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The Transforming Church (9)

by Tricia Tillin

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THE GOVERNMENT OF TWELVE (G12)



*Cesar y Claudia
Castellanos*

From the Bethany World Prayer Center website we read: "The "principle of twelve" was first implemented by Pastors César and Claudia Castellanos at International Charismatic Mission in Bogotá, Colombia. The church has used this discipleship principle to build the largest small group network in the world: 30,000 small groups in a single congregation! "

César Castellanos is also a politician. On March 8, 1998 he became an elected member of the Colombia House of Representatives. His wife served in the

Colombian Senate from 1992 to 1994 and has announced her intention to run again.
(4)

Continuing: "Now, churches worldwide are implementing this dynamic principle. Its simple, personal nature is easy to duplicate. It is not a program, but the development of "fathering" relationships that help every believer become a multiplying leader who can disciple others."

Openly stated to be a discipleship program, G12 is perhaps the ultimate in control. However, the program is presented as the best and perhaps the only way to win the world to Christ.

G12's stated vision is that of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. . . ." but as I have said before in this series, the verse is misinterpreted to mean that all "nations" are to be "discipled" or brought under the control of a religious world government headed up by apostles and prophets. (In reality, Jesus sent out his followers to spread the gospel message that would result in individual people from OUT OF all nations ("OF all nations") receiving him and becoming Christians.)

Patterned on Jesus

The rationale behind the G12 idea is that (supposedly) it is the pattern of Jesus who "worked closely with twelve men that He mentored to take His place on the earth. Following Jesus' pattern, the apostle Paul also trained a number of young men ("Timothys") who later became the great leaders of the New Testament Church. We call this mentoring technique the "principle of twelve." "

But was Jesus "mentoring" twelve men to "take his place on the earth" or was he sharing himself with them so that they could in turn share Jesus spiritually with those who needed salvation. As to taking the place of Jesus on earth, it is plain from scripture that the HOLY SPIRIT and not the apostles did that! (John 14:25-26)

No human being or group of people can take the place of Jesus Christ on earth, yet this is what Church government today is all about!! The agenda is one of rulership. Continuing the Bethany commentary:

"The number twelve is the number of government in the Bible. Jesus established His kingdom and government on the earth by using the same principle that God had used to establish Israel in the Old Testament. Just as Israel had twelve tribes, Jesus had twelve disciples. Using this pattern, Jesus intended to show us a model of how to disciple not only our local communities, but also the nations of the world." [my emphasis]

WHOA. Hang on a moment there! This makes the plan of salvation, and the mission of Jesus about "discipling the nations" (ruling them in a religious government) and not about individual relationships with the Saviour.

1. Did Jesus in fact come to rule the nations, and to set up a government of twelve that was to perpetuate a system of strict authoritarian discipleship? Did Jesus intend for his followers to enforce obedience to his commands in such a way? (When offered dominion over the world by the devil, Jesus refused! His first visit to earth was not to rule, but to call out a people for God. Only when he returns in person will the kingdom rule be set up.)

2. Did Jesus base his choice of twelve apostles on the Twelve Tribes, and the twelve Judges of Israel? In the sense that a new Israel of men obedient to God was being called out, the Twelve foundational apostles (and they alone) were a reflection of times past, BUT there was no stated or implied intention to set up a pattern of governmental rule by this method. This was not a strategy for "taking the nations for Christ".

Not As The Gentiles

The twelve were to pass on the "doctrine of Christ" as given to them directly from the mouth of Jesus, and after their time the Church was to be ruled by local eldership - independent, autonomous and under the headship ONLY of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, Jesus went out of his way to warn the disciples NOT to copy human leadership models and knocked firmly on the head the pyramid scheme of ruling from the top (so beloved today in the shepherding and mentoring schemes of cell churches.) (Matt 20:24-28)

He also scotched the rumours of greatness and authority that the disciples believed they would receive from Jesus on earth. He told them that they would sit on twelve thrones ONLY "in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory" (Matt 19:28)

Heaven and the Throne Coming to Earth Right Now?

Could it be therefore (and I believe this is so) that the modern-day church leadership sees this "regeneration" of all things happening RIGHT NOW, together with the glorification, and the spiritual coming of the Son of Man, such that the "throne" is AT THIS TIME coming down "from heaven to earth" allowing them to claim this promise of rulership "over the tribes of Israel" for themselves???

