

# The Marks of the Apostolic – A Mild Critique of Some Fivefold Thinking

In recent years there has been a resurgence in thinking about the so-called “fivefold” “ascension gifts” shape to ministry. It has been furthered by the likes of Alan Hirsch and Mike Breen. It draws on Ephesians 4:11-12 in which Paul refers to five gifts from Christ, “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service...”



In general, despite a growing tendency to reduce it to some sort of personality inventory, fivefold thinking is helpful. I have, for instance, used it as a starting point to unpack what it means to be prophetic.

Here, however, I want to focus on the *apostolic*.

There's a lot to commend in typical fivefold thinking about the apostolic. It will usually draw on the root word of “apostle” and the associated verb “apostello” which means simply “to send” with the nuance (in context) of being sent with purpose: i.e. appointed to go and do something. Hence the disciples who were the direct recipients of Jesus' Great Commission are, rightly, “big-A” Apostles. And so is Paul, who received his appointment directly from the risen Christ later as one “untimely born” (1 Cor 15:8).

This can appropriately be applied to aspects of ministry today. There is something about the apostolic, for instance, that pertains to *movement*. The apostolic stimulates movement and seeks to lead a community into places where it needs to go

but hasn't. Just as the original Apostles took the gospel into Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, so the contemporary apostolic desires to *extend* the Kingdom of God in some way. In any new venture – church plant, missionary movement, activist community – you will likely find the apostolic at work, hearing the call of some “Macedonian Man” and heading out to answer (Acts 16:9-10).

The apostolic, therefore, is often associated with words like “entrepreneurial” or “visionary.” Mike Breen, answering a blog post question, says, for instance, “*Apostles can't help but start new things.*” A site that expounds Breen's lifeshapes, describes an apostle as a “Vision-keeper for the extension of the church's mission, an entrepreneur/starter... bring strategic skills, risk taking, get things off the ground (church planting?).”

There is some truth to this. But it is also where **I want to push back.**

**The apostolic is NOT *primarily* entrepreneurial.** In my experience, it's the evangelists who often have the crazy new ideas. Some of them even work!

**The apostolic IS *primarily parental*.** The original Apostles didn't just break new ground, or go into new territory, they *took the church with them, and birthed and grew whatever was begun*. They bring the body of Christ on the journey, and they hold and cover whatever is formed.

Entrepreneurs can often be the worst at bringing people with them. To be sure, none of us are as friendly as the pastors, but belligerence is not the mark of the apostolic. Neither is a “vision and dump” mentality that says “well, I've started it, now you carry it.” I've even heard excuses made for toxic leadership, “It's OK, some people have had trouble responding to the apostolic in him.” A corrective is needed.

Healthy apostles don't behave like that. They don't behave

like bosses pursuing a vision despite the collateral damage. Yes, they are deliberate, *determined* even. And the movement *is*, often, outward, ground-breaking, map-making, and pioneering. But they take a “family” with them, and they form a household on the way, wherever they have gone. Because that is the point!

I thought it would be useful, therefore, to list some of the characteristics of the apostolic that I see in the pages of Scripture. It’s not an exhaustive list, and I’d love to receive other suggestions.

These are marks of the apostle that I see in Scripture:

### **The Apostolic Way is PARENTAL.**

Paul writes the following to the Corinthians:

*I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, **as my dear children**. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus **I became your father through the gospel**. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, **my son**, whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. 1 Corinthians 4:14-17*

The language Paul uses of a father with his children or, (in the case of Timothy), his son, is obvious. His heart isn’t just to direct or dictate, but to *impart*, through relationship. The gospel is something to be modelled and embodied, and therefore imitated, not simply pursued as a function or task. This marks apostolic ministry.

Paul makes it even more explicit when he applies a maternal image to his ministry, as he writes to the Thessalonians:

*As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but*

*we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)*

This is why churches and church structures that revolve around programs and pragmatics have a sense of lifelessness to them – a stagnancy even in their busyness and sense of “success”; they have stepped away from the apostolic *sharing of life* to sterile functionalism.

The most apostolic people I know bring movement to the church, not just by *leading* the church, but by *carrying* it. They weep and laugh with it. They are broken by it, delighted by it. They hold it in some place primal, and there they carry it to the Lord and Father of us all. They imitate him, and are therefore worthy of imitation.

