

Why leadership? The formation and teaching of church leaders should be based on the purpose of the church

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Introduction: Current ways the formation and teaching of religious leaders is occurring

The formation and teaching of religious leadership today is thought to be happening in a variety of ways today.

- a. In some cases, seminaries are training leaders with doctrinal knowledge to be utilized in preaching along with skills in pastoral care. The assumption is that specific training in leadership is not necessary.
- b. In other cases, seminary students will take specific courses in organizational leadership. They will learn to understand the dynamics of teams, run meetings, supervise, and address conflict.
- c. Large congregations tend to do their own inhouse leadership training of employees.
- d. At smaller congregations, it is assumed that the supervisor is developing the people under them.
- e. Finally, it is assumed that many leaders have been through the school of hard knocks. In high school, they were in sports, or drama, or music, and in the process, they learned to work in a team.

If we were to distill what people generally think of when they think of leadership development, it is getting a “leadership” book (by Dale Carnegie, Peter Drucker, John Maxwell, Kenneth Blanchard, Bill Hybels, Henri Nouwen, Patrick Lencioni, or the latest business bestseller), and talking about it with a group or mentor.

But we want more clarity about what it means to teach and form religious leaders. Which of these are the best approaches? How can we improve them?

Method 1: What do bishops, presbyters and deacons do in the New Testament?

I started my doctoral work exploring the question of what excellence in church leadership looks like. I began with quite a straightforward method: studying what church leaders were supposed to do in the New Testament. I exhaustively studied the references to overseers, elders, and deacons. What were the Jewish and Greco-Roman roots of this positions? How have these offices been understood throughout church history? After a year, I was quite underwhelmed. (Though happily I was thriving studying this question from other angles). There just are not that many references to the overseers, elders, and deacons in the New Testament and they are—dare I say—rather boring. The most significant collection of these terms are in 1 Timothy 3 and

Titus 1 about their qualifications — which consist largely in these so-called “leaders” being stable, reputable people.

Method 2: Deriving what leaders should do from the purpose of an organization

At some point, I thought back about being a young pastor five years earlier sitting in my office in Vancouver, Canada and wondering what I should do with my time. I had been reading all sorts of books for pastors: Eugene Peterson, Will Willimon, Gregory the Great, George Herbert, Richard Baxter, Fyodor Dostoevsky. Despite all those rich resources, I was also struck by Rick Warren’s suggestion in his book *The Purpose-Driven Church* that the church has five purposes: fellowship, discipleship, worship, and evangelism.¹ Warren argued that the church should balance all five. Resources and time should be allocated to each. “Aha,” I thought, “I could spend one day each week on each purpose.” However, I thought his description of the five purposes were off. For one thing, Warren envisioned each of them as activities occurring within the church building. But, I thought he was correct about pastors discerning the purpose or purposes of the church and trying to facilitate that. A good church leader should help the church be what it is supposed to be. This opened up a new horizon of things to research. What is the church supposed to be and do? Once we figure that out, we can figure out what church leaders should do.

The definition of leadership

It was only later that I learned that the meticulously rendered definitions of leadership also have to do with helping a group accomplish a goal. For example, the main secular leadership textbook by Peter Northouse defines leadership this way, “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”² The key thing to notice here is that both task and relationships are important here. Something is being accomplished. A goal is being sought after. And people are working together to get it done. The task matters. People matter. Both are crucial.

¹ See “The Five Dimensions of a Healthy Church:

- Churches grow warmer through fellowship.
- Churches grow deeper through discipleship.
- Churches grow stronger through worship.
- Churches grow broader through ministry.
- Churches grow larger through evangelism.

Rick Warren, “Forget Church Growth, Aim for Church Health,” <http://pastors.com/health-not-growth/> (May 20, 2016) drawing on Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

² Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 8th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2019), 5.

Discerning what goal leaders should seek to achieve

So, what needs to get done? At a micro-level, this can be discerned through talking with the group and deciding together what to do. Academy for Religious Leadership member Mark Lau Branson has sketched a method of doing so with appreciative inquiry.³ Another method is the leader coming up with the vision more or less by themselves and then casting the vision.⁴ But, before that point, some theological work can be done about the purpose of religious organizations in general.

The purpose of religious organizations derived from observation is to help the world.

The first question is “why religious organizations?” Perhaps the most uncontroversial answer is that religious organizations exist because the world is messed up. Though there is much good in the world, there is also much confused⁵ self-destruction in human society due to pride, sloth, and falsehood⁶; abuse, apathy, and addiction. Even a secular person might affirm this as a valuable reason for existence: to help the world.

The purpose of religious organizations derived from religious texts is to bless all people.

Moving from general revelation to divine revelation, we see in Genesis 12 God’s declaration to Abram that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”⁷ All of the Abrahamic religions thus understand their reason for existence is to be a global influence for good.

³ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011). Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations : Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, an Alban Institute Book, 2016). This parallels Jim Collins’s comment to get the right people on the bus and then decide where to go.

⁴ John P. Kotter, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 1 (2007); James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1994).

⁵ “The expression *hominum confusio* [human confusion] is theologically appropriate because it says neither too little nor too much.” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 parts vols. (Edinburgh, New York: T&T Clark, 1956-1969, 1975, 2009), IV/3.2, 695.

⁶ “Like its [the world’s] persistence, its self-witness and lights are not extinguished by the corruption of the relationship between God and man through the sin of man, his pride and sloth and falsehood.” *Ibid.*, IV/3.1, 139.

⁷ Genesis 12:2-3 (NIV)

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;

Disagreement about whether blessing all people should be a task undertaken intentionally

However, the extent to which this promise is: (a) a promise is to be acted upon or (b) passively accepted, varies among and within each of the Abrahamic faiths. This is a crucial decision that affects all that follows. If a people understands this promise that they will be a blessing as a calling or commission, they will be compelled to action and leadership to try to accomplish this purpose will be necessary. If this promise that they will be a blessing is understood more as a prophecy, it is more appropriate to passively receive this in faith, rather than seeking to bring it about.

