
THE PASTOR AS EXPERT AND THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A SALTWATER FISH IN A FRESHWATER TANK

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Abstract

Contemporary church leadership has largely been developed through historically shaped cultural forces stemming from modernity's rationalism. As the dissonance of this shaping has become more pronounced with the movement toward what has been called *postmodernity*, or *hyper-modernity*, it has become important to understand how we have arrived at our current state for the purpose of understanding how God might be reshaping the church once again. Acknowledging that our current practices of leadership have been largely shaped by historic cultural values can give us freedom to let go of those practices that no longer serve God's mission, and adapt to the context into which God is drawing us.

Historically, seasons of upheaval occur that are so massive they change the fundamentals of how societies function. From a biblical account, we see such seasons in the stories of the Exodus and Exile. The Hebrew people are profoundly shaped in the context of God's activity during the decades of change and reorientation experienced in their rescue from Egypt and their exile in the east. Branson, Roxburgh, and our colleagues at the Missional Network suggest that it is in precisely these kinds of contexts that God's activity is most observable in part because of the disorientation we experience.

An ecological illustration I find helpful in describing this change is that of the transition of a large fish tank from freshwater to saltwater. Freshwater is defined as water that contains less than a half gram of the minerals

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classified as “salts,” whereas saltwater has thirty-five grams of these same minerals per thousand grams of water.¹ Imagine these seasons of change as a large freshwater tank with an industrial-sized canister of salt resting overhead. The freshwater tank and its inhabitants exist in a state of equilibrium. Then, somehow, the salt container is punctured, allowing salt to begin infiltrating the norm of the freshwater tank. Over time, the water’s salinity will change to the point that the tank becomes a saltwater tank. In order for its inhabitants to survive, they must adapt, or change. There is also the transition water that is not freshwater and not saltwater: it is brackish water. Brackish water is where freshwater and seawater meets in rivers and along coastlines. In our metaphor, imagine brackish water as the liminal time between two epochs or eras.

This metaphor describes the state in which many in the West see the church. And more to the point of this article, this metaphor helps us to understand the nature of pastoral leadership and the forces that have shaped much of our current state of transition. It is my assumption that much of the dissonance facing pastoral leaders in the Western church today arises from the fact that after adapting centuries earlier to a saltwater context, many find themselves in a new state of brackish water that is becoming fresh again. Let me explain.

It might be an overstatement, but I know of no other profession in the world where a person can be as highly trained as a pastoral leader and be maligned by her or his clients for being so well trained. There is an odd interplay of the expectation of expertise and the expectation that such training should not be trusted. Pastoral leaders are often expected to complete the Master of Divinity degree (one of the longest professional, post-baccalaureate programs in academia) in order to be worthy of hire. Yet, upon application of this training in many church

¹ Office of Naval Research, “Ocean Water: Salinity,” *Science and Technology Focus*, <http://www.onr.navy.mil/focus/ocean/water/salinity1.htm> (accessed January 2, 2014).

contexts, the pastoral leader is often viewed as a threat to the “way we do things.”²

Pastoral leaders often are seen as a threat because they often *are* a threat to the status quo. These men and women have spent years in training to consider carefully what and how the church should best represent God’s mission in the world. They have received a particular skill set that often promises to assist them in implementing much-needed change within the congregations they will serve. In the hiring process, as in the educational processes, pastoral leaders are often expected to master certain skill sets that promote leadership as visionary and expertise.³

² Jackson Carroll notes that conflict, which often causes pastors to doubt their calling, comes first around disputes over pastoral leadership, among other significant issues. He notes that these struggles are connected to changes in congregational life and need not be negative if “worked through constructively.” Jackson W. Carroll, *God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 167–69. It is also important to note that Carroll’s findings support a double narrative that ministry is both a troubled profession and a deeply satisfying calling. 185. I would suggest that these findings support the agenda of this article—that as a profession, the pastorate is troubled. However, when re-embedded into the life of the Spirit-led congregation, it is a fulfilling vocation. See also Quentin P. Kinnison, “Shepherd or One of the Sheep: Revisiting the Biblical Metaphor of the Pastorate,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 9(1) (Spring 2010): 59–91.

³ Adair T. Lummis’s work on identifying these skills is notable. In *Pulpit & Pew*, Lummis’s research identifies the ideal leader as follows: “He or she would have the ability to envision theologically faithful patterns for their congregation’s future and the entrepreneurial talents necessary to propose effective methods of realizing these patterns. In addition such pastors would possess the charisma and people skills to mobilize congregational support for change, giving members voice in refining the vision and putting the plan into operation. Lay and regional leaders also want pastors who can preach wonderful sermons, conduct inspiring worship services, competently teach, care, counsel, and console. In choosing a new pastor, search committees differ in the abilities and characteristics to which they give priority, based on their past experiences with clergy and a host of other factors and influences.” Adair T. Lummis, “What Do Lay People Want in Pastors: Answers from Lay Search Committee Chairs and Regional Judiciary Leaders,” *Pulpit & Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership* 3 (Winter 2003): 24.

Yet so often, these technical skills and the preparation along technical application leaves these women and men ill-prepared to address the deepest kinds of change most churches are in need of experiencing and the conflict that results from resistance to adaptation. As pastoral leaders attempt adaptive kinds of change through technical leadership application, they often achieve disastrous results including diminished congregational vitality through loss of mission, disempowered laity, personal burnout and exhaustion, and professional disillusionment.

This concern is not to suggest that technical leadership and expertise have no place in leadership.⁴ After all, we all prefer to hear a sermon from someone who knows how to properly interpret and communicate the Scripture rather than from someone who botches the message. Rather, this critique is about the misapplication of leadership as expertise in adaptive contexts where new and different perspectives are required of congregations. This misapplication concurs with a rationalized cultural overvaluation of knowledge, expert systems, and expertise.⁵

In this article, I examine how we have come to exist in our current saltwater state through core cultural strands, which lead us to define pastoral leadership as a

⁴ See Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 14, 18, 110–13.

