



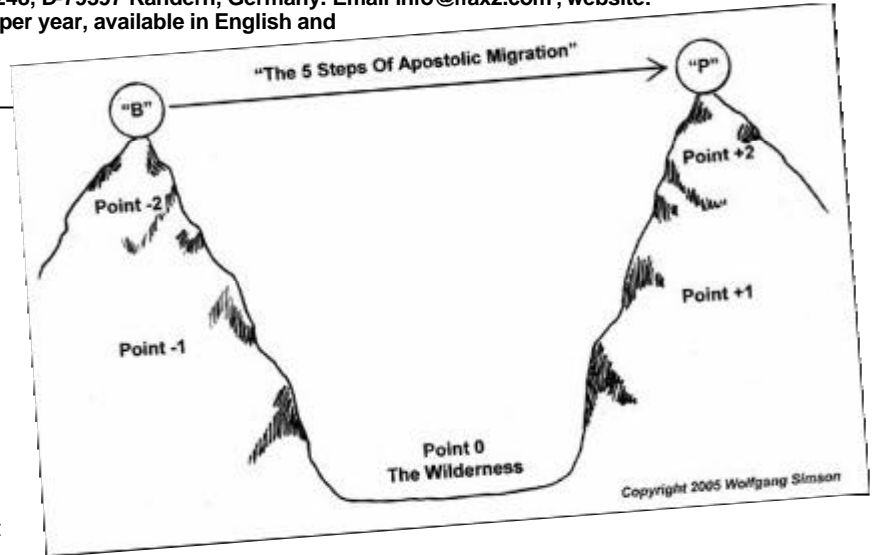
FRIDAYFAX 2

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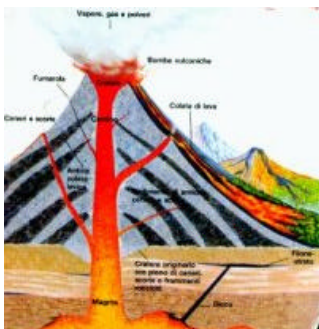
The Apostolic Migration of Christianity

Discounting a few highlights, a couple missionary breakthroughs in many Third World countries and some encouraging news and positive developments of a more local or regional nature, most parts of worldwide Protestantism lie in a veritable depression. The symptoms? Deep resignation, self-centered pirouetting and, if we look at the overall picture, the definite absence of growth. It seems that this represents a Christianity that



God has pulled the plug on – but no one has yet noticed. Someone told of the Korean Pastor visiting the West for the first time, and, after been shown around for some time, finally exclaimed: “Its amazing what you people can do without the Holy Spirit!” What are the symptoms of this rampant and historically grown depression? Here are a few: standstill in spite of hectic activity; alarming burnout rates, especially of the “good leaders”; strategic myopia: the inability and unwillingness to look beyond the own biotope; and retro-oriented escape-patterns (what depressed people do when under pressure): clinging to the old and trusted; idolising and even worshipping tradition; seeking security and identity in denominationalism or religious confessionalism. Or, psychologically speaking, a more manic, frantic reaction: celebrating what I call a **vicarious revival**, the ridiculous attempt to consume and partake in other people’s breakthroughs through copy-catism of spiritual experiences and idolizing imported and pragmatic how-to methods. Once the West exploited the Third World for their gold, slaves and diamonds; today the West still consumes, exploits and drains off the spiritual insights, slaves (brain drain) and methods of the Rest of the World. We need to stop consuming – and start learning.

In the last issue of Fridayfax2 we have explored why this global spiritual depression has resulted in (one more; thanks, Martin Luther) Babylonian Captivity of the Church – where Christianity ended up after centuries of breaking almost every rule in God’s book, preferring by default human traditions over apostolic patterns, and literally celebrating the absence of any biblical order, as if this where freedom. And we have looked at why the Holy Spirit seems to stand at the Babylon Railway Station, blowing his whistle, calling everyone to wake up, get packed, move and join the great present migration into God’s promised land. It’s back to the roots, the return to a genuine, apostolic and prophetic understanding and living of the Christian faith, no matter what. This has gripped the hearts and minds of millions, and lies at the heart of the present realignment and reconfiguration of the Church. This global spiritual migration usually seems to happen in five steps or phases. I call those phases -2 to +2. It is a bit like moving from one mountain peak to the other. Peak B (Babylon) gives a great view to Peak P (Prophetic Apostolic Christianity). It looks you can almost touch it, but, alas, you can’t move from B to P straight as the bird flies. It requires an often-difficult descent from one mountaintop, negotiating the valley in-between and then ascending an entirely different mountain. Not all will succeed that. This is also why most Christian leaders of one era are not able to become the leaders of the next era. Here a brief look at the 5 phases of this journey:



Point -2: Our church is just great!

This is where most Christians are today as this new move of God unfolds. This is the point of “happy clappy” Churchianity where most people are content with where they are in their church experience. When you talk to them about the need for a new paradigm their response is basically, “I have no idea what you are talking about.” Their little world is such a safe religious haven, the new choir is just great, the last conference was outstanding, the new pastor very promising, and the building and parking lot almost paid off. Any talk of a Babylonian captivity is concerned a joke, at best, and the motto is: “Do not confuse me with the facts.” This ostrich mentality can quickly evolve into a dance on the tip of a volcano. Once the finances get tight, the burnout-fever strikes, people start leaving for a hip church next door, or something happens to one’s idolized church or guru, the cards

can quickly collapse. People at waypoint -2 need to hear a simple message: read the newspaper, look out the window, look at the signs of the time. It’s burning, the days of old-time religion are over, therefore get up, start moving, - or keep drifting into a religious oblivion.



