In whose image are our congregations being shaped? Leadership, power and Christian nurture

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The prayerful ambition of every godly Christian leader is to see their congregation shaped, under God, into a truly Gospel community; that is a community 'being transformed into Christ's likeness with ever-increasing glory' (2 Cor. 3:16). The aspiration is to see a local gathering of God's people grow in their knowledge and experience of Christ's truth, his cruciform love, his resurrection power and his heart for a lost world. Paul speaks for all pastoral leaders when he talks vividly of the 'pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you' (Gal. 4:19). That is the theory; that is what we are all signed up for.

The empirical reality, however, is often somewhat different. All too easily the image of Christ in our congregations can be seriously distorted, not just by superficial discipleship and immature and sinful relationships but by our own leadership. Instead of encountering communities marked by the love, truth, freedom and joy of the Gospel, the image of *ourselves* is a little too plain to see. Far too often our own doctrinal and hermeneutical bias, our personality preferences, our limited experience and personal insecurities, our 'niche ecclesiologies'[1] – and our insufficient self-awareness over all these matters – have become seriously distorting factors. The oft-commented 'tribalism' within the contemporary Scottish evangelical scene is sad evidence of this reality. Another tragic expression is the way some emerging leaders in the developing world (where honour-shame cultures prevail) demand congregational patronage, failing to 'reconfigure honour' by the Gospel.[2]

The aim of this paper is to explore the extent to which such deformation can be mitigated, given that God graciously uses our very different personalities and denominational charisms, and given the inevitable fallibility of all human agency. How can we better allow God's Word and

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1 A term used by James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World. The Irony, Tragedy and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 283. By it he means 'designer churches', churches aiming to meet certain needs and interests.

2 This is brilliantly explored in Julyan Lidstone, *Give Up the Purple. A Call to Servant Leadership in Hierarchical Cultures* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2019), p. 80.

Spirit to do its own work, producing congregations where something of the fullness and fruitfulness of Christ's image becomes a reality? This is a huge theme. The particular focus of this paper is on the ways in which issues of power are significant. I concur with Martyn Percy when he comments, 'In ecclesiology, and perhaps to a lesser extent theology, power has been a neglected, even despised concept. The common error of oversimply equating power with coercion has meant that theology has been reluctant to find a legitimate place for it in its doctrine.'[3]

1. CHRIST-LIKE FORMATION – OUR HIGH CALLING

Scripture offers an enthralling vista of what true Christian formation looks like. It is the Triune God alone who is the Potter. The Father's 'two hands' (to use Irenaeus's famous image), his Redeeming Son and his Sanctifying Spirit,[4] are slowly refashioning our lives. The divine image, so badly marred by our fallen state, is slowly being 'renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator' (Colossians 3:10, where the context is the church, not the individual).

More specifically, the New Testament identifies the key transforming practices that allow the Word and Spirit to do their divine shaping and transforming.[5] They operate in a number of key contexts; family life, congregational life and service in the world. In a culture that so easily moulds us by its own values there is an urgent need to 'enact counter-formation by counter-disciplines'.[6] First, and pre-eminently, disciples of Jesus are shaped through parental instruction (if so blessed, cf. Prov. 4:3-4; 2 Tim. 1:5), certainly the preaching and teaching of the church; and central to this 'pattern of teaching' (Rom. 6:17) is the Word of the cross (1 Cor. 1:17) and the power of the resurrection (2 Cor. 4:10). Christian identity formation fundamentally involves our personal stories being radically re-orientated by

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3 Martyn Percy, *Power and the Church. Ecclesiology in an Age of Transition* (London and Washington: Cassell, 1998), p. 75. Percy's antagonism towards evangelicalism is thinly veiled but he has some sharp and uncomfortable observations to make about power and the evangelical church.

4 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.1.3 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1885), I, 527.

5 A good summary is found in Evan B. Howard, *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation. How Scripture, Spirit, Community and Mission Shape our Souls* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2018).

6 James K. A. Smith. *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism?* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2006), p. 23.