⁵ I utilize Giddens's definitions of *expert systems* and *expertise* where expert systems are those mechanisms that disembed and organize professional skill and technical knowledge from localized social contexts and make it accessible across space and time. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 27–28. Expertise is the technical skill that comes through specialized training in and through the expert system that certain individuals apply on behalf of laypersons of that particular system. Giddens, 27–28, 90, 144–45. Experts are persons trained in the expertise of a system and who serve as access points to expertise for laypersons of that particular system. Giddens, 27–28, 90. As an example: Doctors (experts) are trained with specialized medical skills (expertise) acquired from the field of medicine (expert system) on behalf of patients (laypersons).

specialized area of expertise for pastors.⁶ Accordingly, I exegete and critique expert systems as a product of rationalized modernity, particularly with a view to a new transition underway (brackish water) that views experts and expertise as suspect due to its disembedded nature. This perspective allows us to acknowledge the limits of technical expertise and to discuss how mistrust of the pastor, as the perceived *expert system* bearer, allows people to avoid the work of adaptive change.⁷

The Historical and Cultural Context of Expertise

For modern persons, the existence of expert systems is a mundane reality. Most people experience these systems in a multiplicity of ways and never question their

⁶ The critique of expert, technical leadership is part of a larger critique of clericalism and its detrimental effects on churches and pastors. Walter C. Hobbs, "Faith Twisted by Culture: Syncretism in North American Christianity," in *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 106–09; Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), throughout, but especially 120–41; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 191ff.; Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003); Alan Roxburgh, "Missional Leadership: Equipping God's People for Mission," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 190–98. See also, John Hall and Hannah Elliot, "Pastors: Leaders of the Flock but Alone in the Crowd," Associated Baptist Press, October 3, 2006, <http://www.abpnews.com/1401.article> (accessed October 7, 2007).

⁷ Heifetz and Linsky point out that, "...shouldering the adaptive work of others is risky.... [W]hen you take on an issue, you *become* that issue in the eyes of many; it follows, then, that the way to get rid of the issue is to get rid of you." Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership*, 121 (emphasis in original). They go on to clarify that, "To meet adaptive challenges, people must change their hearts as well as their behaviors.... [S]olutions are achieved when the 'people with the problem' go through the process together to become 'the people with the solution.' The issues have to be internalized, owned, and ultimately resolved by relevant parties to achieve enduring progress." Heifetz and Linsky, 127.

message, method, or meaning until a system fails them.⁸ Pastors are largely viewed as experts who employ the expertise of their particular expert system for the benefit of their constituents in the church.⁹ However, in dealing with cultural issues of values, beliefs, and norms, technical expertise and expert systems inadequately address the kinds of change necessary for transformation in adaptive contexts. In this section, I have chosen to work nearly exclusively with the writings of Stephen Toulmin and Anthony Giddens as conversation partners due to the helpful way that Toulmin offers historical insight into the shaping of the forces under discussion and the way that Giddens's framing of the outcome of that shaping seems to connect with my perception of ecclesial consequences. This focus is not to imply that others have not offered exceptional critiques—notably Weber, Taylor, Ritzer, and Tambiah—but instead to identify the context in which these forces were shaped in order to develop a more appropriate understanding of our current experiences.

To understand the development of expert systems as a product of rationality, it is important to clarify the progression from humanism to the quest for universal certainty. Modernity is often portrayed as a product of seventeenth-century rationality and its champions, Descartes, Galileo, and Newton. Instead, modernity occurs in two phases with the first having occurred in the sixteenth century with humanists Montaigne, Shakespeare, and others.

Humanist Modernity

Toulmin contends that modernity's ascent occurred in two distinct phases, with the first being defined as the

⁸ As an example in the medical field, see: John Carey, "Medical Guesswork," in *Business Week* 3986 (May 29, 2006): 72ff.

⁹ See Hobbs, "Faith," 106–09; Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 11–13.

literary and humanistic phase of the modern age.¹⁰ In this initial phase, practicality and flexibility shape the human understanding of the world.¹¹ Humanism valued the context, the concrete, the physical, and the time-specific realities of people, permitting flexibility in understanding that allowed the humanists to acknowledge and accept uncertainty as part of being human.¹²

Apparent in Toulmin's account of early modernity is that the uncertainty of the sixteenth century is held in tension with flexibility and stability. These thoughtful persons (Leonardo de Vinci, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, etc.) saw daily and practical significance in their work while remaining open to criticism and revision, all the while operating within the sphere of human existence and location: in time, place, and experience. As a result, tolerance and humble dialogue were valued.¹³

Modern Rationality: The Quest for Certainty

In contrast to the humanists of the sixteenth century, the transitional thinkers of the seventeenth century—Descartes, Galileo, and Newton—pressed an agenda aimed at developing rational absolutes in a quest for certainty.¹⁴ Rationality, as a retreat from the flexibility and

¹⁰ Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 23.

¹¹ Toulmin, 24. Toulmin also declares, "Before 1600, theoretical inquiries were balanced against discussions of the concrete practical issues."

¹² Toulmin states, "Montaigne claimed in the *Apology* that 'unless some one thing is found of which we are *completely* certain, we can be certain about nothing': he believed that there is no general truth about which certainty is possible, and concluded we can claim certainty about nothing." Toulmin, 42.

¹³ Of Aquinas and Erasmus, Toulmin explains, "Neither of them claimed that human beings, however wise and inspired, could put matters of faith and doctrine beyond the scope of reconsideration and revision.... Despite all its turmoil and religious divisions, the sixteenth century had been, by comparison, a time when the voice of sweet reasonableness made itself heard, and was widely valued. From 1610 on, and most of all after 1618, the argument became active, bloody, and strident. Everyone now talked at the top of his voice, and the humanists' quiet discussions of finitude, and the need for toleration, no longer won a hearing." Toulmin, 79.

¹⁴ Toulmin contends that these are the minds of rationality and the "Quest for Certainty." See Toulmin, 45–87.

humility of humanism, occurs in four areas: oral to written, particular to universal, local to general, and timely to timeless.

