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# Empowering Church Planters. Which training system?

Johannes Reimer

## I Church Planting in a Divided Society

### 1. Leadership in Church planting matters

Planting new and replanting old churches is on the agenda of many European denominations. Some have started impressive programmes to boost a so-called church planting movement (CMP). But the overall outcome is rather questionable. Church planting in Europe is difficult. What are the obstacles and problems and which factors determine success and failure? There is obviously more than one issue to be discussed. In this paper I am addressing the importance of proper leadership in church planting. Planting needs planters. The north-American writer Steve Smith promoting church planting movements states:

Sustained CMPs are in essence *leadership multiplication movements*. The development and multiplication of leaders is what the Spirit uses to drive the movement. This is the

spiritual engine of sustained CMPs. CMPs can start without effective leadership development and multiplication, but they will be short lived without it. You must have a system in place that results in generations of *reproducing leaders*.<sup>1</sup>

Church planting is short-lived without proper leadership. The British missiologist Stuart Murray points to the Anabaptist movement which lost its vibrancy as a church planting movement by failing to address the question of leadership training, but 'in contrast, the training provided for celtic church planters was a significant component in the vibrancy of this movement'.<sup>2</sup> Other examples from the history of mission might be added. Training of church planters is crucial. Is church planting in Europe a problem because

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1 Steve Smith with Ying Kai, *T4T: Discipleship & Revolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011), 259.

2 Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 256.

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*Bio-Data:* Johannes Reimer DTh, (University of South Africa) is professor of Mission Studies at the Theologische Hochschule Eversbach, Germany and Prof. Extraordinarius of missiology at the University of South Africa. He was born and raised in the former USSR, founded a number of missionary and educational institutions, is an ordained pastor of the Free Evangelical Church of Germany and the author of *Die Welt Umarmen. Theologie des gesellschaftsrelevanten Gemeindebaus* (Francke 2009), and *Leben, Rufen. Verändern. Theologie der gesellschaftstransformierenden Evangelisation* (Francke, 2013), and a number of other books and articles on mission, evangelism and church planting.

we fail to rise a generation of leaders? And if so, how does one install systems that result in 'generations of reproducing leaders' in such difficult times and contexts as ours today? And what qualifies a good church planting leader?

## 2. The context demands certain leaders

In their recently published book on church planting in the UK the British authors Andy Hardy and Dan Yarnell describe Great Britain as a divided society<sup>3</sup>—divided by different cultural backgrounds, social classes, gender orientation and religious convictions, just to mention some. Church planting in the UK will have to cross those divides, overcome barriers and develop a church for every context. It is a task that is unusually complicated, so it is not surprising that the authors plead for a certain kind of leadership needed in order to complete it. They expect the future church planters to be change agents, culturally intelligent and able to operate cross culturally.<sup>4</sup> In their perspective the task shapes the demand of leadership. Competent leaders will conform to the many facades of a given context and culture. Other European experts on church planting in their respective cultures support the findings of the British authors.

The acknowledgment of the complexity of church planting in context is not new. The Fuller Theological Seminary professor, Charles Ridley, who analysed church planters, profiles in

the late 1980s and consequently developed an assessment tool, expects of church planters the following characteristics: (1) visionizing capacity, (2) self-starters' mentality, (3) sense of ownership in ministry, (4) ability to relate to unchurched people, (5) balancing family and ministry, (6) effectively building relationships, (7) commitment to church growth, (8) responsiveness to the community, (9) ability to guide others; (10) flexibility and adapting to change and ambiguity, (11) building group cohesiveness for working in a team toward common goal, (12) ability to sustain themselves through setbacks, losses, disappointments and failures, (13) translating personal faith convictions into ministry decisions and actions.<sup>5</sup>

This is a heavy load on a single shoulder. Others describe the church planter primarily as a spiritual person, adding to the list a number of other qualities.<sup>6</sup> Who is able to comply with all this? The frustration on both sides—the pastor and his congregation, the church planter and his mission board—seems to be programmed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Charles, R. Ridley, *How to select Church Planters* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Evangelistic Association, 1988), 7-1; see also: J.D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting. An Introduction to the Whats, Whys and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs-Milton Keynes-Hyderabad: Paternoster), 391f.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, qualifications of church planters as developed by Samuel D. Fairloth, *Church Planting for Reproduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, ), 49-50.

