

Chapter 4

The Fivefold Ministry

God's resources and structure for multiplying house churches

Every growth form in life is based on the multiplication of organic cells. This is true for the church too, as organic, relational households of God. Once we have discovered that the church is not a series of organized and conducted meetings in religious buildings, but a supernatural communal life form, the species of the people of God, as they follow their master together, we may have to rethink how this life form multiplies in a healthy and organic way.

'If you want to build the church, use women'

David Yonggi Cho once said: 'If you want to build an organization, use men. If you want to build the church, use women.' We men like to have things under control, and therefore we are fascinated with computers, engines and robots. As long as we pour water and oil into them and provide some grease here and there, our beloved machines keep running, and we are happy. The problem is that the church is not a machine but a life form, not an organization, but an organism. One of the less obvious facts of church-planting today is that a significant

percentage of churches seem to be planted by women. It seems clear that God's Spirit is challenging the women to get out there and save the country, as we men still sit and feel the need to discuss some more theology and strategy, and, like myself, write one more book.

'Theo-matic' growth

In his landmark book *Natural Church Growth*, Christian A. Schwarz says: 'We can learn about the church by carefully pondering and analysing the lilies – how they grow. The growth of plants and other living organisms reveals that they have a 'biotic' potential, the inherent capacity of an organism or species to survive and reproduce. This type of natural growth is not mechanical or artificial. It is God-given.'

Is this also true for the church? I believe so. The principle can be seen in Mark 4:26–9, in the Parable of the Growing Seed. 'A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces corn.' The words 'All by itself' are the translation for the Greek word *automate*, which means automatically. This growth-automatism is actually a 'theo-matism', since God Himself is the actual cause of growth; it is He who 'gives the increase' (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6). This has very serious consequences for our thinking and practice. For a church to grow, we must *release* the biotic growth potential which God has put into it, rather than *inject* this potential into the church by whatever means we have in mind. The growth potential is already there and wants to get out, and then the growth will happen 'all by itself'. God has kept this part for Himself for good reasons.

No more manufactured churches

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We will all agree that the church cannot be manufactured: there can be no man-made revival, no man-made church growth nor a manufactured church-planting movement. We cannot even 'make',

manufacture, produce, or hammer out a good sermon: we can only 'make' a bad sermon, which is bad simply because we 'made' it. So what is man's role in this? If we cannot make revival happen, we can at least stop hindering it!

Proper ministry consists in releasing the growth automatism by which God grows His church, not manufacturing it. If we have in the past hindered this biotic growth potential, we might need to repent, get out of God's way, observe His ways carefully – by watching the lilies, for example, as Jesus recommends – and then humbly join in the process at a later stage.

Technocrats

In the past, many churches and missions have tended to think the other way round: with the aid of heavy programmes and almost superhuman and tireless effort, constantly teaching and preaching and organizing and fund-raising, they have tried to instill the necessary quality into the fellowships and groups they have planted. This is like trying to push a car sideways, painfully inching along, instead of turning the key and allowing the in-built engine to drive the car. 'The gospel is the power (*dynamis*) of God,' explosive like dynamite, says Paul (Rom. 1:16). If we try to produce the gospel ourselves, we might be like someone who heats up

uranium 235 over an open fire, rather than allowing the necessary nuclear reaction to take place, which will release unbelievable atomic energies from within. We might want to enlarge the balancing wheels of the bicycle of the church, not realizing the awesome gift of balance which God has given even to small children.

If we try to handle the church like a company with the best management principles and foolproof methods, we might start to do the things of God in our own strength, not using God's in-built power and growth potential at all. In fact, we might be found fighting against it, because it upsets our preplanned agendas. As a result, we would become 'technocrats', who control and rule through the help of methods and technical devices. With the very best of intentions and probably pure motives, we may produce useless machines, because our minds – and therefore our methods – had been corrupted. God has provided everything we need for the growth and multiplication of the church: the secret and the power are in the seed! We need to make proper use of it.

How to keep disciples immature through teaching

'I have been teaching my church for five years now, and they still seem so weak,' said one young pastor to me.

'How many have you taught how to teach?' I asked him.

'What do you mean?' he said.

'You have already answered my question,' I replied. 'The teacher's job is to teach them how to teach, and not endlessly do it for them. This, in fact, is a way of artificially keeping people in perpetual immaturity, prolonging their baby status in the name of great and wonderful discipleship teaching!'

