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The Protean Church

Allan Karr

Preface

It has been said that there are no original thoughts. Perhaps the best that can be said is that someone would take old tenets and ideas and arrange them with a new twist so that it appears to be original. I have no illusion that either of these things is happening in this article. Every time I am tempted to think that I have an original thought, I see it in print somewhere soon after that. I have come to realize that my life and worldview is a quilt of sorts. There is fabric in my quilt that I know where it came from and there is fabric that was donated from an unknown source. This article is a little section of that quilt, and I know where some of the fabric came from and some of it came from an unknown source. Nevertheless, I am not trying to claim any of it is original. I am trying to exercise good scholarship by citing and documenting where I can, but I know there are ideas here, which will have been someone else's but it is an unknown donor to my quilt. Ultimately, I hope that if there were credit given anywhere that God would receive the glory.

This article is actually the foundational idea that examines some symptoms of ecclesiological shifts that are being observed and documented in the "church" meta-narrative. As a disclaimer, I am aware that the use and meaning of words are very important. I have discovered that the field of ecclesiology brings to the surface great passions among some scholars and practitioners of faith. Most of the issues occur when a word is used that someone in the audience interprets as having a different meaning than that of the author. Understanding this, I have tried to use words in their most common meaning or to define them carefully even if the common meaning might be misinterpreted.

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Fall 2005

What is a "Church"?

There is currently much dialogue on how to define the word "church" in the confessional community and much of the discussion is an attempt to clear up the lack of clarity about how certain words or phrases are being used, and the debate is both in and out of academic circles. As a church planter practitioner and as a professor, missiologist, and ecclesiology, a common question asked officially and unofficially is how the word "church" is defined. In order to establish a common ground of understanding for discussing ecclesiology and to develop the thoughts of this article, it seems strategic to first define what is meant by the word "church."

In 2005, the International Mission Board (Southern Baptist) in an appendix to their doctrinal guideline adopted a document that was designed to give guidance to the missionaries working in international settings as to what was considered a "church." This document is known as the *IMB's Church Definition and Guidelines* (written by Clyde Meador, Executive Vice-President, IMB) and was dated May 10, 2005. The document is less than two pages long and articulates ten guidelines for missionaries to observe while fulfilling their mission activities worldwide. While all ten of their guidelines are significant, three of them apply specifically to the issues being raised in this article. They are:

1. A church is intentional about being a church. Members think of themselves as a church. They are committed to one another and to God (associated by covenant) in pursuing all that Scripture requires of a church. . .
2. A church meets regularly for worship, prayer, the study of God's word, and fellowship. Members of the church minister to one another's needs, hold each other accountable, and exercise church discipline as needed. Members encourage one another and build each other up in holiness, maturity in Christ, and love.
3. A church embraces its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, both locally and globally, from the beginning of its existence as a church.¹

All ten of the guidelines are designed to create parameters that IMB missionaries should follow as they perform their roles in other cultures as missionary church planters. The three guidelines listed above, however, are significant as they are key in the definition of how the word "church" is being defined in this context. To defer to the definition given in a doctrinal guideline does not usually suffice, as clarification is almost always required. To give a definition in this article is not intended to be viewed as a

redefinition of the term, but to preempt the obligatory need for clarification. Therefore, for the purposes of this article, the definition/clarification of “church” for this context will be as follows:

A church is a group of transformed followers of Jesus, who have made a commitment to be the body of Christ in their community and the world, and live accordingly.

This definition/clarification takes into account and addresses all the significant issues such as salvation, regeneration, baptism, membership, giftedness, pastoral authority, and the purposes of the church (including worship, fellowship, missions, ministry, discipleship, and prayer) that are crucial to the confessional community. If a person lives as a part of a church according to that definition, all of these significant issues are reduced as particular foci and encompassed in the totality of what it means to live as a covenanted follower of Jesus according to the Bible. What it doesn’t address is the extra-biblical requirements some have added to the definition such as buildings, land, letters, ordination, constitution, incorporation, name, and a narrow requirement of the administration of the sacraments or ordinances. This is intentional if the definition is going to be narrow enough to be defined by the guidelines of Scripture but broad enough to assist in a movement of the Kingdom of God.

What is “Protean”?