Leadership of a religious organization that focuses on faithfulness

Some Christian, Jewish, and Islamic groups see their role largely as keeping to themselves and living righteous lives—God, in turn, produces good through that. It is not the responsibility of the religious group themselves to seek to achieve good in the world. The idea here is that intentionally trying to do good ends up doing more harm than good. Religious leadership undertaken from this standpoint has to do with helping the community be faithful to its religious tenets. It operates in faith that this will influence the world positively by being an example. It is purposefully uninterested in intentionally being an influence for good.⁸ Persuasion is seen as human overstepping into God’s realm of agency.

In my life, the Presbyterian pastor Eugene Peterson and the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder have been articulate advocates for this perspective. They inspire me with their calls for the church to be deeply rooted in the Scriptures. Church leaders are to facilitate that to the best of their ability. I can imagine some readers will resonate with that vision. The rest of this paper is implicitly arguing with them.

I can see why those with that mindset however are not particularly draw to the word “leader.”⁹ For them, the responsibility of a church leader is less about leading a group to a goal than being

and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”

⁸ John Howard Yoder, "On Not Being in Charge," in *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁹ “A nice place to start would be for Christians to stop modeling themselves on executive business models. Most pastors in megachurches during the last twenty years have MBAs, not theology degrees . . . Many megachurches now construct their campuses on a business office model, and come up with corporate management titles like ‘executive pastor.’ . . . You’re looking to get people in the pews, saved, and baptized and tithing to support the brand and the budget so you can move on to the next field ripe for harvest and set up a church plant . . . If that’s your account of Christianity then those secular disciplines that promise productivity in those terms are going to be very attractive and may well lead to performance gains judged on this scale . . . I would be very pleased to see the language of leadership drop entirely out of Christian discourse as well as executive management models, and I hope I’m not the only one who finds the language of ‘executive pastor’ physically nauseating.” Brian Brock and Kenneth Oakes,

a shepherd, or pastor, or spiritual director because the goal is spiritual depth. Again, this conception of the pastor is agnostic about the outsider in the house next to the church building. The way that person will be helped is through the Christians of depth being an example to them. The pastor's responsibility is prayer, teaching Scripture, and spiritual direction.¹⁰ Efforts to be accessible or translate the good news are understood to be a dilution of the good news.¹¹ Development of church leaders will involve immersion in Scripture and the Christian tradition so as to learn the skills of preaching, teaching, prayer, and spiritual direction.¹²

Groups tend to turn inward

However, there are Christian, Jewish, and Islamic that intentionally seek to be a blessing to all nations. One argument in their favor is the human tendency to connect with those like themselves. If I am remembering correctly, my first graduate sociology course began with the comment: "'Birds of a feather, flock together' is the most fundamental principle of sociology."¹³ If there is not some impetus, people will not intentionally bless all nations but rather will bond with those most like them.

Captive to Christ, Open to the World: On Doing Christian Ethics in Public (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 104-105.

¹⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: the Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987).

¹¹ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 129.

¹² Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). "The postliberal method . . . is bound to be unpopular among those chiefly concerned to maintain or increase the membership and influence of the church. This method resembles ancient catechesis more than modern translation. Instead of redescribing the faith in new concepts, it seeks to teach the language and practices of the religion to potential adherents . . . Pagan converts . . . submitted themselves to prolonged catechetical instruction . . . Only after they acquired proficiency in the alien Christian language and form of life were they deemed able . . . to be baptized." Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 132.

¹³ "Similarity breeds connection. This principle—the homophily principle—structures network ties of every type, including marriage, friendship, work, advice, support, information transfer, exchange, comembership, and other types of relationship. The result is that people's personal networks are homogeneous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics. Homophily limits people's social worlds in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience. Homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal environments, with age, religion, education, occupation, and gender following in roughly that order. Geographic propinquity, families, organizations, and isomorphic positions in social systems all create contexts in which homophilous relations form. Ties between nonsimilar individuals also dissolve at a higher rate, which sets the stage for the formation of niches (localized positions) within social space." Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, (2001).

Ambivalence toward external mission

At this point, I turn more specifically to the Christian faith. The debate about whether a promise is a commission or a prophecy pops up again with regard to Acts 1:8 “You will be my witnesses.” Even a staunch supporter of Christian mission, Lesslie Newbigin, says it “is not a command, but a promise.”¹⁴ Newbigin wants to retain an element of passivity or rather dependence on God, rather than human effort. Karl Barth did as well.¹⁵ But Barth also makes very clear that *the* task of the church is “to use the simplest and biblical formulation: ‘Ye shall be witnesses unto me’ (Acts 1:8).”¹⁶ Barth goes on to say:

to proclaim the Gospel . . . is what must take place no matter what the cost, the result or the circumstances, and to the postponement and even the exclusion of all other purposes and enterprises. For it cannot do this and yet at the same time plan and attempt and do all kinds of other things . . . If it did not do this, it would not be the Christian community.¹⁷

To be precise, Barth’s emphasis on the church’s task as witness does not mean exclusively witnessing to outsiders. Witness to Jesus Christ also occurs within church buildings to members but witness to outsiders is primary. The

true ministry of witness will be addressed first and supremely to the men who do not share the knowledge of the community and are thus strangers to it, but then necessarily in this connexion to those who do share its knowledge and thus belong to it. It is thus a ministry both *ad extra* and *ad intra*, and the two in a very definite order . . . If its inward service is not to become an institution for private satisfaction in concert, or a work of sterile inbreeding, it must accept the priority of its sending to the world, of its task in relation to those without. Yet for the sake of the execution of this task, in order that the missionary community may be the living and authentic Christian community which is