The organic growth potential seen numerically

Most people come across the house-church model for the first time do not see immediately its potential for growth through organic multiplication. But the right quality in the right structure produces a huge dynamic for growth. How can the quality of relationships become so good that there can be a fast multiplication of churches without losing the quality? The answer is obvious: it happens *in proportion to the intensity of lives shared in house churches*, a dynamic which is rarely experienced in traditional churches. Since there is sometimes in traditional Christianity not much sharing of lives, this fact – and its potential – is often overlooked.

I agree with those who say that building communities is not primarily a matter of numbers but of quality. Nevertheless, quality which does not sooner or later lead to quantity is, to me, suspect. I am interested in spiritual quality in the right place in an appropriate structure in the right order of magnitude and properly distributed. It is instructive to have a look at the numerical potential of organic house churches.

Elephants or rabbits

A case in point is the different reproduction patterns of elephants and rabbits.

Elephants

only fertile four times a year
only one baby per pregnancy

22-month gestation period
sexual maturity: 18 years
maximum growth potential in 3 years: from 2 to 3

Rabbits

almost continuously fertile
average of seven babies per pregnancy

1-month gestation period
sexual maturity: 4 months
maximum growth potential in 3 years: from 2 to 476 million

Typical growth patterns of house churches

House churches are not multiplying like rabbits, but this example shows the theoretical potential of rapid multiplication. A typical house church may have between six and twenty people, and usually doubles itself once every six to nine months. For our example we take an average size of 12 people per house church, and a less-than-average doubling rate of 12 months. We also assume that in the first year of operation, the house church actually does not double itself at all: it may have a leadership problem, or some other starting problem. We remain slightly pessimistic and also assume a 25 per cent fallout rate, and periods of growth and consolidation, which means that one out of every four house churches which are started will eventually close down within any given five-year period for any number of reasons. This will give us the following scenario:

After year	Number of house churches	Number of people
1	only 1, not 2	12
2	2	24
3	4	48
4	8	96
5	12 (= 16 less 25%)	144
6	24	288
7	48	576
8	96	1152
9	192	2304
10	288 (= 384 less 25%)	3456
15	6912 (= 9216 less 25%)	82,944
20	165,888 (= 221,184 less 25%)	1,990,656

This scenario, which has truly happened several times in history as well as in recent times, will incorporate almost 2 million people in a house-church movement within a period of 20 years. The process may be

accelerated through contextual factors, a shorter multiplication time-span, revival, persecution, or may be slowed down by other factors. The core observation, however, is that the growth is through multiplication, and the multiplication is exponential, not linear.

From addition to multiplication

House churches are a multipliable structure. They can multiply literally endlessly, as long as they are provided with the essentials. Two of the essentials for house churches are biblical quality and leadership.

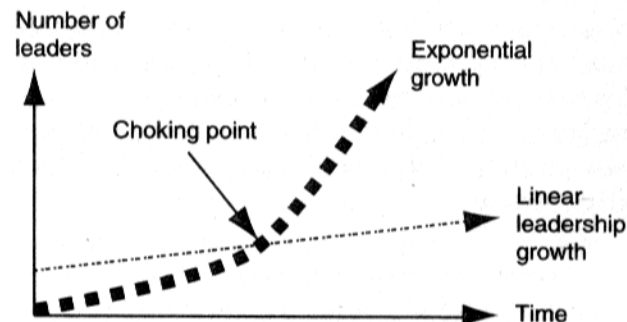
Most of today's structures for developing leadership are addition-based. We teach young leaders a set of classes and go through some programmes which have a similar 'output', a similar number of 'graduates' each time. We may put people through the Bible school system and faithfully add 50 or 500 each year to the number of ordained pastors and missionaries. But just as some are graduating each year, a certain number of leaders that are retiring or dropping out. Moreover, just adding leaders for the multiplying units of house churches is not enough. Addition cannot keep up with multiplication, because ongoing addition produces linear growth: two plus two is four plus two is six. Ongoing multiplication produces exponential growth: two times two is four, times two is eight.

If we try to provide leaders for a house-church movement through a structure that is addition-oriented, not multiplication-oriented, the leadership development model itself very soon becomes the limiting factor in the multiplication process of the churches, and the growth stops. God does not want to give birth to babies only to see them die of malnutrition and cold weather.

Another 200-barrier: when addition stops multiplication

If we have multiplying house churches, which create an exponential growth rate, we need a leadership development structure that grows as fast as the churches multiply. The leadership structure itself therefore also needs to multiply. Either we start multiplying all our seminaries and Bible schools, or we find another way.