<sup>7</sup> See in this regard an excellent description of those feelings in Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation. Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 85-95.

<sup>3</sup> Andy Hardy and Dan Yarnell, *Forming Multicultural Partnerships: Church Planting in a Divided Society* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Hardy, *Forming Multicultural*, 141-217.

Where does one receive proper training for all of this? Is it at all possible to train highly flexible leaders who move smoothly across the lines of our multiple societal divisions? How do you become what Hardy and Yarnell call a 'nomadic disciple'?<sup>8</sup> Which training system might serve them best? Let us examine the options.

## II Training Models Used Today

### 1. How do we train and empower church planters in the world today?

Most experts on church planting will agree: 'Biblical and theological equipping of leaders is not optional'.<sup>9</sup> But does this mean we will have to send all our leaders to Bible schools and colleges or seminaries? Will standardized school-based training solve the complexity of demands for leadership in church planting? Is it at all possible to run a school offering all the courses for all the demands church planting will place in front of leaders? The fact that theological education notoriously avoids issues of apostolic and prophetic leadership, concentrating primarily on shepherding and teaching competences, for instances, leaves us with an open question. Apostolic and prophetic training is very preliminary to *enlarge* and follows questionable practices. We have seen both the prophetic and the

apostolic movement sweeping over our continent with many appeals and little practical effects. So how do we train, if not in schools?

Some suggest that the level on which the leaders will accept responsibility will decide about the depth and duration of training. Edgar J. Elliston, for instance, suggested orienting the training on the different levels of leadership exercised in a movement. He names the skills and competences required and orders them into a scale of different training approaches, formal and informal, short and long cycle, in- and external and so on.<sup>10</sup>

Ott and Wilson build on Elliston's suggestion and describe three models of equipping workers for different tasks and ministries of a local church, calling them 'workshops, in-ministry teams and individual instruction'.<sup>11</sup> Workshops are offered locally or regionally and short-cycle, introducing main issues of the matter to beginners and those workers in transition. In-ministry teams include beginners and mature workers. They may learn by watching and doing.

Equipping is done on the job and wherever needed in a workshop style to deepen knowledge and competence. Individual instruction is done by modeling, coaching and mentoring; in other words, trainees observe their trainer at work and they are observed and guided by the trainer in their work. Individual instruction takes place in the context of praxis and is enormously time consuming.

<sup>8</sup> Hardy, *Forming Multicultural*, 142ff.

<sup>9</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting. Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 356.

<sup>10</sup> Edgar J. Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders* (Pasadena CA: WCL, 1992), 35; Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 354-356.

<sup>11</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 357-361.

All three models can be put into different frames of educational reference: church based training, in-service training or school-based education, even when some of the frames will offer more and others less flexibility. Let us explore the options in more detail.

## 2. Church based Training

In their great book on 'Global Church Planting', Craig Ott and Gene Wilson underline the fact that leaders in church planting do not appear overnight. All great leaders seem to have followed a process of becoming first a disciple, then a servant, and then a leader.<sup>12</sup> And this process takes place in the local church. In fact, the local church is ideally equipped for this, if, of course, the leaders of the church understand what is the very nature and mission of God's church.

Roger Ellis and Roger Mitchell in their book on *Radical Church Planting* clearly assign the main responsibility of leadership capacity building to the church, calling the church a 'training school'.<sup>13</sup> In their view, it is the task of the pastoral leadership to discern and develop leadership gifts in the church and open up space for potential leaders to develop in ministry.