Point - 1: The Balancing Act

This second point or step in the process of apostolic migration represents people who are no longer satisfied with “happy clappy church” as they have known it. These are people who have heard from God about more authentic expressions of church. After all: which prophet has prophesied that the future will just be like the present? First, however, they usually say: something must happen – but nothing should change. They have begun to move in their spirits, but their bodies and their money have not yet moved. This begins to stretch them – and leads them into a spiritual balancing act. It’s like waking up to the insight of sitting in the wrong bus – and keep sitting. You see, the seat is nicely warmed, then neighbours so very friendly, the ticket has been paid, and

after all, what should the people think. We are inwardly torn. A fresh vision has gripped us, lets say, by stumbling across Acts 2:42-47, and left us hungry; thrown us into a creative crisis. With time, the tensions only grow bigger and bigger – until the pain becomes unbearable, and we get up and press that red button – and get out of the bus. The message for folks at waypoint -1: be honest to yourself, follow your heart, end the balancing act soon, and press that button.

Ground 0: Welcome to the desert

This is where we get out of the bus, and, my goodness, find ourselves in the middle of a desert! Looking like losers, alone, vulnerable, shivering in the cold, we face a time of thirst, dark valleys and reorientation. We feel like being broken, experience what the biblical kernel of wheat feels as it falls into the ground to die (John 12:24). We realize: the old must die to make room for the new. This is where pastors and other leaders start selling shoes and drive taxis again. Yes, we emigrated from Babylon, but now Babylon in us has to die. It’s a place of quarantine: once we are out of the system – the system also has to get out of us. For this very reason God engineers the wilderness as a place of “spiritual death” to the old, a place of “religious detoxification” where God deals with our “baggage.” The message for folks at this waypoint is: die thoroughly! Don’t linger at all the oases and force your survival with all those gimmicks and tricks. God has arranged for your self to die, for our religious ego, our fleshly, consumer-oriented Christianity that had only one question: what’s in it for me? This mindset cannot be discipled – it has to be killed. And: this cleansing process takes time, more time than most would think. As a rule of thumb, one month quarantine for each year of passive participation in traditional Christianity. For active ones (like paid church/mission staff): double that!



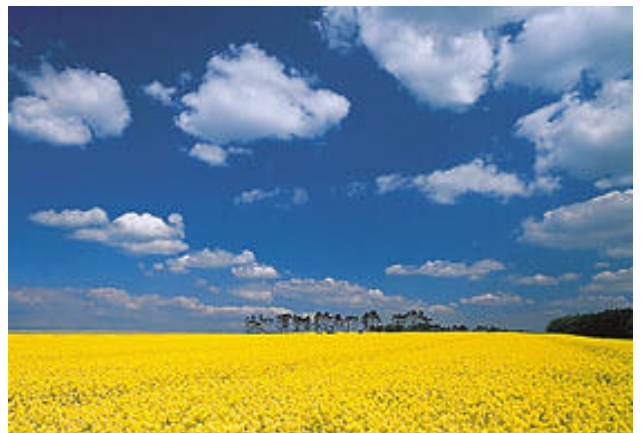
Point +1: The Jordan

This is the stage or point at which people choose to leave the past and the wilderness behind and to “cross over the Jordan ” into the new paradigm of what God is doing. This requires both a *leaving* (of the old) and a *cleaving* (to the new). It requires us to “uncovenant” with what has gone before, and to make a new covenant with God’s new unfolding paradigm. Jonathan is a (bad) example for this. Jonathan covenanted twice with David, the new (apostolic) leader, himself, being the son of King Saul, the rightful and appointed heir to the throne of Israel. But: “(David) rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city.”(1. Sam 20:42). Jonathan was unable to “uncovenant” from Saul and his system – and died with his father. Here at “the Jordan”, where we can already smell and see the promised land, hear the cowbells on the other side, is also the place that requires an ultimate step: leaving the old, overcome a life lived by sympathies, and simply do better than Jonathan. And know what? In the desert you will have met many new friends, fellow-pilgrims, fellow-outcasts. After some time you wonder. What once looked like a lonely loser looks now more like a movement of

pioneers. The message: say your farewell quick – and get into the water. You will see it will part for you, too.

Point + 2: Apostolic Conquest

Once you have crossed that Jordan, it’s time to take up your position together with others and start taking the Land for God. Here you need to answer 3 key questions for your life: what exactly is your personal calling? Where (geography) are you supposed to live and work? And with whom has God placed you together? A former question, “What church is good for me”, fades, and is replaced by a much more important one: What kind of church can take and posses the land? What kind of church is good for God? Like in the early days, this will lead us into developing regional strategies, housechurch networks, citychurches, fivefold ministries, citywide servant hood – and much, much more. As the church is again functioning “under God”, so also we as a person and family will find our place of godly destiny. If this is not worth dropping everything else for, then what is?



Where (and when) in this migration are you at this point? What, therefore, will be your next step? And where on the U-map are those very close to you, the people you love and know? Why not take a big piece of paper right now, draw your version of this “U-turn”, enter the waypoints -2 to +2, and add the names of people around you as you see them on this journey. Then, develop a specific message for those at the various stages and help them understand their own situation, help them to find that red dot on the big map of life that says: “You are here!” and help them to move into the right direction.