Regarding the retreat from rhetoric, sixteenth-century humanist scholars accepted that oral argumentation and logic were compatible in philosophy. The seventeenth-century rationalists shifted away from rhetoric and toward the written to preserve purported certainty in what can be reread, without interpretive errors—unlike the spoken word, which in their view required interpretation of verbal and nonverbal language.¹⁵ Next, the rationalists moved from situational to universal concepts. While the humanists preferred theological and philosophical use of case analyses in dealing with ethical concerns, the rationalists shifted to emphasizing universal principles that purportedly transcended specificity.¹⁶

Third was a move from local to general. Renaissance humanists found ethnography, geography, anthropology, and history to be worthwhile fields of study as the local customs and practices of communities offered insight into the human experience.¹⁷ However, the rationalists believed that “philosophical understanding never comes from accumulating experience of particular individuals and specific cases.... [R]ationality impose[d] on philosophy a need to seek out abstract,

¹⁵ Likewise, they wrongly assumed that the written eliminates emotionalism and social considerations, allowing for evaluation of pure thought. Toulmin writes, “The research program of modern philosophy thus set aside all questions about argumentation—among particular people in specific situations, dealing with concrete cases, where varied things were at stake—in favor of *proofs* that could be set down in writing, and judged as written.” Toulmin, 31.

¹⁶ Toulmin, 31–32. As Toulmin states, “After the 1650s, Henry More and the Cambridge Platonists made ethics a field for general abstract theory, divorced from concrete problems of moral practice; and, since then, modern philosophers have generally assumed that—like God and Freedom, or Mind and Matter—the Good and Just conform to timeless and universal principles.” Toulmin, 32.

¹⁷ Toulmin, 32–33.

general ideas and principles, by which particulars can be connected together.”¹⁸

Finally, issues of the medieval age lent themselves to the specifics of particular moments in time.¹⁹ This time-specific consciousness of the moment was, however, lost to the rationalists. Removal of time made it possible for transient human affairs to take an inferior position for rationalism: “[From] Descartes’ time on, attention was focused on timeless principles that hold good at all times equally: the permanent was in, the transitory was out.”²⁰

Abstract Systems as Disembedding Mechanisms

To achieve rational absolutes, certain disembedding mechanisms were required to decontextualize principles and skills steeped in time and place. *Disembedding mechanisms* refers to the process by which social relations and concepts are “lifted out of,” or removed from “local contexts” and are “rearticulated across indefinite tracts of time-space.”²¹ This process can be described as a distinguishing mark of modern institutions that results in the “acceleration of the time-space distancing which modernity introduces.”²² Hence, the rationalists’ work is

¹⁸ According to the seventeenth-century philosophers, “abstract axioms were in, concrete diversity was out.” Toulmin, 33.

¹⁹ Toulmin states it this way, “All problems in practice of law and medicine are ‘timely’. They refer to specific moments in time—now not later, today not yesterday. In them, ‘time is of the essence’; and they are decided, in Aristotle’s phrase, *pros ton kairon*, ‘as the occasion requires.’” Toulmin, 33. This statement seems remarkably close to Jesus’ teaching that his followers should “not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today” (Matt. 6:34, NRSV).

²⁰ The aim of Descartes and his followers “...was to bring to light permanent structures underlying all the changeable phenomena of Nature.” Toulmin, 34.

²¹ Giddens, 18. This is not unlike Charles Taylor’s disembedding of the individual, which he describes as part of the disenchantment of society. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2007), 146–58. The distinction is that Taylor’s agenda is focused on the person as actor whereas in our current discussion, we are concerned with the tools with which the actor acts: systems, knowledge, and application of systems and knowledge in vocation.

²² Giddens, 18.

expressed by the creation of abstract systems that transcend time and space.

Disembedding occurs in part through abstract systems that are described by the two mechanisms that are intrinsically involved in modern social institutions: symbolic tokens and expert systems.²³ The abstract nature of symbolic tokens and expert systems fits well within Ritzer's definition of *nothing*: "Nothing can be defined as a 'social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinct substantive content.'"²⁴ These abstract systems exist as the elimination of "distinct substantive content."²⁵ Symbolic tokens and expert systems are the application of the rationalists' universal, general, and timeless conceptualizations. To accomplish

²³ Giddens, 22. As I discuss expert systems at length, I briefly describe symbolic tokens here. Symbolic tokens have no intrinsic value, but they represent a determined value. Money is a prime example. The bills and coins hold little intrinsic value, but they symbolize confidence in the issuing government. While assets might back this value, these assets might or might not be sufficient to guarantee the value of the currency. Another example is credit. A credit card has no intrinsic value; however, it symbolizes a person's, a company's, or an organization's promise to repay its borrowed value. It is possible to see here the importance of trust. Stable governments' currency holds its value. Unstable governments' currency is quickly devalued. Giddens, 22–26; Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 134. See also Ritzer's globalization of "nothing." George Ritzer, *McDonaldization of Society*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Pine Forge, 2004), 159–84; George Ritzer, *The Globalization of Nothing* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Pine Forge, 2004).

²⁴ Ritzer, *McDonaldization*, 167.

²⁵ Again using money, in the early United States, each state issued its own currency backed by its own assets. Once the Federal Reserve banking system came into existence, notes became uniform, and for a time they were backed by hard assets (i.e., silver certificate). Despite economic crises, this has been the driving concept in Europe with the Euro currency. This unifying currency crosses nation-state boundaries in Europe generally devoid of French, Italian, German, or other national distinctiveness. Jay H. Levin, *A Guide to the Euro* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002). However, this emphasis may be moot considering the use of credit worldwide. A European spends as freely with credit in Asia, North America, South America, or Africa (where credit is accepted) as in their own city or town. See Anonymous, "The End of the Cash Era," *The Economist*, February 17th–23rd, 2007: 13; Anonymous, "A Cash Call," *The Economist*, February 17th–23rd, 2007: 71–73.

their purposes, “disembedding mechanisms, both symbolic tokens and expert systems, depend upon *trust*.”²⁶

Expert Systems

Of our primary concern, the development of expert systems created a process by which specialized technical and professional information is gathered from localized contexts, organized in institutional structures, and disseminated across space and time. These generalized institutional structures and expert systems are heavily reliant on the trust of laypersons in experts as access points to the information the systems contain.

Reflexivity and Institutionalization of Knowledge

The disembedding of knowledge has resulted in a kind of reflexivity within rationalized modernity, creating the necessity of the expert system as a means to handling this accumulation and disseminating it.²⁷ With the advent of technological advances such as the printing press, radio, television, and the computer, the amount of information that can be acquired and disseminated has increased exponentially. Each new technology expands the process.²⁸ More importantly, with each advance, what is *known* supersedes that which came before, overwhelming human sensibilities. Modernity is constituted in and through reflexively applied knowledge, but the equation of knowledge with certitude has turned out to be misconceived. We are abroad in a world which

²⁶ Giddens, *Consequences*, 26 (emphasis in original).