¹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 57. “Please note that it is a promise, not a command. It is not: ‘You must go and be witnesses’; it is ‘The Holy Spirit will come, and you will be witnesses.’ There is a vast difference between these two.” Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ’s Way: A Gift, A Command, An Assurance*, North American ed., WCC mission series (New York: Friendship Press, 1987), 16. Online: <http://newbiginresources.org/1987-mission-in-christs-way-bible-studies/>

¹⁵ For example, Barth reacts to the late Billy Graham’s preaching this way: “I was quite horrified. He acted like a madman and what he presented was certainly not the gospel.’ ‘It was the gospel at gun-point . . . He preached the law, not a message to make one happy. He wanted to terrify people. Threats—they always make an impression. People would much rather be terrified than pleased. The more one heats up hell for them, the more they come running.’ But even this success did not justify such preaching. It was illegitimate to make the gospel law or ‘to ‘push’ it like an article for sale . . . We must leave the good God freedom to do his own work’.” Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 446.

¹⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 797.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV/3.2, 845.

able and willing to execute it, its witness must also be directed inwards to its own members.¹⁸

The Roman Catholic Church also strongly affirms the missionary nature of the church in the 1965 Vatican II document *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church). “what the Lord preached . . . what was wrought in Him for the saving of the human race, must be spread abroad and published to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).”¹⁹ However, as Barth points out, in many of the other Vatican II documents the concept of mission is absent.²⁰ The same could be said of much of the Protestant church’s writings about the church.

The Protestant classic understanding of the church

The most influential Protestant understanding of the church is rooted in article VII of the Augsburg Confession from 1530.^{21 22 23 24} The church is defined as the entity in which there is right preaching and right administration of the sacraments.²⁵ This is of course meant to distinguish the fledgling Protestant churches from Roman Catholic ones. However, its flaws have had devastating effects. First, it is entirely clergy-oriented. Need any lay people be present for a “church” to have occurred or can the pastor have gone through the motions and it counts?²⁶ What has resulted is clergy who think they have done their part as a church leader when they have merely recited a theologically-correct sermon and administered the sacrament

¹⁸ Ibid., IV/3.2, 832–833.

¹⁹ Second Vatican Council, “Ad Gentes: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity,” (December 7, 1965), ch. 1, iii.

²⁰ Barth comments on Ad Gentes. “How is this decree related to the Constitution on the Church, to that on the Church in the Modern World, and to the Declaration on Religious Freedom? On the basis of these other documents the reader is not prepared for the magnificent basic thesis of this decree according to which ‘the Church is missionary by her very nature,’ and mission is the concern of the Church because it is the Church.” Karl Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, trans., K. R. Crim (Richmond: Knox, 1968), 33.

²¹ The PCA says that its officers “appointed officers not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline for the preservation both of truth and duty.”

²² ELCA pastors are “Ministers of Word and Sacrament.” LCMS: Word and sacrament ministry.

²³ The PCUSA has alternated in calling its clergy “teaching elders” or “ministers of Word and Sacrament.”

²⁴ CRC ordination: “As a commissioned pastor you have been called to preach. The preaching of the Word must faithfully reflect the Word of God and relate it to the needs of the listeners. Paul stressed this demand when he wrote, ‘Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage . . .’ (2 Tim. 4:2). And because the sacraments are closely related to the preaching of the Word, the commissioned pastor has the privilege of administering holy baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”

²⁵ Article VII of the *Confessio Augustana* [Augsburg Confession] “*Est autem Ecclesia congregatio Sanctorum, in qua Evangelium recte docetur, et recte administrantur Sacramenta.* [But the Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered].”

²⁶ John “Zizioulas’s ecclesiology can get along quite well without... the majority... who belong to a given local church.” Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 116.

correctly in an empty cathedral.²⁷ Second, the definition has been understood as what occurs inside the church building and devoid of a sense of preaching the gospel to outsiders.²⁸ It could have been understood as a paraphrase of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 in that teaching and baptizing (preaching and sacraments) are mentioned in both but it has not been understood as such.²⁹ And third, it opened the floodgates to an industry of scholarship focused on theological minutiae³⁰ to determine what is legitimately designated “church” — a title not distributed with theological stinginess in the New Testament as the references to the churches in Galatia and Corinth attest. A better definition of a church would be a group which gathers and scatters to witness to Jesus Christ or a group that gathers and goes to make disciples of Jesus Christ.³¹ This would minimize the neglect of the laity; raise the mission to outsiders; and avoid theological nitpicking.

The consensus position is that the church has multiple purposes though I worry about this

The consensus theological position is that the church has both external and internal foci. The church is to serve the outsider and also to develop the insider. So, for example, Scott Sundquist says “The church, the body of Christ, has two basic purposes for its existence: worship and witness. All other functions point to and should aid in fulfilling these two purposes.”³² Edmund

²⁷ “in direct contrast to our contemporary practice, baptism and the Lord’s Supper were originally not tied to the office of apostolic preaching, but were instead administered by the church-community itself (1 Cor. 1:1 and 14ff.; 11:17ff.)” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans., Barbara G. Green and Reinhard Krauss, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 229.

²⁸ “We have only to put the question for what purpose is all this [preaching and administration], to be aware at once of the yawning gap.” Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 766.

²⁹ “The classical confessions show little interest in the mission of the church in the world, seeming to imply that the church’s task is exhausted in worship, preaching, and Sacraments. Barmen and the Confession of 1967 reflect the awareness of the church in our time that the church does not exist for itself but for the sake of mission.” PCUSA, *Confessional Nature of the Church Report* (1982).