This does, however, lead to the second mark:

### **The Apostolic Way is PAINFUL.**

The cost of parenthood is significant. There is great joy and fruitfulness in it, but also great pain. Any parent can tell you that. God, our Father, reveals the truest sense of this. The Apostle John alludes to this constantly:

*“...to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become **children of God** – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but **born of God.**” (John 1:12-13)*

*“...for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)*

And Paul, writing to the Romans, having spoken of the Holy

Spirit as the Spirit of Adoption, by which we cry out “Abba, Father” then speaks of suffering as something of a family trait:

*“Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.” (Romans 8:17-19)*

The apostle’s “imitation” of the Father will lead the apostle, and any church that can rightly be called “apostolic,” on a path of suffering. This is not a defeatist trajectory, rather it is the “mind of Christ” – the *kenotic* (self-emptying) way that Paul speaks of in Philippians 2:1-11. No wonder, when Paul wants to speak of his apostolic power and authority, he sees the madness of leaning on his own strength and learning (2 Corinthians 11:21). Rather, “if I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (11:30) so that “Christ’s power may rest on me.” (12:9).

Too often, we look up to a triumphalist form of church leadership. We look to persons who have been successful, who have achieved some empowerment of our organisation, and in them we place our trust. We are not far from accolading the so-called “super-apostles” that had bewitched the Corinthian church. In what I think is the **defining description of apostleship**, in 1 Corinthians 4, Paul pushes back at those who delight in being winners in the Christian world:

*Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings – and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! 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. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, we are dishonoured! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. **Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.** (1 Corinthians 4:8-13)*

I have learned to look for this “scum and refuse” moment in apostolic movements. If it is not there, I am wary. For instance, the apostolic qualification of a contemporary movement like Soul Survivor doesn’t lie in its many achievements (although I surely delight in them!), but in its foundation in the Wasteland.

The most apostolic people I know weep for, and because of, the church. In this sense they share in the sufferings of Christ, and lead the people on the same self-emptying path. Their tears take them to the heart of God. They cry themselves to sleep at night, and know the grace of God new in the morning. That is what makes a movement, and it can’t be generated by any entrepreneurial technique.

Which reveals a final mark of the apostolic:

### **The Apostolic Way is Compelled, not Controlled.**

In some ways, this is just a natural consequence of the “sentness” of the apostolic. A pioneer cannot predict the path ahead. A pioneer cannot take a controlled path around obstacles and difficulties. By definition a pioneer is not following a map, they are *making* the map!

An apostle goes out with the family of God, not with a plan of *control* (“This is what we are going to do.”) but with a plan

of *purpose* ("This is why we are going.") And then they have to roll with whatever comes along. So often it is not what they planned; it is almost beyond them, in a direction where they must rely on the Holy Spirit. They are only strong because they are weak.

Paul's plans for the evangelisation of all of the province of Asia were halted. Instead he and his companions are compelled by the Holy Spirit and find themselves bringing the gospel to Europe (Acts 16:6-10). And throughout Acts, we find a similar sense of Paul being out of control: he is imprisoned, driven by storms, compelled to escape violence. Even what seems like an attempt to free himself from prison by asserting his Roman citizenship only leads to further captivity... but still many opportunities for the gospel. So often, it seems, apostolic movement is more rightly characterised by "a wing and a prayer" than clever, entrepreneurial, goals.

The Apostle Peter, as he is (re)commissioned by Jesus at the end of John's gospel, has a foreshadowing of the manner of his death. Jesus tells him "when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go" (John 21:18). John tells us that, most specifically, this statement indicates the kind of death that Peter would have. But it also colours the sense of Jesus' very next words: "Follow me."

So often, the apostle finds themselves "being led where you do not want to go." Their plans go out the window, and they learn to return to the Father's heart. There, in the midst of uncertainty, they follow the Spirit of Jesus, who only ever does what he sees the Father doing.

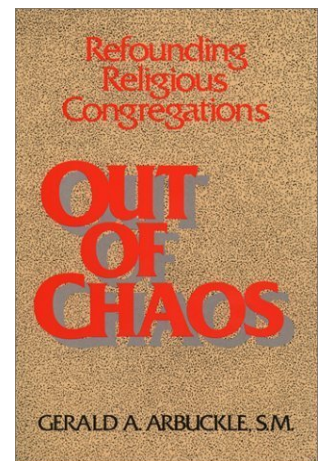
Paul, in his chains, brings the gospel even to members of Caesar's household (Philippians 4:22). Peter, even in his death, glorifies God (John 21:19). It is not the path they may have chosen, but it is the path chosen for them. The apostle leads the apostolic church in embracing the weakness (and

therefore the power) of this way.