The second word in the title that needs to be defined is the term “protean.” This word was first encountered by this author in a religion article in *U.S. News & World Report*.² In an article profiling the religious attitudes of the emerging generations the following statement was made:

There are two types of believers, says Martin Marty, professor emeritus of history and theology at the University of Chicago: “protean” people who shop in supermarket of ideas and values and “constrictive” people who “rule out all other signals except the one they choose.”³

“Protean” is a word which captured this author’s imagination in the statement. *Merriam-Webster Online* was first consulted where it was basically defined and the pronunciation was given: ‘prO-tE-An.⁴ Further search of *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* revealed:

pro-te-an *adj.* 1: of or resembling Proteus: variable 2: readily assuming different shapes or roles 3: displaying great diversity⁵

This was supplemented by *Roget's II Thesaurus*:

protean adjective

Having many aspects, uses, or abilities. VERSATILE⁶

As the historical meaning of the word was explored, it became understood that it came from Proteus. Proteus was a deity in Greek mythology, an early sea-god that Homer called the "Old Man of the Sea." According to Homer, Proteus' home was the sandy island of Pharos⁷ located off the coast of the Nile Delta.⁸ Proteus was also known as a prophet and a herdsman of sea-beasts. The story that Homer tells of Proteus is probably the most well known and establishes for what Proteus is reputed.

In the *Odyssey*, Menelaus relates a story to Telemachus regarding Proteus. Menelaus had been detained by the gods (no winds) on the island of Pharos for twenty days on his journey home from the Trojan War. Proteus' daughter, Eidothea, rescued him. Menelaus learned from her that if he could capture Proteus he could force him to reveal which of the gods he had offended, and how he could propitiate them and return home. True to Eidothea's word, Proteus emerged from the sea to sleep among his colony of seals. Menelaus captured him and held him even though Proteus took the forms of a lion, a serpent, a leopard, a pig, water, and a tree. Proteus then was forced to answer truthfully and also revealed to Menelaus that his brother Agamemnon had been murdered on his return home, that Ajax the Lesser had been shipwrecked and killed, and that Odysseus was stranded on Calypso's Isle.⁹

It is from stories like this that Proteus gained his reputation of having the ability to "shapeshift." Other ancient historians have commented on this aspect of Proteus. Nonnus in *Dionysiaca* says:

In the neighbouring island of Pharos, Proteus of many turns, may he appear in all his diversity of shapes.¹⁰

Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* states:

Some have the gift to change and change again in many forms, like Proteus, creature of the encircling seas, who sometimes seemed a lad, sometimes a lion, sometimes a snake men feared to touch, sometimes a charging boar, or else a sharp-horned bull; often he was a stone, often a tree, or feigning flowing water seemed a river or water's opposite a flame of fire.¹¹

Philostratus in *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* relates:

Proteus, who changes his form so much in Homer, in the guise of an Aigyption Daimon ... I need hardly explain to readers of the poets the quality of Proteus and his reputation as regards wisdom; how versatile he was, and for ever changing his form, and defying capture, and how he had the reputation of knowing both past and future.¹²

Proteus was known as the ancient sea god who could change his shape at will, easily assuming different shapes and forms and exhibiting great variety and diversity. From Proteus comes the adjective "protean" which has come to mean turning with ease from various tasks, fields, or skills; versatile; mutable; capable of assuming many forms.

In a Google search of the Internet for "protean," the list of hits includes all kinds of software to include DNA programs, network performance evaluation, new media design, and a manufacturer of counting systems for health physics, radiochemistry, and nuclear fuel cycle applications. Further research of the word reveals that it is used in a variety of fields including the natural sciences, social sciences, psychiatry, and psychology to name a few. In his chapter on "The Changing Psychological Landscape," Robert Jay Lifton in his book *The Protean Self* makes the following claim:

(P)roteanism involves a quest for authenticity and meaning, a form-seeking assertion of self. The recognition of complexity and ambiguity may well represent a certain maturation in our concept of self. The protean self seeks to be both *fluid and grounded*, however tenuous that combination...Proteanism, then, is a balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other.¹³

In thinking about the word "protean," a search of new uses of words that would accurately describe and communicate the clarified definition of the church as detailed above. "Protean" began to fill a void that had been experienced in trying to communicate and explain this missiologist's concepts about church and to describe an ecclesiological shift that is being observed in the "church" meta-narrative. Since "protean" is used in many contexts, most of them secular and/or non-Christian, a careful definition of the word is needed as it is used in the context of this presentation. Therefore, "protean" in the ecclesiological context is defined as follows:

Protean is descriptive of a church model which tenu-

ously combines a foundational grounding of the tenets of faith to scripture while at the same time being fluid, diverse, and versatile, possessing the ability to “shape-shift” according to the needs of the community and culture.

