

THE STARFISH VISION

How a Kingdom-shaped Church will disciple half the planet



starfish publishing

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This small book is about our ultimate human purpose. It explains a global vision and the resulting mission that is probably bigger than anything you have heard before. The Starfish Vision is based on four things: biblical revelation, a response to the critical times we live in, prophetic insights and strategic thinking.

It is not a new vision some individual person has or owns; it is, in a very real sense, a historical and thoroughly biblical vision of which no one can claim authorship, and is as old as humanity itself. In this sense, it is not something that can be owned or copyrighted; it is rather something that can and might very well invade us, entering into our bones and

marrow - until the vision owns us. Habakkuk once was told by God "to write the vision and publish it, so that anyone reading it shall run" (Hab 2:2). In a similar sense, many followers of Jesus are gripped today by a historic call, being mobilized into a new run. As more and more people join God in this present-day endeavor to finish the apostolic task Jesus has given us, we watch the emergence of a global phenomenon, and we might quickly discover ourselves to be part of the biggest, most audacious, dangerous and daring enterprise mankind has ever had. An enterprise that can be summed up in the formula:

$$J = mc^2$$

Jesus lives on in an apostolic **Mission** that advances by **Church multiplication**

This booklet will explain the vision in short – and why this requires at least 200 million new churches to be planted. And it is an invitation for you to seriously ask God how you could join this snowballing momentum. What you have in print or on your screen, however, is only a visionary flyer, part of a much larger approach thought through in more detail. It is the greatly abbreviated, tip-of-the-iceberg version of a far more extensive book called "The Starfish Manifesto". If you want to get into this, and find out about the rest of the iceberg, you definitely will want to download and study this book - and other resources - by accessing the Starfish website portal:

www.starfishportal.net

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He issues a decree - and this creates huge waves of reactions, initiates spiritual momentum and global "Mega-Trends" that are not born out of human design, but at the intention of God.

Part One

1. What is God doing?

For those with eyes to see, we are standing at the beginning of probably the final leg of history. Many historic biblical prophecies speak of cataclysmic events due at the end of the age. By all scientific standards in regards to the history of religion, church, politics and even economics, mankind is currently witnessing a global seismic value shift with unique geo-political consequences. Many followers of Christ instinctively know that these developments are essentially spiritual in nature, ushering in a time where all of humanity is being positioned for an age that only those will thoroughly understand and shape whose "Lord is their God" (Zec 12:5). God speaks, and it happens. He issues a decree - and this creates huge waves of reactions, initiates spiritual momentum and global "Mega-Trends" that are not born out of human design, but at the intention of God. For those who can see beyond the current heated war of religions, the stagnation of traditional Christianity, the globalization of an emerging unified political system and an enslaving economy of Babylonian injustice benefiting amazingly few people, one thing becomes clear: God is doing something in our days that, in term of its scope and magnitude, "you would not believe even if you were told" (Hab 1). Many people of God can feel in their bones and marrow that we stand on a threshold, at a true watershed moment in history. TIME magazine, in an ever new attempt to identify the 100 most influential people in the world by secular standards of publicity, polls and power, fails to recognize the unmatched influence of one single eternal being, compared to whom all celebrities, megastars, politicians and tycoons pale and are reduced to mere pawns on a chessboard. The living God, as revealed in the Bible, is an acting God, and the message of this booklet is that he is currently deeply involved in **four distinct and foundational moves**, unique to this time. These four present-day moves of God are the primary cause and influence behind a development that is far too large to be called a mere reformation, as in the days of Luther and Calvin. A reformation only re-forms what is; it takes what exists and reshapes, corrects and repositions something we already have or know. God does not start divine initiatives on human foundations; he does not begin a true global and historic move with ever-corrected versions of corrected versions of Church-as-we-know-it. He goes back to the original and builds on a foundation that is solid. In an amazing initiative that is geared to position all of humanity for the ultimate return of the true King, God is leading all of those who have ears to hear and eyes to see back to Square One, the original and age-old foundation that is called Jesus Christ. In an age that thoroughly confuses the world with close to 40,000 different Christian denominations and churches, countless missions, human initiatives and spiritual mom-and-pop shops, the world truly is not waiting for one more denomination, one more Christian group, one more plan of spiritual colonization. All of us would therefore be well advised to "stop starting with the church", and start where everything starts. In a nutshell, these are the four current moves of God of which I am speaking:



- **I) Jesus is King, not merely a savior.** As “King of Kings” he is technically the Emperor of an Empire. Once we know who is in charge, the *loyalty* question is answered. This also means: **it is Kingdom first, church second.** Jesus builds a Kingdom-shaped *ekklesia*, not church-shaped kingdoms. Once we understand the governmental framework that is legally binding for all citizens of the Kingdom, the *political* question is also answered. Christians are first citizens of the Kingdom of God, then members of local churches, and lastly citizens of political nation-states, or part of tribes and clans.
- **II) God initiated an apostolic and prophetic re-foundation.** Faceless and nameless apostolic and prophetic people are coming out of their shadows and are re-entering the arena, beginning to work in synergy and bring their foundational ministries to the table. This answers the *strategic* and *structural* questions.
- **III) God calls us back to Kingdom economics.** The Kingdom of God does not employ an enslaving Babylonian financial system, but the liberating Messianic finance and work principles that the Messiah demonstrated and introduced. That answers the *economic* question.
- **IV) And God created the Starfish,** a “prophetic animal” with amazing reproduction abilities. As more and more followers of Christ return to an obedient and therefore legal existence in the Kingdom, something nearly impossible suddenly becomes absolutely possible. As God again blesses worshipful obedience, he restores fruitfulness, multiplication and global impact on such a level, that the fulfillment of the Great Commission becomes suddenly possible. That answers the missions question “how will we complete the Great Commission?”

If this accurately describes God’s sovereign and current initiatives, our reaction can be as simple as this: instead of hanging on to superficial conversions and me-centered, consumer-driven church systems that develop either into religious franchises or the splendid isolation chosen by a spirit of independence, we complete our conversion to Jesus and pledge loyalty to him as our only King. We start living as children of God and legal citizens in individual and corporate obedience to the principles of the Kingdom. This absolutely includes the clear pattern and DNA of *ekklesia* that Jesus laid down for all of us - and these were neither the Presbyterian, Congregational or Episcopalian church-systems that simply are responses to the varying political flavors of history - but a respectful loyalty for the holy and apostolic blueprint of church as it was laid down by Christ himself, her only head. This also means that we need to begin to again accept the valid ministry and contribution of prophetic and apostolic people, live our faith according to the economic principles revealed in the New Testament, and become an integral part of God’s apostolic mission. In other words: become the healthy and multiplying disciples Jesus called us to be, and corporately become that apostolic people that will complete God’s eternal purposes in this world. For many of those that newly find Christ and become a fresh part of his government in these days, these issues are clear from the beginning. The problem, however, is that for many of us raised in traditional forms of church-going Christianity, these words may mean next to nothing, as

Can I therefore put in a word of warning? Many of us may have grown up with what I call Church-as-we-know-it (CAWKI), and it may come as a resounding shock to us that Church-as-God-wants-it (CAGWI) not only looks very different, but acts and performs differently as well.



we might have been conditioned and trained to accept merely a form of man-made religion as true Christianity. Can I therefore put in a word of warning? Many of us may have grown up with what I call Church-as-we-know-it (CAWKI), and it may come as a resounding shock to us that Church-as-God-wants-it (CAGWI) not only looks very different, but acts and performs differently as well. Many probably have been conditioned to think that “all is well in Zion” and CAWKI is solid as a rock. But as God restores order in his own household in order to fulfill his ancient plans, we might be both shocked about the degree of repentance and fundamental change required of us, change that will neither come cheap to any one of us, and will require an individual and corporate response and a fundamental change of thinking and acting. But at the same time we might finally be finding what our soul has been searching for all our lives – and with him our true meaning and calling in life. He is the one who said: “You are my friends if you do what I say”.

As space does not permit us here to go deeper into the subject, let us at least look at the essence of these initiatives of God. My goal here is not to emotionally excite anyone or even to correct age-old misconceptions and distortions born by the traditions of men in a few pages; that would be impossible. But I want to be very clear on one thing: it is absolutely not enough to just analyze and criticize the current status quo. This only leads to the paralysis of analysis and finally to the embitterment of people. **We must present and live a clear, concise, biblical and healthy alternative** to a Christendom that does not any longer function according to its divine maker. Christian civil religion, a denomination-based religious marketing and franchising endeavor called “missions” and the fundamental heresies-turned-classics in regards to dealing with money and work have created a man-made religion that clearly does not fulfill its original calling. And by missing out on God’s goals and ever faster absorbed by itself, such a self-centered religion proves by its very fruits an important point: it is at its very core unapostolic and not sent by God. This booklet invites us to rediscover in very broad strokes the anatomy of God’s original, a divine blueprint that has been long hidden and submerged by a deviated Christianity that was busy parading itself as authentic. My goal here is simply to give an account of the reasons for the wild hope many of us carry already, which is that God will finish his plans for the nations, most probably in our lifetime. I am convinced that once we allow God to grasp hold of us, we will never be the same again, nor will this world. God in his sovereignty could do this with us, or without us. But better with us.



I. Emperor Jesus and his Empire

One of the greatest secrets of history is the true identity of the Messiah. Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists all wait for the revelation of The One. Jesus once asked his disciples “Who do the people say that I am?” It is clear that absolutely everything hinges on the answer we humans give to the question: who is Jesus?

Sadly, even within Christianity – not to even mention nominal Christianity, civil religion or Christian culture - many know Jesus only superficially as savior, preacher, storyteller or prophet, but not as acting King. And it shows. We can recognize a King who is not acknowledged as such by the separation between him and his people. He may be King in theory, but not in practice. He may be for representation only, for show, but without any political power. He may be in exile, either displaced by a usurper who took his place, or even voted down by the democratic majority. He would be a King without authority, a King without – a kingdom.

Many Christians have been taught the theory that Jesus is their King. But not now, not here, not really, and not in any way that counts today. Their practical lives and actions document their faith, that the rulership of Christ is irrelevant to them. The throne, on which Jesus should be placed, is empty. We may worship the throne, but not the King himself. This makes Jesus a King only in theory, a King in exile. To say that Jesus is currently functioning as King over his people would be a naïve and idealistic statement, wishful thinking that ignores the facts. It would be the same as to say that German football-coach Jürgen Klinsmann is the King of America, or that Mother Theresa was the Queen of India. In our “real world”, dominated by money and power, really good people, even the godly people, are admired - but they usually don't rule.

Whoever looks from the outside at current Christianity and the forms of missions it has developed, comes quickly to an obvious conclusion: Christendom may consider Jesus of Nazareth as its founder – but all symptoms scream that he is definitely not acting King. This is evident in a number of ways. The rampant privatization and democratization of Christianity is one. In Christianity, it seems, anything goes, as long as it is fulfilling the needs of religious consumers, as long as we can find a Bible verse supporting a good deed, or as long as someone with a new opinion that is a notch different from someone else writes another book. The world is full of churches that celebrate plain disobedience towards the true King in the name of individualism, guru-ism and tradition. A church that is lost in the programmes, initiatives and projects of its own chosen saints and gurus has lost its divine authentication, and therefore is in desperate need to celebrate and endorse *itself*, convert by convert, donation after donation. Each cult and each charity does the very same thing.

On an even more painful level, many dysfunctional lives, marriages, families, missed or aborted callings speak volumes of Christians who are obviously completely out of touch with their king. Many Christians have resorted to repetitive activities and become either hectic workaholics, or passive and resigned victims of programs designed for them like a hamster wheel for the animal that drives it. Many have copied the world and have become a faceless number, insignificant and consuming fans

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of ever changing gurus, trying to avoid any thought about the terrible emptiness and meaninglessness deep in themselves by jumping into the ever-next program or project with a vengeance. It is the image of a blatant absence of healthy leadership, of a people without purpose, a kingdom without a king. It is a Christianity where in reality, not the King is in exile, but the people themselves are in exile; in other words: a new Babylonian captivity.

The effect of such a fragmented, self-centered and absorbed Christianity on "the world" has been disastrous. Europe is publicly and proudly becoming post-Christian, Africa, "the most evangelized continent in the world", is ridden by ethnic strife, poverty, Aids, violence and corruption at every corner, and in the USA, to identify oneself as a born again believer carries the same ring as to be a hypocrite and liar – research says that only prostitutes are even less believable than Evangelicals, and are truly rock bottom on a national authenticity scale.

The core of the problem are people who joyfully say, sing or even preach "Lord, Lord", but do not in their wildest dreams think of actually **respect Jesus as acting King in the here and now** and therefore do what he says. As a result, many are in effect illegal aliens – they don't respect nor obey at all what the King says, and end up in a depressed life that is neither royal nor priestly. Neither can the authority of the King be seen in their lives, nor do they act as a living and priestly bridge in the gap between God and the world. Far too many will be shocked to discover when they recite "Lord, Lord", that only those *who do the will of the father* and are practicing loyalty in their lives will have a legal part in God's Kingdom. A citizen in God's Kingdom is someone who is saved by grace *and then does the will of the father*. Works don't save us; only Jesus does. But without works, our faith is dead. And without faith we cannot please God. And if we don't please God, we yes might please ourselves by appointing ourselves to be true Christians, but ultimately we only believe in our own belief. Without practiced loyalty to the King, –something the Bible calls holiness, a life in clear separatedness and dedication to Jesus – we become dysfunctional, found partying with a dirty dress, and shown the door. In the area of sex, money, power and religion, social and value studies confirm that Christians are no different than any other major group of society. They just have a different hobby. Their lives may circle around church buildings and Christian programs, but at the core of their life is the American Dream, a materially safe life with as much fun as possible.

There are many reasons why Jesus is not acknowledged nor obeyed as King: **people have other kings**. They serve Mammon (Mt 6:34). They have sold and pledged themselves over to patriotism, nationalism, culture, their own family, clan, tribe, company or football. Cheap un-apostolic preaching invites people into easy-beliefism; twisted theological teaching told them that Jesus will be King *once he comes back*; consumerism and a church geared up and structured to fulfill the needs of a demanding religious clientele has made the needs, problems and feelings of individuals or the ever available "conference crowd" the centerpiece of "ministry". Out of ten healed lepers only one came back and thanked Jesus. How come that today, out of 100 saved sinners, 99 go away consuming their salvation, attend a Sunday service for 40 years and remain basically unchanged, while only one might acknowledge Jesus as Lord of his life – including sex, money and power - in a way that

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is evident? The answer is simple: we are kings ourselves! And we object strongly to anyone ruling us. We still cry out loud along with those who shouted: "We have no King but Caesar" (John 19:15), "we don't want this man to be our king" (Luke 19:14; Mt 21:38). And this is how a new tribe has seen the light of the day and has spread around the world: *Christian* Amalekites. The Amalekites were a biblical tribe born out of wedlock ("Esau's son Eliphaz had a concubine named Timna who bore him Amalek", Gen 36:12) who were the source of much trouble for Israel. The Hebrew word A-Malekites literally means *those who have no king*. But God is bigger than our human rebellion. If he is "rejected by his own" (John 1:11), he will find others who will accept and obey him— be they Chinese, Sudanese or Vietnamese. If the older generation does not, maybe the young will. If the cultural West – Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand - does not find it in itself to acknowledge Jesus as King and kneel before him, maybe the Rest will. If builders reject a stone in one place, others will recognize it as the capstone (1 Pet 2:7). The Apostle Paul says: "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11). As Jesus is the divine foundation stone, without whom "nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3), the Spirit of God is now leading countless people into a global rediscovery of "Jesus the King". The resulting repentance includes an uncompromising loyal submission to the King - and a personal and corporate alignment to his principles out of loving obedience to Jesus the savior. As people declare their own absolute dependence to Jesus as their King, they will stop wanting to live just as they please, but want to live as true subjects of the King, individually and corporately. Because he loved us first and saved us, we can now love him back – and therefore obey him with great joy.

After Jesus "has come near" and started to declare that the Kingdom therefore "has come near" (the Kingdom starts with the arrival of the king), he reveals the foundational principles of this Kingdom in the sermon on the mount (Mt 5-7). Jesus says: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6,33). Rather than making faith a purely private issue, Jesus makes it a deeply political one: the Greek word *dikaiosyne* most Bibles translate with "righteousness" was in the original Greek language of the days of Jesus a political term meaning "state law"; *dikaiosyne* described the constitution, the law that either God gave to humans or, later, a country gave itself. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that the Law of Moses was not only the bedrock of the Old Testament theocracy, the rule of God, but is also foundational and valid in his Kingdom: "I have not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). Jesus declares that how an individual treats these laws will determine his very place in the Kingdom: "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:19). Only those laws of Moses that pertain to atonement for sin, outward holiness (like the food and purification laws) or the sacrifice of animals are no longer needed and therefore valid today, as Jesus has become the lamb of God, sacrificed once and for all for our sins.

Great liberations require great commandments. After God delivered Israel out of Egypt, he knew they could overboard in limitless celebration

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of themselves – and golden calves, if left unwatched for a minute. That is why God gave them – and all of mankind – the Ten Commandments as a foundational plumb line for life. Now that Jesus, who is greater than Moses, delivered us out of a disgusting slavery to sin - an exodus of global proportions - it is only proper to expect that he would give all of us “new commandments”: “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:23), and finally: “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14). The rediscovery of grace has brought much liberty from legalism and religious manipulation, but it is no license for anarchy, the absence of rule. All newfound freedom needs to be balanced with a holy and healthy fear and respect. As we can both play and drown in an ocean, God is both an approachable Dad, but also a holy and absolute King and final judge. “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). If we take those commandments of Jesus seriously, we find that there are nineteen of them: repent, believe, be baptized, be filled with the Holy Spirit, follow, forsake, fear not, beware, pray, fast, love, serve, seek first the Kingdom, break bread together, go and make disciples, teach, heal, drive out demons and raise the dead.

As humans sacrifice their own selfish ambition, the purpose of God becomes evident again. Jesus, through a global move of the Holy Spirit, is aligning his people and his very own bride back to himself in order to finish his original apostolic commission. In doing that, he is rescuing his people from centuries of misuse through institutionalism, traditionalism and denominationalism through which much of Christianity has become little more than a program- and event-driven Sunday-religion with many franchises and disconnected groups mostly ignoring each other, or even actively competing with each other for a market share. Jesus never intended to be just another religious figure and savior of individual lives. As he is repeatedly called the “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords” (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16), he would technically more appropriately be called an *emperor*, rather than just another monarch. As empires greatly transcend kingdoms - they are essentially *an ever-expanding Kingdom of kingdoms* - emperors are a different breed than kings. In today’s world we do know kings that represent, but don’t rule, monarchs that merely exist, but do not govern. But an *emperor* who does not rule, neither exists nor makes any sense. Just like with Jesus. The historic succession of empires – the transnational rule of the Ottomans, Spanish, British, Russians and, today, Americans show that without an acting emperor at the center no empire will be able to be truly expansive and functional. We have heard the statement: “If Jesus is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all!” The greatest deception of traditional Christendom was that it became an accepted fashion to call upon Jesus simply for personal salvation, but to deny him the right to be actual king. This has created a huge credibility gap in the eyes of the world, who look at Christians as basically hypocritical, not living what they preach. In a worldwide move to restore this century-old compromised loyalty of Christendom, God is inviting all those who have “called upon Jesus as Lord to be their savior” *to complete the second half of that conversion*: to call Jesus also their Lord and Emperor, to give up any contest or rebellion, and to become legal and fully functioning royal citizens of his empire and an integral part of its mission. This requires us to grasp that a Kingdom is not a democracy (*demo-kratos*: the rule of the

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people); in God's Kingdom it is he who rules. If at all we pledge our lives to somebody or something on this earth, it should be our righteous King and his Kingdom. Wherever this happens, the Body of Christ suddenly again has a head - and starts to function as it should. Only the sky is the limit for such a church.





The Empire of God is the realm of the uncontested rule of God.

The Empire is back

The nature of the “Kingdom of God” is a secret (Mk 4:11). And secrets are not easily given away to those that don’t deserve them. The Kingdom of God - or, from now on, the *Empire of God* - is not at all just some future dream people encounter after entering heaven; it is *the realm of the uncontested rule of God*. The domain within which God is voluntarily obeyed.

Paul writes it like this: “The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). The Greek word for righteousness is, again, *dikaosyne*. It is possible to translate it therefore like this: “The Kingdom of God happens where people align themselves into the state law of God, his constitution, in peace and joy”. Let us dwell, however, for a brief moment on what the Kingdom is *not*.

It is not a global transformation of this world, into a paradise.

Exactly because of the mysterious nature of the Empire of God we can expect to see a host of misconceptions and Kingdom-speculations that miss the mark. One of the most devastating Kingdom-heresies widespread amongst many Christians today is the battle cry to create a better world in the name of God. At the core of this misconception lies the human desire to establish the rule of God over believers and unbelievers alike, to implement a sort of Christian *Sharia* (enforced Islamic law) in nation-states, similar to the dream of fundamental Islamists to establish the *Sharia* within a global theocratic caliphate and establish a sort of religious version of the world. Here Christians *develop* (not *disciple*) the nations of this world with slogans of “a better life” on their lips. The goal is to create some sort of paradise this side of paradise, with Jesus as the new mayor and every pothole on the roads filled. But make no mistake: even if many are truly wishing he had, Jesus never got involved in the social, political, legal, financial and health-related problems of this world. Instead, he brought, demonstrated, lived and preached a radical alternative: how life looks under the reign of God. The empire of God offers an entirely different foundation and framework for a life that is different from life based on the values and principles this world in all regards, including social, legal, financial and health matters. Those that confuse the Kingdom of God with a strategy for creating a better world fight a hopeless cause. They place themselves at the wrong frontier and waste their precious time, energy and money. Look around: the bulk of Christian finances goes into creating a better world. Some honestly believe that it will further the Kingdom of God to increase the number of crucifixes on school walls, to have more references to God in constitutions, more bibles in courts of law, more public prayer, to forbid homosexuality and abort abortion. Humans that think of themselves as good and that they therefore *do good* are not the solution of the world’s problem, they *are* the world’s problem – since Adam and Eve. The core of the original sin was that Adam and Eve felt they knew better than God what was good. Maybe it is a shock to think this thought for the first time, but our human concept of what is good is just as corrupt in the eyes of God as that which is genuinely evil. Where people, in independence from God, declare themselves to be the solution to the world’s problems and think they can change the world by doing organized good deeds or even end



up playing God in the lives of the poor, we see the very same devastating sin in action in our time that we know so well from the Garden of Eden. This is why the empire of God never advances by “good deeds”, by outer means, or even by law; that would be nothing more than “Christian” Islamism. It advances when more and more people place themselves obediently under the rulership of Christ, when their inner being, their “heart”, is exchanged and made new, when their loyalty is completely changed, leading up to a revolution in their thinking (Rom 12,1.2). This, in turn, leads to a changed behavior and a revolutionary life. Jesus never taught his disciples that the world needs to be transformed before he comes back. He never gave even the slightest hint to suggest that the fallen character of this world, its soul, nature or ethos could or should ever be changed or even transformed for good. Jesus has therefore never given his disciples the task to transform the world, nor prescribed any methods for doing that. He taught his disciples stewardship and responsibility, but not for the things of this world, but for the things of the Kingdom of God. If we mistakenly believe that the improvement of this world is the central task of the Kingdom – to create a better quality of life, to extinguish poverty etc.- we will be put like an ox before the cart of this world with its ever changing and eternally demanding problems. We will also make ourselves part of a false apostolic mission, pursuing it with a vengeance and enormous amounts of time, energy and money to transform our country into “God’s own country”, a second Israel, a paradise. Once reality sinks in and we see that this does not work, we might swing the pendulum into the extreme other corner and criticize from a non-involved safe position on church pews about anything that moves. If we allow ourselves to become the spokespersons and protagonists of cultural, national, tribal, financial or party-political interests, then we do something that Jesus never did nor asked his followers and friends to do. This does not mean that we need to go to the other extreme and sit in a Christian bubble, only dealing with “spiritual things”, far from it. The empire of God has immensely practical consequences for this world. Jesus has told us specifically, to make an example, to clothe “the least of these brothers of mine” (Mt 25), to be hospitable, give them food and visit them (in jail). A “brother of Jesus” is not a term for absolutely everybody, for “the whole world”, but specifically describes a member of God’s household. Although some are fighting to prove the opposite, Jesus has not instructed us to feed the hungry of this world, to heal all its sicknesses, to get rid of global poverty and make personally sure that everyone on the planet has a decent schooling, safe drinking water and medical health care. These are things that are dictated by our own fallen and wounded understanding of justice, but not by God. These are classical issues and tasks of governments, the UN or even the Bill Gates and other humanistic philanthropists of this world. Jesus was, unlike most humans, not driven by need, but driven by God (John 5:19). Jesus went literally with his head raised – eyes locked with his father in heaven – through a society full of screaming needs and strangled by sin; but he did not solve all the social problems of Palestine, did not heal all the sick in the Middle East, has not dug a single well, build school, hospital or kindergarten or spoken at a managers luncheon in a wellness Spa to have more faith for more business. Life in the Empire runs counter-intuitive, against our human reflexes and acts totally different from a fallen world that is used to just handle its problems, until the next problem arises, while at the same

He taught his disciples stewardship and responsibility, but not for the things of this world, but for the things of the Kingdom of God.