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# Review: Out of Chaos – Refounding Religious Congregations

I must admit, I didn't think a 1980s reflection by a Marist brother on the aftermath of Vatican II would be particularly relevant to today's task of dealing with ecclesial torpor. But there is wisdom and insight in this book that plays in the same space as contemporary texts on church leadership and mission action planning, and it does so in a distinct and provocative way.



I've come across Gerald Arbuckle before with regard to pioneering *dissent*. Here the keyword is the need for religious congregations to be **refounded**. "Congregations" in this context are Catholic religious societies dealing with the *chaos* (another keyword) they experienced after the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II occurred in the 1960s, this book was written in the 1980s, bringing with it the insight of a generation's experience.

The applicability in our own generation comes from the fact that the church of the Western World is facing its own existential chaos; our very reason for existence whirls about in a pool of semantics with people swimming in different directions as we begin to differ even on the most fundamental aspects of our *founding myth* (another keyword) or worldview.

What *are* we for? Even today I was referred to a survey that purported to discern the nature and effect of *discipleship* in a region. It was premised on a subjective sense of how the respondents' faith had grown and the "growth activities" they participated in. It's not a bad survey but the *essence* of discipleship is actually missing. There was no reference to the Great Commission (where we are called to disciple *nations*), no engagement with following Christ on the path of suffering. It appears as subjective semantics with no foundation, chaos artificially blanketed by catch-all words and phrases that cannot tell a story that draws us beyond ourselves. We need *refounding*.

The refreshing difference in Arbuckle's approach is that it is fundamentally *spiritual*. I don't mean in an ethereal contemplative sense, but in the sense that he fully expects that the Spirit of Christ has been, is, and will be forming and preparing his people. This is a Catholic distinctive that we could do well to embrace.

*In salvation history, God permits chaos to develop that people may rediscover that he must be at the very heart of their lives (e.g. see Dt 8:1-4) (Page 3)*

As the Spirit leads us, so he understands that passing through chaos is painful. Refounding involves *suffering*: an antidote to the quick-fix and *cheap* mission action planning that pervades today.

*So this book offers readers no dramatically simple or rapid way to begin and sustain refounding. In fact the road to refounding is a humanly complex and a spiritually painful one, for Christ calls us to a more intimate, privileged relationship with himself, which means being invited to share deeply in the purifying experience of his own suffering. (Page 6)*

But “refounded” is an interesting term. I can see its value over “reforming” which connotes the continuous, ongoing, iterative, day-by-day *semper reformanda*. “Refounding” recognises the passing through of chaos, it reflects a *season*.

Arbuckle draws on the sociological concept of mythology to explain. “Myth” in this sense doesn’t mean vague or imaginary legend, it refers to a founding “story”, an “historically transmitted pattern of meanings.” When I have come to a new church context I have looked for the “folklore” or “DNA” of the church, to seek to understand where the Lord has led it and is leading it. “Founding myth” is the same thing: it’s the *historic story* that gives meaning and order and purpose to a group or congregation. In a season of chaos this story is lost, and *refounding* is not just to rediscover it, but to recapitulate it in a new context, a different world. It is to sing the ancient songs in a new land such that they are heard and joined. “Reconversion” is not an overstatement of how this can be described, as Christ is at the heart of our “founding myth.”

Arbuckle’s categorisation of “creation/regeneration myth”, “character myth”, “identity myth”, “eschatological myth” and “direction myth” (pages 21-23) are useful in that ongoing discernment of “DNA” and “folklore.” They are thoughts that I suspect I will return to.

**The main component** in Arbuckle’s thoughts, however, is, I think, the most provocative. He considers that the main actor in the refounding process is not found primarily in councils, committees, working groups, or consultations (such as the many chapter meetings that apparently followed Vatican II), but in “refounding persons”, individuals with a particular *charism* gift (page 89) to call the group to its reconversion.