As evidence of this concept, please read a recent "word" that directly refers to such a

belief, by Cindye Coates of www.SolomonsPorch-Atlanta.org:

*"In the book of Revelation chapter 5, verse 8 it reads: ... "and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and a golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." The Holy Spirit has been teaching the church lately about the responsibility of having "**Harp and Bowl**" prayer time. This is a key to true worship and the responsibility that elders have in the church.*

*"The twenty-four elders have been said by several theologians to be the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles coming into agreement, establishing government in the church. This passage of scripture depicts a descriptive view of the throne room right now. Jesus taught us to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Wouldn't it only make sense to study what is going on in heaven first and then pray " that" into the earth? In the days ahead, there will be many "David's" leaving the field and coming into palaces to rule with great authority. Everything about God is SUPER! In heaven there are SUPER BOWLS filled with prayers that are carried on melodies from Super Harps. The youth hunger for this Super Bowl and will follow this model as it brings heaven to earth. This restoration of the Tabernacle of David brings relevance to worship as it channels passion upward!" [my emphasis] [**Super-Bowl Worship & Intercession**]*

So we see over and over that the model of G12 is one of governmental rule, and of "bringing heaven down to earth".

Another site proclaims:

*"What is the Government of Twelve? In one sentence, the Government of Twelve is when a trained and approved leader, serving under the spiritual authority of the pastor, gives spiritual oversight to twelve others for the purpose of discipleship and personal evangelism." [**Cornerstone Church, San Antonio**]*

Disciples are not under man's authority

Found in an **article about the Boston Church of Christ**, the following statement could equally apply to the cell church and G12 discipling system.

"This movement is based on the thesis that Christ's master/disciple relationship with the twelve apostles is a pattern to be followed in making, training and leading disciples today. According to this doctrine, a true disciple of Christ will make other disciples who

learn to follow Christ by following him in an authoritarian teacher/student relationship. This training includes teaching new disciples how to make other disciples, and how to train and lead them in the same way. A chain of these master/disciple relationships results in a pyramid."

The article goes on to point out the fundamental errors of such discipling:

- that Jesus made many more than 12 disciples;
- that the chosen Twelve were in fact apostles;
- that a disciple is simply one who follows Christ and not one "who is trained through a subordinate relationship with another Christian."
- that the verb "to disciple" never appears in the bible used to mean one man mentoring another.
- that the biblical way to become a disciple is to repent, believe and be baptised into Jesus Christ, NOT to sit at the feet of any man to be taught how to "do Christianity".

"Discipling" in terms of the cell church, however, means getting your membership in line and making sure they do as they are told. Please read **this sobering testimony** from a family caught up in the G12 discipleship nightmare. It serves as a warning not only about G12 and the abuse of authority, but the entire Church Growth agenda.

Since the setting up of the G12 system, it has changed and taken on the character of dominion rulership with an almost magical belief in the number 12 as covering all aspects of its agenda. One of the first changes was the shift in name from "groups of twelve" to "the government of twelve" taking the emphasis off community and individuals in partnership, to mentoring and rulership.

Concerns

Other concerns are voiced by one of the leading proponents of the cell church, author Joel Comiskey, who has himself written a complimentary book about G12.

He says:

*My understanding of ICM comes from visiting ICM each year from 1996-2000 in order to write my two books: *Groups of Twelve* (Touch Publications, 1999) and *From Twelve to Three* (Touch Publications, 2002). ...[but]... I [am] deeply troubled by what we are observing in the G12 movement today. The concerns I share with you fall into three categories:*

1. Spiritualization of the Number Twelve in the Bible

I listened to the entire audio cassette series of ICM's 2002 cell church conference in preparation for my book From Twelve to Three. I was aghast by the spiritualization of the text (eisegesis) to justify the primacy of the number twelve.

We're told that Elijah would not have chosen Elisha if he had been plowing with eleven instead of twelve oxen and that the number twelve was the key to the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost.[1] We're told that the twelve stones that Elijah used to build Jehovah's sacrifice resulted in God answering his prayer [2] and that "the model of the twelve restores the altar of God that is in ruins." [3]

I freely admit that the number twelve is an important number in the Bible, but it's not the only number that carries great weight in the Bible. ...On top of this, the New Testament provides no evidence that the apostles or other church leaders attached any significance to a specific number of disciples chosen in a church. In Acts, the New Testament history book, you won't find the apostles diligently looking for twelve disciples in order to follow Jesus' pattern of twelve disciples. In order to apply theological significance to a particular number of disciples in the church today, it is necessary for the entire bible to give witness to this practice. I find no substantiation for the idealization of the number twelve or any other number in Acts or the Epistles. In addition, it is absent in the rest of church history and 2000 years of theological development.