Some churches go beyond basic discipleship and servanthood training, offering church planters workshops, seminars, training camps, residences and internships.<sup>14</sup> Here gifted members

of the churches are properly assessed and invited to spend a number of days, weeks, months and more (usually up to one–two years) in a seminar or even internship learning the skills of a church planter. A number of churches in North America offer such programmes, among which the church planter training programme of the Presbyterian Redeemer church in New York has received most international attention.<sup>15</sup> Another great programme is offered by the Nairobi Chapel in Kenya, now also moving into other cities of Africa and Europe, Berlin in Germany for instance.<sup>16</sup>

## 3. In-Service Training

Others promote on-the-job training for church planting. Their motivation comes from the common observation that people learn not because the teachers have been great and provided a maximum of knowledge. It is not what the teacher does that counts, but it is only when the learner starts doing what teachers suggest that we see how much has been understood and learned. Applying knowledge leads to competence.<sup>17</sup> In many strata of

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cloversites.com/northtexasdistrictcouncilofassembliesofgod/documents/Model%20for%20Raising%20Up%20Church%20Planters.pdf (29.05.2015, pp. 4ff; Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 365ff.

<sup>15</sup> See 'City to City' programme in: <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/about/> (20.05.2015).

<sup>16</sup> <http://nairobi chapel.org/NC/missionaries.php>.

<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Lenz, Heiner Ellebracht, Gisela Osterhold, *Coaching als Führungsprinzip. Persönlichkeit und Performance entwickeln* (Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2007), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 351ff.

<sup>13</sup> Ellis and Mitchell, *Radical*, 148.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Glenn Smith, Models for Raising up Church Planters. How Churches Become More Effective Through Intentional Leadership Development. In: <http://storage>.

society this has been understood and systems of 'On-the-Job-Learning' have been implemented. They build on andragogy, a system of teaching adults. Glenn Smith, who studied a number of north-American church planter training programmes concludes:

The best church planter training programs understand and embrace the principles of adult learning. Trainers should keep in mind that adults have life experience, and this experience enables them to dialogue in a manner that will enhance their learning. They also have the capacity to reflect on their life experiences in a way that enables them to gain insight into the knowledge and skills being taught. The best adult training programs incorporated practices such as a personal needs assessment, sequence of content, just-in-time information, and experiential learning.<sup>18</sup>

The author of the well-known study on church planting movements, David Garrison, pleads with churches to follow the society in this matter. He warns: 'Avoid the temptation to pull new local church leaders away from their churches for years of training in an institution. A decentralized theological education which is punctuated by practical experience is preferable.'<sup>19</sup> He offers what he calls an MAWL approach for training effective church planters. MAWL stands for 'Model, Assist, Watch and Leave. Model evangelism and church planting, Assist local

believers to do the same; Watch to ensure that they are able to do it; Leave to go and start the cycle elsewhere.'<sup>20</sup>

Grassroots-Training as suggested by Garrison offers enormous chances to launch a movement, but it may also potentially introduce weak and even wrong theologies, since it does not go deep on theoretical matters, but tends to emphasise the basic questions of evangelism and discipleship.

In-house churches training of leaders is generally done informally by walking alongside a leader as Victor Chodhrie, a prominent representative of the Indian house church movement, reports.<sup>21</sup> Similarly the CMPs largely relay on in-service training of their leaders.<sup>22</sup>

Others suggest a more sophisticated model of modular training by which the church planters and their apprentices meet on a regular basis once a month, for example, to discuss issues of relevance.<sup>23</sup> The 'Modular Church Planter Training' is implemented in many countries.<sup>24</sup>

In-Service Learning also allows the trainer to see apprentices in action and identify problems early on. Few leaders fail because of a lack of knowledge. Rather leaders often

18 Glenn Smith, *Models*, 10.

19 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention), 44.

20 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 344; Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 364.

21 Victor Chodhrie, 'The Training of House Church Leaders', in *Neus. The World House Church Reader*, edited by Rad Zdero (Pasadena, CA: WCL, 2007), 443ff.