Arbuckle appeals to a management speak of “pathfinders, problem solvers, and implementers” (page 30) that is now outdated. More helpfully, though, he looks to the OT role

of *prophet* as exemplars of what he means. There is a pattern: from a season of chaos that is allowed by God “to develop as the preface or catalyst for a marked creative faith response from his chosen people” (Page 50), God calls the people, through his prophets, back to the “regenerative myth” in which they repent and trust in the Lord’s power alone.

*Every time the Jewish people experience chaos or weariness and then resurrection to test Yahweh’s love, they relive the primal events of their creation in sacred time. (Page 50)*

These refounding prophets are therefore “Israel’s creative, dynamic and questioning memory” (page 57) who simultaneously criticise the people for the gap between the vision of who they are and their reality of who they have become, and energise the people to bridge that gap through faith by giving them hope (page 58).

*The prophets reject the distorted culture in which they live, for they measure it against the vision they know can and should be realized, if the creation myth is taken seriously...*

*They break through the chaos of confusion, of numbness and denial, by pointing out the way the people must go in order to return the culture to Yahweh-centered foundations. (Pages 58-59)*

He takes this thinking, applying it to his post-Vatican II situation, and then generalises to consider the “role of the refounding person.” The description is apt:

*There is a fire in these people, a Gospel radicality that inspires the converting, disturbs the complacent, the spiritually lethargic, those who deny chaos both inside and outside themselves and those who compromise with worldly values. They can be feared, like all innovators, because they dare to push back the frontiers of the unknown – chaos, a world of meaninglessness – in the name of Jesus Christ.*

And he summarises their characteristics (Pages 96-97). They are close to people, especially the poor, and with a finger on the pulse. They exercise creative imagination and perception as to how “people... are starved of Gospel values” and “they are able creatively to construct new ways to respond to this deprivation.” They are committed to hard work. They are committed to small beginnings. They tolerate failure. And they are community-oriented; like the prophets before them:

*Prophets are not loners, even if they are marginalised or threatened with death by the people for whom they work; they earnestly seek to summon the people into the deep covenant communion with one another and with Yahweh. (page 59)*

Now all of this *could* be a disconcerting propensity to look for “supermen” and “superwomen” to come and refound us, a guru mentality that speaks more of worldly celebrity than anything else. But where we might look for “super-apostles” Arbuckle wants us to look for a genuine apostolicity.

He recognises that the refounding charism is predicated on a level of faith (helpfully enumerated on page 99) that expresses a “driving selflessness” made manifest only through a union with Christ in his suffering. He posits “a shattering failure, or rejection by one’s own congregation” as a near necessity to deal with pride and to allow a “refounding person an ultimate jump into a more perfect faith, a faith that moves one into the darkness of belief and away from one’s own false securities” (pages 105-106). Such persons are often marked by loneliness and “a strong urge to escape the prophetic responsibility” (page 106).

The reality is that we all know people like this; we look up to them, and as we grow we begin to realise the cost they have

counted and respect them even more. They are not gurus, but gifts to God's church.

The detail of Arbuckle's treatise goes into further description, even advice, for refounding persons, and also their superiors. He puts a significant amount of work into analysing the cultures of contexts and considering where relational and structural facilitation may or may not be effective. But above all, he recognises that there will likely be **conflict** between the refounding persons and their superiors

He notes that true refounders do not deliberately bring discord, but also recognises that the inherent passion and charism will "inevitably cause tension, difficulties, and even conflicts" (page 107). In the face of rejection he urges the refounder towards prayerful discernment and submission, but without quenching the fire. Different authority lines can be pursued, and withdrawal "to a new congregation or reform within a tradition" might be necessary because "religious life does not demand an absolute commitment" (page 109). This is strong, refreshingly unusual stuff.

For the superior authority figure, Arbuckle urges them to recognise, release, and cover the prophets that God will raise up. This is an obligation on the superior who might otherwise risk quenching the Spirit. This counters an attitude that suggests the role of the Superior is to repress, so as to ensure the prophetic refounder may emerge from that repression with a seemingly-helpful humility and holiness. Arbuckle rightly counters that such an attitude is dangerously simplistic (page 118) and effectively pharisaical. Yes, discernment is needed, but in the end the refounding should not be quenched.