That is the logic of the cross: what looks like stupidity in the eyes of the world is, in fact, spiritual wisdom (1 Cor 2).

time ignoring that it itself basically *is the problem*. Jesus did not come to solve our problems, but to liberate us to liberate others and model life under the loving rulership of him. That is the logic of the cross: what looks like stupidity in the eyes of the world is, in fact, spiritual wisdom (1 Cor 2). What makes a lot of sense to our unredeemed senses, and immediately sounds convincing to ears that do not hear like disciples hear, and what looks absolutely doable to eyes blind to the Kingdom, may look superficial, childish and even foolish from God's perspective. Jesus clearly said that seeking the Kingdom and staying within his righteous laws is our main priority. It's foundational and compulsory. Compared to this it is voluntary – and not compulsory – to help the poor. Jesus said it like this: "The poor you will always have with you (which means we will never eliminate poverty, even if we want to), and you can help them *if you want*" (Mk 14:7). Jesus knew that his followers, having their goals confused, will forever become busy solving the never-ending problems of the world and will not have time for their original mission: to expand the rule of God over as many people and people groups as possible. But as we start to live out the radical alternative life from God – life 2.0 instead of life 1.0 – and live what we preach, then many who can observe and touch our lives will want to join life in the Kingdom. This will solve many (but not all) of their problems, but, more importantly, will provide them with meaning and purpose for their lives, as well as prepare them for an eternal future. As long as people, Christians and Non-Christians alike, withdraw themselves from the rule of Christ before his physical return, God will not push his rulership on anyone. He does not "lord it over", but he "lords under" (Lk 22,25.26), offering his rule like a servant. But as more people purposely submit themselves under the rule of God, the Holy Spirit will mold and form them into a critical mass that, even if it starts like a mustard seed, ultimately will become impossible to overlook. But let us go to the place in the Old Testament, where this "critical mass" is mentioned for the first time.

The foundation of the Empire

Daniel saw the beginning of this empire in the famous vision of a rock (Dan 2), cut out not by human hands, smashing into the feet of a statue and then growing to become a mountain to fill the whole earth. And if the issue is the surrender of all rebellion, then wherever people give up their contest with God and align themselves with the Emperor and his empire, by becoming obedient to his imperial principles and decrees, the Empire of God *advances*. The expansion of the Empire of God is a dynamic process: "Of the increase of his government will be no end" (Isa 9:7). In other words: just like a snowball can grow into an avalanche, the expansion of the empire of God will begin small and seemingly insignificant, but will be impossible to stop. Most secrets are told, not discovered. This is exactly the reason why not intellectual genius, theological greatness or scientific scholarship, but childlike obedience will lead the way, without which, as Jesus said, no one will even enter the Empire of God. Where do we find childlike obedience today? It will be the very same place where the Empire of God grows fastest and most visibly: the ability of humans, to voluntarily place themselves in respect and obedient love under the rulership of their King.

This process, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, is no longer led by the cultural West, but by other countries, outside of the West. In the



last several centuries, the church outside the West has greatly increased, while in the West it has stopped growing and plateaued. With very few exceptions, membership and attendance in Western churches has greatly decreased, churches becoming increasingly institutionalized and even fossilized. This is a time where those that are the last are becoming the first. Although God has used the West greatly (Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand) and still has a vital role for it, much of the former glory, if there was one, has already “departed the temple to the East” as in Ezekiel’s vision in chapter 10 of his prophetic book. What is left is much powerless, static and paralyzed religion, ritual spiritual routine, endless talk, but very little spiritual and authentic life, very little obedience – and a minute or even counterproductive impact and fruit in society. Could it be that, following the prophetic pattern in Ezekiel (43), the glory of God will return from where it is seen right now in its brightest colors – *from the East?*

Everything starts and ends with the central truth of the living God that Jesus is Lord. If Jesus is, as the Bible proclaims, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then he is an emperor; a ruler over many kingdoms, and ultimately “the kingdom of the world” will become “the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ”. As God’s messianic emperor, Jesus not only has the quality of a unique savior to whom we can and should cry out for our personal salvation. *He also holds an ultimate governmental function and therefore commands not only our personal, but also our corporate loyalty.* Jesus rules an empire of both a loving, but also of a holy and fearsome God. For the apostle Paul, it is clear that the Kingdom, not just the church, is what he is called to proclaim. Paul described his ministry partners specifically not as co-workers for the church, but as “my fellow workers *for the Kingdom of God*” (Col 4:11). Paul preaches the Kingdom, the rule of Jesus, and those that repent to this apostolic message are added by the father to the Kingdom, and these are exactly those with whom Jesus builds his church! “The father has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son” (Col 1:13). It is God the father who gives those that are saved “the passport of the Empire”; he issues the naturalization, the official right to be legal citizens in the Empire of his son, Jesus.

And as every empire has clear structures, principles and laws, they require our willful alignment and loyalty, the personal and corporate respect and obedience of its citizens to function as royals. *Empires are our destiny.* And there are ultimately only two empires to choose from. One is ruled by Lucifer, partly delegated to Mammon or Babylon, “the woman, the great city, that rules over the kings of the earth”. The other empire is ruled by Jesus. To which empire we truly belong cannot be discerned by our words or doctrinal statements, but is evidenced only by our lifestyle that demonstrates our true faith and allegiance. God never pushes his government on anyone, as do “the kings of the Gentiles who lord it over them” (Luke 22:25). He demonstrates the very opposite of the diabolical concept that “might is right”. This is why we have to discover the amazing secret that the Empire of God is not some era important only for the future; it does not just pertain to heaven (or, as some seem to think, is heaven), the country of Israel or the church in general. The Empire of God is essentially *the realm of God’s uncontested rule.* Wherever and whenever anything created – angels, humans, nations, the church

Wherever and whenever anything created – angels, humans, nations, the church – submits itself willfully to the government of God, there is the Empire of God.



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God already rules over nature that he has created, the elements, the universe, the animals and the majority of angels. His actual rulership can be seen with the fact that all of this obeys him. Only humans have the free will to choose for or against the rule of God over them. Where humans give up their inner rebellion and freely decide to voluntarily place themselves under the authority of God, the empire grows exactly because one more human pledged obedience to the emperor. The empire of God grows, as human obedience increases.

The sum total of all humans, who join Jesus not only with their lips, but with their obedient life in the time span between the time of Jesus on this earth and his physical return is called *ekklesia*, church. Because God is eternal, his reign is also eternal. Church is therefore, compared with God's eternal rule, only a temporary phenomenon in human history. This is why it is so important for us to understand that, compared to the church; the Empire of God is the eternal, bigger and ultimate reality. The first and most determining factor for our existence is the rule of God, without which church in a biblical sense makes no sense. To put it in black and white: where humans call what they do church but do not visibly place themselves unconditionally under the rulership of Christ and his empire, it is not at all church that happens, but human religion. It is merely Christendom, religion referring to Christ by name, but factually existing outside the Kingdom of God.

"In ancient times it was especially the news of the inauguration of a new Cesar in the capital that was celebrated in the provinces as 'gospel', as good news. A change of government always carries great hope, because humans expect the new government to introduce massive change", writes theologian Reinhard Frische. This is exactly the meaning of the Greek term *euangelion*, "the gospel of the Kingdom": Jesus is the new and truly divine Cesar who has taken up his transnational government in God's capital on earth, and all are cordially invited to join his empire who repents and is from now on ready to "do the will of the father" (Mt 7,21). Therefore, it is **Empire first, Church second**. Jesus spoke of the Kingdom 69 times, and only twice of the church, putting the relationship between Empire and Church clearly into perspective. Without humans expressing their loyalty to their King Jesus, the Empire of God has no human members. Only after duly establishing the fact that Jesus was bringing in the Empire did he speak of his intentions "to build my *ekklesia*". Rather than a religious meaning, which church history later attached to it, the Greek word *ekklesia* meant "legal assembly" (Acts 19:39), describing a body of people with governmental authority, equivalent to a parliament or senate. It describes the *political* function of the citizens of the Empire of God, and it is its main recruitment and advancement agency. *Ekklesia* is the spearhead of the rule of God in the sense that the domain of his rule is now entering specifically the domain of darkness (Col 1:13), liberating humans from the rule of the demonic 'gates of Hades' (Mt 16:18) and transferring them into the Kingdom of Jesus. Once a new person is saved and joins Jesus, Jesus builds him as a new building block into his *ekklesia*. This is the background of the statement of Jesus, when he said in Mt 16:18: "I will build my *ekklesia* and the gates of Hades will not be able to withstand it". Humans without Jesus who has overcome the darkness have no chance against Satan and his domain of demons;

The word *ekklesia* describes the political function of the citizens of the Empire of God.



but firmly in his shadow and under his rule the domain of darkness loses its chances against such a prevailing *ekklesia* under the direct command of Jesus, because the satanic reign is no match for the Son of God. He is in a different league altogether. This is why it is essential for the church to function according to its divine design and purpose whether Jesus is factual King over people, or if humans profess only lip service to him, an allegiance on paper, not in reality. It is vital for a human being to allow Jesus to factor and place him into the exact tailor-made spot in his *ekklesia*; no one else than the King himself knows where he truly fits into the bigger picture. *Rather than a church-shaped empire, Jesus builds an empire-shaped church*, a church aligned with the uncontested rule of God, founded on the Empire of God. If people hear the word of God but do not put it into practice, they build their house on sand, says Jesus. Personal obedience and alignment with the King, the core of the essence of the Empire of God, is therefore the very foundation of the *ekklesia*.

Escaping a life without blessing

God's love and his grace are an amazing gift, given unconditionally to all mankind. However, his blessing is a very different commodity. It is not at all given unconditionally, but specifically tied to human behavior. "If you keep my commands, I will bless you" is the constant theme of the Bible, Old and New Testament alike. If someone chooses not to obey God, that does not mean God stops loving him. Again, grace is unconditional, blessing is not; it hinges on God's "if." "IF you obey the Lord your God, all these blessings will come upon you" (Deut. 28:2) is the sum total of very comprehensive chapters at the end of the five books of Moses, establishing many foundational patterns of relationship between the people and their God, and defining eternal reasons for blessings or curses. The core condition is obedience. The Hebrew word for blessing is *barakah* (brk) and it means knee. In a play of words, the Hebrew root word for lightning is brq, also pronounced *barak/q* (as in Ehud Barak). The prophetic symbolism is clear: if a creature kneels before its creator in worshipful obedience, God will bless it just like lightning comes down from heaven and literally gives anything it touches a divine energy-upgrade, a different quality. Blessing is not at all given by chance, cheaply dispensed, a farewell formula as we depart, but represent a very powerful, spoken impartation of divine favor and divine nature. In the first pages of the Bible, each blessing is framed in this very same sentence: "And God blessed them and said to them: be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." First God spoke this into animals (Gen 1:22), then into humans (Gen 1:28), then, after the flood, into Noah: "God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." This means that the blessing itself is an endowment, a divine enablement and empowerment for the very task mentioned here: to be fruitful, multiply, and (thus) fill the earth. Without blessing, people's work would be fruitless, growing, if at all, only by addition of more labor, and have no global impact. But when humans accept their role in God's creation by kneeling before their creator, they are hit by God's lightning that empowers them for things humans cannot empower themselves: fruitfulness, multiplication and global impact. And the best news is this: in contrast to Old Testament times, we are no longer told to "fulfill the law" in our own strength. Since the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, it is both God's transforming and empowering love and his manifested grace that gives us

Blessing is not at all given by chance, cheaply dispensed, a farewell formula as we depart...



humans the supernatural strength and joyous motivation to obey God's norms: voluntarily, out of love and a healthy respect.

Remember football, the most popular game on the planet? It can be played officially – on clearly designated football fields with the FIFA rules in operation, 22 players, a referee and goals that count, or unofficially, outside the stadiums, on the parking lot, on the beach, or, as my sons do, when Mom isn't looking, in the kitchen ... Both forms of the game are fun and exciting, but only one version counts. Imagine a football-field with four clearly designated lines that have names: sex, money, power and religion. It is possible to play inside the field, according to the rules, obeying the norms and principles of the Kingdom, and receive God's blessing, but it is also possible to play offside or even outside the legal framework of God. God would still love those illegal players and shower them, as it is his nature, with gifts of grace. But one thing he will not give to them as he is bound to his own word: his blessing.

How many people that call themselves after God would be found playing outside the Empire, the governmental framework of God, because they neither respect nor obey his official rules? We would recognize them quickly by an absence of blessing. No fruit that lasts, no multiplication, and no world impact. With God's blessing, obeying the rules and respecting the blueprints of God for life, church, sex, money and power, we will see a return of fruitfulness, multiplication and a movement that quickly covers the entire globe. But this will happen only if we are not only loved and graced – but also blessed. And the blessings of the King require that we are the kneeling subjects of the King. And as there is no Kingdom of one, but only a Kingdom of many subjects, the *corporate* kneeling, the corporate obedience to God's ordinances, where we respect God and *each other* – just like birds, flying in formation - will be a key requirement, before which we might see the return of God's blessing to his people. The birds are teaching us how this could look, as if God has sent us teachers in the sky in vast numbers to again and again remind us all of this fact.

A Kingdom-shaped Ekklesia

It is a statistical fact that a very large majority of churches as we know them don't multiply, many do not even grow, and, if we are honest, the vast majority of church members are leading a fairly uneventful and fruitless life. Could it be that unfruitful, non-multiplying churches and people are all very much loved and given charismatic gifts of grace – but simply not blessed? What would it mean for the future if this were the main reason for stagnation? It would mean that the solution would not any more lie in more and better programs, methods and recipes, but figuratively speaking in obediently returning back into the stadium of God.

The Bible does not know a "church" that happens as an event on Sunday morning, organized by a religious group independent from the one next door that runs their own "church" services based on different liturgical programs directed by pastors on pulpits towards a target audience, people in pews with cars waiting outside on the parking lot to drive back into a life of separation and not at all very splendid isolation. Church in

...and, if we are honest, the vast majority of church members are leading a fairly uneventful and fruitless life.



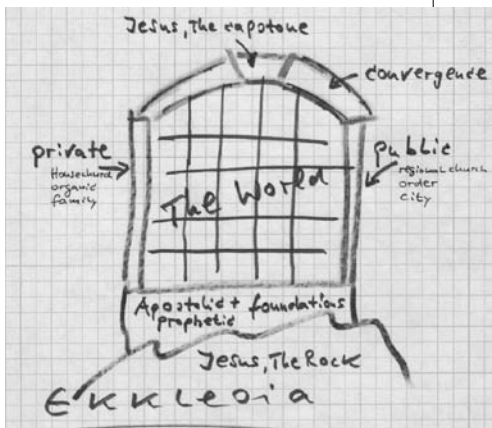
its biblical form is the structured organism of the sum total of all humans that have submitted their lives to a common King, Jesus. Church is essentially never an event; it is a lifestyle, people sharing their lives 24-7 with God and each other in the power of the Holy Spirit (you will find much more on this in the book "Houses That Change the World", available as a Starfish Edition). More precisely: church is an expression of life in the Empire of God. As one system builds upon the other, the *ekklesia* of Jesus builds on the Empire of God. To build the church outside the governmental framework of the Empire of God would be an exercise in madness, creating a religious institution that is a law unto itself. In contrast, the purpose and structures of the *ekklesia* of Jesus are holy and of divine origin, given to God's architects and master-builders of all times by revelation directly from heaven. It is a clear biblical principle that everything that exists "is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven" (Hebr 8:4.5; 9:24; 1 Chr 28:19, Ex 25:40 etc). In other words: there is a divine blueprint, an original pattern in heaven, of which everything on earth is but an image, an earthly reproduction of heavenly architecture, just like humans have been created "in the image of God". This means that it is possible that "if the Lord does not build the house, its builders labor in vain" (Ps 127:1). Ignorance of the blueprint, childish naivety ("there is no blueprint!"), rebellion ("there must not be any blueprint!"), disbelief in anything absolute (which post-modernity has enhanced) or plain disobedience towards God's building patterns will lead to religious activity in vanity. Therefore, the church of the future, Church 2.0, will again only be born out of divine principles and holy decrees, not out of religious convenience or creative human imaginations. The future church will not be emerging where our most creative spirits launch into their most fascinating projects and preach genius, but essentially human concepts, but where people return back to God in humble obedience to the divine building patterns and holy blueprint of God's *ekklesia*. Humans are not at liberty to tamper with the original concept of church and alter the DNA according to trendy preferences and the demands of the Zeitgeist. In computer language: the source code of *ekklesia* is protected, holy, untouchable and in the hands of God; so sorry. Whoever messes with it quickly creates a disfigured mutant rather than a beautiful bride, and brings unspoken agony, unfounded hope and therefore deception to a flock of victims. But if we respect the holy blueprint of *ekklesia* and therefore also allow ourselves to be built in, according to the instructions of the King and the master builders he has called for that work, Jesus can continue to build his *ekklesia* and multiply it until the entire planet is covered with it. It is then an imperial church, a church functioning properly within the framework of the Empire of God.

Every kingdom has both a private and a public life. In the same way, the *ekklesia*, as a part and expression of the Empire of God, features both a private and a public dimension, a small and a large level. On one side we find "Kingdom families" that provide home, shelter and refuge (networks of house-churches); on the other we find the public, political, governmental dimension, the regional church or City-church, built to purpose according to an apostolic architecture. The public and political dimension expresses the governmental function of the *ekklesia* within the empire of Jesus – the regional church or the citychurch, the sum total of all housechurches in a given area – that come together to hold council,

It is a clear biblical principle that everything that exists "is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven"



makes decisions, meets regionally and multiplies itself until the ends of the earth are reached. The reason why I call this “apostolic architecture” is that form always follows function, and because the original architect of the church, Jesus himself, is an apostle (Hebr 3:1), who passed on this task to other apostles – and to no other ministry. The sum total of the number of interconnected house-churches in a city or region formed “the church in” Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Ephesus, Galatia or throughout Achaia. As the early church came together both in homes and in large gatherings (Acts 2,41-47; 20:20), as in the temple court of Jerusalem, the church of the future – hand in hand with Jesus, its King - will escape its denominational fragmentation and distorted human patterns that have turned into fossilized religion. It will remember “the rock from which we were hewn” and return again to this divine architectural blueprint and pattern, and essentially meet again where she was meant to meet in the first place. And this will be around tables and in stadiums, or the largest congregating facilities available to us today, that people, possibly ignorant of God’s true plans, initially built for sports or cultural events.



The intentionally sketchy picture on the left shows the structural core skeleton of New Testament *ekklesia* as a “spiritual dwelling” (1 Pet 2:5) in the form of a two-pillar structure. Built on the rock called Jesus (1 Cor 3:11) are apostolic and prophetic foundations (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor 12:28; Mt 16:18); the *ekklesia* has two dimensions, portrayed in this picture as two pillars: the private and the public (Acts 20:20): the private dimension is the organic *oikos*, house-churches providing the expression of family in the Empire. The public dimension speaks of governmental order, the City-church, regional networks etc. Firmly in-between is the matrix of this world (John 15). All converges towards Jesus being the capstone (1 Pet 2:7), the Alpha and Omega, the beginner and finisher of our faith.

Making the invisible empire visible

Jesus came as an invisible king, representing an invisible power to assume the government of a yet invisible empire. Only those were introduced to this secret to whom the father in heaven agreed to explain it. The discovery of this mystery, however, depended not on information (researching the facts) but revelation (inspiration). The reason for this is crucial: no one was to proudly brag that he, out of his own shrewdness and intellect, has found the Messiah. Only those that ask, seek and knock (Mt 6) will see an open door. And once they go through it, they will find their Messiah, Jesus. This represents a very effective filtering system that only reveals the royal identity of Jesus and the nature of his empire to those that seriously ask. Whoever does not seek shall not find. But whoever finds the King and dedicates his life to him - and relinquishes the control of his own life accordingly – can become a part of the empire of Jesus. Jesus once said to Peter, representing the other apostles: “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom” (Mt 16; Mt 18). The ones who have keys can open locks. He has the ability – and with it comes the task – to open up doors for people and show them what is hidden behind them. Whoever finds Jesus as savior and King has, from now on, a new ability – and a new task. He is now an adept, initiated into the greatest secret of



humanity. As a person with a new security clearance and now literally a member of a secret society, he is to initiate many other seeking, asking and knocking persons to also discover the invisible King Jesus, and place themselves under his authority, by which the empire expands. Imagine an invisible person who only betrays his existence by his footprints in the sand. A small group of *visible* people have now discovered his footsteps and follow them. These obvious pursuers of an imprint in the sand, hidden to most people, are the key to making the invisible visible for others; they are the scent, the red thread, the clue to a mystery that beckons the rest of the world to be discovered. There are five distinct aspects by which the citizens of the empire, those that follow Jesus, can alert a blind and yet-unbelieving world to the fact that Jesus is king.

1) Love. Love is always visible. “God is love” (1 John 4:16). This love has four directions: a) God loves us. God has first loved us, although he knows every detail about us. This is clearly the most profound demonstration of God’s love that he loves the unlovable to such a degree that he even sacrificed his own son. As an echo and answer to this amazing love we are invited to respond and love him back. If we do, b) our own love flows back to God. But as we discover God, we discover other citizens of the empire, his family. C) As we begin to love our new brothers and sisters, the mystery starts to be lifted. The moment we express our love in a horizontal way – towards other people – it betrays the existence of a vertical love affair – with God. Jesus said it like this: “When the people see how you love each other, they will know that you are my disciples” (John 13). D) Once this happens, God wants to fill us so much with his Holy Spirit, that we all, together with God’s love and the collective love of our new family, love the world. And true love is ready to sacrifice. Love for the unlovable, as it is expressed in selfless sacrificial service, is the clearest and most powerful hallmark of a person that is in love. And wherever we see such a lover in action, we see a walking advertisement for the person he is in love with. And, “God’s truth be told”, who wouldn’t want to find out what kind of amazing person, what passionate lover can affect such a revolutionary change to any life?

2) Loyalty. Whoever acknowledges and yields to a King becomes a subject. He from now on respects the king, his values and principles – the kind of justice, that is valid before him, his righteousness and imperial law – as his top priority in life (Mt 6,33). Nothing can compete with the role that Jesus the King now plays in a new royal subjects life any longer. And in a world where everyone – patriotism, religion, tradition, clans, money, supermarkets, power, entertainment, fun, political doctrines, systems and gurus of all kinds – screams for our loyalty, a person that is loyal to Jesus as King sticks out like a fish swimming against the tide. The very direction of life of an imperial citizen is the exact opposite of a citizen of this world. Anyone driving a busy one-way street in the opposite direction can be sure to cause attention. Loyalty becomes visible in the direction of our life. And loyalty has one more important dimension: when a man proposes to an unmarried virgin and she agrees to become his wife, they become bridegroom and bride and are from now on legally engaged. They are “spoken for”, protected by a public declaration that usually is made visible by a ring or other tokens of their new status. They are not at liberty any more to pledge or sell themselves to another per-



son, but have declared to remain faithful and loyal to each other, until wedding makes their pledge a final legal binding. Jesus has declared this loyalty to us; have we declared it back to him? Then let us show it.

3) Legitimacy. Only tested and proven loyalty leads to legitimacy. Loyalty that does not stand up when challenged is cheap. Nobody issues a driving license to a 15 year old simply because he can drive a car real fast. The teenager has to demonstrate that he can handle the car and the traffic well, and even more that he knows the traffic rules and actually abides by them. In Europe, he is given his driving license only with 18 and with that can now officially and legitimately drive a car. He had very much the ability, the power, to drive a car before, but now he has the license to exercise this power and ability in an official, legal, recognized way. In the same way that weapons don't belong into the hands of untrained children, the awakening of sexual ability during teenage years does not automatically mean that teenagers are allowed to practice sexuality if they want with whom they want whenever they want. It is just like with a driver's license: there is a driver's license for sex. This license is officially awarded by the society, including the own parents, after proving that a person is able to handle sexuality in a disciplined and responsible way – and not wild, out of bounds and with purely selfish motives. This driver's license is called marriage. Sexuality without this license trespasses God's creational order and borders, hurts blossoming life like trampling on flowers before they bloom, and pays a horrendous price. The same is true for *charismata*, the charismatic gifts of God, given to every child of God through the Holy Spirit. Charisma requires character; precious gifts call for a proper way of handling them. The more powerful something is that God is placing into our hands, the more maturity we will need not to create an unhealthy disaster, but to be good stewards of God's grace and use his gifts according to the directives of the King. Power (Greek *dynamis*) in God's empire is not just ability (*charisma*) to actually do something ("I can heal, therefore I heal; I can evangelize, therefore I evangelize"), but always -official power (*exousia*), legitimate power, power that is bound to the King, aligned to his empire and therefore licensed, endorsed power. Mere abilities that are naively exercised without official license and endorsement, quickly become the foundation of misused, robbed, assumed power, usurped power that inevitable leads to the establishment of self-centered, human empires, precisely because they don't care for God's imperial law. Such power, applied in ignorance or even defiance of God's rule that does not care about the directives of the King, is essential theft, illegitimate power that does not find God's backing. If such power becomes self-aware and therefore corrupt, it will inevitably try to back up itself, prove itself, or force itself on others, even if this means the twisting of arms and manipulation of other people.