2. Franchising of the G12 model

Franchising is the new talk circling around the G12 world. You have to follow the entire G12 model, just as a McDonalds franchise has to follow exact standards. ...This wasn't always true. When I first studied the ICM G12 strategy back in 1996-1997, I observed a carefree excitement and open sharing of information. Yet in 1998 and beyond, I've noticed a certain exclusivity that has progressively become more iron-clad and closed minded.

3. The division this model is causing

In a very real way, the G12 movement has separated themselves from the cell church movement, claiming to be God's new wineskin for the last days. Listen to Ralph Neighbour's appeal in a paper he submitted to the Cell Church Missions Network in November 2002, "The concept of building a multilevel marketing structure that peaks in the authority of a special Global Apostle with his hand-picked assistants has now come into existence. Bedazzled by the promise of fast track growth for their congregations, pastors are kneeling to kiss the gold rings worn by the Apostles. At the same time, they are severing relationships with fellow cell church workers who are not among the devotees. In many parts of

the world, painful reports are coming about pastors who one or two years ago were very intimately involved in helping each other and working together in the cell movements in their cities but who now shun fellowship with others who did not bow before the Apostle's strategy."

One of those principles that we hold dearly to in the cell church movement is that the cell is just as important as the celebration and that both of them must be equally emphasized. We find this principle in the New Testament church. The early church celebrated together in large temple gatherings and then met from house to house (Acts 2:42 - 46; 5:42 ; 20:20).

*But let us humbly admit that none of the current cell church models are perfect. I wouldn't promote Yongji Cho (Seoul , Korea), Ralph Neighbour (Houston , TX), Mario Vega (San Salvador , El Salvador), Larry Stockstill (Baker, LA), Dion Robert (Abijan , Ivory Coast), Billy Joe Daugherty (Tulsa , OK), or César Castellanos (Bogota , Colombia) as having the only true biblical cell church model. The pattern, or principle, is cell-celebration. The application of the cell church for today is varied and changes from culture to culture and church to church." [Read the whole article at "**Concerns About the G12 Movement**"]*

OFFSITE LINK: For one example of the kind of emphasis that is of concern to the above writer, and to us all, go to "**The Group of Twelve**"

A Warning From History

We see the flawed principle of "Government of Twelve" in movements beloved of the mystics (and modern-day prophets!) such as the Knights of the Round Table.

And self-styled "illuminati" of the modern day still seek to institute such a rule of twelve over the nations, or at least the United States.

"... these United States of America should be Governed by a "Supreme Jury". This is the Policy which is advocated in a soon to be completed "Natural Organic Constitution for the People of the United States of America"; ..., the USA should be Organized Directly Under Twelve "Super-State" Districts, with One "Judge/Juror/Justice of the Peace" Chosen from Each such "Super-State". Similarly, & at the More Localized Levels Directly Under Each of these Twelve Supreme National Judicial Jurisdictions; many More "Supreme Juries" such as this, should be "Organized" to Govern their Progressively "Smaller & More Localized Jurisdictions".

This is all similar to how "St Columbia" Organized the Non-Romanized Christian "Celtic Church" of ancient Britain, & it is Probably how "King Arthur" Organized his "RoundTable" at "Camelot". It is clearly how Ancient "Israel" was Organized under the "Twelve Tribes"; & it is Clearly How "Christ/Messiah Jesus/Yeshua", was Organizing the True Israelite People under his "New Jerusalem" Government of "Twelve Apostles". All of these Historical Precedents lend great Support to the here-in contained Proposition that our American People Should Adopt This Form of "Natural/Organic Government". [The Christian/Israelite Common-Law World Court website]

But where can we find the "Government of Twelve" in the history of the Church?

Unfortunately, the sole example - the city of Munster in the 16th century - highlights what is most of concern to us all: the potential for over-zealous application of apocalyptic beliefs and the setting up of the kingdom rule on earth, leading only to tyranny and the violent enforcement of the rule of "God's" law.