³⁰ “Obviously, the entire meaning of these two criteria is utterly dependent upon what ‘properly’ is taken to mean. Conceivably one could pour all of any theology into these two phrases. John Howard Yoder, “A People in the World,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994; reprint, Herald Press), 75–76.

³¹ The LCMS adapts the Augsburg Confession along these lines. About “The Mission of the Church.” “We believe, teach and confess that the primary mission of the church is to make disciples of every nation by bearing witness to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.” <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/doctrine/statement-of-scriptural-and-confessional-principles#III>

³² Scott Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 281.

Clowney says there are three: worship, Christian nurture, witness.³³ ³⁴ Or consider the classic book *Models of the Church*, in which six models are identified: Mystical Communion, Sacrament, Herald, Servant, Community of Disciples. A balanced theology, he concludes, must incorporate the major affirmations of each. Dulles writes, “I draw the conclusion that a balanced theology of the Church must find a way of incorporating the major affirmations of each basic ecclesiological type.”³⁵ With Dulles’s six models, an idealistic Roman Catholic priest might work six days week. (That’s a joke). My point is merely that the heuristic list has real life implications. It is not that I deny that the church should be doing a number of different activities.³⁶ My concern is that the *the* task of witness to insiders with an eye also toward outsiders is shuffled off into a neglected committee. The outreach focus of the church is relegated to the “it would be nice” part of the to-do list. Far better is to see the commission of the church as that of the thesis statement of the book of Acts: Acts 1:8. The church is to be engaged at home in Jerusalem but launched outward toward outsiders.

The problem of a loss of external orientation

The problem with diluting the external orientation of the church is not that growth slows, donations decrease, a lack of young people, budget cuts, and churches close. The raising of these to the status of preeminent goals is an understandable but embarrassing and poisonous theological error. The problem is that an inward church is not a faithful reflection of Jesus Christ—who came to seek and save the lost, and to proclaim good news to the poor, and was known as a friend of sinners. The church does not exist to grow, to make money, attract adherents, and perpetuate itself.³⁷ This is withdrawal religion. This is the religion of brick walls and little fresh air which will eventually become stale.

³³ “The Lord has designed an order in his church for accomplishing the goals of worship, nurture, and witness.” Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 224.

³⁴ Similarly, Tim Keller describes four ministry fronts in chapters 22-26 of *Center Church*.

1. Connecting people to God (through evangelism and worship)
2. Connecting people to one another (through community and discipleship)
3. Connecting people to the city (through mercy and justice)
4. Connecting people to the culture (through the integration of faith and work)

Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 293.

³⁵ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church (Rev. Ed.)* (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 2002), 2.

³⁶ To be fair to these others, Barth has a list of twelve different ministries but they fall within the category of witness. In IV/3.2 §72, Barth lists twelve ministry practice: six ministries of speech: (1) Praise, (2) Preaching, (3) Instruction, (4) Evangelisation, (5) Foreign Missions, (6) Theology; and six ministries of action: (7) Prayer, (8) Cure of souls, (9) Examples, (10) Diaconate, (11) Prophetic action, (12) Fellowship. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 864–901.

³⁷ “Many believe that Temple said that ‘the Church is the only organization that exists for those who are not its members,’ but what he actually said is this: ‘An army does not exist for the soldiers who compose it; you ask them! An army exists for the sake of the nation to which the soldiers belong. It is not for their

External orientation includes actions and words that point to Jesus Christ

To be clear, emulating the external orientation of the church in witness means both loving with physical help people with physical needs, and loving with truth those who are desperately confused.³⁸ Christians should be at the forefront of fighting poverty and injustice, but also not under the illusion that improved economic standing solves human woe. Even the wealthy, self-medicate with drugs, commit suicide, steal, and destroy their marriages and families.

Internal development is best seen as contributing to external effectiveness

There is a place for the internal development of the church and its own people. However, I'm almost prepared to use the harsh term of "instrumental"³⁹ to describe it. That is to say, I think it is useful to think about the internal development of the institution of the church and its people as instrumental to the external mission. In other words, the church's development of their own people in worship and fellowship is *for* witness to Jesus Christ.

Again, I am being provocative here. As described above, the predominant position is that the church is to both worship and witness (if not a whole lot of other things as well). I am suggesting that we gather so as to be scattered. We grow in holiness and purity so that we might be light.

There are significant portions of the Christian tradition which would react viscerally to this. "The church exists for worship! It is not for something else. Worship is what we shall do for

sake that there is an army; it is for the sake of the nation and the cause which it has espoused. So the Church exists in the first place, not for us who are its members, but for the Kingdom of God.'" Wendy Dackson, "Anglicanism and Social Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 4 (2012): 630-631. citing William Temple, *Issues of Faith: A Course of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1918).

³⁸ "One can tell the story of missionaries who have set out with the firm determination to do nothing except preach the gospel, to be pure evangelists uninvolved in all the business of 'social service.' But the logic of the gospel has always been too strong for them . . . Missionaries in this situation had a problem that did not trouble Paul in the first century . . . the missionary was going to a culture that was as advanced as or more advanced than his own. Paul was under no obligation of compassion to offer educational or medical services to the people of Ephesus or Corinth." Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, 91-92.

³⁹ The language of instrumentality is dangerous, stark, and harsh because we should not be utilitarian with people—ever! The church's people are not objects or tools to be used for another purpose. Each one matters. It would be better to have a millstone around one's neck than to hurt one of Jesus' little ones. The needs of the least of Jesus' brethren matter. We cannot say to even the unloveliest part of the body "We don't need you." Again, the church's people are not pawns to be used for a church leader's grand purpose. Whoever loves their dream of Christian community more than the Christian community itself, hates the Christian community and destroys it. Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, trans., Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 5 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 36. Lesslie Newbigin mutes this by talking about the church as the sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God. "sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society." Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 233.

eternity. Witness is a subset of worship!" But, I would respond, God prefers mercy to sacrifice (Hosea 6:6; Ps 40:6; 51:16). There are more instances in the Hebrew Bible about not worshipping idols than worshipping God. But perhaps this is mostly a matter of semantics. I think it is certainly possible to have worship as the overarching concept and end up with a church with significant outward orientation by thinking of appropriate fully-orbed worship as service. Consider the title of Fuller Theological Seminary president Mark Labberton's book *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God's Call to Justice*.⁴⁰

Or one can conceive of worship and witness as the internal and external dimensions of church life. My point again on the practical side is that because of human nature, outreach to outsiders will get neglected unless it is explicitly prioritized. Jesus says if you only love those like yourselves, how are you different from outsiders?