God's story.[7] Second, the worship of the church is deeply formative. The worship of heaven, shared in part here on earth through the eschatological Spirit, with a particular focus on the sacraments, affirms our identity in Christ and allows us to refocus on what is truly real in a world of illusion. Third, the repeated witness of the New Testament is that the godly example of leaders, themselves imitating Christ, has a powerful impact (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:15-16; Phil. 3:17). More generally, the relational interaction of God's people is hugely formative; a culture of love, forgiveness, hospitality, accountability and encouragement being indispensable for all Christian nurture (e.g. Col. 3:12-14). Finally, it is our faithful witness to Christ, and the frequent opposition and suffering that comes with it, which has significant formative power (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:8-9).

2. THE PLACE OF POWER IN CHRISTIAN FORMATION

What is singularly missing from most considerations of Christian formation, however, is an account of the subtle interplay of human and divine *power*. It is deeply misguided to somehow imagine that the church is a power-free-zone and particularly this is the case when it comes to considering the influences that shape our lives.[8] Indeed total powerlessness is a myth, power being intrinsic to our very human experience.[9] In Scripture the notion of power, that is the ability to effect change,[10] is both celebrated and cautioned against. All power belongs to God and is life-giving, love-creating, redeeming and eternal. God made the world and rules the world in his power and through the power of his risen Son is making all things new. In his providence God delegates power to humanity and a key part of our human dignity, as those made in God's image, is to steward power wisely. Power is inevitably abused when it is used for our own ends and

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7 S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom. A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983) 'to be a Christian is not principally to obey certain commands or rules but to learn to grow into the story of Jesus as the form of God's Kingdom', p. 30.

8 For example, Marilyn Peterson in her book *At Personal Risk* (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1992) talks of the huge danger of boundary violations where the power differential between a professional and client relationship is denied. 'Boundary violations grow out of our struggles with power *and our negation of its significance*' (my italics) p. 70.

9 See the very helpful chapter in James Davison Hunter, 'Rethinking Power: theological reflections' in *To Change the World*, pp. 176-93.

10 Power is the 'ability to act or effect something strongly.' *Shorter English Oxford Dictionary*. In the social sciences power is a contested issue. A 'thicker' definition would include, at the least, the ability to resist and prevent change.

ambitions. Christ, in his incarnate life, has definitively modelled a right use of power, a power that does not grasp but gives (Phil. 2:6), a power that has as its *telos* the shalom of others and God's world. These familiar themes, however, somehow become worryingly forgotten when it comes to Christian formation. It is my contention that it is often an unawareness by leaders of the dynamics of power that is at the root of much communal malformation.

Few have explored this theme of power and formation more penetratingly than the French cultural historian and philosopher, Michel Foucault (1926-84) and a brief excursus into his thinking will aid our exploration.[11] For sure, Foucault was hardly a Christian in his convictions and lifestyle and certainly he never considered the issue of *Christian* formation but his general insights are as pertinent as they are uncomfortable.[12] For central to Foucault's work on power was a restless quest to both understand and fashion the human self. Power is not for Foucault all negative. It is the creative tension between our experience of power relations and our resistance to them that makes us who we are. Clearly Foucault's understanding of self is fundamentally divergent from a biblical one, seeing our essence as a social construct rather than a divine creation and assuming the possibility of self-transformation,[13] but his acute perceptions on the way power shapes the self makes him a sobering dialogue partner.

Foucault's approach was to analyse key discourses throughout history, themes as varied as the penal system, psychiatric care and human sexuality, and by so doing expose how issues of power profoundly shape our assumptions, expectations and self-understandings (what he called 'epistemes'). Indeed one of Foucault's key assertions is the sheer ubiquity of power. Power, for Foucault, is not a separate concept but intimately related to, and shaping of, all relationships, so much so that he habitually talks of 'power-relations'. Foucault helpfully identifies different sorts of

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[11] I am grateful to Roy Kearsley whose book *Church, Community and Power* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008) first introduced me to the importance of Foucault for the church.

[12] For a very helpful overview from a Christian and Reformed perspective see Christopher Watkin, *Michel Foucault*, Great Thinkers (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishers, 2018). Watkin comments, 'Foucault and the Bible are fundamentally at variance in their assumptions, yet have a great deal in common', xxii.