Munster is a city in Germany not far from the Dutch border which became a haven for Anabaptists during and after the Peasant's Revolt. The Anabaptist movement was a radical religious group opposed even to Luther's beliefs, holding to the scripture as the sole foundation of faith, universal priesthood, adult baptism, the common ownership of property and the soon return of the Lord Jesus to set up his kingdom over all.

Anabaptists - although having a genuine and commendable desire to break away from the corrupted doctrine and practises of traditional denominations - were (rather like today's prophetic movement) religious revolutionaries bent on social and religious reform. In an effort to establish a Godly kingdom in Munster they evicted all non-believers on pain of death and offered refuge to Anabaptists across Europe.

After the death of their leader, a tailor named Jan van Leiden immediately took control of the city and styled himself "King John". Leiden abolished the city council and created a "messianic kingship with 12 elders as leaders from the 12 tribes of Israel". This was in effect an absolute theocracy ruled by King Jon and his council of Twelve. It was a "New Jerusalem".

Leiden then instituted a vow of poverty and ruled with an iron fist. Moral standards were enforced as being of utmost importance and capital punishment was used for such crimes as blasphemy, disobeying a master, scolding parents, and complaining. Polygamy was also instituted due to the 3:1 women to men ratio. All of this was "supported" by the application of various "proof texts" from the bible.

All single women above the age of fifteen were obliged to marry, but either men or women could dissolve their marriages due to unhappiness. Rebellion against "king" Jon was punished by death. Leiden saw no contradiction in his treatment of his own wife whom he trampled to death because she disobeyed him. He had come to see himself as above the law since he WAS the Law of God.

On June 22, 1535, this trial kingdom collapsed in a spectacular and bloody defeat when Lutheran and Catholic forces stormed the city. But it stands as a testament to the folly of those who seek to "bring heaven down to earth" and set up the New Jerusalem prematurely.

Other Models

Where else can we see the love of the number 12 in community and government? Well, the Ancient Order of the Templars had as part of their constitution an "Executive Council (Cabinet) consisting of twelve members".

The Essenes - a pious Jewish sect with a tendency towards mysticism - met in cells of twelve. They structured their community in cell groups with small groups gathered together in what was sometimes called twelve 'men of holiness' who acted as general guides of the community.

Traditionally, a wiccan coven consists of thirteen people. This is made up of twelve members and the thirteenth will be the High Priest or Priestess.

New Age groups out to "heal the earth" also look to twelve as an optimum number: "Millions of individuals throughout the world are inspired by the hope that we can create a world of peace and harmony and joy. Doing so in even little groups, twelve or fewer people at a time, we alter our personal energies and help to heal the world. Today, hundreds of "Peace Circles" exist worldwide, and more are forming every day. The circle is a very simple yet powerful tool. Twelve or fewer people meet every other week, or in some cases once a month. We suggest that people keep the groups to a small number because we are fostering what we call a "social intimacy," a way for people who do not necessarily know each other very well, to have the experience of each other's common humanity at the deepest level."



The European Union has a flag of twelve stars even though its members number many more than that. These twelve gold stars on a blue background reflect the stars seen around the head of the Virgin Mary in many RC statues and pictures. They are modelled on the "Woman of Revelation" clothed with the sun. One site explained the symbolism of the flag this way: "Against the background of blue sky, twelve golden stars form a circle, representing the union of the peoples of Europe. The number of stars is fixed, twelve being the symbol of perfection and unity." For the purposes of rulership from a base in Brussels, the UK is divided into TWELVE "regions" each with an EU member of parliament.

Monastic rule often involved cells of twelve monks as in the Cistercians and the Benedictine Order. Gregory writes that Benedict formed twelve communities of twelve monks each. When the Cistercians branched out to form new communities they always did so in groups of twelve. The Celtic missionary movement probably began with Columba in 563 when he went to Iona with twelve helpers. Using the same small group strategy, Columban and twelve companions went to Gaul around 590. Successive waves of these small bands of missionaries were sent out all over the continent. A community of monks (10-12) would settle in a non-Christian area in Europe and establish a Christian church. They would preach and congregate those converted. They would teach those converts. Once they had established the church they would leave to go to another part of Europe.

BACK TO THE MONASTIC CELL?

The cell-church movement has been likened to Monasticism in many articles. Amongst all the other concerns, we can identify in the cell-church literature a desire to recreate the early Roman Catholic system of "community" and the influence of monks and lay brothers over the local populace. Is the cell-church system in fact modelled on the Roman Catholic and Celtic monastic lay-preachers' movement?