Biblically and theologically, I am arguing that the New Testament makes far more sense when an outward-reaching, missionary mindset is presumed.⁴¹ Not only is the entire book of Acts the story of the Holy Spirit-led church reaching out to outsiders, this is also the background situation for the apostle Paul in his letters—the expansion of Jesus' way in the Gentile world. Even a book like 1 Corinthians which addresses many internal matters within the church, repeatedly we see signs that these spectacular flaws need to be addressed not just for purity but also for public relations. Paul is appalled that the watching world cannot see the message of Jesus Christ because of the internal dysfunction. Paul says his mentality is to be flexible in how he behaves around Jews and Gentiles in order to save some. The Christians are to root out blatant sexual misconduct and deal with conflict because they are making a public scene. Paul is optimistic unbelieving spouses and inquirers observing the worship gathering will be moved by the message of Jesus. Yes, I grant that Paul is interested in purity and holiness to some extent for their own sake but also because of not sullyng their witness to Jesus Christ.

My argument is that internal activities such as the worship gathering and the sermon are not merely for building up of Christians in terms of purity and holiness but rather formation for mission in the world.⁴² Yes, there is inherent value in becoming like Jesus, in drawing close to God, but unless this manifests itself in love for others, the purpose cannot say to have been fulfilled. This gives the worship gathering and sermon more significance, not less. Seeing that the internal growth of Christians is penultimate to the ultimate purpose of pointing to Jesus Christ in a dark world dignifies the internal work of the church. The worship gathering and

⁴⁰ Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God's Call to Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007).

⁴¹ George R. Hunsberger, "Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping a Conversation," *Missiology* 39, no. 3 (2011).

⁴² "The church is church only when it is there for others." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, trans., Isabel Best, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 8 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 503.

sermon are not merely religious exercises for those who want to be pure, obedient, and intimate with God. Rather they are training the team to be agents of good in a dark world.⁴³

The reason I think it is important to consider the language of instrumentality is that if the church sees the external orientation of the church as merely one of a number of purposes, the focus of the church has a tendency to blur and a cascade of effects follow: from meetings focused on the color of the carpet, to a fatal mentality of keeping things the same because we like them that way, to the missions committee just being one of a number of committees, to evangelism Sunday being once a year, to the need for compassion and justice for outsiders being an afterthought. It is certainly possible to say that the church should have both internal and external purposes and attend to these things but I think it is more accurate to say that we do the internal activities so as to better witness to Jesus Christ externally.

Thinking like a missionary

Though someone may not be able to swallow the idea that the internal activities of the church such as the gathering and the sermon and fellowship and Bible study are for the purpose of witness to outsiders, they may be able to accept the idea that Christians should have a missionary mindset. Invariably, missionaries describe their challenge as trying to avoid two problems.⁴⁴ On the one hand, they do not want to fall into syncretism by becoming so relevant to the receiving culture that they no longer look like Jesus. On the other hand, is the danger of a failure to communicate. In this latter case, the Christians have chosen to be distinctively Christian by withdrawing from mixing with non-Christians. Their description of Christian faith is so religious that the non-Christian cannot understand what is being said.

In both cases, the non-Christian has no idea why they would have any interest in what the Christian has to offer. The conclusion is that a church with every person an effective missionary develops people to be distinctively Christian and instills a sense that they are to be salt so that they may be light. The missionary mindset assumes the Christian is involved in outreach to outsiders while also affirming the internal processes (worship, Bible study, sermons, fellowship) so that the person is distinctive.

⁴³ "I'd agree entirely, by the way, with Professor Lindbeck that a deeper catechesis in that theology and its images is indispensable, *but I think it is so because of the testing it will endure in the process of 'playing away from home.'*" Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 39. Italics in original.

⁴⁴ For example, Lesslie Newbigin hopes to chart a course "between two dangers." One danger is the person who "simply fails to communicate." The other danger is "to so far succeed in talking the language of his hearers that he is accepted all too easily as a familiar character . . . In the attempt to be 'relevant' one may fall into syncretism." Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: the Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 7.

Summary of argument thus far

Before I drop my final bomb of evidence for consideration, a couple of comments of summary are appropriate. I have argued that excellence in religious leadership cannot be found merely by studying religious leaders. Instead, an effective leader helps a group toward its goal. Therefore, we need to study what the goal of the organization is. I have argued that all religious organizations are trying to be faithful and be an influence for blessing to all people. However, I have argued, there are two different approaches to this.

One approach is agnostic about how the world is blessed by the group. They see their responsibility as being obedient and faithful. It is God's responsibility to bless the world through their faithful example. God has promised that they will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). They do not presume to know how that will happen or seek to accomplish it but rather trust God is accomplishing it. This approach to leadership can better be describing as pastoring. It teaches and develops congregation members spiritually.