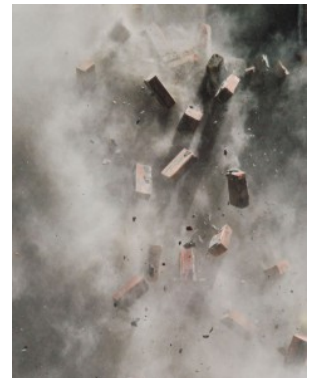
Throughout history, anything charismatic has always been a point of concern and fear for churches and ecclesial organisations. We've all seen excesses of exuberance. We are

quick to counter with common sense, and to speak from the known. But Arbuckle is right, in times of chaos what is known is fleeting and we need to re-find our foundations. We know what they are in the abstract – biblical Truth, salvation in Christ, the present and coming Kingdom of God. But grasping them, embracing them, embedding them, being *rooted* in them and *living* them is simply something the church is not doing very well. Whether you call them prophets or apostles or refounders or reformers, we *do* need godly men and women, who have been led through refining fire, through whom God will minister to and lead us. Inasmuch as they bring us to Jesus, they should be recognised, supported, released, and even followed, out of the chaos that so marks our time.

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## An Attempt to Grasp Emptiness

(Originally a facebook post, in response to a blog post from Mike Breen).



Is there a Lifeshape for kenosis\*?

“Emptiness” is fundamental to Christian spirituality. But it’s a slippery thing to grasp. It’s not figurative (or actual) self-flagellation. It’s an emptiness that comes when you’re in a place where you can’t just lead, you must also carry, and you realise that such a thing is beyond you. Your own fumes of strength are quickly burned away and you find yourself feeling something of the pain of God for his people,

as well as a strengthening and a protection that is now utterly and totally and clearly from him alone.

You see it in the drama of Paul's life whose apostolic burden had him "become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day" (1 Cor 4:13) and who even at the end of his fighting the good fight, described himself as being "poured out like a drink offering" (2 Tim 4:6). No wonder he taught the Philippians that song in 2:5-11!

To avoid pain and risk, is to avoid this emptying out. To fall into his arms in the midst of (seeming) failure, disappointment, frustration, and ennui is the spiritual task. You can tell when a leader has passed through that fire... and when they haven't. And sometimes, when you get to the end of a season of rest and recovery, you long for it again, because in that dynamic emptiness you breathe His vigour and His life.

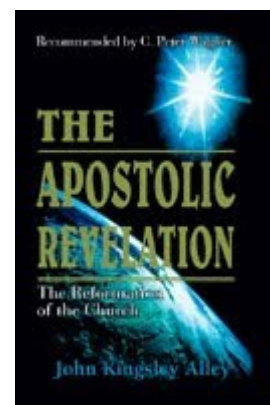
\* *kenosis*, from the Greek κενόω (kenoō), meaning "to empty"

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## Review: The Apostolic Revelation

I have just read a very frustrating book – John Alley's *The Apostolic Revelation*. It's one of those books that contains much that is right – a great deal of experience, wisdom and understanding, some challenging prophetic truth about leadership and the church – but it is packaged in jargon and concepts made slippery by loose semantics. I found myself often reflecting



– “That’s sounds about right, that matches my experience but why on earth do you explain it that way?”

As an example let me point you not to the book but to Alley’s “Peace Apostolic Ministries” website which attempts to explain (my emphasis):

*“We are an apostolic community, under the leadership of Apostle John Alley. Together we are called to take an apostolic message to the nations.... John Alley gives apostolic fathering to ministries and churches in Australia as well as the a number of Asian and African nations.”*

Even after reading the book I’m not entirely sure what is meant by that. I think the best thing to do is replace the word “apostolic” with the word “Christian” and then some of the heart of author becomes visible. (In fact, upon re-reading the beginning of the book, I see that he himself would agree with that notion but, at this time, “we need terms so that we can define, compare and contrast, for the sake of understanding” Page 22)

It might make the theologically precise wince and the anti-charismatics roll their eyes but my conclusion is that, in the case of this book, the semantical deciphering is, in general, worthwhile. And although I am unimpressed by appeals to his own authority (“I now feel compelled by the Spirit to write, because time is short, and the power anointing for apostles and prophets is about to be poured out.” Page 19) I am inclined to read that in terms of “Here’s some truth that God has been laying on my heart that would be timely for me to express in writing” and get over it. So let me be generous.