²⁷ Giddens explains: “In all cultures, social practices are routinely altered in the light of ongoing discoveries which feed into them. But only in the era of modernity is the revision of convention radicalized to apply (in principle) to all aspects of human life, including technological intervention into the material world.” Giddens, *Consequences*, 39.

²⁸ The printing press increased the availability of the written word; the radio made worldwide events available by sound instantaneously; the television made those events immediately visible, the computer sped up the process of accumulating, correcting, and producing written information; and the internet made information instantaneously available nearly anywhere at nearly any time.

is thoroughly constituted through reflexively applied knowledge, but where at the same time we can never be sure that any given element of that knowledge will not be revised.... No knowledge under conditions of modernity is knowledge in the "old" sense, where "to know" is to be certain. This applies equally to the natural and the social sciences.²⁹

With the accumulation of constantly fluctuating knowledge, the storage of increasing quantities of information requires the creation of institutions to house, maintain, and disseminate this knowledge, thus establishing expert systems. Robert Wuthnow states, "People typically do not invent or adopt new ideas without the assistance of some institution that has disseminated these ideas. The relations between ideas and the social environment are thus mediated by institutions."³⁰

Wuthnow contends that for a system of knowledge to become institutionalized, it must meet four criteria: autonomy, social resources, communication and organization, and legitimacy.³¹ With these elements in place, a system of thought, or *cultural form* as Wuthnow calls it, becomes an institution. This institutionalizing effect is critical in order to create the trust necessary for the system to work. However, because trust is being placed in "nothing," the interface between the expert

²⁹ Giddens, *Consequences*, 39–40.

³⁰ Robert Wuthnow, *Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1987), 265.

³¹ "First, they require a sufficient degree of *autonomy* (differentiation) from other organizations to be able to apply resources to the attainment of certain ends. Second, *social resources* must be available for the staffing of creative (productive) and administrative roles and for the payment of others' costs incurred in developing and disseminating cultural forms. Third, an internal systems of *communication and organization* must be present in order for the various activities involved in producing cultural forms to be coordinated. And finally, a degree of *legitimacy* is required in order to sustain favorable relations with centers of power, the state, potential clients or recruits, and other significant collectives in the broader environment. When these conditions have been satisfied, a cultural form has become institutionalized." Wuthnow, 265.

system and the recipient of the system's expertise becomes critical.

The expert, as the access point, experiences the client's personal trust as described above. Expert systems make information and ideas general, universal, and timeless (and mostly written), and accessible and applicable only by appropriately trained persons.³² Once gathered knowledge could be systemized and institutionalized, then it could be disseminated so that all had access to the same information and the same standard of information as absolute.

Trust and Access Points

Trust may be understood as "a form of 'faith,' in which the confidence vested in probable outcomes expresses a commitment to something rather than just a cognitive understanding."³³ From another perspective, Francis Fukuyama defines trust as "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of the community."³⁴ From trust develops the context for *social capital*.³⁵ Although

³² Giddens explains: "By expert systems I mean systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environment in which we live today." Giddens, *Consequences*, 27. This organization or systemization is a process that disembeds information from context, hence "providing 'guarantees' of expectations across distanced time-space." Giddens, 28.

³³ Giddens, *Consequences*, 27. "Trust exists...when we 'believe in' someone or some principle...." Giddens, 27. Giddens balks at the use of "faith" in this context, arguing that "trust is not the same as faith in the reliability of a person or systems; it is what is derived from that faith.... All trust is in a certain sense blind trust!" Giddens, 33.

³⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 26. He goes on to explain that these norms can be: "...deep 'value' questions like the nature of God or justice, but they can also encompass secular norms like professional standards and codes of behavior. That is, we trust a doctor not to do us deliberate injury because we expect him or her to live by the Hippocratic Oath and the standards of the medical profession."

³⁵ "Social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it.... Social capital differs from other forms of

social capital can be achieved without trust, it would be problematic in a relational, ecclesial context.³⁶ Thus, regarding trust, social capital “is an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals.”³⁷ This trust remains essential to the success of disembedding abstract systems.

Discussing the role of trust in abstract systems (i.e., token symbols and expert systems), Giddens determines that “trust is only demanded where there is ignorance—either of knowledge claims of technical experts or of the thoughts and intentions of intimates upon whom a person relies.”³⁸ Two particular kinds of trust exist: trust in systems and trust in persons.

Trust in systems is faith, which “is sustained in the workings of knowledge of which the lay person is largely ignorant.”³⁹ This expression of trust is the expert’s trust

human capital insofar as it is usually created and transmitted through cultural mechanisms like religion, tradition, or historical habit. Economists typically argue that the formation of social groups can be explained as the result of voluntary contract between individuals who have made the rational calculation that cooperation is in their long-term self-interests. By this account, trust is not necessary for cooperation: enlightened self-interest, together with legal mechanisms like contracts, can compensate for an absence of trust and allow strangers jointly to create an organization that will work for a common purpose.” Fukuyama, 26.

³⁶ To this end, Fukuyama clarifies that: “[W]hile contract and self-interest are important sources of association, the most effective organizations are based on communities of shared ethical values. These communities do not require extensive contract and legal regulation of their relations because prior moral consensus gives members of the group a basis for trust.” Fukuyama, 26.

³⁷ Fukuyama, “Social Capital,” 3. Further, Fukuyama states, “By this definition, trust, networks, civil society, and the like, which have been associated with social capital, are all epiphenomenal, arising because of social capital but not constituting social capital itself.”

From Giddens: “Trust is different from ‘weak inductive knowledge,’ but the faith it involves does not always presume a conscious act of commitment. In conditions of modernity, attitudes of trust toward abstract systems are usually routinely incorporated into the continuity of day-to-day activities and are to a large extent enforced by the intrinsic circumstances of daily life. Thus trust is much less of a ‘leap to commitment’ than a tacit acceptance of circumstances in which other alternatives are largely foreclosed.” Giddens, *Consequences*, 90.

³⁸ Giddens, *Consequences*, 89.