If we draw a linear-growth (leadership development) and an exponential-growth (house-church multiplication) development, they intersect each other at the point where the number of house churches starts to exceed the number of leaders. This results in the movement coming to a grinding halt, because the fledgling house-church movement runs out of quality and leaders. The support structure has not grown fast enough, and so the whole movement is in danger of becoming shallow or even cult-like. This choking point, interestingly enough, often happens when there are around 150 or 200 churches in a given movement, for similar reasons that a traditional one-pastor church usually experiences the '200-barrier' described in Chapter 1. The one leader simply cannot care for more



people, and the growth stops. Usually this might create a new denomination in the process. There is, however, a way to break this in-built structural growth problem: we can simply avoid it from the very beginning and provide structures which will help to multiply leaders.

Multiplying the fivefold ministries

The answer to the structural growth problem is the so-called fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11–13: '[God] gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith . . .'

The fivefold ministry functions as the self-organizing powers of the church. They are part of the built-in 'biotic growth potential', an internal structure, part of the spiritual DNA of the church, which forms itself within the body of Christ just as a human body forms its own lymphatic system, white anti-body system, a blood circulation system etc., with an amazing and in-built ability to grow organically with the general growth of the human body, and maintain or even cure itself.

I should underline that the fivefold ministry is standard biblical teaching and practice, and by no means only a speciality of particular denominations or of house-church Christianity. All of these five ministries have their own task to fulfil in equipping the saints for the ministry, and constantly circulate through the (house) churches, like their very own breathing or digestive system.

Empowering people for the ministry

The most important aspect for house churches is that these ministries can also multiply themselves: apostles spotting and training other apostles, prophets spotting and training other prophets, and multiplying themselves through the simple and biblical process of discipleship. This way, the leadership structure can grow exponentially together with a multiplying house-church movement. In the words of Barney Coombs: 'Jesus takes beggars and turns them into princes. He gets hold of six foul-mouthed fishermen, a despised tax-gatherer and five other nobodies, and transforms them into the élite of Heavenly Jerusalem'.

The bottom line of this process is the empowerment of exponentially more people to do the work of God. It is to find, nurture and release talented and supernaturally gifted people into their God-given calling in order to bring out God's best in them, and to do this systematically and strategically.

Giving away ministries to others

After the age of Constantine the church became a channel for the distribution of resources to members rather than challenging members to become resources, says Bill Beckham. The biblical calling of the apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher or evangelist is not to assume or usurp 'the ministry' and perform it oneself as others look on, but to train God's people for the ministry, to equip others. They are evangelistic, prophetic, teaching, pastoral and apostolic trainers, not demonstrators; teachers, not one-man-shows. An evangelist's true fruit is not a convert, but more evangelists. Strangely enough, exactly the opposite of this biblical model has become the norm: specialist teachers, evangelists, pastors, apostles and prophets move about at

a breathtaking speed, constantly overworked and under stress, slaves to their diaries. Unlike Jesus, they are difficult for others even to approach, with more than just their blood pressure in danger. They give seminars and speak at conferences, at which they show to the amazed masses the latest state of the art in their specialist area, and do exactly the opposite of their true and God-given task: instead of equipping God's people for the ministry, they *perform* it for them in front of them. Instead of teaching them how to teach, they just teach. Instead of equipping them to be evangelists themselves, they simply evangelize. Instead of training people how to prophesy, they prophesy and go away without leaving disciples behind. This not only sets unhealthy standards, but leaves both the teacher and the students unfulfilled and empty, because they have not done what God wanted them to do, i.e. to be disciplined into these ministries, to learn each other's secrets, to be initiated into the multiplication process themselves. This creates a new caste of clergy and laity, and ultimately fails to prepare God's people to do their ministry. The five ministries are given by God to be given away, to be used in equipping others to do the work of the ministry, which ultimately means multiplying the structure through which the ministry is operating: the house churches.

The five fingers of the Hand

Gerald Coates, leader of the Pioneer movement in England, compared the fivefold ministry to the five fingers of the hand. The apostle is the thumb. He gives stability, holds the counterbalance, and can literally touch all the other fingers. The prophet is the index finger. He points at you and says: 'You are the man!' The evangelist is the middle finger, the longest of all and sticking furthest out

into the world. The ring-finger resembles the pastor/shepherd, caring for internal relationships. The little finger is the teacher: he can worm his way deep into any ear, and there share the truth of the gospel.