22 Smith, *T4T*, 259.

23 See an overview of such programmes in Glenn Smith, *Models*.

24 See Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 365.

have relational and character problems that are rooted in unsolved attitude and value issues.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. School-oriented approach

There is a plethora of publications complaining about the state and inadequacy of formal theological education in the West.<sup>26</sup> It is blamed for being too theoretical, too academic, offering too little praxis, too expensive, too long, too incompetent in both church and society matters, concentrating on research rather than on church praxis. The well known American missiologist Wilbert R. Shenk states:

In 1990-91 I conducted a reconnaissance of mission training in several Western countries to determine: (1) if there were programs dedicated to the training of missionaries to the peoples of modern Western culture, and (2) what the curriculum comprised. I never got beyond the first question.<sup>27</sup>

Professor Shenk obviously did not find many schools offering missiological training for planting churches in the western context. In fact he found *none*. Things might have changed since, but still even in prominent books on church planting, a formal seminary education is not even considered.<sup>28</sup> And yet even a critique of modern theological training such as Eddy Gibbs, him-

self a renowned professor of theology, recognizes the fact that:

There is a danger of creating a chasm between academic theology and training in ministry competencies. This would simply reposition the already existing chasm from its present location between the church and the seminary, to create a fault-line within the institutions themselves—with fatal consequences. The challenge presented by both modernity and postmodernity require more theologically informed discernment, not less.<sup>29</sup>

He therefore suggests a process of ‘re-engineering theological education’, which in his view includes: (a) bringing churches and seminaries together into a partnership of life-long learning and equipping; (b) involving seminaries in creation of church-based ministry training, (c) readjusting the scholarly community from concentration on the discipline to concentration on theological praxis; (d) concentrating on educating equipping those who are called for ministry.<sup>30</sup> Few schools are following Gibbs’ suggestion of incorporating informal training in their curricula.

#### 5. Non-formal Training

Recognizing the importance of proper training for church planters, mission agencies and/or theological schools develop less formal training for church planters. In Germany, for instance, the Biblical-Theological Academy in Wiedenest offers a one year programme for church planters, focusing on leader-

<sup>25</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church*, 360.

<sup>26</sup> See among many: Eddy Gibbs and Ian Coffey, *Church Next, Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), 93-100.

<sup>27</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 129.

<sup>28</sup> See for instance: Ott und Wilson, *Global Church*.

<sup>29</sup> Gibbs and Coffey, *Church Next*, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Gibbs and Coffey, *Church Next*, 100-106.



ship development and character building and offering practical mentoring.<sup>31</sup>

In India the Hindustan Bible Institute (HBI) developed a Missionary Training Institute, offering a two year non-formal programme, training gifted young church planters with a very high praxis involvement. 'Church planting requires additional skills which are imparted through two years of on-the-job and field-based training', claims the leadership of the Institute.<sup>32</sup> The Institute has decentralized its training in a number of regional centres.<sup>33</sup> The students actually plant a church learning to plant.<sup>34</sup>

In Brasil JUEP, a native church planting agency, offers parallel to their formal theological seminary a *school of cross-cultural ministry*, educating church planters in a comprehensive one year training programme.<sup>35</sup> Beside the central location in Joao Pessao in north-eastern Brasil they run a number of regional centres, especially in the country side to avoid taking the students out of their ministry and community.

In Latvia, the Baptist denomination established in 2008 the Baltic Pastoral Institute (BPI) alongside their

Theological Seminary. The Bishop of this denomination reports excitingly about many positive changes in the denomination especially in regard to church planting. BPI offers a 3 year programme of which the first is full-time and the last two are offered parallel to the ministry of the student. At all stages students are involved in church ministry and guided by their respected mentors.<sup>36</sup>

Other similar programmes can also be mentioned. The president of HBI, Paul R. Gupta writes: 'I have concluded that formal education is ill suited and cannot effectively equip evangelists, church planters, and apostolic leaders for ministry.' 'The skills ... can be understood and mastered only through practice.'<sup>37</sup>

## 6. We need an alternative approach

So what is then the right way to train church planters? In reference to screening church planting movements, Stuart Murray concludes:

There is an increasing awareness in the contemporary church planting movement of the importance of leadership training. Much church planting in the past twenty years has taken place without such training, but this church planting will doubtless continue. But some of the weaknesses of this methodology

31 <http://www.leiterakademie.de/k5-leitertraining/k5-gemeindegruendung/> (29.05.2015).

32 Paul R. Gupta and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision. Training Leaders for a Church-Planting Movement* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2006), 34.