The author of many scholarly religious books, Herbert T Mayer writes, "This was the common pattern for centuries: the real strength and vitality of the church lay in the small groups of clergy gathered around a cathedral and the bishop or in the small group of monks gathered around a strong and influential leader". [5]

Ralph Neighbour's explanation of the benefits of the cell system seem to have much in common with monasticism. His summary speaks of:

- a community that fosters a sense of loyalty and belonging
- the ease of monitoring members' activities and beliefs
- ability to "deeply penetrate" the locality
- flexible structures that can change and adapt (no buildings)
- a message that appeals to local people and meets their needs
- personal mentoring and discipline for all
- training of "the laity" to do the work of the Church in the context of the community.

Consider how many of the points above would also apply to the monastic system of the Middle Ages.

It is understandable that the Church Growth leadership would plunder for ideas a system that effectively spread Christianity throughout a pagan land such as Celtic Britain and we know that the search is on for a method of expanding the Church quickly and adding members and loyal adherents. But we must consider the potential

for abuse.

Since genuine Christianity cannot be simply "taught" (even less "enforced") and must be accepted by faith willingly, it will always be an alternative religious message that succeeds in spreading, instead of the gospel of salvation in Christ.

Many articles on monasticism are glowing in their praise of its missionary endeavours. But the truth is, those nations evangelised so "effectively and fully" are now steeped in the dogmas of Roman Catholicism.

Setting up a system to "penetrate deeply" into all areas of society is only a good idea if the TRUTH is being preached, but not if the fast-growing message is that of a false religion, and the cell-church doctrine as we have already seen is far from ideal.

Potential of the Monastic System

It is no surprise that the cell system has been chosen as the new face of the Church as it does have massive growth potential. It tackles a number of difficulties besides: how could the present seemingly-impregnable denominational Church system be broken down, how could apostolic teachings and the "new paradigm" break into their structures and displace the present creeds; how could the new leadership that has been trained to take over the Church gain more influence over the membership without becoming "ordained" clergymen?

It must have occurred to those leaders how useful the monastic system had been in that regard, in times past. In their monastic cells, men and women were bound in allegiance to the Pope, under strict discipline, while at the same time free to develop, in many cases, radical new approaches to worship and mission.

The Catholic mystics and free-thinkers of their day had all been raised in the cell-church system, the monasteries and convents of the RC church, and their influence amongst common folk was far-reaching and profound.

Indeed it could be said that they changed the face of Catholicism and introduced a personalised religion that took us into the world of the non-conformist and reformer. (But as a result were also leading the field in esoteric religion - you need only think of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross for example.)

The task of many nuns and monks was to minister to the needs of the community (what today is called "servant evangelism") and in doing so they could plant ideas and doctrines that could never take root in a rigid and formal ecclesiastical atmosphere. Indeed, church services were held in Latin; the humble folk of the parish were much more likely to respond to the common touch of a man or woman of God in the local convent or monastery. Thus the message spread - but was that a good

thing?

Such is the potential for spreading a religious message and influencing the locality that many sectors of the Christian Church as well as those outside it are experimenting with small groups today. There is also a potential for ecumenism as evidenced by the following advertisement from former British revival enthusiasts:

"A new monastic community, lay and ordained, with a heart for spiritual renewal and service. ...a new monastic community based in Ithaca, NY with friends around the world. Jane and Andrew Fitz-Gibbon, [6] abbess and abbot, are the apostolic overseers and spiritual parents of the community.... a new type of church—home based, relational, egalitarian, charismatic, sacramental . . . a new form of monasticism. We have embraced emphases from a number of historical traditions—the early Celtic Christian communities of the fourth to ninth centuries in Northern Britain and Ireland; the desert fathers and mothers and monastic movement; the Anabaptist radicals of the sixteenth century; the charismatic movement and Christian feminist emphases of the twentieth. We are committed to the "convergence movement"—the coming together of the Evangelical, Charismatic and Sacramental streams of the church's witness."

Notice the reference to the Anabaptists, amongst other groups! Let's pray they do not settle in Munster.