The pastor

The pastor, in the charismatic and biblical – not the traditional – sense, is by nature a shepherd: he stands in the midst of the flock of sheep. Everything mills around him; but nowhere in the New Testament do we find a pastor truly leading a congregation. He is by nature a very loving person who can create a family atmosphere. To him, relationships are the most important, simply because he is interested in the flock's long-term spiritual well-being. The good shepherd knows the names of the dolls of the children of the adults he is caring for; he is interested in every last detail. There's only one problem: a person's greatest weakness almost always lies in the shadow of their greatest strength. The pastor tends to lose the big picture, because he is 'lost in relationships'. With this ministry usually goes a natural 'professional blindspot'. However, his motto is 'Relationships are everything!' The pastor focuses on redeemed relationship with God, and redeemed relationships with each other, and helps others to function in this relational way also.

The prophet

The prophet is way ahead of the flock of sheep, perhaps five miles beyond the next hill. He is on the lookout. There he hears God's voice and sees visions, enters the throne-room of God and glimpses something. It may actually be very good that he is often away from the flock, because few really understand him. He is interested not so much in people and what they think of him, but in God's voice for the situation. Added to that, he often has a complicated

and disorganized personality exactly because he is so uniquely gifted. Can you imagine spending a relaxed half-hour drinking coffee with Jeremiah? He would probably tear you and me apart, and use the coffee for an illustration.

A prophet's perspective is radically different from that of the pastor. He hears from God and quite mercilessly questions everything, including the pastor, from God's perspective. That, however, is his healthy and God-given duty. For that reason, there is also a historical tension between the pastor and the prophet: one is a defender of the status quo, who wants to maintain the community; the other questions everything and is seen (rightly) by many others as a threat, because he disrupts things and wants 'movement now'. The shepherd, in many pictures, not only has a stick in his hand to tend the sheep and keep away the wolves; he may also be quick in using that stick to keep away prophets. And yet both views are valid, because both are serving God and the same flock – one with loving attention, the other with a prophetic view. Both are necessary!

The prophet's motto, describing his ministry, is 'vision'. Prophets often have the unique ability to see and hear what others do not see nor hear. These supernatural revelations need to go through a process of healthy interpretation in the church (1 Cor. 14:29) and application. The prophet is groomed by a direct calling from God, and then usually sent 'pouring water over the hands of a master prophet', as in the case of Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs. 3:11).

The apostle

The apostle is not as far from the flock as the prophet. He is about three miles away, just on top of the next hill instead of being on the other side of it like the prophet. From this commanding point he can see the big picture and study

his map, looking for the next green pasture. He generally has no time for house visits and small talk; 'the world is his church'. Like Paul, he is never really satisfied: after Rome, he wants to go to Spain! His core word is 'strategy', his heartbeat is 'missions': he wants to see God's plans come true for nations. Apostles are very much like generals in an army. They carry the main burden and responsibility for the advancement of the cause. The apostolic ministry is a founding ministry: it can create something out of nothing, create a foundation in the desert. In many ways it unites all other gifts in itself. The apostle may function as a supernaturally gifted problem-solver and talent spotter. And if the pastor – the word is mentioned only once in the New Testament – is something of the equivalent of a spiritual 'uncle', very caring and loving, but not ultimately responsible, then the apostles, 22 of them are mentioned by name in the New Testament, are the spiritual fathers who carry the last responsibility, the real agony and joy.

The teacher

The teacher, using the picture of his relationship to the flock of sheep, lives at a critical distance from the flock. He sits on a vantage point half a mile from the flock, so that he can send out his dogs in time to deal with a sheep which is misbehaving or one that is unconsciously separating itself from the flock as it grazes. His motto is: 'The truth, and nothing but the truth!' The teacher is interested in quality, in the details, which he finds even more fascinating than the big picture. He is often a 'footnote' person in the truest and best sense of the word, who likes details and needs to know everything exactly. He has a passion for teaching itself, and his gift is to empower others to teach others how to teach. He is, like Jesus, his master Rabbi, leaving behind not primarily teaching notes but literally his spirit.

The evangelist

The evangelist circles the flock, also half a mile away – just enough so that he doesn't smell like the sheep pen and frighten the wild sheep away, but close enough to be able to lead them to the flock when he finds a lost sheep. He has three aims and passions: that people find Jesus, find Jesus, and find Jesus. He introduces a healthy outward focus to the churches, and is even involved in discipling new believers into maturity by literally 'reading the gospel to them', 'evangelizing' them, filling them with the good news. Biblically the evangelist does not lead the extension of the churches, but works in partnership with apostolic and prophetic people, who bear the main responsibility for laying the foundations of the churches. The evangelist empowers others to be evangelists, not in order to create evangelistic enterprises in themselves, but so that the house churches can become or remain an evangelistic movement.