Even Jesus had to prove his loyalty towards God. When he was "led into the desert, full of the Holy Spirit" (Lk 4:1), he was challenged by Lucifer in three crucial tests. Why did Jesus pass all those tests with such high honors? Because he did not argue and act in his own best interests and simply used his amazing abilities (power) just because he had them at his fingertips, but because he demonstrated a much more powerful truth: that he is *under orders*, evident by him referring back again and again to a law that is above him: *it is written!* Jesus throws it into Satan's



face like a bomb that he, unlike Satan himself, is still voluntarily very much bound by God's word. He is the intentional subject of an objective codex that God has established, and therefore Jesus cannot and will not act in his own best interest, purely selfish and subjectively concerned with "what's in it for me". He demonstrates both to God and the devil: "Your will, not mine, be done!" This totally robs the devil of any chance to handle Jesus, so that he had to shake his head in utter frustration and sneak away. But this is only one part of the story. Before his father in heaven, Jesus had just passed the tests of his loyalty, and therefore he is handed the license, given the official nod to - from now on - use his charismatic gifts, his God-given powers, in an authorized and official way that Satan has no chance to object. Jesus returns from the desert as someone given **exousia**, authorized power to perform *dynamis*: powerful signs and wonders. The desert was his graduation. From now on he is not only "full of the Holy Spirit" (full of abilities and possibilities), but he has been given official license (*exousia*) to use these abilities in accordance and in personal synchronization with his father (John 5:19.20; 8:38) on a day-to-day basis. Does it not strike you that this moment is exactly the time when the ministry of Jesus is transformed, the power is "switched on" and literally the supernatural sparks fly? If Jesus needed such a legitimization of his own loyalty as a Son of God, will we be able to do without? The solution to the amazing power crisis of great segments of Christianity is not a lack of the power of the Holy Spirit or a lack of gifts, but a lack of authentication of license that has to do with our shortcoming in legal Kingdom existence. The problem is not *charisma*, but *exousia*. If we fail our graduations, our very own desert-tests, again and again, it is because we basically rebel against God's rule, act in our own best interests and do not abide by his principles. In that case, no amount of begging, fasting, praying, singing, the laying on of countless hands or magic self-appointing - by "declaring and decreeing ourselves to be mighty miracle workers" - will do the trick. Every human will be tested - Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, Josef, David, Peter, Paul -, so that David can write in his Psalm 139: "Search me, oh God, and know my heart, *test me ...*". But those that pass those tests, which are *always* tests of our loyalty to God, become legitimate. And a legitimate life, a life that does not speak or repeat hollow and cheap words, but has been tested in the fire, ultimately becomes authentic, and therefore convicting. Words can convince, but only a life backed up by God convicts. Everything else will be religious hypocrisy, which the secular world despises, and rightly so. But when we live what we preach, it leads to

4) Authenticity. The whole world searches for genuineness, the real deal. And life in God's empire is very real, and therefore different from life in this world. It is authentic life, "abundant life", a life in fullness (John 10), Life 2.0 not Life 1.0. As we can see with the example of Jesus, this does not describe a materially successful, secure, rich and healthy life that requires us to walk this earth eternally smiling as a part of a triumphant cult. It means a life that reaches its goal, fulfills its mission and purpose and is able to give life to others, because it is overflowing with life itself. Such a life cannot remain hidden and invisible, because no one lives in a vacuum. It is tangible and authentic in the six main domains of life: family, education, communication, culture, business and politics. I call such an authentic life in the Kingdom Life 2.0.

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Life 2.0

Jesus has spoken of an “abundant life”, a cup overflowing with God’s blessing. Yet, not only the life of most people on the planet, but also the lives of many that call themselves Christians seem flat, resigned, defeated, purposeless and dysfunctional. Leading a substandard life – life 1.0 - focusing on personal survival, “to work and earn, pay taxes and burn”, is to lead the life of a slave, of someone that is told by someone else who he is and what to do – and is denied his true identity and to reap the fruits of his own labor. Countless people are factual slaves of work, fashion, consumerism, of religious traditions and a victim of their environment. You may have heard this saying: “Great people talk about ideas; average people talk about things; small people talk about other people.” How many great people do we know? In this regard we dare not fail to mention the demonic enslavement the Bible speaks of. Whoever is not “a slave of Jesus Christ”, as Paul describes himself, is a “slave of sin” (John 8:34) and in this finally a slave of the one that has gained temporary government over a fallen world: Lucifer and his host of missionary demons. However, as multitudes move back into becoming loyal and legal citizens of the Empire of God, their individual and corporate lives will be completely revolutionized. No longer will anyone carrying the name of Christ be destined to remain a pitiful victim and subservient slave of his economy, culture or tradition, but be empowered to lead a life of love, hope and faith. God did not promise us a life without pain, crisis or suffering on this side of paradise. But as God is again allowed to be the Emperor of his people, the church is transformed from being Church 1.0 to Church 2.0: they will be restored back to become an apostolic people, a different species altogether. To the outside world, they will again become a model nation, a city on the hill, light and salt, as the blessings of God’s empowerment will be visible to all. This is when others can again say: “Look, so this is how it is when people live in community with their God!” This will not only make the world jealous, but finally also the Jews (Rom 11), a subject we will have to skip here.

The fruits of Church 2.0, a Kingdom-aligned church, will no longer be measured in glorious worship services, attendance or membership numbers, but how it changes lives that, in turn, change lives that change lives like a gigantic series of dominoes, until the whole world is impacted. As all of the main six areas of life are being disciplined (family, education, media, economics, culture and government) and again placed under the government of God, individuals, whole families, clans, tribes, villages, cities, regions and whole people groups (the Greek word *ethne* speaks of people groups, not political nation-states as we know them today) will move, healthily and incrementally, from a substandard Life 1.0 to an abundant Life 2.0. The Bible does not promise us paradise on earth before the return of the king, it speaks of no complete Christianization or even a global transformation with peace, joy and material well-being for all, far from it. But if anyone wishes to be part of the *ekklesia* of God and aligns himself intentionally in loving obedience with Jesus, the head of the Church and the Emperor, he will want to learn and obey afresh the life templates, the civil, spiritual, economic and political laws of the Empire of God. As a result, he will personally experience the blessing of God, that most significant and totally transforming encounter, liberation and empowerment that will move a person from mere success to true



significance. It will change us forever, and, in turn, will revolutionize our lives, and the lives of those around us. And one of the main reasons for a significant optimism at this hour is this: a Kingdom-shaped Church is emerging once again on this planet for anyone with eyes to see. All signs point to the significant fact that this church is not born and bred in the cultural West, but outside, in China, India, Vietnam, Cuba, Egypt, Bangladesh, Indonesia etc, from where this church will surprise the West by its very existence and become a global teacher to all those with the humble ability to learn. At the heart this describes an *ekklesia* that has repented of its ignorance, contest and rebellion, and finds back in loving obedience to its head and Emperor. Such a church will no longer just be a place to enjoy God’s love and grace, but a powerful, communal and prophetic lifestyle that experiences God’s blessing, and models life for all those who do not yet know the source of this life: God. What does life in the Empire of God look like? Take a look at this table that illustrates this in a nutshell by contrasting Life 2.0 to Life 1.0, a life outside of God’s government:

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	Concerning issues like	Life 1.0 godless, pointless, bad meaningless, unblessed	Life 2.0 godly, purposeful, good, meaningful, blessed
Family	authority, relationship, sex	dysfunctional, barren, unsafe	healthy, fruitful, safe
Education	values, learning, teaching	vocation-based, degrading	life-based, empowering
Communication	media, entertainment	trivial, exploiting, manipulative	intelligent, respectful
Culture	science, arts, sports	unclean, demonic	clean, inspired
Economics	work and finance, money	depressive, enslaving, Mammon-driven, greedy	uplifting, liberating, life-driven, giving
Government	politics, structures, military, law	corrupt, aloof, instead of God	just, involved, under God

5) Signs of the king. The life of Jesus was filled to the brim with supernatural healings, driving out demons, raising the dead, prophecies and miracles. The laws of God seem to clearly supersede the laws of nature, which in turn had been created by God. Kingdom law supersedes natural law. One of the ways this becomes evident is when the citizens of the empire exercise their God-given authority over the citizens of the domain of darkness, and drive out demons. Every child of the Kingdom of God has been given the charisma to heal others, drive out demons and speak prophetically. But to truly retake land from the domain of darkness for the King it is not enough to do a few signs here and there and lead a few minor battles, but it requires our *readiness to take over responsibility* for the newly taken land and cultivate it according to God’s directives. The Bible does not make a difference – as some Christians have done in the past – between evangelizing unbelievers and discipling the new converts, as if the first is the job of the evangelist, and the second is the



We are not called to impress people with demonstrations of spiritual power, but use the spiritual openness that the signs of the Kingdom typically create to bring people into a loving relationship with the King and his Kingdom.

task of the church. We need to understand that we ourselves have to shoulder the consequences of our actions. What some have labeled a “hit-and-run-approach” in evangelism – hit the street and run away, do an evangelistic outreach and quickly retreat into a far more standard, non-outreaching life – makes no sense in the long run as a sound strategy and basically shys away from disciple-making. It attempts to make converts, not disciples. If we want to lead others to Christ but refuse any responsibility to baptize them *ourselves*, make them to be our disciples and have them participate in *our* lives and rather leave this “to the experts”, then it is no small wonder that the King is entrusting us with so few new spiritual babies. Jesus is actually protecting people from dying a silent spiritual crib death, SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome. One of the potential risk factors of SIDS is the immaturity of the parents who are busy consuming themselves and have a poor parental care for the new addition in their lives. Wherever the signs of the empire of God break into this world – through miracles, exorcisms, raising the dead or healings - it causes no small excitement. Anyone witnessing these signs realize that this means they have just come in touch with an entirely new reality, and are suddenly confronted with a new question: what does this mean for them right now? This calls for people ready to answer the natural questions of those that are perplexed and astonished by witnessing a sign of the Kingdom, and take them to the King, baptize them, organize them into churches, make them disciples and become their spiritual parents. Charisma to perform a few signs that people watch will not be enough; this calls for *exousia*, a healthy authority given by God to act on behalf of the King. We are not called to impress people with demonstrations of spiritual power, but use the spiritual openness that the signs of the Kingdom typically create to bring people into a loving relationship with the King and his Kingdom. The imperial authority and maturity to do this is directly linked to our legitimacy, and this in turn, is linked to our loyalty. If people decide to play offside the rules of the empire of God, like ignorant children making up their own rules and join a sort of spiritual non-alignment movement, they will still have a small measure of supernatural ability, since God has given all of them charisma. But if they much rather want to be lone rangers, stand-alone ministries that refuse to align with the King, his Kingdom, his principles and therefore other Kingdom citizens, they become like a battery. It yes can light something up for a little while, but is generally weak, cut off from the real power grid, and often needs to be recharged. The true lack in such non-aligned people is not their charisma, but their lack of loyalty and therefore legitimacy in the eyes of the King. Most probably he would have to say to them one day: “Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say? Go away you evildoers, I never knew you!” (Mt 17:21-23). Wherever people develop activities that are not aligned with the king, programs and projects that are their own conceptions and creations, who “drive a car without license” or practice sexuality outside God’s protective structure for sexual love, marriage, they may be fully convinced to do things for God that God, however, had never asked them to do. These non-aligned activities, born out of a religious heart, out of convenience, tradition, financial needs or the desire to prove oneself and “establish a stand-alone ministry like everyone else”, can absolutely produce “children” ministries, organizations, churches and even denominations. But legally, from the perspective of the righteous laws



of God's Kingdom, these are illegitimate children. They are yes, children, but born out of a spiritual wedlock. And things that are born outside the legitimate framework of the empire carry an amazing danger: they can quickly become a worshiped kid, an idol for their prideful parents, something that illegally takes the space and role of only God himself. But where people live a clear-cut and obedient loyalty to the King and his empire, they are transferred the legal right to act and speak "on behalf of Jesus", in the name of Jesus, in legitimate representation, as a deputy of the Emperor. This absolutely includes a life demonstrating the supernatural signs of the Kingdom. God the father gives people the *charisma*, the power to do such things; however, something else needs to happen in order for us to use this God-given power in the way God wants it: Jesus needs to issue us with the license, the legal authority (*exousia*, see Mt 10:1; Mk 16:17 etc.) to actually function in this authority. Jesus said to his disciples: "I give you authority" (*exousia*). In Germany, catching a fish is quite a challenge. You cannot take a fishing rod and just go to any body of water trying your luck. You have to obtain a fishing license, take training and pass quite an elaborate "fishing-test" with more than 800 questions, and then, should you pass, you are given your "Angelschein", your anglers license. But to actually go fishing, you need a second thing: a fishing permit, a day/week/month or annual ticket to fish in a certain water that has to be purchased from the owner of the water. Then, and then only, are you legally allowed to fish. If you can actually master it to then pull a fish out of Germany's dramatically over fished waters is, however, another story. In other words: God issues the fishing license, Jesus the King issues the permit to fish in his waters, to be, like Peter, a true fisher of man. Only with both permits – *charisma* and Kingdom legitimacy, *exousia* – will people be able to truly act "in the name of Jesus", with astonishing fruits.

The 186 different accounts of individual signs and wonders in the gospels and the book of Acts are almost always reporting that people who witness those signs are often immediately opening up for the reality of God and become dramatically receptive for the gospel of the Kingdom. It is a well known fact of church history and today's missionary reality that many nameless, faceless, untrained but obedient and loyal men and women of God – or even children – experience the most dramatic signs and wonders in their ministry for God, while many well known theologians and respected clergy are comparatively powerless. This is one of the reasons why theories like dispensationalism or cessationism (the idea that God's power was only active during special dispensations/seasons or have even ceased altogether after the first batch of apostles died out) have been invented by theologians to basically prove that it is OK to live a powerless live. Some try to invoke the presence of the King with constant repetitions of formulas like "in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus!" as if he would respond to Christian mantras or a magic wand. Ultimately this might quickly become a ridiculous religious tool of the helpless, a Christian mantra for those without authority, a Christian version of the Buddhist prayer wheel. This is why it is so crucial for us to see that the key to world mission is not *charisma* (power), but *exousia*, legal, imperial power. Jesus said: "All authority (*exousia*) in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *Therefore* go and make all people groups disciples . . ." (Mt 28:18-20). If we bind ourselves to the King and his words, if we love him and each other, if we demonstrate our loyalty through fidelity

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and steadfastness and lead the authentic life of imperial citizens, then we have taken every precaution to protect us to do anything else than engage in missions and activities that truly have received the stamp of the king's approval. Once this becomes our normal way of operation again, we can absolutely expect the fulfillment of the task of world mission to be only a matter of time.

God's rule becomes visible where we obey

God forces no one under his rule (just yet). He has arranged it in such a way that the empire of Jesus will become visible through people that do not only consume their own private salvation and religion, but place themselves fully under the rule of Jesus Christ. As they do this, they start to live, look and sound like Jesus. The hallmarks of Life 2.0 is love towards God, brotherly love, driving out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, signs and wonders, a financial and economic life that defies the banking principles of this world and crucifies the spirit of materialism head-on. It is life structured not by man but by God, a supernatural community consisting both in Kingdom families (house-churches) as well as in a political, governmental, countercultural movement. Most of all, imperial life is characterized by sacrificial love towards all, especially the enemies of God. This is the most powerful force on the planet. If we all start to live what we preach - and *then* open our mouth! - then the world will listen. And if we allow our King to structure us and build us into his apostolic architecture the way he sees fit, and not according to traditional patterns and the religious schemes of CAWKI, the empire of God will develop into a supernatural parallel-structure, an alternative universe that, as Jesus put it, "is in this world but not of this world". Through a life lived in sacrificial service to others out of love, this will become the fastest and most powerful movement in the planet. If it is true that God blesses obedience – blessed are those that keep my ways; blessed is the man who listens to me (Prov 8) – and therefore transfers onto them astonishing fruitfulness, epidemical multiplication and world-wide presence, then the question of biblical structures of *ekklesia* is not just unimportant, secondary, or even a nuisance, forever disturbing the greater harmony of an ecumenical, political Christianity, but a *core test of our loyalty and obedience*. If we move back to the biblical principle of regional housechurch networks, we need to do it out of obedience to the king, not because of personal preferences, opinionatedness or as a fashion. Our obedience decides about blessing or curse.

And if this is the time that "God establishes a Kingdom that will rule forever" (Dan 2:44), the key question is: are you a legal part in this, right now? If no, I would ask you to become a part of this today and place everything that you are and that you have, before the feet of your King Jesus. He will be able to make your life into something so much better than you could do yourself. He is the great archer; if you are an arrow on his bow, chances are excellent that your life will hit bulls-eye – to the pleasure of your King!

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II Apostolic-Prophetic re-foundation

"In the church, God has appointed first Apostles, second prophets..." (1.Cor 12:28). Paul speaks of the household of God being "built on the foundation of apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:20). It is a sad fact of church history that, of the five ministries mentioned by Paul in Eph 4:11, apostles and prophets have disappeared through the cracks, vanished from prominence, and have been replaced by an enormous amount of pseudo-apostolic and prophetic substitutes. What was left was a church founded on teachers, pastors, tradition, the treasury, and since Emperor Constantine, the state. This development exchanged the core DNA, the genetic code of God's people, with complacent and domesticated religion. Through this gigantic replacement-scheme, church-as-we-know-it has not only become mostly un-apostolic and non-prophetic, but literally anti-apostolic and anti-prophetic, a harmless and toothless civil religion that blesses citizens as they go and make money, love or war. However, prophets are not democratically elected by the people, and apostles do not send out themselves. They are agents of God's mission. And if people reject the rule of God, his Empire, it is only natural that they would reject also those that God sends to correct them and bring them back on track. This is why, if religious people have their way, they "persecute and kill" the prophets and apostles (Luke 11:49). A.T. Gardiner put it this way: "When a prophet is accepted and deified, his message is lost. The prophet is only useful so long as he is stoned as a public nuisance calling us to repentance, disturbing our comfortable routines, breaking our respectable idols, shattering our sacred conventions." However, one of the most thrilling elements of current developments is that God is reaching down into the cracks, retrieving his stoned prophets and persecuted apostles, dragging them out from heaps of stones thrown at them by religious people, dusting them off and sending them to work. There, they seek to join hands with pastors, evangelists, teachers, deacons and elders, and bring to the table their unique contribution, something no other ministry can provide. Biblical, healthy and mature apostolic and prophetic people have an architectural, catalytic, visionary, navigational, protective and foundation-laying function that no other ministry – no amount of money, tradition or hierarchy – can substitute for. In a very brief summary, here are their main hallmarks:

Prophets, according to the Bible, can be spokes-people and messengers of God, visionaries or watchmen. Many times we see them appear as the totally politically incorrect guardians of a binding agreement or holy covenant with God, making sure that the people of God are keeping their part. One of the main ways prophets seem to function in the Empire of God is that they are a very effective navigational system (I call them GPS, God's Prophet System), to whom God confides before he acts: "The Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants, the prophets" (Amos 3:7). If God has declared his plans, they are often like a map, while the prophets function like either the red dot that says "You are here", or they help define the goal, or guide an endeavor of God, like the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra's time with timely advice: "The elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, and finished the temple" (Ezra 6:14).

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In the broadest possible perspective, prophets serve as agents of God in the area of spiritual intelligence. The basic concept of intelligence, or espionage, is to gain access to otherwise secret, hidden or classified information in order to make this privileged information available to those who make strategic decisions. Humans do this by secret surveillance, hacking, thieving, conniving, or torture. Spiritual intelligence gathers information by spiritual means, through inspiration from God. This inspiration can take on various forms, like visions, visitations, dreams or prophetic impressions. I believe that in our time we are witnessing a huge comeback of the prophetic ministry. Some of them are given inspiration from God not only in “spiritual matters”, but regarding all six aspects of life: in the area of technical inventions, breakthrough business ideas, prophetic concepts that affect the culture in the area of arts, media or sports, or prophetic insights to solve issues regarding the government, the economy, communication or relationships, education and family. There are far too many examples of prophets in operation today, so I will include just one single reference.

Erich Reber is a prophetic figure well known far beyond his native Switzerland. His story of how God called him to ministry is one of the most exciting that I have heard. The long-term accuracy of his prophetic ministry is often so remarkable that even secular businessmen or psychiatrists regularly come to him for counsel. Six months before 9/11, Erich experienced an open vision (a sort of prophetic film in which the prophet is part of the action) in which he found himself trapped in a collapsing high-rise building, and almost lost his mind in this trap of concrete. God made him revisit the situation seven times. In a vision on the first Sunday in July 2005, God showed him that he was going to shake London – and only one week later; the subway bombing in London took place. In 1990, God visited him with a clear and fascinating vision about what God is going to do in the Islamic world. As a part of this, God spoke to him in 1990 about an imminent “Desert Storm,” which will lead to many Muslims seeking shelter in the only security known to them: the Mosques – only to find out that Jesus would reveal himself to them in their very houses as well as from within the Mosque. In a second vision in 1991, God showed him the sequel of the last harvest. According to his vision, it will happen in four phases: first God is going to visit the eastern Block countries (Russia etc. 1991 -1993), then God is going to bring in a huge harvest in Middle and North India from 1996 onwards. The third phase will be God visiting first the soft-Islamic, then the hard-Islamic nations, and finally, as the last phase, Europe and the West. All of this seems to be coming true. What happened after the Soviet Union went out of business in 1991 is history. Since 1996, as many empirical researchers have since shown, there is an unprecedented spiritual harvest in Middle and North India. The number of newly planted house-churches has already reached several hundred thousand. Today, one of the most fascinating developments is the increasing number of Muslims finding Christ: many thousands of new churches have developed in nations like Bangladesh, Indonesia or Pakistan, and many observers believe it is only the primer of a much larger development. If you want to keep abreast with the development, one of the Starfish Resources is the StarfishFax, an electronic news bulletin to which you can sign up through the Starfish website. A last element of prophetic ministry that I can point out here is to be

“The Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants, the prophets” (Amos 3:7).



recruiters and anointers of Kings or apostles. Just like Samuel the prophet sought and anointed David to be the new king, or John the Baptist heard about Jesus being the Lamb of God, many prophets receive inspiration from God in regards to apostolic people. Their prophetic role here is obviously threefold: to help point out an apostolic calling to individuals (like Ananias to Saul, Acts 9), to decrease in their own prominent role, so that the apostolic can increase and does not remain hidden behind what could easily become a prophetic stage-celebrity (as with John the Baptists and Jesus himself; John 3:30), and finally to work in partnership, in tandem.

One of the reasons why God is working with prophets to point out apostles is that, to the naked eye, it is not at all obvious who exactly is, or is not, an apostle. Apostles are not conformed to worldly standards or compatible to religious hierarchies. They are not top-down generals or new pharaohs on top of religious pyramids. How do you recognize an apostle when he enters the room? The short answer is: you don't. We need spiritual eyes to spot them. And if someone enters with big apostolic fanfare and waves a membership card of another elite apostolic club, we can be sure we're talking to the wrong person, to self-appointed hyper-apostles and un-dead builders of their own empires that the Bible warns us of. Not even Jesus himself, the apostle and high priest of our faith, was properly recognized, and he had a more dramatic entry into this world than any one before, with angels, a star, wise visitors from abroad, being born amidst a mass slaughter of babies and as a fulfillment of up to 300 individual prophecies.

Although there have always been apostles like Luther, Wesley, Zinzendorf or Booth active in church history, their global re-emergence and slowly growing reception is a fairly new phenomenon. In a very real sense, apostles are both the first, and the last. Paul explains that "in the church God has appointed first apostles" (Greek *proton*, first of all, 1 Cor. 12:28). But there is a very real sense in which apostles are last: "Many who are first will be last; and the last, first" (Matthew 19:30). Paul picks up this idea in 1 Cor. 4:9: "For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena, a spectacle to the whole universe." In the everyday language of his time the picture that Paul is referring to is the gladiators, men who address the person in charge with "those condemned to die, salute you!" in an arena watched by other people as a sort of blood sport. In those bloody arrangements, gladiators, who were usually more or less trained slaves, were pitted against wild animals or each other, in every possible manner, for the obscene entertainment of the clientele. Those spectacles usually started in the morning, given the heat of the Mediterranean sun and the absence of modern stadium lighting systems, and ended around noon, when the heat became unbearable. The audience had seen any amount of bloody carnage all morning long, and, just before lunchtime, the organizers had to come up with ever new twists of cruelty and innovation to keep the attention span of the patrons. Therefore, they usually played a last trump card that made even the most bored audience sit on the edges of their seats one last time: when they introduced the so-called *meridian gladiator*, the one introduced just before the sun reached its meridian, the last act in the procession of events,

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the finale of the whole bloody choreography. This is when, for example, a ridiculous weakling or dwarf without any serious weapons is pitched against three lions, five giants and one elephant, when a mismatch of power of such gross proportions will make even the most seasoned spectator, who has seen it all, get up one more time from his slumber and watch in bemusement how that defenseless clown would be mown down and ripped apart in seconds.

Paul likens this well known tradition from the ancient entertainment industry to the nature of apostolic ministry, as if he is to say that we can expect apostolic people to come in when all seems lost, at the end of the show, when people start to doze off and nothing other than a ridiculous spectacle can win back the attention of the crowd.

Could it be, therefore, that the current situation in church history is exactly such a moment? All the might of the church, the power of tradition, countless church-based programs and missionary projects without end are clearly not able to face and challenge the Goliath of consumerism, apathy, of Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam. Would it be possible that God, yet once again is fetching the small, insignificant apostolic Davids from their grazing pasture and put a sling shot into their hands?