³⁹ Giddens, *Consequences*, 88.

of the system. "Trust in persons," states Giddens, "involves facework commitments, in which indicators of integrity of others (within given arenas of action) are sought."⁴⁰ This form of trust becomes especially clear as Giddens develops the issue of ontological trust, which he identifies as the basic human trust or reliance upon another for one's own well-being. Drawing on Erik Erickson's work, Giddens underscores the importance of the social context as the arena in which trust must occur.⁴¹ Security and a sense of self reside with those in whom we trust. Therefore, it is indispensable for laypersons that expert systems have trustworthy representatives with whom to interface. This expression of trust is the layperson's trust in the expert.

The disembedding of knowledge and systems requires a reembedding of trust into certain localized individuals, which Giddens calls *facework commitments*. Facework commitments are "trust relations which are sustained by or expressed in social connections established in circumstances of copresence."⁴² In relation to expert systems, this is trust in persons versus the "faceless commitments" of trust in the abstract systems.⁴³ There is an assumption that the system is "near infallible" by the nature of its accumulated knowledge and is therefore trustworthy. The social nature of human beings requires a personal encounter and the expectation that the persons representing these systems are doubly trustworthy: (1) because of their expertise, and (2) because of a commitment perceived as personal by the recipient of their expertise. Giddens describes this situation as "encounters with representatives of abstract systems,"

⁴⁰ Giddens, *Consequences*, 88.

⁴¹ Giddens, *Consequences*, 92–100. He states in *Modernity and Self-Identity*, "Attitudes of trust, in relation to specific situations, persons or systems, and on a more generalised level, are directly connected to the psychological *security* of individuals and groups." Giddens, *Self-Identity*, 19.

⁴² Giddens, *Consequences*, 80.

⁴³ Giddens, *Consequences*, 84.

which “take on the characteristics of trustworthiness associated with friendship and intimacy.”⁴⁴

Facework-oriented trust counterbalances the trust in faceless commitment required for trust in systems of knowledge. Likewise, trust in systems is magnified because of the trust in the individual representative. Giddens further clarifies:

At access points the facework commitments which tie lay actors into trust relations ordinarily involve displays of manifest trustworthiness and integrity, coupled with an attitude of “business-as-usual,” or unflappability.... There is no skill so carefully honed and no form of expert knowledge so comprehensive that elements of hazard or luck do not come into play.... [F]acework commitments are generally important as a mode of generating continuing trustworthiness.... Reembedding here represents a means of anchoring trust in the trustworthiness and integrity of colleagues.⁴⁵

While believing that the system has the information and therefore the power to help, a person’s real trust is in the personal representatives of the system. The success or failure of the system affects the perceived trustworthiness of the personal representative. Its failure destroys this representative’s credibility. It might also be true that personal failure of the representative may negatively affect the perception of the system, but not necessarily so.

It is arguable that when the system’s representative fails, it is possible that there was a misapplication of the expertise or a miscalculation by the representative. For instance, a patient’s family sues a doctor when a patient dies from a difficult-to-diagnose illness. Their complaint is that the doctor misdiagnosed the illness and therefore

⁴⁴ Giddens, *Consequences*, 85. Giddens clarifies by stating, “Cognitive frames of meaning will not generate that faith [in the coherence of everyday life] without a corresponding level of underlying emotional commitment—whose origins, I shall argue, are largely unconscious. Trust, hope and courage are all relevant to such commitment.” Giddens, *Self-Identity*, 38.

⁴⁵ Giddens, *Consequences*, 85–87.

was negligent with the knowledge at his or her disposal. While the access point is being blamed for the death of the patient, the system (in this case, the medical system) can be exonerated, in theory. What is unclear is to what degree the system produced the environment in which the access point (expert) failed. Did the doctor, who received a standardized education, act as the system had trained him or her to act, or did the doctor fail to utilize the system by which she or he was trained? The blaming of the expert is possible because of the institutionalization of the expert system, which is why the reflexive nature of rationalized modernity has such importance. In the failure of an access point (expert), it is not uncommon for the procedures of that system to be reevaluated and studied to determine if such failures can be prevented in the future.

Thus, reflexivity of knowledge creates a particular tension at the points of interface, where the system and its representatives connect with the parties receiving service. This representative might be the doctor, banker, teacher/professor, or pastor. What inevitably happens is that the system, despite its expertise, will fail or fall short of the expectations of those it serves. Knowledge disseminated will be determined inadequate, creating a disenfranchised beneficiary. However, because the tank has changed and we now live in the saltwater, it becomes easier to blame the expert than to distrust the expert system.

Consequences of the “Quest for Certainty”

While it is neither possible nor entirely desirable to eliminate the results of the rationalists’ “Quest for Certainty,” some consequences and limitations that should be acknowledged and mitigated. Despite the best intentions of rationalized systems, these processes, realized in institutional bureaucracy, are actually detrimental to human life, creating “settings in which people cannot always behave as human beings—where

people are dehumanized.”⁴⁶ Two of these detrimental effects are the disembedding and dehumanization of experts, and cognitive distrust on the part of experts and laypersons alike.

Disembedding and Dehumanization of Experts

Whatever the good intentions, these rational processes effectively rob human beings of their humanity. As John Drane states, “But more often than not, the thoroughgoing way in which rationalization has been pursued seems to carry along with it other aspects that are less than satisfying, precisely because they are mechanical, and therefore dehumanizing.”⁴⁷ It is notable for our purpose that social relations are reordered by the disembedding of the access points (experts), from the social systems in which they function.

In the “hidden curriculum” of formal education, children learn through “general social attitudes, an aura of respect for technical knowledge of all kinds.”⁴⁸ However, despite this respect, those who possess such knowledge at high levels can be treated as disembedded objects, outsiders who are often stereotyped and the recipients of hostility and fear.⁴⁹ Marginalization is possible partly because the rationalized modern world has disembedded experts from kinship-relations and placed

⁴⁶ The full quote from Ritzer states, “Despite the advantages it offers, bureaucracy suffers from the *irrationality of rationality*. . . . In other words, they are settings in which people cannot always behave as human beings—where people are dehumanized.” Ritzer, *McDonaldization*, 27. He further clarifies that, “Human beings, equipped with a wide array of skills and abilities, are asked to perform a limited number of highly simplified tasks over and over. Instead of expressing their human abilities on the job, people are forced to deny their humanity and act like robots.” Ritzer, *McDonaldization*, 34. Ritzer identifies four manifestations of this process: efficiency (choosing the optimum means to a given end), calculability (increasing quantity), predictability (guaranteed results by systematization), and control (through non-human technology). Ritzer, *McDonaldization*, 43–133.