Avoiding ministry projection

One of the greatest errors of our day is that we have allowed and even encouraged 'spiritual gift projection'. Gift projection happens when a Christian who has received a particular spiritual gift assumes that his gift is the most natural thing in the world, and that all other Christians would automatically achieve the same results if they acted just as he does. He overlooks the fact that God has made each of us unique and given each of us special gifts. At one stage or another, it might be God's plan for a Christian to stop *having* a gift and start *becoming* one, where someone would stop just prophesying, and become a prophet. Whoever measures someone else against himself is comparing apples with oranges and is doing himself and others a great disservice. He also

complicates the lives of other Christians with unrighteous comparisons and simply sins against the body of Christ, in which not everyone is a mouth or a ear.

'Ministry projection' makes the problem worse. In ministry projection, the teacher looks at the evangelist and says: 'You and your evangelistic campaigns! Theological training, that's what really counts. You have only one problem: you should be a bit more like me!' The pastor looks with horror at the prophet and says: 'You and your visions. Long-term relationships are what counts!' He grasps his shepherd's crook, meant for keeping wolves at bay, and starts driving the prophets away.

When a teacher builds a church

If you leave a teacher to develop a church all by himself, he will build it around his unique gifting of teaching. What else could we expect? He might convert a church into a lecture hall, or plant Bible schools or other teaching centres. These sometimes might grow into impressive preaching cathedrals, if he has the necessary rhetorical giftings, where people from far and near come to be amazed. But often enough when the talented man leaves, the centre disappears also. A teacher does not really lay foundations; but he explains them brilliantly.

The evangelistic model of church

Evangelists often seem to live in one endless rally, and if you leave them to build a church, they will create a most fascinating series of events and exciting programmes, with a lot of adrenaline per minute. But ultimately it will have only one message to tell. An evangelist will be able to gather many, but is usually not gifted in building them together. Very soon the people will get tired of this one-

sided spiritual diet and leave, looking for more. Maybe the evangelist also spots the problem, and leaves before the people do, or – a most elegant solution – becomes airborne and itinerant, with a basic equipment of 10 or 20 evangelistic sermons, looking for people who have not yet heard them.

The pastoral model of church

One of the strongest messages of a charismatic shepherd-pastor to the world is, 'Come to me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will listen to you and counsel you.' And come they do. If the shepherd is left all to himself, his ministry will naturally create counselling centres, which ultimately may grow into a spiritual hospital, where people come to have their wounds cared for in the power of the Holy Spirit. Pastors, like good uncles, have difficulty in saying 'No'. The result is often a choking effect created by the very best gifting in them: they are swamped by more needy people than they can handle, and the growth limits itself and stops. They quickly become 'maxed out' and reach their capacity.

The predominant role of apostles and prophets in church-planting

Important though spiritual hospitals may be, they cannot replace what apostles and prophets are uniquely gifted for: to build a supernatural base and foundation for a multiplying church movement, to accept nothing as impossible, to respond strategically to visions and supernatural revelations, to be prophetic talent spotters. They are not so much human-centred and felt-need oriented 'tenders' like good pastors, teachers and evangelists, but God-centred: they have

the God-given ability to see beyond things, beyond human needs and problems, and take hold of the tasks and visions of God. They do not just want to build 'a church', they want the whole city or nation! They live in the future, for the future, from the future, constantly pregnant with future developments, and they can therefore pull and lead the church into the future, and prevent it from becoming a traditional institution only celebrating the past, or a fossilized monument of history long gone.

The church is 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone' (Eph. 2:20), writes Paul. John writes to the church in Ephesus 'that you have tested those who

Like a foundation for a house, much of the work of apostles and prophets is not always seen but felt.

claim to be apostles' (Rev. 2:2) after almost all of 'The Twelve' had died. This suggests simply that the service of apostles continues beyond the 'age of apostles', as Watchman Nee says in his book *The Orthodoxy of the Church*. Like a foundation for a house, much of the work of apostles and prophets is not always seen but felt. That is why they are described as being 'first of all' (1 Cor. 12:28), because they are also 'called in' first of all to do the foundational work for 'founding churches', the site-spotting, earth-moving, excavating, foundation-laying, so that others, like carpenters and plumbers and electricians, can build on that foundation. Would you like to live in a house where the foundations were laid by a carpenter? I admire carpenters, but I would not want to live in such a house. That is simply outside their brief.