Let us look at a short and incomplete list of some other elements of healthy apostolic ministry, something I call the fruits of apostolic ministry:

- They open up an apostolic space, so that the impossible is possible
- They retake, tend and defend "The Garden". Just like Adam and Eve had a job to do in Eden, apostles today still have a role in regional apostolic strategies within divine allotments or apostolic jurisdictions, areas measured out for them by God (Acts 17:26; 2 Cor 10:13-18)
- They have a ministry of impartation and blessing (Rom 1:11; 1 Thess 2:8)
- They are system builders to make sure that form follows function
- They are synchronizers between heaven and earth
- They are God's master builders and architects (1. Cor 3:10)
- They are divine code breakers and mystery solvers (1. Cor 4:1; Eph 3:6)
- They are spiritual fathers who adopt and initiate sons
- They are foundation layers (1. Cor 3:10)
- They are defenders against wild wolves (Acts 20:29)
- They are planters of self-multiplying church planting movements
- They have a role to make the Jews jealous (Rom 11)

In what I call a divine romance, these two ministries are matched by God into prophetic-apostolic tandems. God is causing them to, figuratively speaking, "fall in love, engage, marry and have children". Prophets see the mountain far away; apostles build the road to reach the mountain. Prophets, in short, declare God's purpose, while their apostolic partners build strategic systems to fulfill them. One historic example of this is Samuel anointing King David (who was not even deemed fit for royal screening by his own father), a type and foreshadow of apostolic ministry, who in turn laid down a governmental framework within which everything, including Samuel's prophetic ministry, functioned.

One of the true signs of healthy apostolic and prophetic people is that "they have been in Tarsus", the place symbolic of the ultimate death to the apostle Paul. There he was sidelined, tortured, mocked and kept in

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ridiculous inefficiency for 11 long years in order to kill his missionary ego and any selfish ambition - like a kernel of seed falling into the ground - until he could say "I am dead" (Gal 2:20; Phil 3:8). Only dead apostles and prophets are good apostles and prophets. The issue is death to do-ability. Before God acts, he often brings the very men through whom he wishes to act, to a complete and devastating standstill. This inertia means death to human hustle, a workaholic mindset and any hint of self-reliant triumphalism. Remember Moses? He was a young hotshot that first had to become an old man with a stick in the dry desert before God could use him in one of the greatest apostolic episodes of history, the exodus of Israel out of Egypt. It seems as if God carefully aims to kill off the ego of an apostolic person, so that there will be no danger of one of the more envious ones to steal the credit for what God is doing.

We simply have seen enough human actions, plans, projects, fads, methods and strategies to save the world 1000 times over. They have not worked, and many have rightly become wary, careful or even skeptical. Triumphant plans and strategies that are not born out of prophetic initiatives of God have the seeds of their own destruction built right into them. We had better wait patiently for the pillar of cloud or fire to move, and move only when they move. I call this prophetic intelligence for apostolic architecture, a more technical and deeper way of saying that we need to hear God's voice - alone and corporately - and do what he says. Good ideas, human creativity and even the most genius marketing concept will simply not be good enough. Tarsus, in other words, is a symbolic spiritual place, where human ambitions die with a vengeance - so that the purposes of God will live.

I need to put in a word of caution. One of Lucifer's tactics is trying to burn the ground before God sows his seeds into it. The *diabolos*, the confuser, will (and has) put up a confusing smokescreen of the false or premature, to besmear and ridicule the words apostle and prophet with the filth of images of self-appointed, triumphant, successful, rich and abusive gurus building their pseudo-apostolic empires, which is often nothing more than thinly veiled and polished neo-denominationalism. His satanic goal is to lure as many Christians as possible into throwing out the apostolic baby with the pseudo-apostolic bathwater. But to be forewarned is to be forearmed. If we expect to run into a good measure of self-appointed, smiling and triumphant, hypersuccessful and "enormously anointed" gurus who build their apostolic empires and network very much like a net around a spider, we can remain calm, and handle such unapostolic hype even with a bit of relaxed humor. Satan does this because he truly has to fear an apostolic and prophetic church; however, in the long run, he will be unable to prevent the rise of the real thing. Because God is restoring a holy order to his *ekklesia* and re-engineering it for its final purpose and global mission, we are witnessing a global re-emergence of a prophetic and apostolic people of God. This development is far bigger than any reformation we remember. It is both a revolution and a reformation. A reformation takes something that already exists and re-forms, restructures and reshapes it. Revolutions replace an existing system with a new one. What happens today is both - a revolutionary re-foundation of apostolic and prophetic foundations, typically far outside of established religion, which presents a huge challenge

A reformation takes something that already exists and re-forms, restructures and reshapes it. Revolutions replace an existing system with a new one.



towards the reformation of existing churches, ministries and missionary systems into a truly apostolic architecture. Careful observation shows that revolutions are the main cause for reformations; reformations don't cause revolutions. As entirely new things start to happen outside the system, the system is challenged towards a proper response, which is, in its most positive form, a reformation. As this development is an issue of the Empire, no single church or missions structure as-we-know-them will be able to contain or even import these spiritual innovations. Everyone who tries will find himself drawn into the far bigger reality of the Empire of God. Rather than existing systems pulling the new development on board like many other waves or projects – as the new program for the next 5 years – they will be sucked into the far bigger reality of the empire of God. And one of the main ways that this will happen is this: by imperial decree, apostolic and prophetic people, crowned not by triumph but by suffering, together with evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons and healthy, responsible families (elders), will become parents and equipping-teams of the saints matched by God with each other, their jurisdictions or respective “gardens of God”, and will work in corporate, long-term obedience to the revealed pattern and divine blueprint of the *ekklesia*, so that God's garden will flourish once more and bring its fruit, so that the Lamb that is slain will finally receive the reward for his suffering.

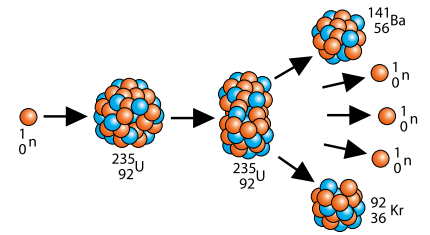
Some of my prophetic friends compare the declaration of a prophetic word (over persons, churches, nations etc.) with the process of emerging life itself. After the event of impregnation follows a period of pregnancy. In order to bring forth life it is not enough to celebrate the sensual moment of fertilization, but the new baby wants to be carried, developed, nurtured, born and cared for. Mary heard prophetically through an angel that she should become the mother of Jesus. But instead of jumping up and down and telling everyone that she has received a prophetic word, she “pondered these words in her heart”; she took personal responsibility to do everything in her power, so that the new life can see the light of the day. For an unborn embryo to become a newborn baby and grow into an adult it takes a protective framework, a safe structure that protects the new life, provides a nest for it and makes every arrangement so that the new child can grow up to their parents pleasure. The prophetic ministry is often an impregnating ministry, making people pregnant; the apostolic ministry is building conducive structures and create an enabling framework for the prophetic word “not to fall to the ground”, but to bring mature fruit and become reality.

Man has now built the church long enough on the foundations of tradition, theology and treasury. God has established his household “on the foundations of apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20). As God is correcting this foundational error, a resource almost unknown for ages is being unlocked once again: the explosive and viral power of an apostolic *ekklesia*. I liken our times to the days of the famous “Manhattan Project”, where in 1942, under greatest secrecy, “Project Y,” an experimental lab, was started in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Led by the scientist Robert Oppenheimer, several thousand people worked hard, and on the 16th of July 1945, the first atomic bomb was ignited. Atomic power was discovered; something that was previously unknown and unavailable suddenly came onto the scene and changed the face of the world. Central to this was



the discovery of the so-called enrichment process, bombarding safe uranium in the form of U238 with neutrons until it experiences a super-charge, an enrichment, and becomes U235. In the form of U235, uranium becomes fissional, explosive.

For me, this is a prophetic picture of what is happening today with the rediscovery and reinstallation of the long-lost prophetic and apostolic gifts within the *ekklesia*. As atoms become fissional by being exposed to an enrichment processes, one of them being the bombardment with neutrons, individual believers, disciples, churches, and entire networks will experience a similar enrichment, an impartation, a change of thinking, an upgrading in their existence through prophetic and apostolic ministries that will bring them to a similar boiling point like U235: it will become difficult to remain in containers. Technically speaking, Christianity will become fissionable. Again! And instead of releasing atomic potential for mass destruction, apostolic potential will be released towards mass *construction*, to the degree that a healthy scattering process of disciples and churches will again set in, in answer to millions of prayers to Jesus to “cast out laborers into the harvest” (Luke 10:2). I see the re-emergence of biblical prophetic and apostolic ministry as similar and as significant towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission as the discovery of atomic energy a few decades ago. And it fills not only me with tremendous hope and expectation to watch God’s meridian gladiators come onto the scene, out of their age-old dungeons, stumbling into the arena and rubbing their eyes. I am sure that God himself rejoices about this far more than all of us would ever know.





Our dealing with work and finances is the most accurate and immediate thermometer of our spirituality.

III: Kingdom Economics

Every faith has immediate economic consequences. Our dealing with work and finances is the most accurate and immediate thermometer of our spirituality. Not only is God the origin and source of all, but the empire of God, as introduced by Jesus, has a sound economy. The Bible contains clear principles defining the world of work and money, designed both to empower people and to honor God. God established four ecosystems for his people, and laid down clear economical principles regulating issues of money and work for all of them (whether people actually obeyed those principles is, however, a very different story). The first ecology, the Garden of Eden, ended with a disaster, the fall. The second, the era of the Patriarchs, ended in Egypt; another disaster. The third one, Israel under its kings, ended in captivity in Babylon, one more disaster. The fourth and current ecology is the Empire of God as initiated by Jesus. Since Jesus, the Messiah, introduced many of the economic principles that govern this time, we will call them Messianic finance principles. If we look at them carefully, they are more revolutionary than Marxism, more freeing than any American dream, more liberating than what people call financial independence, and more life-giving than the current free market economy.

However, just like the foundational role of apostolic and prophetic people, the messianic finance principles hardly survived the first century of church history under the onslaught of religion, Mammon and the battles for power and the definition of church and state relationship. Today, hardly any of these principles are either known or practiced by a significant amount of followers of Christ. The church in general has been ignoring and overstepping these economic laws with amazing thoroughness, breaking age-old covenants of God, and institutionalized itself outside the clear economic parameters the Empire of God provides. In football-language: the church started to settle down in an offside position, outside the financial rules laid down by its king. If we would look at the intersection of official church doctrine in regards to money and work and the economical principles of the Kingdom of God, we would find the actual overlap to be amazingly minute. In this way, the economic rules Jesus has established have become exotic exceptions, and the Babylonian exceptions became the rule. The Babylonian principles are in direct competition to the principles Jesus, the Messiah, brought into this world. I call it Babylonian, because that is the home of the spiritual leader of an age-old rebellion against God: Mammon (Mt 6:24). The demonic proportions to which greed and fear have deeply molded the worldwide economy – greed to have always more, and the existential fear of losing one's livelihood or missing out on things – did not stop at the doors of the church. A realistic sampling of the general economic condition of Christianity is a sobering experience: Deeply thrusting for material security above anything, idolizing secular work as the sole reliable source of income and, in case of financial pressure, plagued by tremendous existential fear, ignoring just about every aspect in God's book about economics, the majority of the Body of Christ today factually lives in exile, in a new Babylonian Captivity. If a materialistic society (I buy, therefore I am), completely deceived by Mammon about



the meaning of life and the nature of security, is deeply driven by both fear and greed, most Christians are faring no better. They have sold themselves into the very same Mammon-driven slavery that they, with a knowing wink of the eye, misinterpret as rock-bottom reality. As a result, they suffer very similar anxieties as the secular world – plus a dose of “typically Christian” financial symptoms. Where secular folks are dreaming of winning the lottery, they are tossed about by dreams of financial independence, hunting after the big financial breakthrough, which is forever “just around the corner”. Deeply manipulated by neo-legalistic giving techniques (give 10% to a church and God will surely bless you!), they have either fallen for the eternal pursuit of triumphant prosperity, got stuck with the notion of a pain-free middle class existence that they defend with their very lives, or have, following Francis of Assisi example, married “lady poverty” and embraced a crippling poverty spirit. As a result, millions have been deeply traumatized and mauled by Mammon almost beyond recognition. Gripped by existential fear, deeply influenced by the obsession with Middle Class values, they retreated into a financial cave that centers on personal survival or security. This is the result of a false gospel in regards to economics, and we are only reaping what has been sowed for hundreds of years, the bitter harvest of abandoning “the gospel of the Kingdom”, including its economic dimension. If most everything we have heard in church about church was wrong, most everything we have heard in church about money and work was wrong, too.

“Envy and selfish ambition leads to disorder and every evil practice” (James 3:16). If the church is contaminated by the exact same motives like the secular, fallen world - envy, greed, selfish ambition - then an immediate consequence of God, restoring a holy order amongst his people, is to walk them away from Babylon and its Mammon-principles. This is one of the foremost tasks of an apostolic and prophetic people. This will require a healthy financial conversion, rediscovering the imperial finance and work principles and demonstrating and living out the revolutionary economical truths of God. The early followers of Christ lived a life of total financial dependence on God and each other, crucifying the spirit of materialism head-on. In the eyes of a materialistic world, they led economically ridiculous lives and were either crazy – or holy. God is today changing the economic operating system of his people from a Babylonian system back to a Kingdom economy. As a result, the empire of God will become such a global economic factor that it will develop into a real threat to Babylon about who owns the world. But before the “wealth of the wicked” or any prophesied end-time transfer of wealth into the Kingdom can take place, the spirit of wickedness, Mammon, the total obsession with material security and financial security according to the world’s standards, has to be removed from the Bride of Christ, or at least from a section or remnant of it, in order to be able to act again. As God is in the process of launching the most far-reaching reformation of *ekklesia* since the times of Luther and Calvin, that re-establishes the Church within Kingdom patterns and back to New Testament principles, the consequences for the economy of the Body of Christ are monumental. The unity of the Bride of Christ has been marred by institutionalized disobedience beyond recognition, ripped apart by a sectarian mentality into denominational factions and downright financial competition on the religious market. Only our repentant return to a congruent behavior

If most everything we have heard in church about church was wrong, most everything we have heard in church about money and work was wrong, too.



with the revolutionary principles that Jesus the Messiah has established in the area of money and work, our individual and corporate financial obedience will lead us back into an accurate Kingdom existence.

Jesus teaches, as in the Mt. 13 story of the parable of the sower that only in direct physical contact with the world can there be an invasion of the Empire. So once an expansive, apostolic Christianity is no longer molded by the world, but again by its divine Emperor, it regains the potential to reshape the world and see a never ending increase of “the government of God” (Isa. 9:7). The empire of God, as we have seen, is not bound to remain invisible, tucked away in some remote corner of the world or hidden behind thick church walls, where harmless Christians gather on Sundays to sing Kumbaya, but in the midst of the world, in the arena of life, in all the six areas of our very visible human existence. This will lead to a final climax and showdown between the global players for God’s ultimate world cup: the system of Babylon, and the “Apostles, Prophets and Saints” (Rev. 18:20). As more and more followers of Christ refuse to be *market-shaped* but becomes *mission shaped*, the Mammon-driven principles of maximization of gain and competition are no longer allowed to remain the engine for the religious success of a fragmented Christianity. As this is not the place to fully develop a Kingdom economy (more on this in “The Starfish Manifesto”, the monthly electronic newsletter “Mammon Fax”, or the new book on the subject, “Messianic Finance Principles, an introduction to Kingdom Economics” by Wolfgang Simson, available in 2009 through the Starfish website), it will have to suffice to briefly summarize some of the

Messianic Finance Principles

A four-phased model of life. Jesus lived four economically distinct life phases as a child, a young man, a father and, after his departure to heaven, as a grandfather. As a boy, Jesus was financially dependent on both his human parents, Mary and Joseph, as well as his father in heaven, who sent gifts towards his son, for example through the wise men from the East. Then, as a young man of about 12 years of age, Jesus went into business. After finishing his 18 years as a building contractor, financed by the business, he left phase number 2 and entered phase number 3: he started to live a very different financial life, lived in (more economic) community, served humans (Mk 10:45) with his gifts, who financed him out of their wealth (as in Luke 8:3), that was gathered in “the purse” (John 12:6), a corporate account run by Judas, and was used for the sustenance of his train as well as for the poor (Mk 14:5). He preached what he lived: that God has paid work for all who are ready to leave the marketplace to serve “the owner of the vineyard”, God (Mt 20). If we are truly to be followers and imitators of Christ, then we are also invited to follow his life in economical terms. In that case this messianic principle can be summarized as: **“God has paid work for all!”**

Jesus demonstrated that, through prophetic advice, businesses can flourish, as in the case of Peter and the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5), which represents a dramatic business breakthrough. But he also showed that getting involved in the Empire of God is far more important than business or money (**“don’t die a businessman”**, another important messianic principle). Cleaving requires leaving: getting involved in the Kingdom and the harvest of the King requires leaving behind everything



else (Luke 5:11; Lk 14:26-33), nets, businesses, relationships, houses and fields. For most this is a shocking insight, but every single disciple that is mentioned in the New Testament needed to *leave* a secular job or a business existence behind, a very radical step that was necessary in order to be “cast out into the harvest” (Luke 10:2). The principle is: missionaries of the Kingdom are recruited away from the market, and not sent into the market. In this third phase of his life, Jesus called out disciples, for whom he was clearly a father figure (John 17). After his ascension he left them behind on earth to, in turn, become the fathers of the next generation of disciples, while Jesus himself relinquished the steering wheel and went on into a sort of grandfather role in heaven. After modeling tangible fatherhood, he retired from this job and, entering the fourth and last phase, he left it for his spiritual sons to take over fathering the emerging church, while he, financially speaking, was surrounded by more wealth than we could possibly comprehend.

Looking into the financial system of the early church, we can see how his disciples understood the revolutionary economic message and life of Jesus – and put it into practice. They did not romanticize the revolutionary economic teachings of Jesus or claimed that he only meant all this in a figurative sense; they seriously put them into practice. This is another important messianic finance principle: **these economic principles are meant to be taken seriously**, not as a romantic fiction of a bygone era which we can safely ignore simply because our cultural times have changed.

Let us structure all of this into three key questions: where, in the Empire of God, do resources come from; to whom are the resources given (where does the buck stop), and for what is money spent?

1. What was the source of income for the early Christians?

a) God’s supernatural provision. The Bible knows supernatural multiplication of bread, fish and oil, quails and manna from heaven, or water that turns into wine. God can and does, in principle, sustain people in a supernatural way: Elijah’s raven, Peter catching his fish with the tax coin in its mouth or the several miraculous catches of fish are well known examples of this.

b) Normative entry-payment at the time of conversion. *All* new converts, that owned houses and fields (Acts 4:35; note the plural), humans, that had more than they needed, submitted not only themselves completely to their new Lord and owner, Jesus Christ, but also everything they owned. They now were the slaves and property of Christ, had a new family (the church), a new government (the Empire of God), a new job for a new employer, a job security, fulfilling the Great Commission, and even an eternal pension plan. This standard practice of an entry payment, a commitment to communal living and the relinquishing of the right to own (Acts 2:44.45 and 4:32-34) was by far the greatest source of income for the church. Even if there were “not many rich” coming to Christ then (or now), it was normal that all new slaves of Christ brought what they had and put it into a common financial pool (resembling the common purse of Jesus and his team). Selling houses and fields would mean we are talking at least 6-digit Euro-amounts. It is possible that this constituted 95% of all the income of the *ekklesia*.



c) Sharing, offering and gifts of the believers. After people have become believers, they adopted a communal lifestyle and attempted to put together as many offerings and gifts as they could (1 Cor 16). The early church did neither know a regulated church tax or even practice a percentage-driven giving or tithing-system (which is nothing else than an infamous invention of church history). But it was not financial individualism that reigned: every believer was not simply free to give if, when, what, how much and to whom he wished. He was now part of an organic community, and finances were clearly regulated and an issue of corporate discipleship. Finances were never left, as in individualistic societies, to the subjective opinionatedness and moods of each person. The financial life was part of their corporate dimension of following Christ, and therefore subject to the clear rules and principles of the Kingdom of Jesus. Sad exceptions like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) or the church of Corinth, that obnoxiously refused to financially support even their own spiritual father and foundational apostle, Paul (1. Cor 9) are only confirming the general rule. In such exceptional situations – and in pioneer moments - Paul became a self-supporting tent maker to bridge shortages without the financial support of the church (Acts 18:1-5).

2. Who collects the money?

Money has “a life of its own”: left to be without a master for only a few seconds, it immediately develops a mammon-shaped dynamic. This is why it is so important to purposefully submit money under the royal rule of Jesus. And his imperial government makes it abundantly clear who are the people to whom money is to be entrusted: it was given to the apostles, to nobody else. To ensure that it becomes “money with a mission”, *apostolic* money, the money was to be laid “at the apostles feet”, never at the feet of pastors, evangelists, parachurch ministries or charity (Acts 4:35). If God is the banker, the apostles are the tellers at the cash counter, assigned as stewards of God to receive the money entrusted to God. Feet of apostles (plural) speaks of a redeemed plurality of apostles, not a single Christian star. It also speaks of a public and transparent mode of giving; people did not give in secret, “into the pockets”. Those whom God entrusted to develop the policy and strategy of the *ekklesia* were the same ones that decided about the money. Anyone knows what happens if strategic planning and the budget commission are in separate hands. The money always seems to win in the long run, have a life of its own and begin to follow its own logic and laws. To do this job properly, the apostles worked in tandem with “deacons”, whose job was, amongst others, to assess real and false needs, so that truly everyone could be given “according to his need” (Acts 2:45; 6:1-7). Even if the gifts put together by the believers at home amounted to larger sums, the money was ultimately channeled to an apostle for further appropriation (1 Cor 16:2-4).

Even if it runs deeply counter-intuitive to many people that have grown up in western, individualistic cultures, the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, clearly knows financial centralism. Each time, when in the Old Testament, a special project was to be achieved, you will find a centralized financial collection (1. Chr. 29; 2. Ki 12:10; Neh 10:33-40; Neh 13:4; Gen 41:49; Ex 25:1-9 etc.). We should therefore not be overly surprised, but even expect that the empire that Jesus Christ brought into this world - and an empire is no decentralized democracy or even an

If God is the banker, the apostles are the tellers at the cash counter, assigned as stewards of God to receive the money entrusted to God.



anarchy - also knows central financial instruments, as it is seen, for example, in the partnership of apostles and deacons. And as all of us know about the ability of money to corrupt, we have all the more reason to state again that “only dead apostles are good apostles”. Deacons are, in a certain sense, “financial eunuchs”; people that only after they have been tested (1. Tim 3:10) were entrusted with money to be distributed according to apostolic policy.

3. Where did the money go?

The New Testament knows four different budget items that seem to be clearly prioritized:

a) *Diaconia* (servanthood) towards their own poor (especially widows and orphans). First things first: you have to take care of the unprotected and most vulnerable members of your own household (Gal 6). Anyone who ignores the weakest members of his own family has nothing to say to this world.

b) “Mom and Dad” (spiritual parents). At some point, all maturing disciples are to become harvest workers, spiritual parents and equippers of others. They are meant to become people who invest themselves full time into the maturing and mobilization of others (Eph 4:11-13). As strange as it may sound, their work is not the work (evangelizing, preaching, teaching etc.), but *to equip others* for “works of service” (Greek: *diakonia*). Unmarried men may work for themselves; fathers work for their family, for the next generation. In this sense, true spiritual parents are not harvesting the harvest, *they are harvesting harvesters*. This is exactly how multiplication will take place. And as “every worker is worth his pay” (Luke. 10:7; 1. Cor. 9 etc), they were cared for out of the apostolic financial pool, from which they got money or material things as they needed. Harvest workers received daily wages; in the same way, the New Testament does not know regular salaries (that quickly can create dependencies or false securities), but tailor-made help and assistance according to the situation. To say it in football language: it was not the football *players* who were financed, but the football *coaches* that trained the players. The central idea here is that all people who have reached a matured trainer- or coach-phase and who are also ready to take over such a vital function in the Body of Christ are being funded. A Christianity that does not show proper care for its own spiritual parents and trainers and lets them rot on the streets, tells them to be financially “on their own”, is childish, deeply selfish and consumer oriented. It is immature, possesses not an ounce of integrity and therefore has no future. But a church that recognizes its own parents and coaches, those “that work hard among them” (1. Thess 5:12), and values them as expressed in sufficient financial support, ultimately invests into its own future and will experience and upgrade in quality, stability and maturity.

c) *Diaconia* towards the poor outside the *ekklesia*. Point three on the budget list is “to do good to all people” (Gal 6). Giving to the poor is *voluntary* (Mk 14:7) and must not occupy priority number one, otherwise the finances would start being dictated by need, no longer by God, and the church would financially bleed to death. This is why the money was never entrusted to evangelists or pastors, since their danger would be to be driven only by their soft and compassionate heart for those who



suffer, quickly losing perspective for the overall mission, destiny and therefore financial needs of the *ekklesia*. If *need* in itself was the driving factor of the financial policy of the church, budget items one and two would immediately suffer and the entire system would fall apart because of unapostolic charity and an untamed “helper syndrome”. Apostolic diaconical work is much more than to give alms to the poor outside the church. At its apostolic diaconia is to share the overflowing blessing of the empire of God with those that are at the moment yet outside of it. This includes to model Life 2.0 for them, in all of the six aspects mentioned, and to invite them to benefit “from the children’s bread on the table” (Mk 7:26-30). Apostolic diaconia also means to not keep healing, prophecy or dream interpretation for ourselves, but also to open up our families for others, which may very well include the adoption of new family members. As Christ has adopted us, we also can adopt others. It also means to model Life 2.0 in the corporate world, in the area of business, running companies with a solidarity-based and not Mammon-driven mindset, and to invent and open Kingdom-shaped education models and training, in which people who do not yet know Christ as King can participate. Rather than through preaching alone, we will start living the answers that all humans are knowingly or unknowingly looking for, and by modeling Kingdom life for the world to see we will become “the city on the hill”, the light of this world. All of this is in grave danger the moment we isolate the command of Jesus “to love our neighbors” – and therefore serve them and share what we have – from its necessary apostolic framework. If deacons and apostles, who are destined for a tandem-function in God’s Kingdom are separated for whatever reasons, both of them face an immediate overload because they feel pressured to take over the task of the missing partner as well. Need oriented ventures – like feeding the hungry, caring for the sick - have a very powerful tendency to quickly become a stand-alone and independent project; and if they are not any longer motivated and inspired by the King or an apostolic structure, but by “finding a need and fill it” – something so self-evident to the unredeemed mind that also non-Christians would easily support it – then it is only a matter of time when this becomes one more social project totally depending on the mood of the sponsors. And instead of been driven by the king, God’s work is degraded to good work, humanitarian deeds organized by well-meaning men.

d) Apostolic projects. The rest of the money went into apostolic projects necessary to implement the next steps within the larger apostolic mission. Besides the financial costs for apostolic councils (Acts 15) or travel costs Paul asks for a collection for the aging grandmother of a church, Jerusalem (1 Cor 16); the Philippians collect a large and obviously liberating financial sum for Paul who was suffering financially and had to resort to making tents for a while (Acts 18:1-5; Phil 4:15). In order to make tents it is not necessary to be an apostle; but not every tentmaker can fulfill a precious apostolic role.