[13] Foucault conceived the possibility of self-creation as 'a work of art'. This image is, interestingly, similar to Gregory of Nyssa's description of spiritual formation as paintings created by apprentices to a master. For Foucault, self-creation comes about by the ecstasy of transgressing boundaries ('limit experience' as he called it); for Gregory of Nyssa, of course, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

power; for example 'sovereign power' – power that is obvious, directional and unquestioned; 'disciplinary power' where institutions more subtly impose conformity; and 'micro-power', the complex power dynamics of small communities where the interplay is complex, unpredictable and often unnoticed.[14] Power, he argues, can creep into a community with a sort of 'capillary effect'; it is 'the microphysics of power'.[15] Once named, all these categories of power are not difficult to identify in the Christian community yet, as Foucault warns, 'relations of power are perhaps among the best hidden things in the social body.' [16]

Equally salutary is Foucault's insistence on the intimate connection between power and knowledge.[17] He is deeply suspicious of the Enlightenment claim that knowledge is neutral and objective. Rather, through his 'genealogy' of power relations, searching into how acceptable social norms have changed over time, he concludes that although power and truth are distinct, they are also profoundly interrelated. For example, in his perhaps best-known book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he vigorously challenges the perception that the reforms of the penal system represent a growing awareness of what is humane and restorative. Rather, he argues that though contemporary mechanisms of criminal justice may appear less barbarous than in previous centuries, the technology of power through prison educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists is actually just as oppressive, 'punishment now strikes the soul rather than the body'.[18] Though perhaps overstating his case, there is again cause for reflection. It has long been accepted in hermeneutics that no biblical interpretation is immune from issues of power; equal acceptance has often been slow in the area of spiritual formation. For very good reasons Paul wrote, 'We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God' (2 Cor. 4:2).

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14 These distinctions are first introduced in his *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1977).

15 M. Foucault, ibid., p. 26.

16 M. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings* 1977-1984 (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 118, quoted in Watkin, *Foucault*, p. 36.

17 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*; 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presume and constitute at the same time power relations.' p. 27.

18 Ibid., p. 16.

Related to this theme is Foucault's concept of 'normalisation', the subtle power that encourages behavioural norms though hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and examination.[19] Often such normalisation is healthy, as in society's expectation that we respect the rights of the other, but the danger is that such subtle power can overreach itself. The somewhat vivid image Foucault uses to illustrate this is Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*, a prison design where a tower at the centre of a circle of prison cells allows a supervising warder to look into each cell, intimidating and inducing self-regulation among the inmates. Again Foucault deliberately overstates to make his point. Institutions, including the church, he argues, in the name of good governance, can far too easily exercise undue power. It raises the uncomfortable question as to what exactly distinguishes the important process of Christian re-socialising from an unhealthy normalisation. **Does the homogeneity of some congregational life point**, worryingly, more to the latter than the former?

As a final comment on Foucault, the one place where he does directly connect with Christian formation is, from his French Catholic background, in his fascination with the practice of confession – 'pastoral power' as he calls it.[20] He sees the importance of the **confessional** not only as a way individuals grow in self-understanding but as the way they are shaped by the declarations offered and the renunciations made. For Foucault the 'complete subordination' of the confessor to the pastor is deeply problematic.

So much more could be said but what is important in all this is Foucault's almost uncanny alertness to the many factors that shape the self, that complex interplay of reason, desire, passion, and volition, and how very *vulnerable* we are to issues of power in all this.

3. DEVELOPING A 'POWER AWARE' THEOLOGICAL MIND-SET

The ecclesial culture, determinative for so much in Christian formation, is deeply shaped by underlying theological convictions. What is vital is to assess the extent to which these convictions, and the mind-set they create, adequately resource both a resistance to the sort of unseen power Foucault alerts us to and an embracing of the life-giving, transforming power of the Gospel. Without such, our congregations will be vulnerable to being shaped too much in the image of their leaders and not of our Lord Jesus. At least two inter-related issues are involved here.

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19 C. Watkin, *Foucault*, p. 156.