Instead of pastoral, evangelistic and teaching models of church, apostles and prophets build prophetic and apostolic churches. The apostle, mentioned first in all the

biblical lists of ministries, is one 'sent to attempt to solve the unsolvable for the purpose of facilitating the increase of the church of Jesus Christ in quality as well as quantity,' says Barney Coombs in his excellent book *Apostles Today*.

Playing together, not against each other

We need to stop playing these ministries off against each other, and start recognizing these unique giftings in each other. They are all valid parts of the whole picture, each a unique 20 per cent of the whole 100 per cent of all ministry, with the apostolic and prophetic ministries having a special and slightly more prominent role than the others. The teacher will never be able to take over or replace the ministry of a prophet or apostle; the pastor will not be able to do the work an apostle is called to do; and the prophet might fail miserably if asked to be a shepherd, but flourish if he is allowed to function within his anointing, and prophesy and teach others how to prophesy. The five ministries are meant to function in harmony and synergy, and complement each other perfectly.

A house church is led by elders. Not every individual house church of 15 people will have its own apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers sitting all together in one small room. Those ministries are equipping ministries, going beyond the scope of a local house church, and function translocally, affecting the whole area or, especially in the case of prophets and apostles, even beyond that.

Building a spiritual gene-pool for the local church

The devil's plan has long been for the pastors to stand in one corner, the prophets in the other corner looking out of the window, while the teachers sit in the library, the

evangelists drink coffee outside and the apostles roam overseas. In order to see the fivefold ministries working together again, they need to be identified afresh. These ministries then need to recognize each other – which might involve some solid repenting to redeem past misunderstandings and correct misconceptions of each other. Then they need to become friends with each other, because 'everything significant in the Kingdom of God is built on redeemed relationships,' says Roger Forster. Then they need to form teams, usually based on a locality – the city, the region, the district, the state, the nation – and start to multiply themselves, prophets multiplying prophets and evangelists multiplying evangelists 30-, 60- or 100-fold, and finally forming the equivalent of a spiritual gene-pool, an equipping and resource centre for the whole body of Christ in that locality and beyond.

From this leadership pool, the right person with the right gift can be dispatched quickly to add to the spiritual diet if needed somewhere, to solve a crisis, or give a specially needed input in any given church or area. The apostolic and prophetic equippers and servants of the Body, similar to civic servants, form a spiritual senate and council for the city or region or nation. One of their jobs is to work hard to avoid the formation of another spiritual dominating élite by forgetting titles and fame and being humble and accountable to each other. Their task is to be responsible for the corporate identity, calling and redemptive purpose of the church in a city or region, for truly speaking with one voice to the nation, for city-wide celebrations and regular apostolic and prophetic envisioning of the church on a wider basis. Business as usual for them will be to make themselves available to any house church that needs them, constantly circulating 'from house to house', pouring themselves into God's people as they multiply the house churches.

Are you the man?

Where do you start to develop this spiritual gene-pool? With those who have a passionate, supernatural vision for it. Those who can and do cry for a city or region or nation should be the ones to initiate the process; no one else will truly have the anointing for it. It will have to be apostolic and prophetic people, because this is part of their God-given nature. John Knox, the reformer of Scotland, an apostolic man, once prayed: 'God, give me Scotland or I die!' This is the kind of prayer that should be naturally on your lips before you do this. Pastor Colton Wickramaratne of The People's Church in Colombo, Sri Lanka, himself an apostolic and prophetic man, frequently says it this way: 'God's method is a man. Are you that man?'

The first step in many areas is to recognize, form and multiply the individual ministries. We need to do what we are made by God to do. You may work as a pastor today, but really be a prophet. Or you may try to be a teacher, but you are a pastor, and you long to get in touch with people, away from all that paper.

Three areas of responsibility in the church

Rather than developing three layers of hierarchical 'leadership levels', house churches are organically maintained and multiplied through the ministry of three types of specially gifted people:

1 Elders

The house churches are led by elders, whose function is to father or mother the church. They bring redeemed wisdom to the church, overseeing the flock like a father overseeing his children, showing them how to live, and

they add authenticity through a proven family track record and balanced and mature lifestyle.