⁴⁷ John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Consumer Culture and the Church's Future* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth and Helwys, 2001), 32–33.

⁴⁸ Giddens, *Consequences*, 89.

⁴⁹ Giddens, *Consequences*, 89–92.

them in contractual relationships, which lie outside comfortable ranges of ontological security.

Thus, while trust in persons is required as part of the layperson's access to the expert system, the potential pain and loss of betrayal fills laypersons with such angst and fear that they find it easier to hold experts at a distance either as heroes or clods, as objects of expectation rather than as fellow subjects in a relationship.⁵⁰ In this sense, Giddens describes the modern social world as a "world of strangers" where persons live at the intersection of "intimacy and impersonality."⁵¹ Experts, often under mandates of professional distance, become necessary so far as they bring a particular set of skills to a relationship and are able to fulfill others' expectations with those skills.⁵² However, as objects of expectation, experts are particularly vulnerable to isolation.

Cognitive Mistrust

Reflexivity has much to do with the speed at which information travels. Giddens states that, "the reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character."⁵³ Rapid reflexivity leads to a perception of relativism such as James W. Sire states, "By the 1990s everyone in the Western world and much of the East came to see that confidence in human reason is almost dead.... Knowing itself comes under fire, especially the notion that there are any truths of correspondence. Conceptual relativism...now serves not just religious experiences but all aspects of reality."⁵⁴ What we knew yesterday is

⁵⁰ Giddens, *Consequences*, 92–111; 142–44.

⁵¹ Giddens, *Consequences*, 142ff.

⁵² Barry Harvey, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1999), 120–21.

⁵³ Giddens, *Consequences*, 38.

⁵⁴ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 3d ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 178.

changed in the reading of the morning paper today.⁵⁵ What confidence can we have in anything we think we know?

Expert systems, while functionally necessary, have become suspect and concertedly deteriorated with dire consequences, including those related to ecclesial expert systems. Because expert systems cannot do all that is expected of them to do (i.e., adaptive context and change leadership), experts, as persons whom laypersons trust, are particularly vulnerable to issues of focused distrust at key moments of a system's failure to meet lay expectations.

Ecclesial Expert Systems

Like medicine and law, ecclesial expert systems have been shaped by rationalized modernity. The movement from the local and specific to the general and universal created the environment wherein the expert systems moved from locally controlled settings in congregations to the academy. In the pre-modern era, the study of Christian theology, while mainly carried on in the monastery, had as its purpose "the beatific vision, fellowship with God, wisdom and, at a more mundane level, the equipping of clergy and the people of God for

⁵⁵ One example might be the nature of dieting. For eons we have been told that a balanced diet was the most healthful diet. Now with the advent of Weight Watchers, Atkins, South Beach, Jenny Craig, and many more, we receive constantly changing information—all of it "backed" by scientific data—concerning what constitutes the healthful way to eat. This changing information causes many to wonder if anyone really knows the best way to eat. Add to this a growing understanding of genetics and it now seems that there is not one good way to eat, but perhaps seven billion appropriate ways to eat healthfully (each according to his or her own needs). Giddens writes in *Modernity and Self-Identity*, "The more or less constant, profound and rapid momentum of change characteristic of modern institutions, coupled with structured reflexivity, mean [sic] that on the level of everyday practice as well as philosophical interpretation, nothing can be taken for granted. What is acceptable/appropriate/recommended behaviour today may be seen differently tomorrow in the light of altered circumstances or incoming knowledge-claims." Giddens, *Self-Identity*, 133–34.

their tasks.”⁵⁶ The latter reflects specific, local contexts wherein people were prepared to work where they lived.⁵⁷ Centralization of teaching and dogma arose in the Roman Catholic Church as a means of protecting the church “against the corrupting consequences” of Protestant heresies and the French Revolution.⁵⁸ The rise of the modern university in Germany led to the formation of theology as a formal academic study.⁵⁹ This reveals a disembedding of theological education from local and specific contexts to the university with its scientific process and universal concepts.

Disembedding: Institutionalization and Academia

Throughout the course of our saltwater experience, ecclesial systems recognized in institutional churches—Roman Catholicism to Southern Baptists, Anglican to Assemblies of God—have disembedded the ecclesial expert system through the establishment and control of seminaries. In these schools, certain so-called important skills are bestowed upon select individuals who often have to meet certain standards of calling and denominational recognition. Attainment of these skills, successfully ascertained by the completion of the Master of Divinity degree, initiates a person into the professionalized class of clergy. For those unable or unwilling to pursue these specialized academic skills, denominational professionals offer remedial courses in workshops and training sessions to help the clergy

⁵⁶ Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: T&T Clark, 2000), 33.

⁵⁷ As Toulmin states, “Historically, the Western Church was a transnational institution and it dealt realistically with people from Scotland to Sicily, from Poland to Portugal. Moral issues had pluralism built in from the start; the wisest resolution came from steering an equitable course between the demands that arose in practice, in specific cases.” Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 136.

⁵⁸ Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 136.

⁵⁹ Forrester writes, “In this tradition [University of Berlin, 1809] the university is properly concerned only with *Wissenschaft*, a scientific commitment to relate everything to universal rational principals. Theology had to justify its place in such a university....” Forrester, *Truthful*, 35.

achieve the special training needed to be successful church leaders. These specially trained persons are presumed to have the knowledge, skills, and resources to lead churches according to modern standards: efficient, calculable, predictable, and controllable.⁶⁰

Ray S. Anderson writes a determined and demanding memo to theological educators in which he argues, “Christian tradition is misunderstood and misused if it becomes institutionalized and loses its cumulative and liberating function within the praxis of the Spirit.”⁶¹ Damning is his indictment of seminaries as academic institutions of theological instruction that have little if any relevance to the churches they are meant to serve. Emphasizing orthodoxy above orthopraxis has encouraged the disembedding of theology as academic theology and left the ecclesial mission underserved.⁶² This emphasis demonstrates the impact of ecclesial systems in rationalized modernity where universal principles—disembedded from time and space—can be transmitted by non-practitioners. The academy generally teaches those who care for the church how to care for the church without dealing with specifics of time, location, or culture.⁶³

All of this leads to a professionalization of the pastorate. The academy promotes highly trained professionals as necessary for the church’s future. Arlene R. Inouye writes, “The current form of training Christian leaders, especially pastors, grew out of the modern era and the image of pastor as professional. Crudely put, the function of formal training has been to prepare people to

⁶⁰ Ritzer; Drane.