20 M. Foucault, *The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 1 Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. by Paul Rabinow and James D. Faubion (New York: New Press 1997), p. 242 quoted in Christopher Watkin, *Foucault*, p. 43.

First, in assessing the value of current evangelical theological trends, there is an urgent need to be alert not only to their biblical veracity but to their pastoral power implications. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is profoundly subversive when it comes to issues of power and most of us, in theory at least, are deeply aware of this. Christ's whole life was an incarnation of the self-giving love of God, expressed in a constant renunciation of worldly power and an embracing of divine power in human weakness. The famous hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 is not the narrative of a Christ who temporarily relinquished power on the cross only to take it up again in resurrection, but rather the revelation of a whole new understanding of power.[21] It is precisely in choosing to sacrifice for others that God's resurrection power is realised. It is thus far more radical than Foucault's understanding of successive epistemes where *expressions* of power change with time.[22] In the Gospel the *very nature* of power is totally subverted; a whole new, qualitatively different sort of power is revealed through Christ (1 Cor. 1:23-25).

Given such revolutionary Good News it follows that this Gospel and its understanding of power must not only be the very centre of all evangelical theology but also a key touchstone by which other evangelical truths are assessed. Thus, for example, when articulations of eternal subordination within the Trinity are used to justify subordination<u>ism</u>[23] or when doctrines of Scriptural revelation posit 'sufficiency' as synonymous with 'completeness', permitting no mystery or debate, they point in a direction alien to the Gospel's view of power. In handling such contentious issues as women in church leadership, power-awareness must be part of the lens through which we interpret Scripture.

Second, in our understanding of pastoral leadership, great care must be taken to make the vital distinction between divine and human agency.

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21 Because Paul's words in Phil. 2:10 are an exact borrowing of language from Isa. 45:23, it indicates not only the closest possible identity of Jesus with Yahweh but that the non-grasping nature of Jesus power reveals the very character of Yahweh. Gordon D. Fee, 'God is not a grasping, self-centred being but is most truly known through the one who, himself in the form of God and thus equal with God, poured himself out in sacrificial love'. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians, The New International Commentary on the N.T.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 227.

22 This is very well expounded in C. Watkin, *Foucault*, Chapter 5.

23 There is indeed a vital distinction to be made between the clear biblical witness to eternal subordination within the Trinity (1 Cor. 8:6) and subordination*<u>ism</u>*. Different modes of origination do not necessary imply a hierarchy of status of persons. What is more, drawing direct non-analogical lines between God's inner life and our social life is deeply problematic.

Clearly this is not an easy issue for both are deeply related as well as distinct; there is tension and complexity here. All ministry is inevitably both mediated and incarnational, our embodied struggling but 'with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me' (Col. 1:29). 'How is it possible', asks Martyn Percy, 'to embody and preach a Gospel of power in a form of powerlessness?' [24] It is a key question – for we talk of preaching as 'truth through personality'[25] and God clearly uses our natural as well as spiritual gifts to aid his ministry. This paper is certainly not implying that 'big personalities' cannot be effective in God's purposes. Neither is it saying that commanding or confrontational leadership is never appropriate; in the face of injustice it is vital.[26] Rather, it is when the distinction between *opus Dei* and *opus hominum* is blurred that power abuse becomes possible.[27] Colourful leaders are not the problem, collapsed distinctions are the concern. Strong leadership is not the issue, pride, hubris and a lack of self-awareness about power are the issues. It is precisely when an understanding of human agency and divine agency are conflated that, for example, the 'anointed' preacher becomes the unquestioned mouthpiece of God and the exhortations of the worship leader become *automatically* endued with prophetic authority. It is when there is no room for diversity of view and when a non-dialogical culture has taken hold that one needs to ask whether this conflation has come to roost. At heart, unless an intentional asymmetry is established between divine and human agency, then power issues will inevitably distort true spiritual formation.

Before moving on, it is important to emphasise that what is connoted by 'human agency' is complex. There is, for example, the issue of 'author-

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24 Martyn Percy, *Power and the Church*, p. 41.