The common perception of monks and nuns, although probably simplistic, does focus on the strict discipline and lack of personal choice in such cells. For the monastic system is nothing if not hierarchical, as one observer astutely notes:

"But living together cannot work, unless one has order and structure. Several Church Fathers and saints devised rules for communal monastic life, including St. Anthony the Great, credited as the founder of monasticism, St. Pachomius, who wrote the first detailed rule for monastic life, and then St. Basil the Great, who wrote the ultimate rule and the one upon which all monastic communities are based. ... Since the monastic life was designed to divinize followers in this life in order to get them deified in the next, the rule and pattern was based upon the Holy Trinity, with a hierarchical structure. There was no time to waste on such foolishness as the monastic demanding to have his or her way, with all his wants and desires. He completely submitted his will to that of God, expressed in the leadership of the monastery."

Leadership from the Top

The G12 cell-church model, like many others, has a strict system of "discipleship"

and "mentoring" which means that every person from top to bottom is accountable to his over-shepherd in matters great and small, both religious and secular.

From **Rivertown Christian Ministries International** we can see a summary of the G12 system in action, focusing on mentoring and training up your own disciples.

"Jesus started by finding 12 people that He could disciple to become world-changers. He prayed all night before choosing His twelve. Then, he mentored and molded them over the next three years, turning them into a powerful team. Later, in the book of Acts, we see the apostles choosing and mentoring their "twelve." The principal of twelve is dynamic and explosive yet simple to understand and implement. Fundamentals of the G12 vision:

- 1. Everyone is a potential leader*
- 2. Everyone can disciple twelve people.*
- 3. Everyone is ministered to and then ministers.*
- 4. A person is in your twelve only when he/she has opened a cell group.*
- 5. Everyone should win souls and develop potential leaders.*
- 6. Cells open most rapidly when they open homogeneously.*
- 7. Your twelve are your assistants."*

Both new believers and new church members are "plugged in" to the church through the consolidation process. Members of the consolidation team are assigned to new believers or new members to help enroll them in a weekly cell meeting, guide them through a short Pre-Encounter course, and register them to attend an Encounter Retreat. At this weekend retreat, they "encounter God" through teachings on inner healing, deliverance, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the vision of the church. Following the retreat, they are encouraged to attend a ten-week new believers' class entitled Post-Encounter.

After completing the consolidation process, the new disciple enters the School of Leaders, which consists of three ten-week trimesters of study. During the second trimester, the students will open their own cells but will also continue meeting in their original cells, which now become their leadership, or G-12, groups.

As the disciple progresses through the School of Leaders, he opens his own cell and begins to develop his twelve, taking them through each step of the process of the vision: winning them, consolidating them, discipling them, and eventually sending them "to make disciples of all nations."

This focus on a hierarchical structure is intentional, for - as Ron Wood of "Reconciliation Ministries" says - conventional Church and small bible groups are "lawless":

"When God has finished with his reformation, we will not be lawless, prideful, or independent. We will recognize leadership, be fitted into the body, and walk in covenant love. ... The true church ... must be organically connected to its Head, even Jesus, and to his apostles. ... Jesus said that if we don't receive those he sends, then we don't receive him. Relationship is a reality. God is ending our isolation from one another. Apostolic networks are emerging. The Holy Spirit is inspiring covenant connections with these new circles. There really is a difference between a home Bible study and a church. One is set order in order; the other is embryonic or dislocated, or worse, perhaps even lawless. Jesus builds the universal church. His apostles build local churches." (From "Leaving Organised Religion" by Ron Wood [touchedbygrace.org])

A re-emphasis on personal discipleship

*"Rice Broockes, the overseeing apostle of MorningStar Ministries writes "In case you haven't noticed, discipleship is back... All across the Body of Christ, discipleship or mentoring is being heralded as the church's critical need." Frans Wowor the senior pastor of The Arrow Generation Church in Indonesia writes: "As you read through the gospels you will unmistakably recognize that discipleship takes place, not in big a meeting, but in a small group. Discipleship happens away from crowds and meetings, within the confines of open relationships in cell groups. Jesus formed a small group of twelve young men in order to make disciples. If we are serious about making disciples we must follow his pattern and do discipleship within the confines of the cell structure. The cell is where we make ourselves transparent and teachable with people we trust, people who we know will encourage us in our walk with God. There is absolutely no substitute for this type of small group discipleship." Biblically there can be no substitute for personal discipleship, and the best place for this to happen is in small groups or cells." (From "**meeting from house to house.htm**")*

From the same document above, we read that there is a "mandate from God to raise up leaders." and this is not being taught but passed on by "an impartation and investment from one person to another".