The other approach is to be intentional about that external focus. The religious organization is attempting to be a force for good. For Christians, this missionary approach embraces Acts 1:8 as a commission to witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed—as he did—locally and to the ends of the earth. The leadership here involves keeping congregation members focused on how their formation and training as a Christian is to manifest itself in witnessing to Jesus Christ in the world. Though there is always a pull to take care of one's fellow Christians, and focus on fellowship and spiritual consolation among fellow Christians, the leader reminds congregants that their internal care and fellowship is not an end in itself but rather strengthening that they might better love outsiders. The church leaders will constantly be helping the group to consider how they might better together love outsiders. Rather than balancing all church activities, there will be much sorting through multiple priorities so as to keep this external orientation primary and the other activities feeding into it. In this understanding, leadership is crucial because human beings tend to revert to caring for their own.

What kind of a leader was Jesus?

It is difficult for me not to insert here a question about what Jesus was doing. Was he pastoring and teaching and inspiring religious people to greater faithfulness and discipline? To some extent, sure. But this is more like the Pharisees and then later the Judaizers who were focused on purity and the letter of the law as opposed to compassion and openness to the outsiders. Was Jesus not more fundamentally urging God's people to be people of compassion and healing and loving others? Jesus was with the fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes, women, lepers, soldiers, and sinners.

Method 1 revisited: Leaders and Managers, Apostles and Elders

John Kotter made the distinction a number of years ago between leaders and managers. Leaders are focused on change and the future. Managers are focused on operations functions effectively. Kotter says both are important.⁴⁵ I find this very helpful. Kotter's most recent book *Accelerate* argues that organizations need both functions.⁴⁶

Regarding church leadership as described in the New Testament, the penny dropped for me reading Gordon Fee. He says that there are two kinds of leaders in the New Testament. Elders and deacons, I thought, right? No, he says, apostles and elders.

Leadership was of two kinds . . . On the one hand, there were itinerants, such as the Apostle Paul and others, who founded churches and exercised obvious authority over the churches they had founded. On the other hand, when the itinerant founder or his delegate was not present, leadership on the local scene seems to have been left in the hands of 'elders.'⁴⁷

The apostles are the movers and shakers in the New Testament. They are traveling, spreading the message of Jesus, planting churches, and writing significant letters of guidance to the churches they founded. The elders (made up of two different categories: overseers and deacons)⁴⁸ are caretakers in comparison. They are the administrative staff. They are running things with the founding pastor out of town. They are above all reliable. The most dynamism that can be ascribed to them is they are able to teach. Otherwise, their chief qualification is basic moral maturity.

There are vast ramifications if one builds one's ecclesiology based on what we see the so-called threefold ministry of bishops, elders, and deacons are doing in the New Testament—as the vast number of Christian traditions have done under Christendom.⁴⁹ What is produced is a

⁴⁵ "Good management brings a degree of order and consistency . . . Leadership, by contrast, is about change." Leaders: Set a direction, Align people, Motivate people; Bring change. Managers: Plan and budget, Organize and staff, Control and problem solve; Maintain stability. John Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," in *The Leader's Companion: Insights on Leadership Through the Ages*, ed. J. Thomas Wren (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ John P. Kotter, *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2014).

⁴⁷ Gordon D. Fee, "Laos and Leadership Under the New Covenant," in *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 141.

⁴⁸ "The elders in the local churches seem to have been composed of both *episkopoi* (overseers) and *diakonoi* (deacons)." Ibid. "The term 'elders' is probably a covering term for both overseers and deacons. In any case the grammar of Titus 1:5, 7 demands that 'elder' and 'overseer' are interchangeable terms (as in Acts 20:17:28), but they are not thereby necessarily coextensive." Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles," 157.

⁴⁹ "the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it." Faith and Order, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Faith and Order Paper no. 111, the "Lima Text")," no. 15 January (1982).
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text>.

maintenance-oriented church. Not to pick on John Calvin, but he explicitly said in *The Institutes* that the roles of apostles, prophets, and evangelists had ceased since the entire world has been evangelized.⁵⁰ What is left from Ephesians 4:11 is shepherds and teachers or shepherd-teachers. The result under Christendom logically is an educational church that catechizes those baptized as infants into the church to be confirmed later as members.

Now, to be fair, over the course of church history, bishops and teaching elders have absorbed some of the apostolic functions beyond what is explicitly stipulated in the New Testament about overseers and presbyters. But bishop literally means overseer in the New Testament and understandably bishops see themselves as playing that role as a hierarchical supervisor. Elders are said to be able to teach in the New Testament. Thus, it is not surprising that most pastor or teaching elders see themselves as primarily preachers within a church building. It is not by reading the New Testament that a bishop or elder would see their role as similar to the apostles in terms missionary, planting churches, communicating the good news to outsiders, becoming all things to all people as Paul describes his role, and engaging in works of physical compassion.

Conclusion of the argument

I think I have made an argument that should have pinned back your ears a bit.

Forming church leaders for churches focused on faithfulness, not mission

If you did not buy it that the church must prioritize its external mission, you will want to take an approach like that of a hero of mine, Eugene Peterson. You will want to develop leaders into people of depth. The goal is to have them be immersed in the Scriptures. It is not matter than they do not have strong abilities or interest in relating to non-Christians or helping those in need. The important thing is that those under their care will grow in knowledge and maturity. Likely that immersion in Scripture and prayer will also inspire some to be involved in compassion and mission to outsiders. But this will vary. This is a possible consequence. God will do the outreach. We must simply be obedient. For a seminary professor or a pastor, you will want to immerse those you are teaching and forming for “leadership” (more precisely, “shepherding”) in Scripture, theology, the history of Christian soul care, and in the practice of spiritual disciplines. You will avoid secular and Christian leadership textbooks. You will feel no guilt about not following the latest organizational psychology “findings” by the non-Christian professor Adam Grant at Wharton Business School. You are not primarily concerned with the

⁵⁰ “According to this interpretation (which seems to me to be in agreement with both the words and opinion of Paul, those three functions [apostles, prophets, and evangelists in Eph 4:11] were not established in the church as permanent ones, but only for that time during which churches were to be erected where none existed before.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans., Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), Book IV, Chapter III, Section 4, page 1057.

non-Christian world or your non-Christian neighbors. This is not your responsibility. You need not follow the news. You will not be as interested in reading history unless it is about the spiritual greats. You will not be as interested in science or public health or politics. Your concern is primarily with attending the souls of the people who are under your care. As Peterson has done, translation of the Scripture is good exercise.