⁶¹ Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001), 320.

⁶² Anderson, 321.

⁶³ Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Richard Muller, *The Study of Theology: From Biblical Interpretation to Contemporary Formulation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991); and Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999).

serve in a religious institution.”⁶⁴ In our current brackishness, many of us in academia have noted with concern the rise of pastoral training programs within local church contexts. In many ways, this trend is reflective of the mistrust of expert systems (particularly academia) and the desire to create experts trained with a particular understanding of expertise. These attempts appear to be emphases on re-creating universalized structures and processes embedded in localized contexts. Toward what end is not entirely clear.⁶⁵

Modern Ecclesiological Consequences

Certainly many factors lead to what might be described as an eroding of the church’s standing in the West. Clergy scandals, competition for the laity’s attention, and a general loss of biblical literacy are examples. While avoiding the implication that there is only one cause for the many difficulties facing churches and pastoral leaders, these difficulties appear to be amplified by our experience in the saltwater tank of modernity and the current brackish water in which we now swim.

Despite the importance of theological preparation through the academy, there are also negative consequences for ecclesial expert systems. These consequences are especially acute in contexts where traditional leadership preparation and acquired skills are

⁶⁴ Arlene R. Inouye, “Revisioning the American Evangelical Church and Pastoral Leadership for the 21st Century” (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2001), 179. Also Banks, 208–22; Drane; E. Glenn Wagner, *Escape from Church, Inc.: The Return of the Pastor-Shepherd* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999); Ogden; Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership”; Liviu Tiplea, “The Role of Leadership in Building Healthy Church-Communities through Christopraxis” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003), 153–201; Jim Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish: New Ministry for a New Era* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2003), especially 85–99.

⁶⁵ An additional question worth considering elsewhere is the nature of disembedding from the academy to the internet through the rise of the wiki. The institutional function of disseminating information bestowed to the academy has been subverted and become even more universalized, leaving many to wonder exactly what role the university or seminary serves.

insufficient to leading congregations through adaptive change. Drane sums up the situation in ecclesial structures this way: “Many churches and their leaders have lost a sense of confidence in the ability of the system....”⁶⁶ I would suggest that although many consequences might be possible, here are four particular to the Western church’s reliance on radicalized ecclesial expert systems: (1) a disengaged laity; (2) isolated pastors; (3) disillusionment; and, (4) the undermining of mission.⁶⁷

A Disengaged Laity

Increasingly, pastors perceive that they alone do the work of the church rather than equipping others for the work (Eph. 4:12). However, the system has eliminated the laity from the equation. This elimination occurs as the result of a self-perpetuating process of systemic control. The system funnels expertise into the expert by training the pastor to be the leader of the church; this tendency creates lay dependency upon the pastor for vision, initiative, and preparation in order to perceive and pursue the church’s mission. This mission is conceived through the expert system’s design. The expert system’s design is best interpreted by experts trained in the language and processes of the system.⁶⁸ *Deskilling* occurs because of specialization, which naturally occurs when expertise is funneled from the expert system into an individual (in this case, a pastor).⁶⁹ The superstar mentality emphasizes

⁶⁶ Drane, 6. This quote concludes, “...to address their own deepest needs.” It is not the suggestion of this study that the church exists for this purpose. The church, as witness to God’s reign, will sometimes meet needs, but mostly it is to live in testimony of God’s advance in the world, even if that requires giving up our own needs. The point here is that the system fails to operate as it was designed and therefore, creates distrust as exacerbated by the liminality of the current age.

⁶⁷ It is fair to question the degree to which these are symptoms of the systemic environment or caused by the systemic environment. I will leave others to argue this point or to more fully research the question. Whether causal or not, they do seem to be inextricably linked.

⁶⁸ Drane, 101–02.

⁶⁹ Giddens notes, “Abstract systems deskill—not only in the workplace, but in all the sectors of social life that they touch.” Giddens, *Self-Identity*, 137.

that clergy are trained to do specialized work, which includes motivating laypersons to achieve the pastor's vision of the church.⁷⁰

The lay responsibility is resourcing (particularly time and money), a "successful" vision's end. Many laypersons choose to leave, feeling disgruntled because of the pastor's failure to meet their expectations. For those who remain, they receive in exchange a weekly spiritual recharge. Few seem to have any real awareness of God's missional presence in the world; even fewer seem to realize their role as witnesses of the kingdom's work.

Pastoral Isolation

Many pastors are themselves disenchanted by the work they perform. Patti Simmons writes: Clergy face daunting expectations. They must fill countless roles—spiritual leader, psychologist, counselor, business manager, human resource specialist, to name a few—and those roles expand so rapidly that a sense of futility sets in as the gap between what they were prepared for in seminary and what they encounter on a daily basis steadily widens. In addition to feeling unprepared, clergy feel alone.⁷¹ Loneliness is the natural conclusion of these patterns according to an article for the Associated Baptist Press, which identified pastors as "leaders of the flock but alone in the crowd." The authors suggest that because of the pastor's leadership role, they must maintain a distance from the flock they lead. The intense loneliness stems from a pressure "to present an image of perfection in order to better represent the church or the gospel, though no one can fulfill that ideal."⁷²

Therefore, as the expert interface, the pastor becomes disembedded from the congregation. The social consequences are certainly demanding as described by Ogden: "I fear that many participants in the church view

⁷⁰ Ogden, 92–93.

⁷¹ Patti Simmons, "Supporting Pastoral Excellence," in *Congregations* 29(1) (Winter 2003), 29. See also Carroll, *God's Potters*, 186.

⁷² Hall and Elliot, "Pastors: Leaders of the Flock."

their pastors as specialists in the things of God, so they need not be bothered with that realm [temporal]. As a result, clergy are held in both respect and contempt.”⁷³ This disconnect isolates pastoral leaders, while the mundane work of maintaining the institutional church drains what spiritual life they have left.⁷⁴

Disillusionment

Pastors, as theologically trained experts (systematic theology; biblical languages—Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic; hermeneutics and exegesis; church history; church leadership and administration; church growth; pastoral counseling; discipleship; etc.), are perceived as the expert interface with the expert system, undergirding the church’s contrived reality. The layperson in the modern church expects the pastor to accomplish all of these tasks and more. However, in an adaptive change context where the church functions as a “vendor of religious goods and services,” technical skill will fail to meet the congregation’s expectations. More importantly, the pastor should not make it his or her job to meet these expectations because the expectations themselves are often in need of conversion.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ogden, 89.