2 Fivefold ministers

The elders are equipped and trained by people who have been called by God for one of the fivefold ministries, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Those ministers circulate within the house churches 'from house to house' and function as a spiritual blood-circulation system nurturing all house churches with the elements necessary to become or remain healthy and therefore to multiply. Those ministries are like sinews and joints, linking the various house churches together to be a whole system. Their ministry transcends the individual house church and serves the body of Christ like a spiritual gene-pool, which the house churches of an area or a region, and sometimes beyond, can draw upon.

3 Apostolic fathers

Those spiritual equippers of the fivefold ministry are related to a third group of what I call 'apostolic fathers', people with an apostolic and prophetic gifting plus a special calling and charisma from God for a city, a region or a nation. These apostolic fathers, usually recognizable by the almost unbearable agony and spiritual pain they bear for a place, a city, a nation or a people group (Gal. 2:7-9), become the local backbone, the regional or national 'pillars of faith', anchoring the whole movement of house churches locally and being responsible for celebrations and the city church that will emerge. Since they usually have a true kingdom mentality, a broken spirit because of the spiritual burden they carry, they are least viable to build a massive movement and kingdom around themselves, but truly function as serving all – and therefore leading

all – not top-down from the lofty heights of a hierarchical power-pyramid, but down on earth, alongside other equippers (Mk. 9:35).

The *deacons* can be seen as functioning together with the elders (Phil. 1:1), but also as the secretaries and assistants of those apostolic fathers, taking care of administrative needs and social aspects, and keeping the apostles' hands free to do their work (Acts 6).

Most leading companies know that their future depends on the quality of the next generation of their leaders. So they employ so-called human-resource companies and placement agencies, or send out their own talent spotters, who roam the universities and schools to find the kind of gifted people of the calibre the company feels they need to employ. The body of Christ could learn from that. We need a supernatural talent-spotting ministry, or even a plan, systematically identifying and recruiting those gifts in each other and in the churches, and then helping those junior apostles and prophets or pastors-to-be to become apprentices with their own role models, people who are miles ahead of them in spiritual maturity and experience in the very ministry area they feel called to serve. Those disciples and apprentices can carry the suitcases of their masters, or 'pour water over the hands' of a senior prophet, and rub off as much as they can, 'catching the spirit' of someone ministering in the spirit. 'Just imitate me,' as Paul puts it. As an apprentice without a master does not make much sense economically, a disciple without a master does not make much sense spiritually.

Healing the church trauma

Many apostles and prophets today are not in church at all, because there is little room for them in traditional pastor-centred churches. They have been pushed to the side; they

are often feared because they seem so strong, radical and different. Many have been not only marginalized but rejected, and as a result have given up on church almost completely, maybe with a last flicker and a spark of hope still burning in them. Many of them are in business today, or have become medical doctors. More and more of them know deep down that they are made for more than just earning 10,000 dollars a month operating on ulcers, avoiding the church that hurt them, spiritually surviving by TV and radio, and attending an occasional conference or a Christian businessmen's 'chapter'. Those rejected, undiscovered or underemployed apostles and prophets suffer from what I call the 'church trauma', a very deep and tricky wound inflicted on them by the very institution of healing, the church, which did not live up to its own calling and which – an almost devilish scheme – has badly hurt those whose ministries it needed most. Many of those Christian businessmen therefore heavily support anything but the church, invest in 'parachurch' ministries and missions – called 'para-', meaning 'alongside', church because there is no place for their vision within the church – , as long as they can stay clear of the church which has hurt them. The tragedy of this is that the church is God's mission. Someone needs to find them, go to them, apologize to them profoundly, heal the 'church trauma', speak to that glowing spark and fan it into a flame, and then recruit them, helping them to see how God sees them, and release them into their apostolic and prophetic potential for the building up of the church.

Does this strike a chord?

If you stand next to a piano and sing a tune, some of the piano-strings reverberate with the melody and give an echo: they resonate with the frequency of your tunes. This

is also true spiritually. Sometimes I explain the fivefold ministry to participants of a seminar, and afterwards ask them to identify themselves and physically stand in their respective five corners. Usually, a small percentage of participants keeps sitting, because they still do not know where they belong. I then ask some representatives from the pastors, evangelists, prophets, apostles and teachers to come from their corner and pray a short prayer for and over those who do not yet know their calling. Then we ask those still sitting whether they have felt or experienced anything special while one of those ministers prayed, whether it struck a spiritual chord in them. If yes, they are then encouraged to join the respective group to which they felt they responded spiritually, and go to their corners, where I ask those waiting there to lay hands on them and pray, 'to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands' (2 Tim 1:6; cf. 1 Tim. 4:14).

What is the next step for your area?