25 See Charles W. Fuller *'The Trouble with "Truth through Personality": Philip Brooks, Incarnation and the Evangelical Boundaries of Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010). The argument here is that Brookes, in his evangelical romanticism, significantly tilts the human/divine asymmetry in the wrong direction, underplaying the objective power of the Gospel. This may well be true but it is not the main problem with evangelicalism today. Brook's attention to the holiness, humanity and humility of the preacher is welcome.

26 See the very helpful trilogy by Simon P. Walker, *The Undefended Leader*. In his second volume, *Leadership with Nothing to Lose* (Carlisle: Piquant Editions, 2007) he very helpfully outlines eight different leadership strategies, relating each to issues of power, distinguishing what he calls 'strong force' and 'weak force' (the latter when a leader is most effective by admitting vulnerability).

27 This is a criticism Martyn Percy makes of fundamentalism but is, in my view, more generally applicable to evangelicalism; *Power and the Church*, p. 72. I am grateful to Percy for this paragraph.

ity', that is power legitimised by a community. Such regulated power is essential for any healthy community. Further, the power of human agency is multi-dimensional. Steven Lukes, an influential British sociologist, talks of three dimensions to power; decision-making power, non-decision-making power (the power that frames the agenda), and the ideological power that shapes peoples' very wishes and thoughts.[28] For example, in a church where the pastoral staff sense an urgent need for a church plant, it is not unknown for a powerful lobby to ensure the issue never quite makes it on the agenda and/or a prevailing belief that large numbers signifies Kingdom 'success'. In addition, there is, of course, an extensive and lively debate over the extent to which 'structures', the formal shape of a community or organisation, create bias and wield hidden influence.[29] In an ecclesial context, the way a congregation is governed, its practices and key stakeholders all have the potential to distort the power of the Gospel.[30] There is much that could be explored here.

4. A CONSTRUCTIVE SUBVERSION OF POWER – FINDING THE APPROPRIATE ASYMMETRY

I wish to conclude, however, by offering *four proposals* for finding an appropriate asymmetry of agency, all of which stand at the heart of the Gospel and connect back in some way to Foucault's observations, addressing them and critiquing them. I am persuaded each is indispensable for a true shaping of our congregations into Christ-likeness.

First, is the need for self-less and self-aware servant leaders.

Part of my intention in dialoguing with someone as unlikely as Foucault has been to counter our over-familiarity with this theme. Foucault's insistence on the ubiquity of power, affecting all relationships, renders servant-leadership language more problematic than we often assume.[31] The influence of worldly power is far more subtle than we routinely admit. For example, James Davison Hunter in his book *How to Change the World*, reflecting on Christian leadership in the public sphere, offers a devastat-

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28 S. Lukes, *Power, A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974)

29 For a full exploration of this see Stewart R. Clegg, *Frameworks of Power* (London: Sage Publications, 1989).

30 A culture of non-transparency between a church leadership and a congregation is just one of a multitude of painful examples.

31 Roger Preece, *Understanding and Using Power. Leadership without Corrupting your Soul*, (Grove Booklet, Ridley Hall, Cambridge, 2011) 'There is much to commend servant leadership, but it does not address all the complexities of power at work in individuals and organisations.'

ing critique on how leaders of both the American Christian 'right' and 'left' have, in their quest for political dominance, become complicit with the very understanding of power the Gospel seeks to subvert.[32] At the heart of the Gospel is the promise that, through Christ, power can be transformed. The key issue is not an embracing of weakness over power [33] (weakness is not an end in itself) but whether the power entrusted to us is deployed entirely for the health, growth, and Christ-likeness of those we serve. [34] It is 'the freedom to lead with nothing to lose'.[35] Such self-emptying leadership requires both vigilant self-awareness and robust community accountability.[36]

A second factor of critical importance is the need for leaders to create a culture where* space *for God's Spirit and Word to do their own work is guarded.

What distinguishes Foucault's 'normalisation' from Christian re-socialising is that the former is subtle, often unintentional and ultimately restricting whereas Christian formation is transparent, intentional and freeing; and a determinative factor in all this is the issue of space. Jesus always gave space for reaction and even rejection. He allowed the rich young ruler to leave (Luke 18:23) whilst pressing for hospitality from the equally rich Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5). Those church cultures where there is no safe space to ask basic questions,[37] where there is no room for multi-

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[32] James D. Hunter, *To Change the World*, 'The proclivity towards domination and towards the politicization of everything leads Christianity today to bizarre turns; turns that, in my view, transform much of the Christian public witness into the very opposite of the witness Christianity is supposed to offer', p. 280.

