

## Authority, Accountability, and the Apostolic Movement

kingdom, demand determines supply! Variation in spiritual endowment is intended for distribution to need in divine assignment, not accrual to positional rank. (Refer to the diagrams at the end of chapter 9.)

We are also not equal in the sphere (scope) of our divine assignment and the responsibilities of that assignment. Romans 12:3 states that everyone is given a measure (Gr. *metron*) of faith. The passage then proceeds to describe how each *metron* is different. It is clear from the Lord's parables of the talents/pounds (King James Version) that there are variations in endowments and variations in the spheres of dominion in proportion to the endowment and how faithful we have been with it. Greater grace (endowment, giftedness) mixed with greater obedience is required for greater spheres of expression. However, this also is not hierarchical; it is functional.

Therefore, defining rank in terms of maturity, endowment, and sphere is legitimate. Defining it from ministry, title, education, talent, skill, office, calling, or position is not. When we acknowledge the maturity, endowment, and sphere of another, including, but not limited to apostles, we are actually acknowledging and yielding to Christ (recognizing Christ within as we spoke of in chapter 2). We can then voluntarily affiliate or align with that manifestation of Christ. An apostle is not entitled to any submission merely because of his apostleship. His authority is limited to the measure of the stature of Christ he possesses, his grace gift endowment, and the limitation of his *metron*. If an apostle is thinking or behaving carnally, operating outside his grace gift, and outside his *metron*, we owe brotherly love—*nothing else*.

## Casting the Cast Vision

What about vision casting? Isn't that a basic, fundamental premise of leadership? Well, again, the Scriptures never use the phrase and never associate it with leadership. The case is made at best from Old Testament leadership models (which we have already addressed as inadequate) and an inference from Proverbs 29:18 and Habakkuk 2:2. Proverbs 29:18

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says the people perish from a lack of vision. The alleged implication is that good leaders provide vision, or envision their people. In Habakkuk 2:2, it is alleged that good leaders are to “make the vision plain,” implying that the set-man’s vision must be clearly and strongly presented so every one can align with it. In application it is like this: “God’s order is the envisioning of his leaders and the submission of the people to their envisioned leader. As your leader, God has given me the vision and direction for your lives in God, as the people of God. Now, *if you are really* a son of my heart and a son of this house and submit to the house vision, you will, or we expect you to, or we hope you will, ———,” or variations on this theme.

### Proverbs 29:18

There are two problems with the classic interpretation and application of this verse:

1. Importing western value systems into the text.
2. Preaching it out of context. The second half of the verse is rarely mentioned in leadership forums.

Projecting western cultural and leadership values onto the biblical text gives it a meaning that has no basis in exegetical reality. The verse has *nothing to do with* esoteric visions, inspirations, projects, goals, and “the mission statement” of an executive leader. The passage refers to spiritual and prophetic insight into the Word of God, specifically the Torah, as the second half of the verse contextually makes clear. *God’s people perish not from failure to submit to the set man’s dreams of kingdom accomplishments but rather from failure to have spiritual and prophetic insight into the Word of God!* The lack of restraint refers to living apart from the constraints of God’s moral law as revealed by prophetic insight through the prophets,<sup>11</sup> not by refusing to give one’s self to the vision of the house! The former is legitimate and makes total sense; the latter is a modern imagination.

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Christ and Him crucified and equipping the saints *is the vision* of the New Covenant era! A “visionary” leader is not one who necessarily sees and accomplishes great things to be admired by man. That which is highly esteemed by man is an abomination to God. Shoot, you don’t need the Holy Spirit to accomplish great things. You can do it with a winsome and warm personality, the skills of a used car salesman, the passion of a teary-eyed evangelist, pictures of a few starving children, and graduation certificates from Dale Carnegie and Tony Robbins.

### Habakkuk 2:2

Make the vision plain upon tables that he may run that readeth it.

Isn’t part of being a leader being visionary, making the vision plain? Well, again, this is not a leadership verse. The context (*isn’t context a theological party pooper!*) has to do with the Lord answering Habakkuk’s specific prayer concerning the nature of injustice. The “vision” the prophet receives is of the Messianic Age when God will finally defeat His enemies and restore righteousness and justice in the earth.

Now, if being a “visionary leader” means making Messiah (Christ), His ultimate victory, and His kingdom rule plain before all, then I agree! I want to be a visionary leader! However, most who consider themselves visionary or revelatory don’t read the verse as “make the vision *plain*,” they read it as “*make* the vision.” The vision has already been made for us. It is Christ and Him crucified. The leader’s job is to make Him plain, not put forward his or her grand dreams with which subordinates must comply. If being visionary means having lots of grand and great ideas, plans and dreams to accomplish “for God” if the necessary troops will just submit to it (and keep the tithe and offering flowing—maybe we can send a “free love-gift”), you will have to look elsewhere for a justifying Scripture. This one doesn’t do it. The annoying detail of so many “visionary” dreams is that they usually have the delightful side effect of making our kingdom great as well as the Lord’s—maybe even greater.