For instance, for Alley apostles are leaders of today’s church who are appointed by God “to represent Christ as head to the body.” They carry the “essential anointing that connects the body to the headship of Jesus.” (Page 39). The danger in this expression is the promulgation of a priesthood model of

leadership – with a priest mediating God to humanity and humanity to God. A generous consideration of the semantics will, however, affirm leadership that is truly an exemplar of Christ and therefore a gift of grace to the church where “‘Grace’ has a specific meaning... it means that God will choose ordinary men and women to do what He purposes.” (Page 35)

Similarly, phrases like “when Jesus sends an apostle, that apostle is Christ to you” (Page 46) make my alarm bells ring. But it is caveated by the assertion that “without submission to Christ there can be no real authority” (Page 48) and we can, generously, move on wishing perhaps he had used ambassadorial or representational language rather than ontological.

It is possible, therefore, if we take “apostolic authority” to mean “a gifted leader of the church truly submitted to Christ and representing/imitating him well”, to encounter some truth:

*“The key to apostolic authority is death, and apostles have more authority because they have face more death. The death referred to here is death of self, death to the world, and death to the fear of man and the praise of man.” (Page 55)*

Which may challenge us to look for and honour the sort of leadership “that is substantially different to what we have known of religious, institutional, denominational Christianity” which is marked by a “willingness to suffer” as “servants of the church” (Pages 62-63). We may even be stirred to ask how we might imitate Paul as he imitates Christ as he is called to “give himself for the church, to cleanse her through the word he brings, and to present her to Christ perfect.” (Page 64).

This is a good thing. And I wish more leaders had this aspiration and were willing to carry this burden for the church and for the lost. And, if I’m honest, I wish more Christians understood the pain and death-to-self that

sometimes inheres to every step of ministry. It hurts to love sometimes.

His prescription of how apostolic authority might be put into practice is based more on a description of Paul rather than any prescription that might come from thorough Biblical analysis. I certainly disagree with the assertion of an *inherent* anointing concerning finance which is based more on anecdote and prosperity doctrine than on anything biblical.

And I raise an eyebrow when he explains that for Paul “relationships were always buoyant, cheerful and full of good hope and expectation.” (Page 97).

But considerations that “we do not have a democracy, but we do have a community... Democracy cannot produce community” (Page 115) are worthwhile when thinking about how new churches are grown and how power is managed. And I can see in his unpacking of “apostolic covering” (Page 149) something of how I “use” the leadership above me – I will serve them as they serve Christ and so am able to ‘hide behind them’ if that service takes me into dangerous ground. A bishop is (can be?) a blessed thing.

I also like his ecclesiology that is centred not on denomination but on geography and formed not around institution but relationship:

*“No one is going to create unity by amalgamating denominations. Who would want a bigger, more centralised, institutional religion anyway? In any case, there are too many differences and institutionalised errors to overcome... The only way forward is with what comes from heart relationship. In every place, real men and women of God must find each other, and begin to walk and talk together.” (Page 175)*

And he is wise to cut across the danger of gung-ho young leaders seizing his thoughts and railroading themselves

through churches as the “new apostolic ministry” or something. He assures denominational leaders “no true apostle will raise a hand against you, and the heart of every apostle will be to help you, strengthen you, and support you in battle... Your honour is safe with an apostle... a genuine apostle will not grasp for power, but will wait for only what God gives him.” (Page 254)

I guess, in the end, even after a generous reading, my problem is that while he may make assertions such as “Jesus is the actual covering of the church” (Page 149) I don’t think apostolic leadership was ever meant to be the focus. While I am aware of the biblical examples such as where Paul defends his apostolic authority, the fundamental mode of the apostle is not “we need people like me” but “Jesus, all for Jesus.”

If I look to the examples that he cites – Moses, Elijah, Paul, in the Bible, people like Wesley and Booth in history – and if I look to some current leaders who I would call apostolic – Driscoll, Piper – the message is not “let us reform the church with apostolic ministry” or “let us take apostolic ministry to the world” but “let us turn to Christ, let us speak Christ, let us live for Jesus.”

In other words, there is good stuff in this book. But it is meta-apostolic – apostleship that speaks about apostleship.

Apostles are sent by and for Jesus and they speak of him not themselves. Apostolic ministry is not the hope of the world or the church, Jesus is.

Perhaps a good way to finish up is to tip my hat to Alley’s emphasis on relationships. I think I’d like to meet Mr. Alley and have a coffee with him. I think I’d ask him a lot of questions like “What do you really mean by?” but I daresay this brother would bless me and hopefully I him.