[33] Simon P. Walker, *The Undefended Leader, Leadership with Nothing to Lose*, (Piquant Editions, 2007) pp. 17-21 well shows how weakness (deliberately stepping back and allowing others to take control can be a very effective form of leadership.

[34] For example, the attitude of John the Baptist whose self-identity was simply 'a voice' calling attention to the presence of the Messiah, 'He must become greater, I must become less' (John 3:30).

[35] Simon P. Walker, *Leadership*, p. 148.

[36] It is salutary indeed that two of the most eloquent recent exponents of power issues in the church, John Howard Yoder and Jean Vanier, have been exposed as serious abusers.

[37] L. J. Francis and P. Richter, indicate that in their interviews with church-leavers in England and Wales, 25% commented that their church did not allow disagreement and 29% said questions were not welcome. *Gone for Good? Church Leaving and Returning in the Twenty First Century* (Peterborough, Epworth Press, 2007).

voiced Bible teaching and where difference of opinion is unwelcome are sliding into the realms of Foucauldian normalisation. I am attracted to Simon Walker's key metaphor for leadership as that of 'a host', leadership as creating a safe and hospitable space in which people can relax, hear God's voice, discover their own gifting and, in turn, give themselves to others.[38] (It is an interesting question to ask as to whether digital church, so essential at the moment, helps or hinders a quest for Gospel-shaped expressions of power. My own sense is that though there are some obvious draw-backs to on-line pastoral care and character education; space to choose, room to reflect, alternative voices to listen to are all potential on-line pluses.)

Third, we need to reaffirm the importance of sacramental worship as a God-given safeguarding of an appropriate asymmetry.

Ian Stackhouse has argued that the ignoring of the sacraments by much contemporary evangelicalism, particularly its revivalist streams, has led to a theological 'immediacy' which, in turn, has allowed the church to become prey to manipulation.[39] 'The collapse of the theological notion of mediation means that God is all too near.'[40] In terms of this essay we could say that the value of the sacraments is that they guard against the potential Foucauldian distortion of truth by power. This vigilance occurs in at least two ways. First, precisely because the sacraments are so christologically focussed, pointing us to a drama where power has been totally subverted, the only appropriate response is one of humility and gratitude. Both baptism and communion are material spaces which magnify the primacy of divine grace and promise. As Stackhouse well puts it 'through the instrumentality of mediated grace, true encounter is allowed to take place, without ever violating the notion of the other.'[41] God's transcendence is honoured and human freedom is respected. Second, the sacraments emphasise, through our union with the death and resurrection of Christ, both the equality and unity of all God's people. Worldly power is barred from this table and pool.

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38 Simon P. Walker, *Leadership*, p. 153.

39 Ian Stackhouse, *The Gospel Driven Church. Retrieving Classical Ministries for Contemporary Revivalism*, (Paternoster, 2004), pp. 125-130.

40 Ibid., p. 127.

41 Ibid.

Finally, only a truly biblical vision of shalom can foster in a congregation the likeness of the One who came to bring fullness of life. The flourishing self is not, as with Foucault, about social construction, even less about self-transformation, but is about allowing the grace of God in Christ to renew His image in us. For Christian leaders to foster such a divine plan requires a wholehearted commitment to the empowering of others, seeking their 'faithfulness in the totality of life.'[42] It is when leaders cease to define their task in utilitarian ways, (anxious to solicit help in this programme and that ministry; addicted with the need for success) but rather seek to equip God's people for the whole of life – home, workplace and community – that God's purposes take their rightful place and with it the self-giving power of God's love. Thus, a glorious, as opposed to a vicious, circle is at work: a renunciation of self-seeking power among leaders allows the image of Christ to be more clearly formed in our congregations – and that image is precisely one of selfless love.

[42] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 'Formation – the task of making disciples – is orientated towards the cultivation of faithfulness in the totality of life', p. 227.