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Don Rumble captures the spiritual essence of correct local church vision:

The local church is not to express simply the mind of its leadership, its prophets, its administrators, etc. The local church is where Christ arises in the midst of His People. As we “tap into” the flow of His life, *His mind* is revealed. The Church is to constantly experience *more than* the expectation of its leadership, *more than* the visions of its prophets and *more than* the strategies of its apostles. The purpose of God for each gathering is greater than our abilities to quantify and define.<sup>12</sup>

Having great “revelations” or being “revelatory” does not in itself make someone apostolic. Apostolic revelation does not function in a vacuum. To be biblical, it must have an object: Christ and Him crucified. Being apostolic and visionary is about seeing Him clearly, and from that sight, facilitating sight in others.<sup>13</sup> Even the eighth-century Irish monk, Dallan Forgaill, understood this when he wrote (verses one and four):

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.  
Riches I heed not, nor man’s empty praise,  
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

Christ and Him crucified *is the vision*. Oh, I forgot, Brother Forgaill was not part of the emerging, cutting-edge, new-reformation, revolutionary, wealth-transferring, revelation-birthing, foundation-shaking, radical warrior, and last-day company of world-changing prophets and apostles. He probably had a poverty spirit that darkened his mind to understanding. He must have needed a covering apostle to bring him into the full blessing of insight. Oh, all right, I’ll stop. But really, listen

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to us talk. Isn't our language just *plain silly* and our opinions of ourselves a *tad inflated*?

How much "government" does it take to facilitate "love God and others as yourself"? The goal of a godly leader is not to set the vision so others can follow it but to equip the saints to fulfill their vision. The house of God is, by definition, full of multiple visions, because the Spirit envisions each member with personal destiny. Think about this from a purely pragmatic and "fruit-bearing" point of view. If you were God and wanted to get the most done in the quickest time, would you have two thousand people facilitating one man's vision and goal or one man facilitating two thousand visions and goals? Which would accomplish more? The former builds *our* kingdom; the latter builds *His*. God's kingdom increases through death and resurrection and the scattering of seed. Man's kingdom is built by gathering people in unity of vision and purpose to accomplish a great goal. God takes a pretty dim view of that thinking. He calls it Babylon.<sup>14</sup>

The practical problem arises from our corporate and business structures rather than anything inherently spiritual. Leader ego issues play in to the allocation of corporate resources (money, people, and time). Multiple "visions" cannot be accommodated ("If I fund theirs, I can't fund mine"). So much vision-casting rhetoric is about where money is spent and who controls that decision. That is more a reality of our manmade corporate structures than an inherent biblical principle of leadership. It is not inherently evil. It is just a reality of a self-inflicted problem due to our structures, not divine mandate. The reality cannot be used as justification for ungodly authority structures.

Now there is nothing wrong with mutually cooperating with, or voluntarily aligning one's self, with a leader to help him or her accomplish a large divine task: smallness is not necessarily holy, and largeness is not necessarily success (*except in the new apostolic reformation!*). However, it is *not legitimate* to *require* people to do so in submission to a misguided and dubious principle of coming under authority, covering, and biblical headship! It is also illegitimate to spiritually, psychologically, or socially

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marginalize folks who will not “sign the covenant pledge to support leadership vision,” or who do not want to be “a spiritual son or daughter,” or do not share the passion for the “house vision.”

How can you tell if you are in an abusive leadership situation, disguised as submission to authority, covering, and the set man’s vision? Practice a powerful tool God has given you: *say no*. That’s it—not in a bad spirit or defiance and not concerning apostolic doctrine over sin, but in all other areas, politely and firmly say no when it is authentic to say *no*. Be real. Be who you are. Be what God has made you to be. Tell a leader *no* sometime and watch how he or she responds to you. If you feel the icy flow of withdrawal, separation, and suspicion come upon you, get out of Dodge before the sun hits the horizon. If on the other hand you are respected, dignified, and perhaps engaged with in further dialogue, you may have found a healthy local church home.

One of the most liberating things I ever did as a local church pastor was give people under my care the explicit, articulated, right to tell me *no*, and the right to disagree with me. It was remarkable to watch the effect it had. It was not “jailbreak of the carnal unsubmitted” as many of my more authoritarian friends dread as an inevitability. Rather, gospel liberty and genuine identity in Christ emerged from years of suppression under authoritarian, rigid, and legal styles of leadership. Peace, harmony, unity, oneness, and yes, order resulted. Some with literally decades of experience in the church were shocked that it was actually “all right” to tell me *no*. Of course it is all right! I am their pastor, not their God! The reason the result was so positive is because I was not there trying to implement “the vision God gave me” but rather to release people into the vision God gave *them*. People intuitively know when you are genuinely “for them.” It is amazing how conflict subsides and order sets in when liberty and personal dignity instead of government and authority are preached and practiced. The former is the kingdom norm; the latter is for crisis.

My wife and I had a couple in our home once for some relationship building and personal life plan discussion. They were a very seasoned

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and mature couple having spent almost their entire lives from their earliest youth in the apostolic/charismatic brand of the church. They had served faithfully in multiple capacities over the years. In the course of the conversation, as my wife and I started inquiring how we could help bring them into the realization of their dreams, the wife broke down and started crying. She said that it was the first time in over forty years of church life that they had experienced a pastor/leader expressing actual concern for them as individuals, rather than asking them what they could do for “the ministry.” I suggest that her experience is not isolated, but tragically closer to the norm in hard-charging, discipleship oriented, “doing something for God” type of churches.

### Apostolic Strategies

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 3:5–11)

In this passage, Paul writes to *correct* the Corinthians for what the apostolic movement considers *normative*: alignment with a single apostle. I think it worth the ink to reemphasize the plain, straightforward, context of the passage that we already hinted at in chapter 4. Different factions were jockeying in the church for what would be called today