What does this mean for today?

Nowhere in the New Testament have any of these Messianic principles established by Jesus been lifted or changed. The times have changed; God has not, nor has the nature of his Empire. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not my words”, says Jesus. The unchanging nature of

In order to make tents it is not necessary to be an apostle; but not every tentmaker can fulfill a precious apostolic role.



God's rule is one of its very distinct hallmarks. This means that the words and deeds of our King himself are legally binding for all of us that have decided to be his subjects, and not the variations and ever-changing interpretations of interpretations of the economic principles of God during the uneven course of church history. Consequently, we need to seek ways to implement the same principles in our times and political circumstances, whatever they may be. A good start is that we repent, if necessary, from any rebellious and materialistic, fear-driven behavior and the fact that we have persistently broken almost every rule in God's economic book and replaced it with economic advice imported from Babylon. The next step would be for us to voluntarily embrace and align ourselves to the clear imperial economic promises and laws. This means that *all of us* need to not only learn to live by faith rather than by sight (as in calculation, the faithless crunching of numbers), but that we also have to build structures and financial instruments that, as best as we can today, reflect original apostolic practice. The development of apostolic foundations or trusts that serve entire regions or cities, publicly entrusted to a group of apostolic and diaconical people for apostolic purposes, is one of the clear tasks that is ahead of us.

Those who are deficit in material resources as well as those who have far more financial resources than they need for themselves require in this new phase of church history new, substantial, "apostolic teaching" to bring in "both the small copper coins" of the poor widow in Luke 21 as well as their financial surplus or even abundance into the apostolic financial pools in their region. In cases where wealthy new converts or wealthy Christians who have never "given everything" to the contemporary apostolic people – either in ignorance or defiance of the King's principles – the financial lions share in the ecology of God's Kingdom goes missing and the mission either greatly suffers or comes to a grinding halt. This is another important messianic finance principle: God rules the money and money does not rule God. To own money in the Kingdom of God is something entirely different from owning money in the world. In the world people who have money automatically assume with great fervor that they have the inbuilt right to decide about the exact appropriation of the money, to direct its use. Not so in the Kingdom. Nobody in the Kingdom can, by giving money, buy himself the right to dictate apostolic policy or even assume the control over the financial means. This would reflect the controlling style of Mammon, not Jesus. The apostolic function cannot be bought by money. Not those that have money and a few good ideas dictate the direction in God's Kingdom, but those that have been gifted and assigned by God for this very task. The financial challenges of an apostolic era, that, for example, involves the facilitation of the planting of millions of housechurches, the families of the empire, are enormous. We cannot afford to build such an endeavor on *flesh*, on economical calculations made in Babylon, but we will need to learn to go by the book, not our homemade financial constructs, and follow the sound financial constitutional law of God. Too much is at risk. People need to learn to invest financially whatever they have into this largest missionary venture the planet has ever seen without the right (which is simply not God-given) to pull the strings and call the shots simply because they gave money. We cannot cling to financial doctrines and principles made in Babylon, that cripple an apostolic mission like a cancer, and then go on to expect a great breakthrough. And we cannot

Nobody in the Kingdom can, by giving money, buy himself the right to dictate apostolic policy or even assume the control over the financial means.



run by our own financial rules, no matter how much we have been hurt by others – including Christians – and pretend to follow the King. But if we allow Jesus to again be the King of our financial world, the sky is the limit for what will happen.

In addition to this, on a more personal level, we need to encourage people to learn to run through all four organic life-phases (child, woman, mother, grand-mother), including the distinct financial implications of each phase. This means they need, if at all possible, to be financially dependent on their parents (or others) for a while. The next step would be to become involved in business for a time, trying to escape a passive job-based existence and become either self-employed or start a business, which trains people in their pioneering skills and personal responsibilities. Finally we would grow up further into a parenting and coaching role in the Kingdom, before we happily settle down on the comfortable bench reserved for spiritual grandmas and grandpas, leaving the steering wheel to others. Remember: you typically become a grandfather at an age not much older than 50, and usually far earlier than with 65. As spiritual grandparents we can watch and, if need be, help with solicited comments and advise, and impart our inheritance and bless what God has given us into the next generations. That our times of greatest weakness and even physical confinement can be a time of tremendous spiritual fruit can be seen in Paul's ministry in Rome: bound with chains, arrested in his own rented house, he boldly proclaimed to all that came to visit him the message of his life - the Kingdom of God with its Lord, Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30).

In other words: we need to move through all the vital organic and natural stages in life, and grow from being a boy into an adventurer, into a warrior, a lover, a knight of the King and finally into a wise man (see also John Eldredge: "The Way of the Wild Heart. A Map for the Masculine Journey").

History knows examples of some of this, of people in whom exactly this holistic and organic vision – of the Kingdom inspiring all aspects of life – burnt like a bright flame. One of the examples is the amazing story of Hans Nielsen Hauge of Norway (1771-1824), who, against all contemporary odds, called for a regaining of simple, authentic NT-home based Christianity *and* ethical business planting, and laid the foundation of modern Norway. Hauge was misunderstood, badmouthed and persecuted almost all his life –including by the Lutheran Church fearing to lose their monopoly to housechurches – but passionately challenged everyone to return to the simple forms of house based churches and start companies in the spirit of a solidarity-based economy. But because he kept his course and followed his King Jesus with an almost divine stubbornness, he ultimately became the spiritual father of Norway, the country with the highest standard of living in the world today

One thing is clear: the new *ekklesia*, church 2.0, needs a new financial concept. As a new, Empire-based and apostolic-prophetic Christianity clearly arises, we cannot afford to power the New Christianity with the old financial engine. It would create a generic system conflict, and wreak havoc on both. This will reshape our handling of work, and the way, amounts and directions of money given towards the Empire of God. This will also mean for us to prepare a necessary "mammon-proof character" for two reasons. First, to begin to properly use the money that already



is in the hands of Christians according to the principles of the king, and secondly proactively prepare ourselves for a time, in which the following prophecies regarding an impending “wealth transfer” will come true, that God seems to plan for. Imagine a time when, globally, “the sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous” (Prov 13:22), “those that increase wealth by exorbitant interest amass it for the one who is kind to the poor” (Prov 28:8), “the sinner gathers and stores up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God” (Eccl 2:26), and “those who heap up silver like dust: the righteous will divide the silver” (Job 27:13-16). Space does not permit to go very much deeper into this here. At its core the economic future will see a new industrial revolution, that is, like all industrial revolutions, an economic development directly tied to a groundbreaking innovation of global proportions. This innovation will be the discovery of inspiration itself and this, in turn, will lead to the emergence of an Inspiration Age, replacing what today is known as the information age. On a personal level the amazing job-security and the economic liberty that the Empire offers to its citizens will make them the freest persons on the planet. Those that are ready to work for the King in his Kingdom will experience an amazing liberation and remain fairly unaffected by the economic ups and downs - or even disasters - of the planet. To work for Jesus involves two dimensions that are necessary: personal faith and apostolic structure. Personal faith without apostolic finance structures – for example without the existence of a functioning regional apostolic pool - is like walking a tightrope without a visible security net. It will not be easy at all, although it can be a great test of our own ability to trust. But if we experience personally that God pays what he orders, we will become the happiest and freest people on earth. And all slaves listen when a free man speaks. As the *ekklesia* of Jesus again learns to function according to his economic principles, this world will see the emergence of two waves. One will be a large liberation of liberators, the mobilization of spiritual parents, of equippers and mobilizers of others, many of whom have either been a frozen asset, as almost all their energy and time has gone into fighting for their own economic survival. Many spiritual parents have not been able to do what God has designed them to do, but were forced to do what economic pressures dictated them to do. A great number of people know for sure that God has called them for a task in the Empire, but, for mostly economic reasons, they tread water, run in circles and more or less patiently wait for “a signal from God”, while they are busy with “Plan B”, a sort of wait loop, a temporary mode that for many already has become a permanent condition. The “cries of the workmen in the fields” and “the wages of the harvest workers” are screaming since centuries to the Lord, as it is described drastically in James 5, while many people, who carry the name of Christ, literally sit on millions. Once these mobilizers of others themselves are enabled by the tens of thousands, they can now finally go about their job and are no longer tied to a life in subsistence. They are now free to do exactly what God has purposed them to do since ages: to parent, call, equip and send out many others. Once the *mobilizers are mobilized*, this will lead to a second, much larger wave: it will release a large amount of harvest workers, of those bringing in the harvest, the saints who do “works of service”, because their spiritual parents are on active duty again and function the way God the father wanted this to happen in the first place. This will be the final fulfillment of the prayer, that Jesus taught us to bring before

All slaves listen when a free man speaks.



God: "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to fling out workers" (Lk 10:2).

Once the return to Jesus as our King positively gains traction by more and more people aligning themselves with the economic principles of his empire, it is not longer Mammon who sets the controlling and crippling borders for the church, but Jesus, the liberator. This will be the final tipping point when an apostolic church will rise up yet once again, taking back land for God from the domain of darkness "garden by garden", until the might of Babylon and Mammon will begin to crumble (Rev 18), its empire greatly depleted, and Satan and his demons will be greatly challenged about who rules the nations. There will be a final apocalyptic climax, prophesied for all of us in the prophetic books of the Bible and the revelation of John, which will look as if God and his people are losing it all. But this is not the last word. The King has the final word, because he says: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Rev 22:13).



IV) And God created the Starfish

The starfish is an extraordinary animal that can serve us as a prophetic symbol. It displays one of the most unique reproduction abilities in the animal kingdom. Cut off the leg of an octopus, and - amazingly - it grows back. Cut off its head, and it dies. However, cut off a leg or two of a starfish, not only do the legs grow back, but also the cut-off pieces grow back into an entirely new starfish! Rather than a top-down structure, like an octopus or spider, with a minute head and a dumb workforce that literally just does the legwork, a starfish is a brilliantly designed decentralized neural network, carrying its DNA in every part of its body.

From the beginning of creation, everything that God made has the seed to its own multiplication built into it (Gen 1:10.11). Humans can only add, but cannot manufacture multiplication; only God can do that. The difference between addition and multiplication is like the difference between growth and an explosion. This opens up entirely new possibilities and time frames for the Great Commission that Jesus gave us all: "Make disciples of all nations". It either will happen "by power and might", or by God's Spirit. It either will happen through human endeavor in our typical additive, sweaty style of work - or it will happen God's style: by multiplication. If the *ekklesia* shifts back from man-mode to God-mode, if she is taken out of the controlling hands of man and their bureaucratic systems that quickly have taken on a life of their own, and given back into the hands of God, it may not at all take another 2.000 years to finish the task God has given us. Under God and as a firm part of his Empire, with the specific blessing of God on individual disciples, churches, networks of churches and regional strategies, they will receive a dimension of fruitfulness and multiplication that is, for humans, out of this world. The consequences of this is that the global impact, the filling of the earth with the glory of God, the discipling of all nations, will become possible within an amazingly short time-span. It is the central thesis of this booklet that, under these conditions, it will take less than two decades to finish the task Jesus, our King, has left for us. Let us look closer into this.

We will not live here "happily ever after". Planet Earth has an expiry date. The Bible clearly speaks of an end of history as we know it, and it will be marked by a number of cosmic events. One of them is the physical return of the formerly invisible King Jesus as King for all to see. "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), said the angels to the disciples. Another event will be the deprivation of the devil: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8), and: "The devil was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur for ever" (Rev. 20:10). Yes, Jesus did come to establish the good, but also to destroy the bad. The works of the devil manifest in a million ways and have a boundary named Jesus. Jesus overcame and drove out the devil from his presence, so we, as part of the Empire of God, can overcome and drive out demons as well. Before the return of Christ, the Empire will not be visible, triumphant and perfect. It will be like a mustard seed conspiracy,

From the beginning of creation, everything that God made has the seed to its own multiplication built into it (Gen 1:10.11).

The works of the devil manifest in a million ways and have a boundary named Jesus.



The small flock of an amazingly expansive God is surely bigger than the large flock of a small shepherd.

yeast working its way all through the dough, a subversive underground counter-culture. The *ekklesia* of Jesus, before he comes back in visibility, is just like Jesus was while he was on earth: not crowned in triumphs, but in suffering; beaten, but not killed; sorrowful, but always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, but yet possessing everything (2. Cor 6-8).

And finally, a time will come when “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, sing praises” to Jesus, the Lamb of God; when “a great multitude in white robes that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language stand before the throne and in front of the lamb,” and the Bride will be united with her bridegroom (Rev. 5; 7; 21). But we are not there yet. Therefore, we must concentrate on what is at hand.

How plentiful is a plentiful harvest?

In my line of work, countless times colleagues around the world and I have discussed the question that arises from when Jesus said: “The harvest is plentiful” (Luke 10:2). The Greek word for plentiful is *polus*, which simply means big, huge, plentiful. How plentiful is plentiful? We know that “God wants all men to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4). But this statement is balanced by another statement: It is a “little flock” to whom the Kingdom is given (Luke 12:32). And quite simply, not all men want what God wants. Paul writes: “Not everyone has faith” (2 Thess. 3:3). Therefore, how many will that “all” be, that God wants to see saved?

“The full number (Greek: *pleroma*) of gentiles will come in,” says Paul in Romans 11:25. *Pleroma*, meaning totality, full measure, describing a ship that is fully laden, does not speak of a pitiful few. How full is full? As the “uncountable great multitude” will stand before the great white throne of God (Rev. 7:9), who can then count the uncountable? One thing is for sure: the small flock of an amazingly expansive God is surely bigger than the large flock of a small shepherd. In other words: it is going to be a big, bold, mind blasting, God-sized number.

Knowing full well – and promoting - that discipleship is both a qualitative and a quantitative term, some of us have been discussing the needed percentage of Kingdom people in a given population of a region, city, nation or people group to render that area *discipled*. Will 1% be enough? 5, 10, 20%? Many of us have discussed the concept of a “critical mass,” describing a tipping point, a certain quality and size of a substance in a larger entity that has the potential to change the entire entity. I remember as I pondered this question again and again, I once asked Jesus this direct question: “Lord, how will it be when you come again? How many will have been won for eternal life in the Kingdom?” And like a direct response he spoke to me from Matthew 24:40-41: “That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken, and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” And in a parallel verse in Luke 17:34 Jesus adds: “On that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left.”

Statistically speaking, Jesus predicts a 50:50 situation when he comes. 50% of the planet, half of all women, men and couples “sleeping in one bed” will be taken, half will be left. And as he is the Lord of the harvest



and has insights into things that we don't and who knows the future better than us, I accepted this as a prophetic statement in a direct and even verbatim answer to my question. If we are reflecting back on the history of theology - humans reflecting on God - a great deal of theology has been to actually try to explain why Jesus has not really meant what he said, or why what he said literally should only be taken as figurative speech. A foundational principle of the Protestant Reformation has been that the Bible interprets itself. If we take this principle serious, do we find other biblical statements that endorse or even enhance the 50-percent thesis? As you will see, we do.

Remember the ten virgins in Matthew chapter 25? *Half* of the virgins went in, 50% of those who were sleepy and unprepared had to stay outside, unrecognizable to the bridegroom. In the book of Esther, the King asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." (3 times: 5:3 & 6:7:2). In a prophecy about the return of the King Jesus to Jerusalem, the prophet Zechariah says: "I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. *Half* of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city" (Zec 14:2). Even King Herod said to the girl dancing before him: "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you. And he promised her with an oath, whatever you ask I will give you, up to *half* my Kingdom" (Mt 6:23). And Habakkuk prophesied a time "when the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:4; Isa 11:9). More than two thirds of the globe is covered with water. What if God meant all of what he said literally? Could it be that God has been trying to say something to us not only about the quality, but also about the quantity of the harvest? If this is what the Lord of the harvest says, it means for all the King's people in plain simple terms that **we need to ready ourselves for a harvest of at least 50% of the world's population.** For many if not most of us, this is a dimension that far supersedes any evangelistic vision that has ever crossed our path. And it would require us grasping this goal not with our natural, calculating mindset that screams in us to "hold it right there" and to be "realistic," but with our eyes of faith, seeing the way God sees, and acting based on inspiration from God, not information from earth.

Let us have a look at what this would actually mean in practical terms. UN estimates indicate that today's 6.5 billion people will grow to reach 7.82 billion in 2025, whereby 93% of that population growth happens outside the West. If we put a rough number of eight billion people out as a very possible population of the planet within the next fifteen to twenty years, we need to look at a task of discipling half, that is, four billion people. Current Mission statistics speak globally of about 650 to 700 million evangelical, born again Christians across the board of all existing denominations, including charismatic Christians in traditional Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox churches. Evangelicals are those who claim a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. At best, the number of Evangelicals globally comprises slightly more than 10% of the world's population. Even if a phenomenal traditional revival occurs in the traditional church and the current evangelical population would grow from 650 to 800 million in the next



20 years (which is highly unlikely given the current stagnating growth rates), this leaves 3.2 billion, a staggering 80% of the task of discipling half the planet, yet undone. As it is even more unlikely that the current church-as-we-know-it will suddenly grow to 4 billion people in the next two decades, we therefore need an alternative scenario. Respected mission thinkers like James Engel and William Dyrness have pointed out in their book *“Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?”* that the missionary movement is badly off track, needs to rethink its core assumptions, and embrace a “gracious revolution” in missions. I believe the answer to reaching such a “God sized goal” as discipling of half of the planet is not really difficult, as it ultimately hinges on two things: organic multiplication, and obedient love towards the healthy apostolic patterns for *ekklesia* that God has already revealed.

The power of organic multiplication

Someone said: Humans think addition; God thinks multiplication. The multiplication potential of anything organic – fruits, vegetables, plants, animals – is so explosive, that “nature” is balanced and self regulative, preventing individual plants or animals from growing all over the planet, like the well known rabbit plague in Australia. God created plants (and animals) in such a way that *they carry their own seed in them*. A head of wheat carries between 50 and 120 wheat corns. Female carps lay up to 1.5 million fish-eggs. Bacteria and viruses often double every hour, and certain mushrooms, like *Langermannia gigantea*, with five to fifteen billion spores, hold the world record in multiplication. But even two rabbits, if their multiplication is unchecked, can turn into an impressive 476 million animals in only three years:

Elephants

Only one baby per pregnancy
22 months gestation time
Reaches sexual maturity in 18 years
Only fertile four times a year
Increase in 3 years from 2 to 3

Rabbits

average of seven babies
1 month gestation time
mature in 4 months
almost always fertile
increase in 3 years from 2 to 476 million

If we dare to compare the elephant to traditional churches and rabbits to self-multiplying, organic house-churches and networks, the apostolic potential of small, multipliable house-churches becomes immediately evident. But there is more proof to this than the funny rabbit-comparison. A friend of mine, German researcher Christian Schwarz, has researched what he calls God’s “growth automatism” (according to Mark 4:26-28). Looking at the typical formats of individual congregations based on CAWKI (Church-as-we-know-it), Schwarz, in one of the largest church research projects ever done, comes to a simple conclusion: the larger the church, the smaller its potential for growth. Here some of his findings:

Church size (Attendees)	new members after 5 years	size after 10 years	growth rate in percent
1-100 (average 52)	32	133	63
100-200 (average 150)	34	185	23
200-300 (average 250)	39	293	17
300-400 (average 350)	25	375	7
1000+ (average 2.856)	112	2.970	4



What Christian did not research at that time was the amazing growth potential of organic house churches. Typically, such churches double in number (not size!) every twelve months; especially once they are part of a regional, apostolic architecture. This means a house church of twelve people can, in only ten years, grow into a movement of 3,456 persons. If we pencil that into the above statistics, the line would look like this:

Housechurch (average 12) 132

3,456

1,100



200 million new churches by 2020

Let's go back again to the difference between starfish and octopi. Church planter Curtis Sergeant once compared the reproductive abilities of a starfish to those of house churches. An octopus, for example, is able to replace a tentacle that has been cut off, and grow another tentacle. If the head of the octopus is destroyed, the animal dies. Curtis compares the octopus with traditional church or a cell *within* a traditional church. Such churches or cells rely heavily on the superstructure for teaching, leadership, and authority (Curtis calls this meta-church). In times of pressure, problems, or persecution, the cell dies; it cannot survive without its head, let alone multiply itself. A starfish, however, has the amazing ability to not only grow back a leg that has been cut off; but the leg that has been cut away can grow back into an entire new starfish. If we cut a starfish into five pieces, each piece has the reproductive ability to grow back into a new starfish, altogether into five starfish! Starfish are almost impossible to destroy, and even using chemical or biological means to kill them, they show an amazing resilience and power of survival. In a Mega-Church, if the senior leadership of this church is imprisoned or dies or falls into sin or any other problem, the church is typically seriously damaged, deflated or even destroyed. Housechurches are not meant to live independent, but interdependent. As a part of the empire of Jesus they are meant to be embedded into a regional network and therefore plugged into a context that provides them with apostolic and prophetic input, in addition to their connection to "the vine", Jesus himself. However, all of this is part of their DNA, which empowers them to grow and multiply beyond themselves. Wherever there are problems - and it would be futile to think that there are no problems in housechurches - these affect only a small number of people - unlike in a Mega-Church - and therefore create only a limited damage. The key insight is: once equipped with the proper apostolic DNA, each unit is not necessarily reliant on the organization any more but is self-sufficient for feeding and growth. Starfish are simple and non-specialized - and therefore multiply easier - whereas octopi are complex and specialized and are much more difficult "to clone".

Let us draw the conclusion of this insight. If we focus our attention and energy to plant starfish-type churches, we will be as close as it humanly gets to finish the Great Commission of Jesus to see all people groups of this world discipled.



Maybe one of the key reasons why God has created starfish after all, I have concluded after studying starfish of all kinds, is to give all of us a powerful symbol in nature to challenge us to do something like this ourselves. Imagine a church that grows under pressure, expands the more it is squeezed, multiplies as it is persecuted, and typically doubles its numbers once a year, and you have a church that can do what has previously been unimaginable and can do so in a breathtakingly short time.

Research has shown that healthy house churches that are born out of a passion to reach the lost and do their part within a wider apostolic framework will usually reproduce after their own kind. Sometimes, depending on context and situation, house churches can double or triple their own number in only a few weeks, sometimes days. Sometimes, in phases of consolidation or challenges, the time between reproductions - that one house church becomes two or more - can be up to 2 years, but usually not more. The statistical average time span of reproduction, as missionary research shows us, is around twelve months. A typical house church has an average of around fifteen adult members. Once it grows beyond that size, it typically will multiply into two or more house churches. Given these factors, this leads us to a crucial question: how many new house churches will be necessary to disciple the more than three billion people? The answer is: 200 million new house churches. Minus those that already exist!

Below is a list of new house churches that, to the best of our knowledge, have emerged over the last decade in selected countries. This does not include China, where the number of house churches may already significantly exceed one million.