Forming church leaders for churches focused on witness

However, if you have accepted my argument that the church should primarily be about witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed first of all to outsiders but also to insiders so that we might better witness to Jesus Christ to outsiders, then you will want to inculcate the love of Christ for the outsider in those you are training for leadership. This will involve deep study of the Scriptures and theology in conjunction with curiosity about all things so that you may see how the way, the truth, and the life of Christ makes a difference in the world. Second, you will want to help them to nurture the ability to work with fellow Christians.

Thoughts on how to teach and form church leaders

Start them young

Though he has a leadership podcast and has written many leadership books, Andy Stanley has been dismissive about developing leaders because leadership is a gift. That is, people are born leaders.

Teaching *leaders* will result in better leaders. Teaching leadership to *pastors, preachers, and teachers* results in pastors, preachers, and teachers who've taken a leadership course. A leadership course may make them better, but it won't make them leaders . . . Leadership is a gift. If you have it, Paul would tell you to lead diligently. If you don't, discover the gifts God has blessed you with and lean into them with all your heart.⁵¹

However, the so-called gift of leadership referred to in Romans 12:8 has to do with the gift of oversight or administration or management. It is related to “managing” one’s family correctly and “managing” the affairs of the church. And the person is to do this “conscientiously.” So, rather than “leading diligently,” this is “managing conscientiously.” It is the apostle Paul who is who has the leadership vision in Romans 12—that multiple persons contribute to the community’s work.

I am more inclined to think that what Andy Stanley is talking about is apostleship. It is not so much that they are born “leaders” as that they have this passion to connect outsiders with the good way of Jesus Christ. I grant that God has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers (Eph 4:11). There are no longer apostles like Paul and the Twelve who have seen

⁵¹ Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 295, 300.

the Lord but I continue to think their pioneering energy is necessary and thus think God continues to provide them to us. I think Andy Stanley probably is one. If we look at people like Paul, Apollos, and Timothy, we see that even in their young development, they received much input and formation. Bobby Clinton is right to say that all sorts of life events prepare people for future leadership.⁵² From childhood, children should be nurtured to be not just shepherds and teachers who know a lot of Scripture but also apostles who know Scripture and are passionate about helping outsiders and working with people.

Not training but education in Jesus' compassion and way with people

Religious leaders do not need training, but rather education. Training is step-step instructions. So, as a seminary professor, in helping students think about how to deal with cases of sexual misconduct, I may provide an outline of steps, but I also want them to be familiar formed in a sense of care for the vulnerable and the ability to work with people, so when invariably the case they confront is more complicated or confused than the steps can manage, they are able to reason wisely with the help of others.

Similarly, in the church, preachers are weekly forming their congregation through the sermon. Sure, they can provide an additional "leadership workshop" on a Saturday morning. But more effective is week after week the preacher inculcating a sense of God's compassion for the world and the way to relate to others. Statistics reviewed by sociologist Bradley Wright indicated that regular church attendance does correlate with lower sexual misconduct, abuse, substance abuse, and divorce.⁵³ It is my experience that fine Christian leaders have been nurtured in stable solid churches.

⁵²

- Sovereign foundations: God works through family, environment, and historical events.
- Inner-life growth: the leader seeks to know God in a more personal, intimate way. The leader faces tests of obedience and integrity.
- Ministry maturing: the leader is experimenting with spiritual gifts. They may get training to become more effective and will face tests of relationships and discernment.
- Life maturing: The leader has identified and is using their spiritual gifts in a ministry that is satisfying. Their character will become apparent in situations of conflict, isolation, and authority.
- Convergence: Some leaders get the opportunity to be in a role that matches their gift-mix.
- Afterglow: For a very few, the fruit of a lifetime of ministry and growth culminates in an era of recognition and indirect influence at broad levels.

J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, Rev ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 37-40.

⁵³ Regarding "divorce statistics . . . Christians, especially those who regularly attend church, are doing relatively well in this area" (135) . . . With regard to domestic violence, "The big difference, however, came with church attendance" (136) . . . "there is a strong correlation between church attendance and sexual behavior" (142) . . . "all three of them had crime rates that were about double that of the weekly attendees" (147). Substance abuse: "Turning to attendance data, we see very large differences" (147). Bradley R. E. Wright, *Christians Are Hate-filled Hypocrites—and Other Lies You've Been Told: a Sociologist Shatters Myths From the Secular and Christian Media* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010).

Help people think theologically about leadership principles

Many leadership training resources deserve the derision directed at them by people like Stanford business school professor Jeffrey Pfeffer in his book *Leadership BS*.⁵⁴ Pfeffer insists the research does not bear out the conclusions that many vacuous aphorisms tout. He is trying to protect those who are duped. Machiavelli and Nietzsche were more correct to suggest that if the measure is getting things done then use any means at your disposal. The strong survive. Moral and soft approaches to leadership should be utilized to the extent to which they work.

Robert Greenleaf, Patrick Lencioni, Bill George, Daniel Goleman, Jim Collins, and Adam Grant give evidence that servant leadership, trust, integrity, emotional intelligence, humility, and giving do lead to success in business.

It is not difficult as a Christian to see through the dueling evidence. Christians are not to lead as the Gentiles do with harshness and intimidation. That is not because such leadership never works. Not all unethical leadership is exposed—in this life. Rather, it is because Christians have trust that there is a good God who does see and will make things right in the end—in this life or the next.