33 Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking tradition*, 159.

34 <http://www.hbionline.org/mission.php> (29.05.2015).

35 [http://juvep.com.br/v2/?page\\_id=700](http://juvep.com.br/v2/?page_id=700) (29.05.2015).

36 Pēteris Sprogis and Līva Fokrote, Non-Formal Education as a Tool for Church Planting in Latvia. In: *Raksts izdevumā 'Common Ground Journal'*, v8 n2, 2011 (<http://www.lbds.lv/par/publikacijas/non-formal-education-as-a-tool-for-church-planting-in-latvia—29.05.2015>).

37 Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition*, 23.



are becoming apparent ... some of the training provided seems rather narrowly conceived, lacking theological depth and exposure to other ecclesiological and missiological perspectives.<sup>38</sup>

Such training, Murray says, might be appropriate for basic instruction of those who are interested in church planting. The context in which church planting is done today demands, however, deeper knowledge, which cannot be provided by the majority of church-based, on-the-job and in-service training models. On the other hand church-based training tends to train people in the limited competencies for which the current church leadership stands. The British leadership expert, John Finney writes about his own experience in the UK:

All studies show that churches tend to produce clones of the minister. If he or she is an evangelist, the church produces evangelists. If he or she is a dominant personality, then leadership will be seen in terms of aggression. Indeed one of the difficulties of the church is that because so many ministers are gifted as pastors they tend to produce more pastors at a time when they may require a more directly evangelistic model.<sup>39</sup>

There seems little alternative to proper school-based education for church planters. 'With the growing diversity of American culture', says Glenn Smith, 'the increasing secularization, the need for new models, and the seductiveness of popular culture,

church planting leaders are discovering that they must train their planters to think more deeply from a theological perspective.'<sup>40</sup>

But deep theological thinking alone seems not enough. What is needed is an alternative, an alternative which may reduce the load on a single shoulder and at the same time provide quality training both in theological theory and praxis. The alternative we ask for might lie in an integrated model.

### III Integrated Training

#### 1. The dream team of Church planting

Let me start with a basic observation. Most of today's experts in church planting agree that the time of the single church planter is gone. The north-American George Barna even claims that individual leadership is completely unable to grow a church to maturity.<sup>41</sup> It requires a team to start a healthy church.<sup>42</sup> Ridley's categories, as right as they might be, will still be incomplete. No single person will be

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Models*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Water-Book Press, 2001), 18ff.

<sup>42</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches. Planting a Church that's Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Company, 2006), 70ff; Faircloth, *Church Planting*, 48ff; Roger Ellis and Roger Mitchell, *Radical Church Planting* (Cambridge: Crossway Books), 189-200; David Gilet, 'Theological Training and Church Planting' in *Planting New Churches. Guidelines and Structures for Developing Tomorrow's Church*, ed. George Carey (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1991), 179-185; and other.

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<sup>38</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 256-257.

<sup>39</sup> John Finney, *Church on the Move. Leadership for Mission* (London: Daybreak, 1992), 9.

able to offer all we need in modern day church planting.

The history of church planting includes stories of effective individual church planters. But it has always been the case that to dig a bit deeper into their history will reveal a powerful team behind those apostles. Apostle Paul is the point in case. Planting a kingdom community obviously requires more than one person.<sup>43</sup> Apostle Paul speaks of a team of five in Ephesian 4:11-13. We read:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (NIV).

To equip the saints for their ministry requires apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching competence. What does the apostle mean by that? In short

(a) *Apostles lead strategically.* They understand and promote God's mission on earth. Alan Hirsh and Tim Catchim call the apostle 'custodian of the DNA'.<sup>44</sup> Apostles are responsible for what the church we plant is going to be. They see chances and provide

courage to move ahead. They are starters. They are the strategic brain of the church in mission.<sup>45</sup> Church planting needs people like them. Ed Stetzer calls the apostolically gifted church planter 'the apostolic harvest Church planter', using apostle Paul as a paradigmatical example.<sup>46</sup> Apostles usually act in a team, of which they are the leader and mentor (Eph 4:11).