Country	Approx. number of known house churches		
	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2007
India	20,000	100,000	300,000
Pakistan	1,000	5,000	7,000
Bangladesh	3,000	20,000	40,000
Egypt	400	3,000	4,000
Israel	40	100	150-200
Middle East (excl. Egypt and Israel)	300	3,000	5,000
USA	500	10,000	40,000
Canada	100	1,000	3,000
Spain	5	50	200
Switzerland	50	300	500
Germany	100	1,000	2,000
Austria	10	50	100
Albania	3	20	50
Finland	10	50	100
Philippines	500	1,000	2,000
Indonesia	1,000	20,000	40,000
Australia	50	500	1,500
Myanmar	100	200	1,500

A conservative estimate of the sum total of all existing house churches worldwide (outside China) may already be around 500,000. If current



developments are any indication, then the number of house churches in these and many other countries will continue to grow at a steady rate. Now imagine as more and more of these new house churches are allowing themselves to be related, and possibly founded on apostolic and prophetic ministries, are regularly exposed to prophetic intelligence, inspiration and impartation - what would happen? They would become fissional, just like the Uranium 235 we already discussed. There are two types of atomic explosions: controlled ones, and uncontrolled ones. Uncontrolled ones are bombs that inflict unspoken harm and disaster on mankind. Controlled ones are explosions "with the handbrake on," and create useful atomic energy in reactors. One of the key elements in the process of controlling atomic energy is Hafnium. Named after the Latin word for Copenhagen, Hafnium (Hf) is a silvery transition metal, chemical element number 72 in the periodic table that is found in zirconium minerals. Hafnium has an amazing ability as a neutron absorber in control rods in nuclear power plants – 600 times more than zirconium. It therefore functions as a "brake," a short leash to control otherwise uncontrolled explosives.

For me, hafnium is a symbol that speaks of the need for a regulative structure for otherwise uncontrolled, wild and potentially harmful growth. This structure can not be control structures invented by humans – ekklesiastical hierarchical superstructures, for example – but can only be the Empire of God, and the regulative and supporting structure and architecture that God has set in place for the *ekklesia* to function properly, including the fivefold ministry or the financial principles and structures we see in the New Testament. It is otherwise possible that Christian Amalekites – those that respect no King except themselves – will use housechurches as a convenient do-it-yourself method to promote their own little kingdoms, bless-me clubs of "us four no more", and plod on in splendid and harmless isolation, without any missionary fruit. Worst case, they become patterned after a small spiritual dictator called Diotrephes (3.John 9) and behave like an exclusive cult. Not that this will disturb God's mission in any significant way; the mission will simply bypass such folks. But such groups will become a tragic trap and a cemetery of divine callings, immobilizing and binding precious human potential into small, ingrown specks of Christians that merely exist for their own benefit and in order to fulfill their own religious needs. Where Christians only come together in order to come together, "because of the kids" or to slot in an hour of religious time-out per week into a busy middle class life, the dreams that God is having with each one of us as well as with church-as-God-wants-it will slowly die, crucified by our own uncrucified consumerism. But as more and more followers of Christ become loyal and legal citizens of God's Empire, they gladly accept or exercise these controlling elements for their own benefit, humility and discipline. The chances are then high that this "apostolic explosion," as some have started to call what is happening, will remain a healthy one, under the loving headship and able control of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

The impossible suddenly becomes possible

This brings us to an interesting conclusion. Imagine that we are able to grasp this and develop regional apostolic and prophetic networks, together with gifted, skilled, and willing Kingdom-minded pastors, evangelists, teachers, deacons, and elders. Imagine we come up with adequate

Christian Amalekites – those that respect no King except themselves – will use housechurches as a convenient do-it-yourself method to promote their own little kingdoms, bless-me clubs of "us four no more", and plod on in splendid and harmless isolation, without any missionary fruit. The mission will simply bypass such folks.



recruiting and training that can serve as a healthy implantation of a missional DNA into many individuals, churches, and movements. Imagine that in all areas of the globe an apostolic and prophetic foundation laying and enrichment process is both made available and well received at local and regional levels. Imagine we would all give up our independence of each other and start to work in synergy. Imagine we would relinquish our control of any of this to the only one who can control it, Jesus. Imagine if all of us would relinquish any desire to humanly control such developments at any level, because we have understood that it is enough to know the steering wheel is firmly in the hands of Jesus. Imagine Eph. 4: 15.16 were true and Jesus would direct all of this with timely prophetic advise from heaven. Imagine if God, through his Holy Spirit, would give his blessing towards fruitfulness, multiplication and global impact to us all; and imagine if God would steer all this through timely emails from heaven, through prophetic intelligence, supernatural directives that do not come from human mission headquarters. What would be possible?

Imagine a process that would start in the year 2010 where a few hundred (or thousands?) of apostolic and prophetic people – in partnership with evangelists, pastors, teachers, and deacons, whom God has been calling into such a task for a long time - recognize the need to synergize, “give each other the right hand of fellowship” as in Gal. 2:8-10, work together in the harvest and help each other pull in the nets because they are too heavy for just one boat (Luke 5:7)? What if God would fashion them into a global net that catches all “the 153 large fish” (see John 21), then the known number of people groups in the entire world? If we would all start working in our God-given jurisdictions, be that local, regional, or global? And imagine if it would start with only about 100,000 house churches around the world that are ready to participate and to engage personally and deliberately in this process, while 400.000 – that is 80% of all existing housechurches today (outside China) – remain aloof to this and absolutely want to go their own ways and disrespect the King and his mission? How long would it take to see the task fulfilled of discipling 3,2 billion people, if housechurches, firmly part of a Kingdom-shaped ekklesia, would do what they already do: double their numbers every year? The answer is: *it would take us a mere 11 years!*

We all know that organic developments usually never follow ivory-tower strategies and mechanical rules invented on drawing boards. Organic life is always different and hilariously unpredictable; however, some organic factors – like multiplication – can be very much foreseen and reckoned with. What follows is a table that lays out the very real possibilities for such a multiplicative development, and make its potential transparent:



Year	Number of house churches	their combined members
2010	100,000	1.5 Million
2011	200,000	3 Million
2012	400,000	6 Million
2013	800,000	12 Million
2014	1.6 Million	24 Million
2015	3.2 Million	48 Million
2016	6.4 Million	96 Million
2017	12.8 Million	192 Million
2018	25.6 Million	384 Million
2019	50 Million	750 Million
2020	100 Million	1.5 Billion
2021	200 Million	3 Billion
2022	?	?

In only eleven short years, such a process would have the ability to disciple half the planet. And should God not place a stopper on it and let this go for another few months, it would be even more than half the population, maybe reflecting the more than two thirds of the earth (70%), the amount that is physically covered by the sea. I am writing what follows here not lightheartedly, but after much deliberation: I would be willing to give my life to such a cause. What would you be ready to do for it?

Such a global development of a viral Kingdom-epidemic would, of course, have extremely serious implications for governments and the economy. The time is long gone where the “real world” was still governed by governments. The world affairs are today far more effectively run by the decisions of multi-national companies, cartels and bank syndicates. For those groups that believe themselves to be in a position of real economic power – including national and transnational governments, alliances or political platforms – and who refuse to align themselves with the Kingdom, a mushrooming Kingdom development will create the very real pressure. It will definitely threaten a possible one-world government that then would easily legitimize such freaky actions like the introduction of 666-type security and other Big-Brother type responses, so they would not be in serious danger of losing control of the planet. But this is not the real challenge, because our goal is not to be in competition with Babylon to rule the world, but to do the will of our God. Therefore, the much more crucial question is: what will be your role in this, individually or as a family? What kind of roads will we need to build to achieve these goals? What structures are necessary and helpful towards this?

Let me conclude this by addressing three remaining questions: a) What does all of this mean in our modern context? b) What therefore do we need to do? And c) how do we turn the Starfish vision into a reality, into “Mission Starfish”, $J=mc^2$, and run with it?



Part Two

2. Interpretation: what does this mean?

First of all, if this is a correct rendering of the vision and a description of what God truly is doing and up to, it means we have arrived at a *kairos* time in history. *Kairos*, other than *chronos*, is not only just time as we know it, another historical epoch, but God's appointed time, a special watershed moment. The birth of Jesus was such a *kairos* time; Pentecost was another. The culmination of God's apostolic mission will be yet another one, as well as the ultimate return of the King. **Kairos** times ask for a special response, an extraordinary echo in all of us, or we might "miss the day of God's visitation" (Luke 19:4; 1 Pet 2:12 etc) if we simply remain untouched and unchanged. In order to do what God is asking of us we need to "discern the times", we must weigh all new visions or teachings against God's word, the Bible (Acts 17:11), and "weigh carefully what is said" (1 Cor 24:29). I invite you to do this with your Bible at hand, and study the far more extensive "The Starfish Manifesto". At this point we will look briefly into our present-day context and offer a number of aspects and interpretations that will help you to place this vision into a larger framework.

a) The political dimension. Whether we like it or not, we find our political context within a globalized *Pax Americana* similar to the *Pax Romana* 2000 years ago. One was the framework for the entry of the King, the other will be the political framework preparing the stage for his return. Just as during the reign of the Roman Empire, the *ekklesia* finds itself in another pagan, animistic worldview; a military- and market-driven empire that creates a near-global *Pax Americana* with a common language, English, global music, MTV and consumer-driven pop-culture and a communication systems that connects people at the speed of the Internet; in other words, a global village. If it is of God, and part of the unfolding of salvation history that globalization is happening, the current prominent role of the embattled but clear leadership of the USA is indisputable. Just as Jesus and his disciples did neither speak for or against the Roman Empire, we as citizens of the King need to avoid two extremes: we should neither fight globalization itself, be Anti-American in our minds and criticize the Washington administration for its every move, or, the second extreme, embrace an unholy and idolatrous patriotism and confuse America as God's own nation, like American Pastor Gregory Boyd points out vividly in his book "The Myth of a Christian Nation". God has always used political powers as his agents of government, judgment, wrath, and to commend those that do good (Rom. 13), but they ultimately remained not much more than pawns on his chessboard. I believe that the current process of globalization, which is driven mainly by the market, by money, power, military presence and a pseudo-religious UN, is the birthing process of Babylon. Babylon is a global political, economic, religious and military structure that will ultimately assume world government for a while, and use this position to persecute and fight "the apostles, prophets and saints" (Rev 18:20), which it will perceive as its fiercest competitor and global rival. This means that the *ekklesia* needs to be both politics-proof and persecution-proof. We need to be extremely careful not to be co-opted into the political agen-

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das of today – which could result in us being sucked into vortex similar to a German Church siding with Hitler – and secondly be prepared for a massive persecution, including the loss of all financial privileges. Those who prepare early for this, and develop a persecution-proof mindset (and structure!), will be largely unaffected by this, while a Christianity that relies on the same fleeting material or political securities as the world will drown, being completely at a loss for answers. Prophets like John Mulinde, Ron McKenzie and many others have warned extensively about this, but have been largely ignored.

b) Postmodernism. Postmodernity and its rejection of absolutes, of fundamental truth and the embracing of “change as the only constant”, prioritizing experience over explanations and relationships over institutions has created a new cultural environment, mainly in the West, within which the gospel, the story of God, has to be re-interpreted and incarnated in order to embody and flesh out the gospel in a way that is understood. Only what is first perceived can be understood at all. US-futurist Leonard Sweet describes how an institutional and deeply modern church has nearly no chance to communicate any longer with a postmodern society, as long as it remains an attractional, propositional and deeply colonial church. Rather than ‘come and see’ the new motto is ‘to go and be’. And that happens only as the church becomes missional, relational and incarnational.

c) Recent Mission history. One of the greatest dangers of any new movement or initiative is a disruptive start, a breaking away from each and all *healthy* foundations and traditions, a cultic mindset that believes “church history starts with us.” This is why it is paramount for a truly global and healthy apostolic movement to connect solidly with its own historic roots, and rather than burning bridges, use existing bridges and foundations of those who have gone before.

After Patrick of Ireland, who died in AD 461, who was instrumental in seeing almost all of Ireland converted, “Boniface was the first to ever develop what we today would call a well-developed mission strategy, complete with aggressively defying the gods of the Germanic pagans, demolishing their shrines, cutting down their sacred trees, and building churches on their former holy sites,” says missions historian Pierce Beaver. For over 1,000 years after that, no one known ever suggested a global missions strategy, until a young shoemaker in London named William Carey decided, in 1792, to publish a groundbreaking missionary manifesto called “An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens.” It was not only a theological justification for missionary activity, but also a history of missionary activity, 26 pages of tables, listing area, population, and religion statistics for every country in the world, and a call for the formation of a missionary society. When Carey, who is now considered to be the father of modern missions, first stood up in a pastors’ meeting, he was immediately shouted down by a Christian Reverend, Dr. Ryland, who exclaimed: “Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen world, He will do it without your help or mine.”

Ralph Winter, himself a missionary statesman and founder of the US Center for World Mission, describes the history of global missions extensively. He says: “William Carey, in 1806, thought that it would be a good

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idea if all of the missionaries in the world were to meet together four years later at the Cape of Good Hope, in 1810. The purpose of such a meeting would have been very simply to plan together to finish the task of world evangelization. His proposal may have been the first time any human being thought in such concrete and planetary terms. Despite his considerable influence, his idea of a world-level gathering of missionary strategists in 1810 was dismissed by one of his followers as merely 'one of William's pleasing dreams.' But Carey's dream of 1810 didn't die. It went off a century later at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910 where Missionary-statesman John R. Mott proposed a world-level meeting in Edinburgh that very year. This led to the first missionary conference with a global strategy to evangelize the world, The 'World Missionary Conference' in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910."

During the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, Ralph Winter said that nearly half the world's population was still beyond the reach of the gospel! Since then, a growing number of voices have all done the same thing: rallying the Christian troops to finish the task, amongst them Keith Green, John Stott, Jim Montgomery, Thomas Wang, Luis Bush or George Otis.

d) Recent Church history. In an age that has been termed the Age of Modern Missions (1780-1945), starting with William Carey, the Western Church exported and translated the Gospel to other languages and cultures, complete with its own belief, Episcopal, and financial systems. The results were mainly foreign, transplanted national church-beachheads and imported denominations with HQs mainly in the UK, US, Germany, and Italy. It created both an acceptance as well as a rejection of a western imposed religious system. Much of this age came to a grinding halt at the end of the second World War in 1945, as the main missionary sending nations, the missionary superpowers of the world, were involved in a gruesome war, throwing bombs at each other in plain sight of a pagan world. This opened up an entirely new era in World Missions, in which God seemed to have stepped in as the global teacher, taking his church by the hand and led them through his Spirit into five classes of learning. From 1945 onwards, I observe five distinct pieces of revelation that the Spirit of God seems to have dropped into the church. Each of them has generated a new era, a new phase that, like steps on a staircase, led up to the next level. Each phase brought something vitally new to the table, and after the era was gone, it does not mean the emphasis was gone and the movement faded, but that a new emphasis was now on God's agenda, a new class was on, whereby the last emphasis of the Spirit of God was to be solidly built into the entire equation. As one emphasis built on the last one, those that heard what the Spirit had to say to the churches discovered a totally new and bigger picture of the church and her task than most had before. Here is a quick list of those five important phases of recent church history:

1) Age of Evangelism (1945 - 1978). After WW2, ideologically driven by personalities like Billy Graham, evangelistic ("parachurch") organizations like OM, YWAM, Navigators, CFC, YFC, etc., emerged, that greatly molded the shape of Christian ministry and mission. They demonstrated to the church how evangelism can and should look like. In an age of church apathy and self-concern, evangelistic firebrands carried the torch



of reaching the world, "one soul at a time." The main methods and means for this were crusades, tracts, door to door visiting, and evangelistically used media within a concept of evangelism & "follow-up", or "outreach and in-drag."

2) Era of Church Growth (1955 - 1990). In an era where most churches in the West were stagnating, Donald McGavran was one of the pioneers of a revolutionary new approach that would soon mould the thinking and policy of many old and new movements of God: Church Growth. This led to the emergence of national, continental and global church growth societies and the worldwide propagation of growth-oriented church models like those of David Yonggi Cho and others.

Evangelism showed everyone how Christians can lead their neighbors to Christ; Church Growth pointed the way how local churches can start to experience a new phenomenon: growth!

Technically speaking, the Church-Growth era still lives on in the form of the more organic, church-health oriented Natural Church Development movement developed by my friend Christian Schwarz, and seeker-oriented church models (like Willowcreek) and some emergent church developments.

3) Age of Church Planting (1980 - 2001). The move from addition-oriented Church Growth ("how can I grow my church?") to multiplication-based church planting was only logical and ultimately only a matter of time. However, it required a huge step for many. For most Christians, the concept of new wine into new wineskins required a new interpretation and paradigm of tradition, methodology, training and outlook. The word Church Planting itself is a relatively new term that can be associated to the original pioneering Baptists and Methodists of old, and, more recently, to people such as Bob Logan or English church pioneers Roger Forster, Terry Virgo, Gerald Coates, the early days of John Wimber and others. One of the developments that put church planting into a strategic, national context – in cooperation with empirical research, prayer and long-term churchplanting was the Saturation Church Planting movement, most tangibly through the DAWN movement since 1984, started by Jim Montgomery.

4) House/Simple Churches (from 1996 on).

Quantity is one thing, quality another. Saturating whole areas with churches is one thing; but what kind of church - what quality of church? - will not only sacramentalize passive otherwise people, but transform them into active disciples? These and other questions led to the "discovery of housechurches". Historically developed in areas specifically outside of a direct western missionary jurisdiction (like China and Vietnam) a new phase of missions started when God began to reveal, mostly simultaneously to a number of people worldwide, that the New Testament forms and patterns of Church were mainly networks of house churches. Probably the first intentional house-church planting movement outside rather closed nations like China, Vietnam or Cuba, was initiated in 1996 in North-India by Dr. Victor Choudhrie. In later years, other initiatives followed. One was initiated by IBRA Radio, a Swedish Pentecostal Radio ministry, which started an immensely successful house church planting ministry in the Arab World. Apostolic persons like Bruce Carlton, then



working with the Southern Baptists' IMB (International Mission Board), initiated housechurch-based churchplanting movements, while Neil Cole began planting housechurches in the USA as a part of a denominational churchplanting strategy. First greatly ridiculed by traditional churches in almost all nations, the house church movement has grown to many hundreds of thousands of churches in an amazingly short period of time, and is, at this point, not only the main harvesting tool God seems to use in Muslim nations like Bangladesh, Pakistan, or Indonesia, but is also making its presence felt in many Western nations as well. If US-pollster George Barna is right in his predictions, published in his book *Revolution*, it will take but a few more years for house churches to become not only an extremely vital harvesting instrument of God, but quite simply the new mainline church.

5) Apostolic-Prophetic re-foundation (from 1999 on). With the emergence of indigenous leaders who did not fit the mould of traditional Christendom (and its missionary expressions) at all, a new and very radical return to the principles of New Testament Christianity emerged that suggested not only a gradual evolution of Christendom, but a re-foundation to its original apostolic roots, values, foundations, and principles. The prophetic movements of the 1980s have prophesied a new apostolic future for the church. Around 1999, just before the turn of the century, it was, as some are referring to it, as if God suddenly switched on the light and the whole apostolic issue was placed in broad daylight before the church. Apostolic forerunners like Watchman Nee, Arthur Wallis, Arthur Katz, and John Wimber had ploughed the ground for this before. Suddenly a host of, sadly, mostly premature and over-excited "apostolic networks" emerged as new forms of denominations, offering to "cover" usually independent traditional churches with pastors who feel lost and were looking for a new umbrella organization.

But these are all understandable birth pangs of a new era. We all know the statement that *nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come*. Being in the right place at the right time with the right message is crucial, if we don't want to be found trying to persuade God to bless what we are doing, but rather, to start doing what God is blessing. This is why a relatively small group of people and relatively few and predominantly small organizations can have most far-reaching results and be of truly global significance if they make themselves available to be the spokesmen of a message from the Spirit of God to the Churches during a given window of time. However, once the Spirit of God moves on to the next emphasis, and asks us all to move into the next phase, we can quickly get tied up in a mission of the past, hang on to our past roles and identities, and start being absolutely the right person with an outdated message, or even find ourselves in a ministry or organization whose sell-by date has passed. We would then no longer ride the crest of the current wave of God, but a wave from the day before yesterday. Nothing is more boring than a person reading us the news from last year, and may God protect us from us finding ourselves tied into organizations that were cutting-edge and spot-on a few decades or even years ago, but have stopped moving ahead in sync with God's Spirit and now do not much more than protecting their assets and explain why they are still needed (and therefore need funds). In that case, we would begin to live backward-oriented rather than forward, becoming reactive instead

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of prophetic, and, far from being part of the solution, we become part of the problem.

My Swiss friend Florian Bärtsch, recently returning from Russia, told me how more and more bishops and pastors there confided to him and said: "We have enough of the show!" With "the show" they mean the weekly routine, performing churchy programs. "They were thirsty for life, for the real thing. And if our brothers from Russia start saying that, who have been, historically speaking, deeply steeped into Czarist thinking and traditionalism, this is a true indicator of how God's spirit is speaking about a new time to every church," commented Florian.

e) Business: the decentralization revolution

Have you ever asked yourself what Craigslist has in common with al Qaeda? How were Skype and the Apache Nation linked? Or why people nowadays rather turn to Wikipedia than to Encyclopedia Britannica for information? And do you recall the so-called "open source movement"? Officially born in 1998, rather than trying to monopolize the market like Microsoft and make the most of it, computer software developers actually published the source code and made it available, enabling anyone to copy, modify and redistribute the source code without paying royalties or fees. This new philosophy has given the world Linux, Apache or Mozilla Firefox, and many other excellent programs. And have you thought about what all of this has to do with the current global revolution and reformation that is sweeping and reshaping Christianity? It's a revolution out there, according to TIME Magazine in a recent article about YouTube. You have probably heard that two young guys called Steve Chen and Chad Hurley started an internet-platform for ordinary people to share their videos, and search, watch and rate those of others. That was in 2004. On Oct. 16th, 2006, the company was bought by Google for \$ 1.65 billion, a phenomenal success story. There are three revolutions going on out there, says TIME: a *technological revolution* by ever cheaper hard- and software; a *social revolution* that analysts have called Web 2.0, where people create and share information together, and a *cultural revolution*, where people turn away from mainstream media and its top-down culture (talking heads spoon feed passive spectators ideas about what's happening in the world) and rather choose to listen to unfiltered news and stories from folks like themselves.

Starfish or Spider?

It has all to do with the big difference between a spider and a starfish, argue Rod A. Beckstrom and Ori Brafman, two young entrepreneurs, both with an MBA from Stanford who have come out with a new book called *"The Starfish and the Spider: The unstoppable power of leaderless organizations."* "Traditional top-down organizations are like spiders, but now starfish organizations are changing the face of business and the world", they say. Using the stories of Grokster, Napster, Emule, Skype, Ebay, Wikipedia and other recent movements with phenomenal success, and linking it with the stories of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), the abolishment of slavery in England or even Early Christianity, they "lift the lid on a massive revolution in the making, certain to reshape every organization on the planet from bridge clubs to global government", comments Paul Saffo, director of "Institute for the Future". Klaus Schwab, executive chair-

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man of the World Economic Forum in Davos, proposed ten action points for his own organization after reading the book.

A spider is a creature with a head and eight legs. It's a symbol of a centralized, top-down, hierarchical structure. In a spider-structure, there has to be a king, someone who is in charge, and legs: those who do the work, but are not required to think. In comparison, starfish have no head; they are a flat neural system, a decentralized network of cells. If cut into pieces, the entire animal can replicate itself from a single piece of an arm. As a starfish has five arms, starfish organizations, Beckstrom and Brafman contend, have five important foundations on which they stand:

1) *Circles*. Circles are self-organizing groups of people with a common cause or interest that can emerge, expand, multiply or die spontaneously, without red tape or authorization "from above". Circles are not lawless; they don't have rules (someone else's idea of what you should do), but they depend on norms (values, ethics, codes) that are the backbone of the circle. The members who start or join a circle, own, embrace and even enforce these norms themselves, and this is exactly why norms become more powerful than rules. A typical circle would be a group of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), peer-to-peer file-sharing Internet users, a group of Quakers (or a house-church). "Ordinary people, organized into circles, gain immense power", say Beckstrom and Brafman.

2) *Catalysts*. A catalyst is an element that initiates (or speeds up) a reaction of other elements without being used up in the process. Catalysts in starfish organizations are the inventors, ideologists, inspirational people that refuse to control; they are like architects that are vital to build a house, but then don't move in. They function entirely differently from a CEO. Catalysts that stay around for too long become absorbed into their own creation and being usually strong personalities, start to centralize the whole structure – the very opposite of what they want to achieve!

3) *Ideology*. A starfish organization needs a "Big Idea", a founding vision. For AA the ideology is simple: "If you have a problem with alcohol, stop consulting the experts, and let's help each other and follow simple twelve steps," which are the implication of the ideology. For Skype, the motto is: "Let's talk on the phone for free!"

4) *Pre-Existing Networks*. As much as you can't launch a rocket without a launching pad or a ramp, an idea needs a place, a platform from which to start. William Griffith Wilson, better known as Bill W, the founder of AA, started with "The Oxford Group", an independent Christian movement launched by a renegade Lutheran minister. Another historical example for this is the role of the Quakers in the abolishing of slavery in England. Here, Granville Sharp was the catalyst, Thomas Clarkson the champion, and the network of about 20.000 Quakers became the platform, which helped birth a nationwide and ultimately successful movement. Centralized organizations are not set up to launch decentralized movements, and so the Internet is today a huge "breeding ground" for many starfish organizations.

5) *Champions*. While catalysts are the visionaries, champions are the implementers. They apply, embody, promote or sell someone else's idea



and give it wings. By yielding themselves to a vision not their own, by becoming the echo to a voice, they make the vision work and incarnate the catalysts' original design. Both catalysts and champions are very different, but both desperately need each other for the entire enterprise to work.

f) Welcome to the 4th Industrial Revolution

We normally speak of three industrial revolutions, which have reshaped the economy and thus the face of the earth in recent history. An industrial revolution is a phase of rapid technological, economic, and social change that follows a base-innovation of such radical dimension that it is groundbreaking in every sense and which, of course, revolutionizes the workplace. New jobs are created, old forms of work vanish.