It depends where you are, and what ministries have been founding or dominating your area or even your church in the past. If there was an overabundance of pastoral and evangelistic ministry in your nation or people group, you may need to consider complementing the effects of these good ministries with apostolic and prophetic and teaching ministries, so that the spiritual ground has all the nourishment and care it needs to develop strong fruit.

Watering flowers with ice-cubes?

I believe strongly in the pastoral ministry. I also believe strongly in the other four ministries, the apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists. As water is found in three

forms – ice, water and steam – the five ministries are also found today, but not always in the right forms and in the right places. They may be frozen to ice in the rigid system of institutionalized Christianity; they may exist as clear water; or they may have vanished like steam into the thin air of free-flying ministries and 'independent' churches, accountable to no one.

God is transforming the core quality of the five ministries, captured and frozen into neat packages by the era of Christendom, and gently warming them up, bringing out the best in them for the task of watering His creation, the church. In fluid form, the five ministries will also find it easier to relate to each other and function and flow together.

Many in the churches today have hurt or even ill feelings about the fivefold ministry, especially about the apostolic and prophetic ministries, because they may have encountered them in the wrong form or package, either as steam or as ice. But that should not lead us to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

The lesson of Liebig

German biologist and chemist Justus von Liebig discovered over 150 years ago that soil only needs four fertilizers or minerals for the healthy growth of a plant: nitrogen, lime, phosphoric acid and potash. As long as all four minerals are present in the soil in sufficient quantity and harmony, growth occurs 'automatically'; the soil is truly fertile, and has all it needs to produce a good crop. If one of the fertilizers is lacking, let us say lime, the growth will be limited and halted by this limiting factor. The soil starves for lime, and you can add as much nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash as you want, but you will not change the situation, you even damage it, unless you add lime.

Treatment of overacidic soil

Let us, for the sake of illustrations, equate evangelism with phosphoric acid, prophecy with potash, teaching with nitrogen, and pastoring with lime. If you have a soil thoroughly treated with phosphoric acid (evangelism) and nitrogen (teaching), it soon reaches a saturation level where any more of phosphoric acid and nitrogen will actually have a bad effect: it will make the soil acidic and have the opposite results to the ones we desire. What the soil needs now is not more phosphoric acid and nitrogen, but potash and lime in sufficient quantity, so that those minerals can catch up, and harmony in the soil is restored.

This could potentially hurt the producers of phosphoric acid and nitrogen, because they might feel rejected; but in effect they are only complemented by lime and potash, so that their good contribution, together with the other necessary elements, will reduce acidity and make the soil fertile ground again.

Phosphoric acid around the world!

Someone might stand up in a Christian conference and say: 'Phosphoric acid (evangelism) did it for my church! When I applied phosphoric acid, my church exploded. It was just what I needed, and it is just what you need, too! Brothers and sisters, I have a message for you: you need phosphoric acid. You may not know it, but you need it! Before you even ask, I have the answer: phosphoric acid! It worked for me, it will work for you. Let us start a ministry, "Phosphoric acid around the world", and tell everyone the blessings of phosphoric acid which will change any church for good.'

What would you think of such a man? Would you allow him to speak again at the conference? I would not. I rejoice

for what happened to his church, but I would beware of copying him, because the situation in his area may not at all correspond with that in my area. Contextualization – the importing of a foreign idea into native soil – might be a nice idea, but fresh incarnation is better. Given the historic developments in the area of our farmer, he might have been starved of phosphoric acid, but he might need lime! If I take the advice of the phosphoric acid enthusiast, I might spoil the ground and do something very bad with something very good. The message again is that we should not copy someone else's experiences and methods, but be apostolic and prophetic ourselves, creative and sensitive to our own situation.

Every good agriculturalist can test the soil, finding out its quality and what fertilizers it needs and in what quantity, in order to produce a good harvest. This would be, in this illustration, the job of the apostle. Like the wise farmer who knows which of the four minerals are needed, the apostolic ministry would see which of the four ministries are necessary next in order to create a healthy balance that will truly develop a good soil. In a similar way you may remember the spiritual DNA, made up of the four genetic letters: guanine, cytosine, thymine and adenine. They are put together in a double-helix structure, which defines what letters correspond and complement other genetic letters, and the very way these letters are arranged will define how the organism grows. If we equate, for illustration's sake, those four genetic letters with the four ministries: evangelism, prophecy, teaching and pastoring, this creative act of putting them together in the right order would fall to the responsibility of the apostle, God's 'master-builder.'