Jesus' way sometimes "works" but sometimes you get crucified. My personal favorite comment on this is from 1 Peter where Peter initially assures his listeners that their good deeds will surely be appreciated and will win over the skeptic. "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" (1 Peter 3:13; Cf. 2:12). But then he thinks better of it and continues, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed" (1 Peter 3:14).

Servant leadership or love only "works" within the context of the kingdom of God, where a just God sees all and will make all things right.

Sometimes organizational psychology research will affirm the wisdom of Jesus' way. Other times, as Pfeffer points out, the successful CEOs are those who have stomped on or sabotaged everyone who stood in their way. If you want to get ahead, says Pfeffer, do as these executive leaders do, not listen to the bromides and clichés they spout.

Affirm the importance of prayer for wise human agency

A crucial confusion that hampers the effectiveness of religious leadership has to do with the interrelation between human and divine agency. There is gnawing sense among many devout religious leaders that their own efforts and ideas should be suppressed out of due deference to God. Some notable stories here are that of God fighting for the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Therefore, the idea goes, rather than planning or leading with excellence, leaders and leadership teams should be spending a certain time in prayer so as to persuade God and

⁵⁴ "You would be well served to pay attention to what you see and not to what people are saying." Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Leadership BS: Fixing Workplaces and Careers One Truth at a Time* (New York, NY: Harper Business, 2015), 208.

reiterate to themselves their dependence on God's action rather than their own planning. "Humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps" (Proverbs 16:9). It is clear that God does indeed cut down those who would exalt themselves. Think of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30-31) or the rich man building barns in Jesus' parable. Once their boast of their own accomplishments escapes their lips, God's judgment falls.

On the other hand, I think Dallas Willard is correct to say that God is opposed to the notion of earning one's own salvation but not opposed to effort.⁵⁵ If Jesus urges us to make disciples in the Great Commission, it is not somehow something to hemmed and hawed about in deference to God's Spirit before embarking in obedience. Surely, obedience to God is not a zero-sum game where God is offended if a human being takes action. God is not put off that He cannot do 100% of the effort because a human being has embarked on obedient action. God's plan is to utilize human beings (Eph 3:10).

How much we depend on God is a legitimate theological question that I am not prepared to answer here. However, what I will say is that I see in Jesus a dependence on the Father at various points in solitude and for affirmation and direction and consolation. And I see in the book of Acts the apostles responding effortfully to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Paul, I see a mix of strenuous efforts and a sense of God's empowerment.⁵⁶ And for what it is worth, in Karl Barth, known as the king of skepticism about human agency, we see him urging Christians to act courageously.

If Christians cannot do what the Spirit does, and they should not pretend that they can, they may and should follow Him in what He does . . . Even the most stringent self-criticism must never be a reason or occasion for prudently doing nothing. Better something . . . over-bold . . . than nothing at all!⁵⁷

Again, I think, prayer (and what it connotes humility, dependence, passivity, deference) might be seen as instrumental to action. Once again, "instrumental" is perhaps not the correct word here but I'm being purposefully forceful. It seems to me the point of prayer and worship is not ecstasy. God honors prayer for wisdom: Solomon's and in the book of James. The prayer to God: "How may I better obey you?" is a safe one. It parallels the phrase "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

⁵⁵ "Grace is not opposed to effort, but it is opposed to earning." Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Rediscovering Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 61, 133, 166.

⁵⁶ "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow" (1 Cor 3:6). "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil 2:12-13). "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Phil 3:12).

⁵⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 779-780.

Regardless, we must grapple with the relative importance of human agency. My sense is that human agency has vast moral effects. For example, the greatest indicator of one's job satisfaction according a massive Gallup survey was one's immediate supervisor.⁵⁸ Not benefits, not a good fit, not the company's mission. Your actions matter to those under your care. A pedestrian example is how you lead meetings. Followers are all aware of how much time is wasted in bad meetings. Those leading often are not. They need to be reminded that what they do matter. Another example is John Kotter's suggestion that people underestimate that their team's influence. They estimate it may affect hundreds of thousands of dollars when in fact, it is more like billions.⁵⁹ We see of course the destruction of organizations when there is a moral failure of a leader. David McCullough too says that the history books he has written are intended to convey his sense that history did not have to turn out how it did. People made a difference.⁶⁰ This is not only inspiring, but true.

Perhaps Christians are better than others at being able to see through the skepticism and cynicism that truth does not matter, that the wicked prosper, and that everything is rigged. Yale history professor Timothy Snyder says the latter mentality is inculcated by totalitarian regimes to justify their immoral actions—everyone is doing it and it cannot be helped.⁶¹ No, we believe, that if one leader is lopped off by the powers of destruction, others will pop up behind them. The right ends matter and the right means matters. God is watching and will judge. God is willing to guide people. The Spirit is off to the ends of the earth, will we be Christ's witnesses?

⁵⁸ "Employees rated the questions differently depending on which business unit they worked for rather than which company. This meant that, for the most part, these twelve opinions were being formed by the employee's immediate manager rather than by the policies or procedures of the overall company. We had discovered that the manager—not pay, benefits, perks, or a charismatic corporate leader—was the critical player in building a strong workplace . . . People leave managers, not companies." Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 32-33.

⁵⁹ "bringing the total consequences of the failed HR IT project to between \$1.75 billion and \$4.5 billion . . . Insiders estimated the stakes involved ... were in the range of \$750,000 to \$50 million" Kotter, *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World*, 52-53.

⁶⁰ "What I'm trying to do is show readers—especially young readers—that things didn't have to turn out as well as they did." Thomas H. Lee, "What's Keeping David McCullough From Sleeping," *Wall Street Journal*, 03/26/2018 2018.

⁶¹ Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*, (New York, NY: Tim Duggan Books, 2018).

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