The 1st Industrial Revolution started in 1769 after the introduction of steam engines for industrial use by James Watt. The 2nd Industrial Revolution began through the invention of electricity. Thomas Alva Edison invented the gramophone in 1877, and in 1879 the world stared into the first light bulb. The 3rd Industrial Revolution was spearheaded by the invention of the computer. As early as 1941, German engineer Konrad Zuse built the Z3, the first programmable electromechanical binary computer. In 1971, the first microprocessor hit the market, and with it the first "micro-computer", the Altair 8800. The rest is history. With the arrival of the Internet the *information age* was born, dividing the world into Knows and Don't knows – but it also created a historic wave of new ignorance, as people began to drown in information: Data, data everywhere – but not a drop to think! The amount of information today doubles so fast that hardly anyone can remain on top of it. The big question is what the next break-through innovation will be that ushers in the 4th Industrial Revolution. I believe we already know: it is the discovery of *inspiration*. In the information age we are online – via modem or broadband. But on the other side is still only a computer, programmed by humans. In the Inspiration Age we also will be increasingly online: with the invisible world. The basic innovation is the widespread discovery of the reality of inspiration. Whoever grasps the nature and anatomy of inspiration, and the connection between inspiration, innovation, and industrialization, will have a huge head start into the future.

This means that the future world will be divided into the inspired and the uninspired, those offering inspiration, and those buying - or ignoring it. Nobody, no matter how well informed he thinks he is, can really know all relevant facts any more – he is dependent on selecting the information that he *feels* are important. Ultimately, we need inspiration to process information. Gerd Gigerenzer, German professor of Psychology writes in his book "**Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious**" about the "amazing power of intuition as an instrument of non-analytic decision-making". From a psychological, scientific standpoint, Gigerenzer is already picking up the scent.

The Bible describes the End of Ages as an era where there are two groups greatly contrasting each other: an anti-Christian, Babylonian world system, "a haunt for every evil spirit", and "apostles, prophets and saints" on the other (Rev 18). Both groups are inspired – from vastly different sources: one by Satan, the other one by God. This is why the citizens of the Empire of God, if they are alert, are going to have a huge head-start in the economy of the future, as inspiration by their "wireless

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uplink" to God through the Holy Spirit is supposed to be their second nature. "God gives it to his beloved in their sleep" (Ps 127:2) could well mean that the bed is probably the most prophetic place on the planet for a human being. As we (finally) shut up, God finds space to talk. His spirit talks to our spirit. Let me finish this with a recent example:

It was 1995 when a man from Pondicherry in southern India woke up one day with a stunning dream. In his dream, he had very clearly seen a chemical formula. As he wrote it down, it turned out to be a formula for a special glue. He set out to test that glue, planned its production – and in no time, "Jabez Polymer" was born, a company that quickly gained a place among India's leading glue manufacturers. People whispered that the owner had imported costly high-tech know-how from America and thus made it to the top so rapidly. The company was able to make so much profit that it could support many missionary projects in India. An inspiration had become an innovation.

As we are moving into this Inspiration-Age, we will hear more and more of people that are stumbling onto absolutely groundbreaking and revolutionary inventions – with breathtaking economic consequences. I am a personal friend of a number of such "inspired inventors", and it is only a matter of time until their fascinating innovations become the new global industry standard. Not everyone might know or even expect this, but the real reason why such inventions are not yet common-place is not so much that they are not existing; the bigger problem is that such inventions (with their huge profit potential) have to fight themselves through a tightly controlled system, a market largely supervised by those that benefit most in terms of money and power from exploiting old technology and the industries (and taxable jobs!) they have generated.

g) Prophecy. Prophecy, in its function as spiritual intelligence, has foreseen all of this. There is such a host of prophetic words speaking about each one of the five initiatives of God I am describing here that it would take a coordination center and a huge office to compile, sort out the chaff, weigh and categorize them all, and then pass them on to those in the household of God that are charged by God for strategic decision-making. Let me just mention a few brief prophetic words:

You might remember the vision that Kansas City's Mike Bickle related. In 1982, he was in Cairo, Egypt, and heard God say to him: "In one generation I will change the shape of the church and its expressions." Prof. Nigel Sykes of Warwick University in the UK, a prophetic man to whom God has shown some of the future economic developments around the globe, has a constant theme: how the caterpillar develops into a butterfly. Rick Joyner, a prophetic teacher in the US, picked up the same picture: a church like a caterpillar, creeping up and down along the earth, that will transform into a beautiful butterfly, able to spread its wings and no longer be confined to creeping along the contours of the earth, but freed and newly carried by the winds of the Spirit. In the UK at the end of the 1980's, a number of prophetic voices communicated that God was saying this: "Give me back my church, so that I can give it back to the world." This implies that the church has been taken captive by controlling leaders who have shielded it from the world, who will have to let go of their control, give God back the ownership of his church, who will, in turn, restore it into its rightful place as a blessing to this world.

In 2002, Andrea Xandry, a prophetic man in Zürich, Switzerland, wrote

"Give me back my church, so that I can give it back to the world."



a book likening the present situation of the church with Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome. During a violent storm, the ship was about to perish with all hands on board. However, Paul had a prophetic word for everyone, which later came true. He said: "No one will be lost – only the ship." (Acts 27:22). In a similar fashion, Xandry speaks of the ship as a picture for the church. As we know it today, the church will not be able to reach its apostolic destiny. For this, all had to abandon ship and take a swim. Everyone reached land in safety...

h) The re-emergence of "Kingdom Women". Women, "the frozen assets of the church", as someone has said, will rediscover an entirely new place once we stop locking them into the small world of church-as-we-know-it, but ask a much deeper and more profound question: what is the role and mission of women in the Empire of God? Inside traditional churches, the discussion raged around hair-covering, dress codes, whether they can or cannot speak in church, or whether women should be ordained or not. The basis for this discussion was usually the traditional church, not the Empire of God as the framework. When men should walk through their organic life-phases and move from being a boy, an adventurer, a warrior, a lover, knight and finally a wise man, women need to have the same opportunity to grow from a girl into a daughter, a princess, a lover, a plunderer and finally a wise woman. Already today, women in India or China are the most effective church-planters, prophetesses and evangelists, and this is one of the reasons why the church is exploding in these regions. In a profound prophecy, Bernard Ankoma of Ghana spoke to Pastors in India that he had seen in a vision many women trapped in a deep well, while men in clerical dresses stood on top of a platform that firmly covered the opening of the well like a lid, so that the women could not get out. In a sovereign move of God, his hand swept away the dominating men, removed the lid, released the women – and this was the moment when the Body of Christ in India *grew its second leg*. It is clear that the other half of the body of Christ, women, will play a crucial and very active role in the expansion of the empire of their King – and in an *ekklesia* that is truly built by the King – in this last leg of church history we are now entering into.

i) God's Code Red. If a society is under threat, like a country on which war has been declared, the government will move from civil law to martial law, from Code Green to Code Red, from one status of alertness to another. Just as the human body floods the blood with adrenalin when under attack or facing a particularly difficult task to get ready to fight or flee, the prophetic warners and watchmen of the Body of Christ have, for decades now, attempted to rally the troops, assemble the army, mobilize the church, call for solemn assemblies or prayer days or movements. However, someone who rallies the army should not only point to the advancing enemy, but should propose a plan of action. The Starfish Vision - and the mission that derives from it - is such a strategic plan. The most important context of all for weighing and interpreting a vision like the Starfish Vision is not culture, politics, business or the current economic trends, but: *is it of God?* Has God spoken and initiated all of this? Are we truly in a *kairos* time, as people like David Demian, a former medical doctor from Egypt who is now in a prophetic role in Canada, preach? Or should we give all of this a tired wave and return to business, life and

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church as usual? If your answer is “yes, this is a crucial God-moment in history”, as it is my answer, then we need to face the fact that God has blown the trumpet (1 Cor 14:8), issued martial law, called out Code Red, and is recruiting loyal subjects for his Empire and the completion of his apostolic mission. If God has been speaking to you before in his unique ways, and if what you have read so far is a confirmation of what you have already heard from God, then now would be the right time to take a serious time-out, take your Bible and your family, and discuss how you will change your life so you will be able to align with God and others in all of this. You will have a unique role to play in God’s greater plan, and no one else will be able to fulfill that role, except you yourself.



Part Three

3. Application

If this is what God is doing, what, therefore do you do - personally?

If it is true that this is what God is doing, and he is the one who threw the stones into the water that creates the ripples that we are discussing here, this requires both a *personal* and a *corporate* response. As in every reformation, the key question is: *do we, or do we not, accept the reformation?* And if we do, what are the next steps to take? Here are some practical steps you may want to take as an individual to become a part of all this.

1) How high is the bar, your current “measure of faith”? If we truly want to be involved in seeing 50% of the world’s population disciplined, we will not advance a single millimeter on this daring path without a large measure of faith. The most deadly trap for a life of faith in Jesus is overcautious safety thinking. A life that is ever prepared for all eventualities (remember the scout motto “always prepared?”), leaves absolutely no room to chance and therefore simply no room for faith. Who needs faith when everything is planned, double safe, triple secured, and when even our insurances are insured? From the cradle to the grave, the life of most people in the cultural West is protected and cushioned by the social security measures of the welfare states plus their own frenetic safety precautions - except for a few marginal groups. Little wonder if many Christians in the two-thirds world - many of them below the poverty line - view the life of their western counterparts as completely dug in, all-round defended, protected and surrounded by a fantastic security system, full of fences, barriers and security lines. A life in faith is almost completely impossible, choked to death in a cocoon of caution, prescribed and sanctioned by the society. Everything else, if you listen to the evergreen sermons of the apostles of security with eyebrows raised and a warning finger in the air, is frivolous flippancy, plain dumb or outright religious delusion. Such a faith-killing culture is a breeding ground for head faith, where we theoretically assume some religious dogmas to be true, without any real-life consequences. This leads to purely subjective faith that only exists as a religious opinion in our heads, a *belief in our own belief*. Biblically, faith is something entirely different. It is a mindset that is able to act based on childlike trust. If we are analyzing and calculating every single aspect of a proposed action, we finally will not need to have faith any more, we will not even be able to believe, even if we want to. Biblical faith shows itself in actions and deeds that make absolutely no sense unless a person believes. Faith without works is dead. “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). John Wimber, an apostolic man from California who died in 1997, used to define faith as *risk* – as the readiness to take chances for God, and to utterly embarrass yourself in front of other people, if necessary, and walk on water “just because Jesus said so”. The Starfish Vision would be utterly ridiculous without our faith in God’s promises and his possibilities. That is why we should count the cost before participating in building such a tower, and those costs will be mainly the quality, load capacity and the measure of our personal faith. “Examine yourself

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to see whether you are in the faith, test yourselves" (2. Cor 13:5), is the astonishing admonition of Paul to the Corinthians. So our first port of call should be a serious check-up of our faith, an honest self-test. To what measure do you live right now purely "in sight", in calculation and computation, and to what degree do you live in faith in God's promises and abilities? This factor will determine everything else that you do. What would be more wonderful than Jesus saying to us the very same thing that he said to the biggest hero of faith he had found in all of Israel, the Roman centurion (Mt 8:5-13): "It will happen according to your faith"?

2) Make Jesus the emperor of your life. In an act of personal surrender and repentance, let us give up all our contest, selfish ambitions and attempts to consume Jesus for our own personal benefits and salvation, and place ourselves under his headship and Lordship. This is far more than a political pledge or to start carrying a membership book of a political party. It confers our right of ownership of ourselves to Jesus. This includes that, in obedient love, we accept the values, norms and rules of the Empire of God to be legally binding for us in all areas, including sex, money, power and spirituality. This will require nothing less than that you die to self, and ask your sovereign King that crucial question: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10), as you relinquish the ownership of your life that you may have held inappropriately in your own hands back to God. This vertical, up-ward conversion – the conversion to God - of an individual that repents for his sin and comes to God in the name of Jesus to plead "Save me!" leads to personal salvation, healing, deliverance and personal restoration. But this is only the beginning. Don't remain there forever.

3) Become a legal citizen in God's Empire. In Luke 3:17, Jesus preached, "Repent, because the Kingdom of God is at hand." Who was close, "at hand"? Jesus, the King of the Kingdom of God. Pledging ourselves to Jesus as our Emperor means that we have to do the homework of un-pledging ourselves from any rival. We have to renounce all false kings, idols and allegiances, any nationalism, tribalism or political ideologies to which we have unnecessarily pledged ourself. If we don't renounce our present idols – anything that promises us identity, security and destiny outside God – we have no right to pledge ourselves to Jesus; he is either our only King or no King at all. Entering the Kingdom of God also means to move back from any overstepping of God's imperial norms that we find ourselves at in this moment - remember the football field? - and become legal and blessing again. This conversion to the Empire pledges loyal allegiance to Jesus as King and Emperor, and commits itself to an alignment to the principles of the Empire of God, including the areas of sex, money and power. As "people keep the laws and decrees of God, they will live by them" (Lev 18:1-5). This ends a life of self-centered individualism and is therefore the start of life in a communal dimension. After the conversion to God, the conversion to his people – the other Kingdom citizens - is the second, the *horizontal* part of our conversion. "You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph 2:19). Making the Kingdom of God our first priority – to seek it first – effectively kills the Amalekite in us and leads to our naturalization in the Kingdom. And it is exactly that which is a necessary step to becoming a legal and empowered part of God's global, Kingdom-based apostolic initiative.

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4. Give Jesus your career plans. In the third aspect of your conversion – the conversion to the world – Jesus will want to scatter you (Mt 13) like seeds into the ground and cast you out as a laborer into the harvest (Luke 10:2), into a life of dedicated ministry and sacrificial service. Jesus is no dictator, so this needs your approval. Before Jesus can send you into the Kingdom Mission he has designed for you, you need to sign the dotted line that says: “Yes, Lord, here am I, send me” (Isa 6:8) and declare that you are ready. This may mean he will send you out like Lambs amongst the wolves, or he has a more comfortable job for you. Job-decisions (and therefore career plans) are from now on up to him, no longer up to you. Allow him to be the Lord of your career plans. A very practical first step after you have made that decision is to stop asking him to bless what you are already doing, and start doing what he is blessing.

5. Accept the valid ministry and contribution of prophetic and apostolic people. Respect them and align yourself with them according to imperial principles. If, because of past experiences, you need to overcome your own fear of being used and manipulated by anyone, come to God with this fear and have him deal with it. Don't let the fear of men be bigger than the fear of God. As you love and respect God, he will help you to love and respect those very people God has positioned you to work with. Don't allow bad experiences with controlling and manipulative people to push you into a cave, so that finally fear of being used - and therefore being hurt - starts to dominate and mould your behavior. Remember, without valid apostolic and prophetic ministries (that are carried out by real people!) *you personally* will neither become fissionable nor truly mature into your own destiny and mission.

6. Complete your financial conversion. Renounce any false securities in material things, any *love* of money and a life in excess or debt. Bring your natural existential fear (what do I eat, drink, wear, where do I live, who takes care of my pension) to God and stop forever seeking the solution to your immediate problems, but start to “seek first the Kingdom of God” (Mt 6). Ask God to go through your financial situation with his fine comb, make an inventory, reduce your spending to a moderate level and start investing not into your own ever-demanding need for ever more security, but invest into the Empire of God according to the financial principles Jesus has laid down for us. If you have not given away the surplus that you owned while you came to Christ - for example because no one taught you this biblical truth - plan now on making your missed entry-payment into the Kingdom, and prayerfully but not overly skeptically find apostolic people in your own area at whose feet you should deposit the proceedings of any “houses and fields” (Acts 4:35), any substantial surplus that you have now or will have in the future. In tune with their calling, it is their God-given responsibility - not yours - to then invest those financial means into the apostolic purposes God is showing them.

If you have dutifully responded to the sermons and teachings of countless misinformed pastors that have told you “to tithe” (give 10% of your income regularly to them), or have been engaged in any other neo-legalistic giving practice –like paying church-tax - stop it. The Empire of God does neither know tithing nor any other tax-system. If you have previously given in a calculated way - I give to get - given in a watering can



mentality (everyone gets a bit so no one feels left out) or given in order to be needed, wanted and admired by others, stop it as well. If you have stored money (like in your own family foundation, gold bars, shares, off-shore accounts or under your pillow) in fear and confusion (“whom can you trust nowadays? I would rather sit on my money until I die!”), please end it here. Perfect love drives out *even this* fear (1 John 4:18). If you have plans to start your own foundations without an apostolic directive from your King, think again. Or if you plan to bequest your financial legacy simply to posterity, so that those that come after you, will have to decide what to do with your money, then you are basically relegating your responsibility to others and are not acting in faith yourself, but are in danger of becoming a prisoner of fear – and your money with it. This way your money becomes fear-driven money instead of money with a mission. Give both – your fear as well as your money – to Jesus, and he will liberate both.

If your giving was based and informed by a rebellious and individualistic attitude that has molded much of the mindset of the West, and have seriously concluded that you have the God-given right to give “if you like, when you like, to whom you like as much as you like”, repent of it. Cancel standing orders or regular payments to organizations, churches and individuals that, as you might now see, do not really conform to Empire standards, and learn to live by faith, not by sight. Life by sight calculates; life by faith trusts. Your life will never be the same again, and many screaming needs in the Empire will be met, the unpaid wages of many harvesters in God’s field that cry out (James 5:2-4) will be met, God will be greatly honored by our financial behavior, and a great reward will be waiting for us upstairs (Mt 6:19-21).

7) Become part of God’s ekklesia. If it is true that Church-as-we-know-it prevents Church-as-God-wants-it, you have two choices. You may want to either seriously change your present church (denomination, organization) into a Kingdom-shaped *ekklesia*, which is possible, but will be a painful and slow process of transitioning and reforming; Or you join or start networks of missional housechurches, connected to apostolic and prophetic people, wherever you live. Why would you want to let convenience, tradition and religious legacies determine your precious future – and that of your family?

8) Get trained. If you lack skills or insights in any of these subjects that make your life fruitful, search prayerfully for training and make sure that the equipping is apostolic and prophetic in nature and ethos. Try to find local or at least regional training that connects you with people from your area. The Starfish internet portal – as well as “The Starfish Manifesto” – will be able to point out some very good training concepts and resources to you.

9) Take or join a local or regional Starfish initiative. Mission Starfish is not a new mission agency, but a vision that exists to stimulate you towards a life of blessed multiplication. It is about the multiplication of multiplication. Don’t complain any longer like a resigned child that “nothing seems to happen”; rather ask God for the kind of contribution you could bring to the table. Let us learn the lesson of the parable of Jesus feeding the 5,000. In some way we humans can be “bread and

Why would you want to let convenience, tradition and religious legacies determine your precious future – and that of your family?



fish” in the hands of Jesus, who will want to feed the “hungry 5,000 of today”. As Jesus takes *us*, looks up to heaven, says thanks, breaks *us* and gives *us* away, multitudes will be fed. Don’t wait therefore forever for someone to visit you at home and tell you what to do: if nothing happens, *happen yourself*. We humans do not only believe in God, but he also believes in us in the sense that he trusts us to do extraordinary and fascinating things. God has many ideas and plans for you. One of them could be to start an incubator, a place that aids safe development stages by providing love, care, space, warmth, for the new life to hatch out of its eggshell. You could distribute this booklet to a number of people, have them read it and then invite them for coffee and explore practical ways to implement these issues, start to call folks together in your mission, church, denomination. We need more than mere think tanks where topics are being discussed without actually venturing into them; we need to start spiritual experimental labs, out-of-the-box groups, spiritual touring groups, people planning real-life expeditions, pressing on into experiences previously unknown to us. We call this a Starfish Incubator. Remember: *you are not the product of your environment; your environment is the product of you*.

10) Respect the starfish publishing agreement and, if you have benefited from it, pass on this material – pay it forward – to as many people as you can (at least ten), and make sure to seek ways to get involved in this global mission personally, financially and prayerfully. As this is an E-Book, it is very easy to send it on to your email contacts with a personal comment, post it on your website, use its contents for any bulletins, newsletter or presentations without asking our permission: the permission is hereby granted as long as you respect the context.

J=mc² - Mission Starfish

Mission Starfish simply means to do whatever it takes to see the Starfish Vision become reality. Not that this is a do-able thing at all. It is humanly completely impossible, and only if we and our human good plans die as a kernel of wheat, once we admit to our own spiritual bankruptcy and discard any unhealthy triumphalism or even a naivety that proudly proclaims “church-history–starts-with-us” will we be able to join God in his eternal plans. Mission Starfish is not a new Mission agency or an organization that looks for members. It is the lifestyle of an apostolic people, that naturally and organically form a visionary and relational network that exists to be a catalytic movement towards at least ten very specific goals, and looks both for champions and pre-existing networks who help to implement and accelerate the process of making this missionary vision a reality. The ten goals are:

- To promote repentance and loyalty to Jesus as savior and King
- To preach, like Jesus, the gospel of the Empire of God
- To see 200 million house-churches planted to disciple at least 50% of humanity
- To identify current and emerging prophets and apostles and encourage synergy
- To facilitate Saturation Garden planting: to identify apostolic jurisdictions - gardens - and match them with five-fold ministry teams

If nothing happens, *happen yourself*.

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ready to give their lives for the discipling of their turf (region, city, people group)

- To promote the general return to messianic finance principles
- To create appropriate financial infrastructures for a Kingdom economy
- To provide resources, materials and practical training, furthering this mission
- To promote unity of the body of Christ based on allegiance to Jesus, his Empire and his mission
- To exist for the sole purpose that the lamb that is slain shall receive the reward of his suffering

The biggest secret for the achievement of this mission can be seen in a symbolic formula: $J = mc^2$. Jesus lives on in an apostolic Mission that advances by Church multiplication.

Not only Benjamin Franklin dreamed most of his inventions, but also Albert Einstein once had a dream about a sleigh that gave him the clue to $E=mc^2$, the core formula for his most famous contribution to the theory of relativity. This unlocked some of the secrets of the physical universe. One of the principles he discovered is that matter and energy are both valid expressions of the same thing. One can exist in the form of the other, that is, energy can be converted into matter, and vice versa. They never exist independently of each other.

The same is true for Jesus and his church. He lives on in his body on earth and continues to accomplish what he has started in the first place. When the early disciples went out into their first steps to fulfill the Great Commission, Jesus “worked with them” and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mk 16:20). The Greek word for “worked with them” is synergy. Jesus was the one literally empowering his disciples to fulfill his mission. As Jesus is the one who also said: “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18), the connection becomes clear: the way Jesus wants to see the Great Commission fulfilled that he himself started, is by multiplying the *ekklesia* to the ends of the earth, until all nations are truly disciplined. This is why we need to see church multiplication as the central element of the continuation of the mission of Jesus. He stated: “I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Finally Jesus passed on his mission to his disciples, when he said: “As the father sent me, so I send them into the world” (John 17:18). And as this mission is not yet complete and not all nations are yet disciplined, we can expect Jesus, more than any of us, to be still completely focused, sold out and passionate about the same age-old mission that he started. Jesus lives on in his body on earth, ever present through the Holy Spirit, to compel, admonish, catalyze, energize, inspire and direct the entire enterprise. And since we all can read the last pages of the Bible, one thing is for sure: Jesus wins, and we will win with him, *as we remain in him*. So if we want to achieve anything in regards to the apostolic mission of God, the recipe is not more frantic human activity, 20 hour shifts, more Christian workaholics and fantastic projects, plans and ideas of our own, *but to be in him*. This is the very first command Jesus ever gave to his new apostles “when he appointed the twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him” (Mk 3:14). Only after that he would send them out to preach or drive out demons. So the place to start something for

So if we want to achieve anything in regards to the apostolic mission of God, the recipe is not more frantic human activity, 20 hour shifts, more Christian workaholics and fantastic projects, plans and ideas of our own, but to be in him.



God is not human activity, but to be with Jesus. Being comes before doing. Otherwise not only will we quickly burn out and get entangled in our own self-initiated actions, but Jesus will not have obedient hands, feet and mouths - his body on earth - to complete the job (Acts 20:24). To remain in Jesus does not encourage laziness, eternal contemplation or sofa-based Christianity, or even to restrict ourselves just to pain free, virtual mission only on the world wide web. Jesus was very much "out there", on the move. Being with Jesus therefore also means to go where he wants us to go, get up, make our hands dirty and go about the very specific work that the King has left for us to accomplish (Mt 28:18-20).

What should we do corporately?

As we have gone through the list of suggested individual responses above, there are some to-do items as an echo to the Starfish Vision that surpass the ability of any individual, because they require a corporate response, something that only a community of those who are serious followers of Christ can do. I will name some.