And where is the arena for such impartation? "Only cell groups can provide the practical training ground and apprenticeship that is needed ...the key to church growth is multiplying leaders....the most effective way of releasing and raising up hundreds and thousands and potentially unlimited numbers of leaders, is through the cell system. "

So there you have it. Growth is the aim; leadership the method (because the new

doctrine must be taught to the masses); and cell churches are the vehicle.

The Jethro System (Discipled and Discipling)

There are a number of leadership models used in cell churches but all are driven from the top down and depend on close monitoring of each and every person - however far up the ladder they climb.

The Church Growth Movt. rates leadership and pastoral oversight very highly. As Wagner says, "In America the primary catalytic factor for growth in the local church is the pastor. In every growing, dynamic church I have studied, I have found a key person whom God is using to make it happen." As in Cho's church, the "vision-casting" is done by a dynamic leader controlling the direction of the whole church and making sure his vision is implemented all the way down the pyramid to the bottom.

The system of mentoring differs slightly from system to system but some basic models are:

(1) the Jethro system based on advice about delegating leadership given to Moses by his father in law Jethro. This is structured around groups of 10, 50, 100 and 1,000 headed by the pastor, and allocating descending ranks to district pastors, zone pastors, apprentices and cell members. The system is used by both meta-church and pure-cell systems. A pictorial version of the Jethro Model of leadership can be seen by clicking the link [HERE](#)

(2) Five-By-Five as used by David Yonggi Cho in Seoul, Korea and based on the Jethro system. The Senior Pastor heads five district pastors, who head five zone pastors and so on right down to the cell leaders who mentor their disciples.

(3) the G12 system which as we have seen is based around the number twelve. Also highly structured, it aims at reproducing its cells by making every member a leader who is tasked with producing his own cell of twelve. Here all staff no matter what their position lead a cell and at the same time mentor other cell leaders or disciples. Each cell member is being trained to form his or her own cell of twelve by making recruits from friends and family but at the same time each person is still being mentored by his or her own cell leader. Members therefore are expected both to lead and to attend different cell groups! Every new convert goes through discipleship training to equip him or her to become a new cell leader.

- Please go to [this page](#) to see the differences between the G12 and the Jethro model for cell-group leadership.

Thus the key of the cell system is that everyone is being discipled and is also discipling someone else. The senior pastor disciples the assistant pastors, the

assistant pastors disciple the area leaders, the area leaders disciple the cell leaders, and the cell leaders disciple the cell members. Every activity and belief as well as personal relationships and the minutiae of life is funneled through the discipleship pyramid.

Cho writes, "The sub-district leaders are constantly questioned and encouraged by the large district pastor, 'If you do not work properly, you will be punished'" The leadership structure at Cho's church is diagramed by a pyramid with Cho of course at the top.

Such discipling schemes have emerged before in the UK and elsewhere and are discussed in the articles linked below:

- **Shepherding Considered**
- **Website looking at Spiritual Abuses**
- **List of articles by various people on spiritual abuses**
- **The 1970's Dominion/Shepherding Movement**
- **"The Discipling Dilemma and Church Growth" online book**
- **More articles on spiritual abuse**

 **CONTINUE TO PART TEN (Part Ten summarises the dangers of the Church Growth and Cell-Church Movements)**

NOTES

[1] Claudia and Cesar Castellanos, The Vision Of Multiplication, Audio Cassette. Bethany World Prayer Center : International Cell Conference, 2001.

[2] Claudia & César Castellanos, Audio cassette. How to Influence Others (Como influir en Otros) January 2002 conference in Bogota .

[3] César Castellanos, The Ladder of Success (London : Dovewell Pblications, 2001), p. 25.

[4] [**"Colombia's Bleeding Church" Christianity Today report**, May 18, 1998]

[5] Meyer 1976 "Pastoral Roles and Mission Goals: Currents In Theology And Missions"

[6] The Fitz-Gibbons are in fact native to England, having spent many years in the Charismatic movement there and from 1994 onwards hotly defending the notorious "Toronto Blessing" that had hit their church. Jane FitzGibbon is a Dental Therapist

and part-time feminist theologian. Although a pastor from 1981 Andrew FitzGibbon says he was ordained "ecumenically" in 1998. His wife wrote a monthly column in "Renewal" Magazine (UK) for three years.

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