⁷⁴ Alan Roxburgh and Mike Regele discuss the effects of rationalized modernity’s disembedding process on the church: “Disembedding is not a by-product of modernity; it is the core agenda. One irony is that the methodologies and systems developing to counteract this disembedding are drawn from modernity. That is why for example we have seen the emergence in this century of pastoral leaders (i.e., an attempt to redefine the traditional model of pastor into modernity categories) as efficient managers trained to solve problems. This paradigm of leadership not only deepens the church’s loss of identity, but also shapes leaders who look for solutions primarily from the new-and-the-next. These leaders are essentially cut off from any meaningful engagement with the Christian story’s response to modernity. One suspects that the current turn among leaders to issues and styles of spirituality is an expression of the growing unease with techniques and management models that have pervaded the church for most of this century.” Alan J. Roxburgh and Mike Regele, *Crossing the Bridge: Church Leadership in a Time of Change* (Ventura, Cal.: Percept, 2000), 40.

⁷⁵ Guder, *Continuing*, 150ff.

Attempts and failure to meet these perceived needs invalidates the expert system that is organized religion (i.e., the church). This invalidation has led to a general disillusionment with the church as organized religion, which has promised to fulfill felt needs as part of a church growth model, to the point that many leave the system to find spiritual fulfillment elsewhere.⁷⁶ At this point, pastors trained in the abstract systems of the institutional structures miss integration with their congregations and fail to provide the kind of adaptive leadership necessary. Thus, the pastor is particularly susceptible to being the focus of this disillusionment as well as becoming irreparably disillusioned by means of being the interface with the system.⁷⁷

The Undermining of Mission

The church is called into the world by the power of the Spirit to bear witness of Christ's ongoing mission for God.⁷⁸ However, radicalized ecclesial expert systems have focused on human control and management of this mission to the detriment of Christian witness.⁷⁹ After the Protestant Reformation, there was only modest interest in missionary activity. When interest was finally shown, "Missions' became a program of the church."⁸⁰ By programming missions, the church manufactures, distributes, and controls the instruments of salvation,

⁷⁶ Drane describes the scene this way: "I have mentioned those who leave the Church. Though I described them as giving up on faith, things are not usually that straightforward. Not only do such people rarely abandon faith altogether, they also frequently claim that leaving the Church is actually a way of maintaining their faith. Increasing numbers of people today regard the spiritual search as something that is not necessarily supported or enhanced by involvement in the life of organized religious institutions." Drane, 5.

⁷⁷ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 32–37.

⁷⁸ Anderson, 40–46.

⁷⁹ Drane states, "Mission is another key area of Christian activity that cries out to be released from the influences of McDonaldization." Drane, 198. Banks contends that theological education trains pastors as missional persons first and academicians last. Banks, 129–86.

⁸⁰ Paul M. Dieterich, "What Time Is It?" in *Transformation* 1(3) (Fall 1994): 3–4.

including the message and the methods.⁸¹ In so doing, the church attempts to appropriate the work of Christ—the “author and perfecter of faith.”⁸² Controllability and management of mission diminish the affective nature of God’s work in human lives, attempting to make it dependent upon our efforts rather than upon God’s.

Further, as the church ceases its witness to Christ’s activity, it attempts to replace Christ and establishes itself as the source and place of salvation.⁸³ Hence, the current status of the church as a “vendor of religious services” becomes apparent.⁸⁴ This kind of mission is no mission at all. The critical issue may be that the institutional church in the West ceased living for Christ’s sake and began living for its own self-preservation. As Jesus warned, “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world by forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?”⁸⁵

Conclusion: So, What Is an Expert to Do?

Normally, the conclusion is where an expert offers the three, four, seven, ten, or twelve steps to success. Thus, it may be disappointing that I am going to resist that temptation, somewhat. Instead, I offer one observation and two suggestions as guides for approaching the cultural situation in which we find ourselves. The observation has already been made, but I will make it again to remind us of the context and to set the stage for the two suggestions forthcoming.

The filter has been replaced, and it seems we are once again moving toward a new environment. The saltwater world in which we have been trained and have lived is becoming more brackish, and we must embrace the need

⁸¹ Guder, *Continuing*, 97–119.

⁸² Heb. 12:2, NASB.

⁸³ Guder, *Continuing*, 135–41.

⁸⁴ George Hunsberger, “Sizing Up the Shape of the Church,” in *Reformed Review* 47(2) (Winter 1993), 133–44, especially 138–142.

⁸⁵ Matt. 16:25–26, NRSV.

for adaptation. Whether we call the current ethos postmodernity or hyper-modernity, the water is changing. Expertise is challenged in medical offices and courtrooms, in classrooms and sanctuaries. This challenge certainly includes pastoral expertise. Where the church once played an integral role in the social fabric of our societies, it now seems relegated to the margins. Pastors who were once leaders in the community are suspect to many in their own congregations. As a result, consider these two suggestions.

First, we need to embrace the discomfort of not knowing the conclusion of our work. The expert model creates the expectation that we begin with the end in mind.⁸⁶ However, in adaptive contexts, the end is unknown. Expertise will help us navigate technical aspects of engaging people in the venture of change, but it cannot fix what must ultimately be the work of a community: interpreting and discerning values, mission, and identity. Adaptive change works at all of these issues. As highly trained professionals, we must avoid manipulating outcomes with which we are comfortable. We accept our limitations and become embedded guides on a journey in which we also do not know the outcome.

Second, we must encourage the people we guide to unmask cultural captivities and expectations of expertise. Pastoral leaders need to redirect congregational dependency away from themselves and back to the Spirit's presence within the congregation. In the modernist movement to certainty, we have lost our ability to live comfortably with mystery. We need to embrace and help our congregations to embrace the mystery of God. In so doing, we can learn to rest comfortably in a God who finds pleasure in developing God's people by taking them on forty-year walks through the desert when an expert can get them to the promised land in two or three weeks. This conversion will require that we become people who are no longer "conformed to this world" of

⁸⁶ Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 95.

reliance on expertise but are being “transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Then we will be able to “discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Rom. 12:2, ESV.