1) Corporate repentance. The situation of the traditional church in general today is very similar to the situation of Israel after their return from Babylon as reported in Nehemiah chapters 8-10. God did good to them, and they paid him by ignoring him, "became arrogant and stiff-necked and did not obey God's commands". Putting his laws behind themselves, they killed the prophets. Finally, when given over to their oppressive enemies as a punishment, they cried out, and God rescued them. But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in God's sight. God warned them to return to his law, but they became arrogant and disobedient to his commands. Forever stubborn, God had them led away into the Babylonian captivity. "They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention" (Neh 9:26-30). As Ezra re-reads the law to the Israelites, he calls them to two things: corporate repentance, and entering a binding agreement "with a curse and an oath to follow the law". I believe as a body of Christ we need to do something of that nature, too, and call solemn assemblies to corporately repent of our individualism, fragmentization, unbelief, ignorance and breaking of God's covenants and promises in our regions. It is not enough to pay a moment of guilty lip service, feel sorry for ourselves and then go back and change nothing; that is not repentance; that is self-deception. We need to embrace a form of repentance that not only turns away from evil, but commits itself to actively embrace what is from God, and make every possible effort to prevent ourselves from wallowing again in the same mud. The core sins of Christianity have been disobedience, individualism, the celebration of fragmentization, unbelief in God's promises, ignorance and the breaking of God's covenants. After we have cast an eye on the original of God and his blueprint of *ekklesia*, it has probably become very clear to us that we have no right to play church any way we like it, direct the church according to our own will and imagination, either out of splendid ignorance or falsely bound by tradition. Therefore we are facing a strong, apostolic challenge to all of us, very similar to the one that Paul presented in Athens. After he pre-

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ched and had laid his apostolic message, he brings home the very same challenge that I believe God is bringing home to all of us in these days: "In the past God has overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

2) Declaration of Dependence. Freedom is not that we can do as we like, but that we can do, as we *should*. True freedom, therefore, is found only in one place: in close bonding to our liberator, Jesus Christ. He invites us all to become and stay his bond-slaves, those released by their master into a master-less liberty and later find that they love their master so very much that they voluntarily want to come back, bind themselves to him and be slaves for life. In a ceremony that the Old Testament describes several times (Ex. 21:5.6; Dt 15:16-17; see Gal 6:17) the Lord takes the ear of such a slave and pierces it to the doorpost as a symbol for all to see, that this servant has decided to stay with him out of his own free will. As followers of Christ we have the liberty to make ourselves dependent not only on him as our Lord, but also on each other. We all know in theory that we are relying on each other - all for one and one for all -, but in practice most live an autonomous life. All of us have been influenced by the world's warped concept of freedom. It says: freedom is independence from anyone - don't tell me what to do, believe, say, hold me accountable or even *think* of making suggestions. The USA has been proud of their political "Declaration of Independence". However, we need to make sure that we don't declare our spiritual independence from each other, the rest of the Body of Christ and God as well. I propose, as a prophetic deed in times of corporate repentance, that we make a "Declaration of Dependence", that we sign with our lives: dependence on God, the Body of Christ, and dependence on each other. Only if we are vulnerable and humble enough to do such a thing and declare to each other how desperately we need each other, will the prevailing spirit of proud independence, stand-alone ministries, splendid isolation, competition and infighting so rampant in Christianity today be broken and replaced by God's original.

3) Missions need to become an open-source project. Every human is a missionary; someone sent to accomplish something. The question is: whose missionary are you? If we are not engaged in the King's mission, we are busy with another mission, which is either economic (e.g. let us outsell the competition), political (e.g. let us spread democracy around the world), religious (e.g. is our kind of faith represented in Malawi yet?), sports-related or value based at its core (e.g. let us have as much fun as possible). As we become the subjects of the King, we also become an integral part of the King's mission. As we have seen, the mission of Jesus simply cannot be accomplished in spider-type top-down organizations with great headquarters on earth. It will have to be organized like a starfish, flat-structure, whereby God has installed both the core DNA and is "its head in heaven", directing it remote-controlled through prophetic intelligence. In an open source project anyone can and should contribute anything that God has given him or her anywhere, and will find an easy entry into the system, as there will be many access points and nodes in the net to enter. No-one has to work himself up in the hierarchy to reach missionary status and significance, but each part of the body, weak or strong, seemingly insignificant or intimidatingly visible, new converts or



old hands will be able to make his or her contribution, without which the whole will be lacking. What will be the contribution of your life?

4) We need a new global resource function, Kingdom logistics.

For such a global vision to be carried out, it needs to be translated into a mission, and broken down into strategic developments that happen not erratically, but, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, systematically, region by region, garden by garden, similar to the land-allotment strategy in the book of Joshua, making sure nobody is overlooked and the task is ultimately finished (Acts 20:24). To implement such a mission we do not need a headquarter, but a certain amount of logistical functions, to transport information, money, people or products from A to B. Some men and women of God will be called and gifted to fuel this mission by their passion, knowledge, influence and ministries. They will become resources to such a movement. Beyond all personal presence, materials produced by them like books, manuals, tapes, videos, DVDs, films, websites, blogspot, music, prophetic messages, inspiration, research, newsletters, training concepts, inventions and encouraging stories and much more, will be extremely useful and instrumental to fan the flame. However, to actually bring such resources to places of need for training, inspiration, and encouragement, we need a new collection and distribution system, a Kingdom logistics.

One of the bottlenecks of classical missions has been that the distance between resources and needs was too long. Many important books, tapes, or films simply have been hidden in a great number of smaller or larger publishing houses, mission agencies or churches, and have been difficult to access by the general public. Plus: the market-driven principle of ordering, buying, shipping, paying (and reminding to pay) for materials has not only been a tremendous limiting factor, but had many great resources plainly lost in competition, lost in translation, or even lost in distribution channels. The general Christian media market has long ago become a commercialized battleground, where entertaining and therefore best-selling materials, exciting (but fictitious) novels and beautiful picture books dominate the counter, because the itching ears of the consumers demand ever more. It has been a sad reality that especially the more strategic, apostolic, and prophetic resources that have been produced have forever been struggling to be heard and read, drowned out and literally shouted down by the myriad of four-color, flashy, consumer-oriented materials out there “that the market wants”—resources that may be pleasing to the eye or ear, but ultimately are not at all necessarily dedicated to empowering the generations to disciple the nations of the globe. That current situation has got to change, where many of the most strategic, apostolic and prophetic resources sit silently on the margins and collect dust, having to fight that a few thousand people may even find out about their very existence. This is a tremendous waste of efforts, but who says that Mammon needs to control Christian publishing forever?

There is more that needs to change. I have lost count of how many times I have heard how an apostolic or prophetic book has been literally censored, watered down, cropped, and blunted to fit what people are ready to read (and therefore buy), until it lost its original edge. Many such books have suffered like the visitors of fabled Greek giant Procrustes who either stretched or cut his visitors short in order to make them



fit his guest bed. I call this death by edition. That simply cannot go on. No well-meaning editor has ever softened the blow of the Old Testament prophets, or strategically adjusted the apostolic teaching of Jesus or Paul to better speak to their audience, and to make their books more sellable. It cannot be that the marketing principles of Mammon or the personal preferences of publishers, donors, or denominational boards still dictate the general way that apostolic or prophetic messages and resources are produced and distributed. In recent decades, most of these resources have had to be self published, against the odds with a lack of distribution networks, and failed to make the impact that many of these resources would actually deserve.

All this needs to change. This is why, in this *kairos* time, we need a global resource function that is actually owned by the resource providers themselves, not any middle men making money with them, and set up necessary decentralized structures like an editorial board, new distribution channels, and financial systems that support this. This is where "Starfish Edition" comes in. It is an entrepreneurial publishing concept to exactly that end. It is a globally accessible "resource warehouse" that will be mainly Internet-based, allowing quick global access, providing a resource portal, giving materials away freely as an investment to anyone in line with the Starfish publishing agreement. And that is very simple: if you like the material, pass it on to many others and become part of the vision. If you don't like the materials, don't worry, give them to someone who might be interested, and you are completely off the hook. In addition to digital media like E-Books or music, many countries will still require hard copies, printed versions of resources. This is why we invite anyone who wants to become part of the Starfish distribution network in a given nation to become a logistical center for such resources, and help in distribution. You could become a "Starfish node", and if you have an ability and passion to help distribute Starfish material in appropriate conferences, seminars or meetings or can help send out parcels inside your nations, please contact us. If you are a writer or artist, specifically with an apostolic or prophetic calling, you are invited to submit your manuscript or contribution for consideration by the editorial board.

5) Let us lay the foundations of the Citychurch! The time has come to intentionally resurrect and refound the "church of X", X standing for our region, city or jurisdiction. The "church of our city" is the regional and public expression of the sum of all followers of Christ in a given city or region that come together time and again, as described in the book of Acts. Although many may hope for it, we need to remain realistic: the Citychurch will only very rarely develop as an evolution out of an existing or emerging alliance of traditional churches and ministries. Too strong are usually the powers of inertia and the degree of institutionalization of classical-church-based alliances, structures that would quite simply have to die and literally vote themselves out of office in order to make room for a true Citychurch that deserves that name. The Citychurch will therefore emerge as the result of a corporate effort of founding fathers of apostolic and prophetic nature in an area. Start such an initiative, or join it. Prayerfully call together the right persons for this, and rest assured that many members and leaders of classical churches have heard the exact same thing from God: it is time for the Citychurch! In places where existing alliances, churches and leaders have not yet realized that they



are no longer legally holding the monopoly to the apostolic directions in their region, please remain unimpressed of the fears and anxieties you might witness as the existing system is questioned, and sober in the face of any bureaucratic red tape that you might experience. Think of the very real fact that the classical church system has had its very fair chance to arrive at apostolic unity for probably decades, if not centuries. Proactively start to look out for appropriate venues or stadiums for regular or irregular citywide or regional gatherings. Ideally God will call out the Citychurch as an initiative of people from both outside and inside traditional church and ministry structures, so that both the new and old wine can be offered to the city in unison.

6) “The right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). If God is putting together an organic global missions network of people towards the goal of seeing half the planet disciplined in our time, some of us need to meet, regularly and irregularly, be on our knees before God together, pray, inform each other, listen to God’s prophetic directives and warnings, interface with each other, both globally and regionally, and give each other “hands of fellowship” in the spirit of Galatians chapter 2 or the apostolic councils in Jerusalem. We all need to learn not only to be a trustworthy friend of Jesus, but also to be reliable friends to each other. We find biblical examples for apostolic task sharing in Gal. 2 or the apostolic councils in Antioch (Acts 13) or Jerusalem (Acts 1;6;15). Even in the age of the Internet, face-to-face meetings will remain crucial. Therefore we need a dynamic interface, a knowledge base, to make space to meet, discern the times, share experiences, come in prayer before God not only alone, but as a corporate body and ask him what is on his agenda and timetable, deal with new challenges and make strategic decisions in a spirit of synergy. In other words, it calls for connectivity in the spirit of decentralization.

Plans are in place to have a first global gathering in October 2009. Regional meetings can happen at any time. If you sense this is a contribution you could and should make, then arrange and call such meetings yourself. I believe that this, like most truly strategic meetings in church history, does not require huge gatherings that, following parliamentary logic, need everyone named and famed present to ensure political correctness. It will be vital to gather those called and gifted by God for today’s apostolic and prophetic tasks. We will need some global meetings, and some regional meetings, because some of us will have a more global role to play, and others a regional role. Sometimes these roles might even change.

7) The role of Jerusalem. This is where Jerusalem might, again, be of crucial significance. It was not only the physical place where God promised to Abraham to give him the nations, where God chose for his name to dwell, it was also the place where he sent his son to live, preach, heal and die, rise from the dead and commission the *ekklesia* to finish the task of discipling the nations, in fulfillment of the prophecy to Abraham. And even if we are today moving away from classical mission headquarters, we all remain in desperate need of directives from heaven, not from men. This is an age where we want to do missions not by information, but by inspiration, and what better place to consider as a central meeting point in the future than Jerusalem?



We all know the pathological condition of religious people called Jerusalem syndrome, where people are overcome with an obsessive religious behavior and delusion triggered by contact with Jerusalem. The religious mind loves holy places; however, we need to admit the fact that God has assigned some distinct or even prophetic roles to certain geographic places. Jerusalem is one of them. As we all are rejecting religion as a man-made system, we need to be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater here. Jerusalem has a special place in the apostolic scenarios of God; missions began there, and it will also end there with the physical return of the King.

Both Isaiah and Micah say: "In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains, and will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many people will come and say: 'Come; let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. The torah will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem'" (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2). The Hebrew word "torah" does not mean, like in traditional Judaism, the five written books of Moses, but speaks of the foundational instructions of God to his people. The "temple of the Lord" today is the *ekklesia*, not any longer a building made of stone. A mountain in prophetic language represents government. In other words: in the empire of God, representing the government of Jesus over those that have voluntarily submitted to it, it is prophesied that Jerusalem, "Mount Zion", has a prominent place for the practical directives given from God to his people "in the last days". This is the most important reason why we plan to hold, from AD 2010 on, a yearly global "Starfish gathering" in Jerusalem. There is no human logic or religious romanticism in this. God has simply spoken to a number of us prophetically, and that - in an inspiration age - is all the reasoning we need. Thinking globally and acting locally (some call this glocalization) is one thing; but this often carries a plastic, artificial ring to it, as global agendas are pushed down onto regions to be imported and implemented. Far more interesting - and organic - is *lobalization*: acting *lobal* means to have *local* roots, develop something locally, with *global* consequences. So whether or not we all see each other in Jerusalem, I invite you to ponder this, pray, seek God's face about this, ask him how you, your family, your group, network, church, organization, business, or institution should be involved, what your contribution should be, and then give yourselves to God first, and then to the task of seeing the fulfillment of God's age-old apostolic mission come true in our days, a mission that countless precious souls have already given their lives for. Will you give yours too?

8) Emigration out of Babylon. Birds and fish, the very first creatures God made, are prophetic animals demonstrating to us humans how to live in sync with each other, swim or fly in formation, and regularly follow the mysterious call for their migrations. In a similar way, God's Spirit calls all of his people to migrate out of Babylon - the false security of a materialistic and false, even demonic imperial system - and move out in an apostolic migration, a spiritual journey from Babylon to the promised land. For people to be free to live their role in God's Empire, they must be delivered or dismissed from false imperial structures. These pseudo-empires have a name: they are inventions of humans, and could be or-



ganizations, nations, denominations, churches, tribes or clans, anything that requires an oath, a pledge, loyalty, finances and offer pressure or even punishment to squeeze people into ungodly systems of control. Systems that require an oath or a pledge from us, the fact that we literally have to either sell ourselves to a system or at least enter into a long-term contract, imprison people in ungodly control systems. An offshoot of Babylon may look glittery in the life of self-made men and the so-called social elite, but it ultimately is nothing else than a golden cage. The principle of Babylon is simple: if you live for money and power and therefore surround or tie yourself to structures that promise permanent wealth and permanent power, it is nothing else but serving Mammon and become a delusional slave of Babylon. As long as people are trying to be loyal citizens of two empires, they try to serve two masters that are totally incompatible (Mt 6:24). They cannot serve God with their whole heart, will always be bound to two traditions and will limp with both legs (1 King 18:21). This is the best way to sell your imperial birthright for the lentil soup of having your immediate needs met. This is why God is calling each and every spiritual citizen of Egypt or Babylon: "leave the false securities of Egypt, come out of Babylon!" And God would not be God, if he would not have a strong word with every human chief of Babylonian structures, and speak to every disciple and spiritual descendant of Pharaoh and tells him: "Let my people go!"

9) Good seed grows in soil, not in dirt. It is far easier to criticize than to create; it is cheap to whine but fail to offer an alternative; bad-mouthing and backbiting is one thing, constructive encouragement and blessing others is another. The collective suspicion against false religious systems, the experience of manipulative systems and therefore the aversion against any new fad has reached Tsunami proportions. "Unfulfilled hope makes the heart sick" (Prov 13:12). Insecurity, disappointments and plain anger have lead millions of Christians to retreat, flee, licking wounds, an internal emigration and the general refusal to commit to anything and comment and censor whatever that is going on "in church" from a safe distance. Many have developed an inner barrage, forbidding themselves to engage anything with more than a cautious finger, and they reflexively shrink away from anything that smells of even the smallest commitment. Millions of Christians are what has been coined as OOC, "Out Of Church Christians", who initially live a desert existence and remain generally offside, in an out-of body experience. Such an exodus experience, for many an escape from church into a no-man's land, is understandable, but should not remain a permanent condition born out of trauma. Escape is not attack, reaction is not action, and if everyone now knows what we are against, who would know what we are for? It is one thing to leave Egypt; it is another to enter the promised land of God. The desert is only a temporary stage, not a permanent dwelling. That is why we need to be very careful not to allow a climate of general critique of CAWKI to mold us into a negative identity. Instead of remaining in a negative identity (who we are *not*) and constantly distancing ourselves from anything else, the Spirit of God will invite all of us to voluntarily align ourselves into God's apostolic plans and structures and live the fascinating and positive alternative of the Empire of God, Life 2.0. This also requires from us "to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). The good seeds of God will not grow in the hip-

And God would not be God, if he would not have a strong word with every human chief of Babylonian structures, and speak to every disciple and spiritual descendant of Pharaoh and tells him: "Let my people go!"



The good seeds of God will not grow in the hip-high dirt and rubbish of discontent, rebellion, denial and anarchy, but in the good soil of God: his love, acceptance, compassion and security.

high dirt and rubbish of discontent, rebellion, denial and anarchy, but in the good soil of God: his love, acceptance, compassion and security. This, in turn, enables us to also love, forgive, forget, hope and believe, if necessary against all hope, as Abraham did before us (Rom 4:18). For this we need “gardeners”, shepherds, elders, pastors, people who can open a space for this to happen. Let us therefore create frameworks of hope, love, acceptance and reconciliation amongst each other, so that God’s seeds will not grow up deformed and tainted by bitterness and unforgiveness, but in a spirit of mutual submission, love and respect. This will truly honor our God, who has specialized to do the impossible, even what we humans deem to be utterly impossible. Would you yourself start an initiative – to do away with dirt and to gather the good soil - in your village, town, city, region or country? God will be there for you to give you the needed inspiration and creativity for this.

10) Will your city accept the reformation? Many observers have already concluded that, in scope, depth and significance, this present revolutionary reformation - back to the King and his Kingdom, back to a prophetic-apostolic refoundation of *ekklesia*, and back to Kingdom economics - far outstrips what has historically become known as the Protestant Reformation. The consequences for the world are monumental. If this is true, this means we all face a pivotal choice. Will we remain unreformed, trotting our ways, loyal to our past, our heritage and legacy, that we have been handed down by very loveable people, yet very much limited by their times, or will we, realizing that this is truly of God, accept the reformation, personally and corporately, and become part of it? What say you? And what say your city or region?

Historically, the reformers in Luther’s and Zwingli’s time called together the city elders and clergy, presented them with the case for the reformation, and asked if they do or do not accept it. I propose that we do the same in ways appropriate to our cultures and situations.

As we learn to work and partner together and again function like an inseparable One Body under One Head, as the King has destined us to do, this will be literally earth changing. This is a future worth living for, because we have died to ourselves, our small vision and dreams, and became part of history in the making. And, before we know it, we will realize an amazing truth: *we are the very people we have always been waiting for.*

What a privileged day to be alive. And what a joy if we were to look backwards one day, and see it all from a perspective that will blow us all away: when the great historian will take our hands, and walk us all through mankind’s history, from Adam and Eve to the consummation of time, and look us straight in the eyes and say that one sentence that will have made it all worthwhile for us: *“Well done, you faithful servant!”*

We are the very people we have always been waiting for.



Appendix

The Starfish website is www.starfishportal.net

This is the internet warehouse, the place where you will find existing and new Starfish resources to download, where you can sign up for newsletter like the StarfishFax, Mammon-Fax, find training concepts and also an electronic investment portal for the Starfish Foundation.

The Starfish publishing philosophy

Starfish Edition is an entrepreneurial publishing concept. It exists to make vital apostolic and prophetic materials towards the goals of Mission Starfish easily accessible and globally available for the empowerment of anyone. Starfish Edition is a decentralized distribution network and is based on the philosophy of a Christian gift economy. Materials cannot be bought. You can only get them as an investment into you personally; in return, should you benefit from the material (if not, please delete it or discard with no further obligations whatsoever), we would ask you to honor the following risk-free moral agreement: 1) pay it forward and 2) get involved yourself.

1) To “pay it forward” is a philosophy that embraces the value of an advance investment, asking readers not to pay a fee for the resource itself (that would be to “pay it backwards”), but encourage them to re-invest in at least ten others who should be exposed to this material freely as well and therefore not just consume, but pass on the blessing. Instead of consuming media only for our personal use, we want to encourage you to pass on to others what has encouraged you. You will know best who this should be. This is how blessings from God do not end up sitting on our bookshelves, but grow like an epidemic by us passing it on to others.

Although their intellectual property, the authors specifically release their materials for intentional global distribution in line with the Starfish publishing philosophy. Everyone is not only encouraged, but also entitled to freely distribute; however we ask that **the materials shall not be sold at any time.** *If you agree to these simple terms, you may:*

- forward this E-Book to as many people as you can (we suggest at least ten others)
- make it available for free download on any website/blog you own or have access to
- self-print and distribute free hard copies
- freely quote and re-use materials contained herein in your own or other publications as long as it remains in context
- bulk order and freely distribute the printed book version, once available, and become a regional distributor/resource outlet of this and other Starfish material yourself (see below)

All electronic Books (in pdf-format) are password-protected. You will have to type, “I agree” to open it. We consider this signature (the fact that you type “I agree”) to be a moral agreement, a handshake of mutual integrity. This also means that we make ourselves intentionally vulnerable if someone wants to take advantage of this. We consider this risk

The materials shall not be sold at any time.



of possible exploitation to be a necessary part of the needed change and breaking away from the materialistic, Babylonian selling-and-buying principles of this world. We reckon that in this regard there are three types of Christians in this world: a) outright consumers who take anything for free; b) followers of Christ with a lacking integrity who quickly say 'yes' but practice 'no'; c) and finally morally sound people of character and integrity, in other words: *people like you*.

2) What does involvement in Mission Starfish look like?

Pray for this vision to run quickly. Pray that the mission, the practical implementation of the vision, will happen swiftly and unhindered. Pray for godly connections, strategic relationships, healthy biblical guidelines and that the work can be done without competition or pride, in a spirit of humble and vision-oriented friendship, and that Jesus will be and remain the Lord of such an initiative.

Invest financially into this vision. Instead of paying for products, you can become a sponsor of the overall vision. Through your investment into a strategic financial pool you can express your agreement and become a financial partner with this vision. For this to happen, we need to create financial instruments that allow this. This is where the Starfish Foundation comes in (see below) that specifically exists to mobilize others towards the Starfish Vision. The foundation is responsible for all of the dedicated capital to use it for three specific purposes:

- a) To practically finance the goals of the Starfish Mission, for example the mobilization of others to become a part of this, to invest into the future generation, to finance necessary travel and Starfish gatherings etc.
- b) Logistics for the preparation, printing and distribution of Starfish materials;
- c) A fair contribution towards the authors.

As a rule of thumb we recommend for each Starfish sponsor to invest one daily wage per year, or more. There are biblical reasons for this. Harvest workers in biblical times never received salaries; they have traditionally been paid a "daily wage." In essence the Starfish Missions exists to mobilize "harvest workers for the big harvest", of which Jesus spoke in Lk 10. In order to answer "the cries of the unpaid wages of the field workers" (James 5:4) and to respect biblical harvest principles, we have chosen the daily wage principle as well. A daily wage typically is a monthly income divided by 20. For a student with 600.- support per month, this would be 30.-

As an individual or as a family, we ask you to invest a daily wage (or more) per year into the Starfish Foundation. As a housechurch (or company, group, ministry conference etc.), or if you are having considerably larger financial possibilities, we would ask you to discuss an appropriate Starfish investment with your King. In addition to the daily wage concept, you are of course invited to contribute financially as God would direct you according to your abilities.

Participate yourself in the Starfish Mission. As all of us have something unique to contribute into God's ultimate mission, we invite you to follow the recommendations in response to the Starfish Vision,



and above that, be as creative as God made you to come up with ideas, concepts and initiatives no one has ever thought of. "For God's sake", do something unheard of. You could "open up your house, your kitchen and your fridge" for your neighbor, or be the birthplace of a movement to disciple unreached people groups – in your own area or on the other side of the planet - by helping to plant multipliable house church networks among them. You could start and multiply inspiration-based businesses, model Life 2.0 in the area of family, education, culture, communication and politics, and you could take training in the area of your giftedness and your life's calling by finding a mentor or coach in your area. At some point in your own growth process you will become a mentor or coach for others yourself and become a trainer for many. And, if you have the necessary logistical abilities (space and energy), you could - as an individual, a house church, a network of house churches, or a business – become a local/regional distributor of Starfish materials. Those materials would be stored in an adequate and dry space you might have, and then would have to be sent out in parcels when people order more of them, or distributed across entire churches, mission organizations or at appropriate seminars, conferences and meetings. Contact us for details at distribution@starfishportal.net

Starfish Foundation

Since 2008 the Starfish Foundation is functional as a financial instrument of the Mission Starfish, including the goal to facilitate the development of similar apostolic foundations in many other regions of the world. The Starfish Foundation is registered in Switzerland and directed by a regional board (amongst them Thomas Giudici and Wolfgang Simson) as well as an international senate of persons of integrity and experience, functioning as an advisory board.

To financially participate in the Starfish Vision, you can send checks made out to "Starfish" to the following

postal address:

Starfish
PO Box 1248
79397 Kandern
Germany

wire amounts directly into the **Starfish account**

Switzerland:

Starfish Verein
Postfinance Bern (= bank)
account no. 60-516665-9
IBAN: CH1609000000605166659
SWIFT Code: POFICHBEXXX
Clearing Nummer/BLZ: 9000

or use our website and online donation portal:
www.starfishportal.net