(b) *Prophets lead analytically.* They see into the past, the present and the future of a given community. They are 'Guardians of faithfulness'.<sup>47</sup> They understand the obstacles and challenges, the need and the bondage of the people, see the path to take and the traps to avoid. Prophets are analysts—they see where people are and determine ways to get them out of there.<sup>48</sup> Church planting is all about people. Without knowing their context and understanding their condition, there will be no effective planting. Church planting needs prophetic vision.

(c) *Evangelists lead through communication.* They know how to communicate the gospel to the people across boundaries and cultures.<sup>49</sup> Guided by an apostolic plan and prophetic insight they are powerful communicators winning people for Jesus. Church planting

<sup>43</sup> See as an excellent survey of teamwork in the New Testament, David W. Shenk and Erwin R. Stutzman, *Creating Communities of the Kingdom* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1988), 42-55.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution. Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2012), 29.

<sup>45</sup> See more in Johannes Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen. Theologie des gesellschaftsrelevanten Gemeindebaus*. Transformationsstudien Bd. 1, 2. Auflage (Marburg: Francke Verlag, 2013), 306-310.

<sup>46</sup> Stetzer, *Planting*, 53ff.

<sup>47</sup> Hirsch and Catchim, *The Permanent*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> See the discussion of the validity of prophetic leadership for church planting in Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen*, 309-313.

<sup>49</sup> Hirsch and Catchim, *The Permanent*, 35-42; Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen*, 314ff.

presupposes evangelism. In fact, without evangelism there can be no proper church planting.

(d) *Pastors lead by caring.* They are the shepherds who will walk long distances with the individual and the flock to grow them into maturity and spiritual strength. They disciple people, creating an 'empathic community',<sup>50</sup> mentor them into a missional lifestyle.<sup>51</sup> Discipleship is the core ministry of church planting. Without discipleship, there will be no clear identity, no sense of belonging, no community—all in all—no church! Pastoral leadership is central to church planting. Many modern day church plants follow the classic 'founding pastor paradigm', following, as Ed Stetzer observes, the example of apostle Peter, who founded churches outside of Jerusalem by staying in Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup>

(e) *Teachers lead by teaching the word of God,* 'bringing wisdom and understanding'.<sup>53</sup> They lay solid foundations in scripture and theology, providing a strong base for identity, ethics and morals, values and life praxis. Teachers help to avoid sectarianism and build a church according to God's design. You need teachers in your church planting team.

The Pauline church planting team is a team of five. Alan Hirsh speaks of a genius of APEST,<sup>54</sup> the abbreviation for Apostle-Prophet-Evangelist-Shepherd-Teacher. APEST represents a power team, a strong right hand of God, with

all five fingers, by which God equips the saints to the work of their ministry in order that the body may grow (Eph 4:16). It is God himself who sets the team in motion, a highly qualified team.

What concrete qualities are we looking for in church planters? Ed Stetzer speaks of a planter's SHAPE we have to keep in mind in order to train planters.<sup>55</sup> SHAPE includes: (a) *Spiritual gifts* needed in church planting and bestowed by the Holy Spirit on the people; (b) *Heart of passion* or a missional spirituality towards church planting; (c) *Abilities* required in many practical matters of church planting, such as organisational skills or fund raising; (d) *Personality* able to manage unavoidable stress of crossing frontiers; (e) *Experience* in church work and planting.

Talking of equipping church planters, we need to think of training systems to empower the SHAPE of apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching gifts and competence. Especially the ministries of apostles and prophets, largely neglected in our churches, need to be recovered, as Stuart Murray rightly demands.<sup>56</sup> How do you do this? What educational tools do we use?

## 2. Shaping roots and wings

Glenn Smith observes some north-American church planting movements seeking strategic alliances with traditional schools. He writes: 'Some churches like Perimeter, Redeemer, and West Ridge look to Bible colleges and seminaries. Increasingly more of these types of schools are placing em-

50 Hirsch and Canchim, *The Permanent*, 42.

51 Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen*, 316-317.

