”
(Eph 4:8).

Glory to His name!