52 Stetzer, *Planting*, 61ff.

53 Hirsch and Carchim, *The Permanent*, 45.

54 Hirsch and Carchim, *The Permanent*, 8.

55 Stetzer, *Planting*, 81-82.

56 Murray, *Church Planting*, 240-243.

phasis on church planting.<sup>57</sup>

An example of this new trend is the Cypress Creek Church in Wimberley, Texas, which has established more than 70 churches and recruits its church planters among college students by offering them a discipleship and training programme parallel to their studies at the university. The students are well prepared academically at the university to face challenges of modernity and they understand the church dynamics, having observed and worked inside a well-functioning body of Christ.<sup>58</sup>

Church planters seem to discover the validity of solid theological education, even if traditional theological education is still viewed as ill equipped to train church planters, concentrating on pastoral care of existing congregations rather than on a mission of expanding the kingdom, as Lesslie Newbegin puts it.<sup>59</sup>

Theological training Institutes will have to change their pattern of teaching and their curricula if they are to add to the proper training of church planters.<sup>60</sup> Robert Banks claims that the 'credibility gap' between theology and everyday life is far too deep.<sup>61</sup> But there is a deep necessity for solid theological teaching in training apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors

and teachers for church planting—and therefore a place for formal education! Church planters need roots, deep roots if they want to grow a stable and solid church!

On the other hand, colleges and seminaries need to see the shortcomings of their education wherever it has separated itself from the church. David Gillett from the Anglican College in Bristol, UK states:

In a sense the training establishments are a child of the church. This is true in the area of church planting: we depend on it actually happening in real life; so that we can learn from it, reflect on it, and evaluate it in the light of scripture and the history of the church's mission. So we depend on students' experience in church planting before they enter college. We need to be able to give them placement experience where they can be involved in church planting during their time in college, and we need training parishes where a newly ordained deacon can go and learn the habits of church planting at the beginning of his or her ministry.<sup>62</sup>

Gillet offers a path for our future training. No, we do not have to drop the very important church and ministry-based training options. On the contrary, they are valid and must be strengthened by the greater church as well as her educational wings. Church planters will have to strengthen their wings and one does so only by flying, by practising. On the other hand, church planters must understand the danger of insufficient training provided

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57 Smith, *Models*, 13.

58 Joel Cominskey, *Planting Churches that Reproduce* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing), 62.

59 Lesslie Newbegin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 231.

60 Murray, *Church Planting*, 257-258.

61 Robert Banks, *All the Business of Life. Bringing Theology Dawn to Earth* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1989), 35ff.

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62 Gillett 1991:182.

by short term schemes, and reduced to simple mentoring models.

The danger of moving from church planting to church cloning is obvious. The complexity of life today will never accept clones, regardless of their sources—the Americas, Africa or Asia. Copying the success of others under different cultural and societal conditions will never guarantee success at home. What we need is a renewed alliance of theological educators and practitioners of church planting—our education must become praxiological and theology a *handlungstheorie* (*action theory*). In practice this would mean that our churches, agencies and colleges will have to look into the experience of programmes like the HBI in India or the BPI in Latvia, not to copy them, but rather contextualizing their experience into our own context.

#### IV Church Planting and the Future of the Church in Europe

It is true that Christianity in Europe is suffering setbacks. Churches close their doors by hundreds and Christians leave their churches by hundreds of thousands. Nothing is more urgent than a process of re-evangelisation of

the European population and replanting of a strong and vital church. To accomplish the task, however, means that we will have to train leaders properly prepared for the task.

The systems in place, as promising as they are, are by and large, not sufficient. What is needed is a strategic alliance between educators in all models of training. High priority must be given to training of church planters in all departments of church life, including the educational and parachurch bodies.

Time is pressing. The situation is becoming more and more complicated. Europe is changing by the day. Already now major parts of some European cities are inhabited by more Muslims than Christians. In my own country, Germany, many church buildings have been turned into mosques due to the lack of ability to revitalize the church formerly meeting in those buildings.

It is more than complicated to evangelise people who witness a church dying. But it is far from impossible. God raises apostolic teams to move into such places and plant new churches. They will need all our support. And they need proper training, praxiological and at the same deeply theological.