As a point of clarification, protean is not a synonym for any other model like traditional church, purpose-driven church, cell church, house church, et al. It is looking at the church through a different lens in that each of the models could conceivably be “protean” while at the same time being distinct. It also follows that there are churches within each model that would not be “protean.” To illustrate, not all protean churches are house churches and not all house churches are protean and the same could be said for every other model. Now that the key words are defined, the rest of the article will attempt to flesh out the appellation of “The Protean Church.”

Ecclesiological Shifts in the “Church” Meta-Narrative

In George Barna’s recent book *Revolution*, he attempts to document an undercurrent of a movement of revolutionary proportions that he proclaims is largely still below the radar. In his last chapter, Barna states:

This is a great time to be alive-especially for those who love Jesus Christ. The opportunities to minister are unparalleled: millions of searching hearts and agonizing souls, combined with the abundance of resources Christians have at their disposal, makes this a very special era for the Church. Throw in the rapid and profound cultural changes occurring as well as the struggles local churches are undergoing, and we have the environment in which the birth of a spiritual revolution is inevitable. The confluence of those elements demanded a dramatic response, and the emerging Revolution represents such a historic thrust.¹⁴

In the last forty years, the traditional church has completed the century long shift from a family or community congregation to a “Business/Institutional Model.” Almost every traditional church has adopted, perhaps wisely, some basic business practices that were not common several generations ago. For example, most churches have budgets so they can set salaries for their pastors and staff and to predict how much they project to spend on various programs and services. They have policy manuals, comprehensive insurance coverage, non-profit corporation

status, elect corporate officers, and file corporate tax documents with the state and federal government. This is standard operating procedure for most businesses and has become virtually necessary for “doing business” as a church in the United States, and is becoming true in the global community.

In the 1980’s and 90’s the church began to borrow other business savvy practices. Churches began to commonly develop “Mission Statements” and “Vision Statements” which were concepts from the business world, which transferred quite easily and even used words that were arguably biblical. Church planters were taught to develop these statements prior to launch (a business term), in addition to “Core Values” that wouldn’t be compromised, another good business principle applied to the church. Furthermore, business models of leadership began to influence how congregations thought about structuring their church leadership and this spilled over into issues of polity in the church. One prominent way to evaluate the quality of a church structure has become how well the church modeled and adopted good business practices. Ironically, in most churches, the “business meetings” are sparsely attended and usually are the arena where division in the church is birthed or aired out.

Simultaneous to churches posturing to become good businesses, the established church in the United States has become more institutional. Denominations either were influenced to adopt the business practices of their churches or they taught the churches how to be better as businesses. The resulting consequence is that the Protestant “church” and denominations in America have developed into powerful institutions that some would say vaguely echo the institutional church that they worked to diligently to break away from and change during the Reformation.

This is not an overstatement if one considers the intention of the Reformation was to correct the Catholic Church by appeal to the exclusivity of the Scripture’s authority, and to reject Christian tradition as a source of authority alongside the Bible or in addition to the Bible. Protestants declared that the Roman church was mistaken for adding human traditions to the Word of God. The Protestant perspective was that all things necessary for salvation and concerning faith and life are taught in the Scripture, and that these truths are stated clearly enough for the ordinary believer to find it the Bible and understand them. Consequently, Protestants maintain that the Scripture alone is the authority. Catholic opponents maintain that the Scripture by itself is insufficient as the authority of the people of God, and that tradition and the teaching authority of the church must be added

to the Scripture. In the 16th century as Luther and others studied the Bible with a greater care and depth than people in the church had done in centuries, they began to discover that some traditions actually contradicted the Bible. "Sola scriptura" (scripture alone) is one of five important tenets of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

The ecclesiological shift in the "church" meta-narrative in the 21st century is accompanied by a "neo-sola scriptura" tenet. Protean followers of Jesus place a high value on the authority of scripture and believe that some traditions have been incorporated into the doctrines of the church. For example, while ordination has value and meaning in church life, to have a position that ordination is a requirement to baptize or administer the ordinances is a traditional value that is extra-biblical. Furthermore, land or buildings can be a blessing to a church, but to require that a church have either land or a building as some associations do is equally extra-biblical. The shift in ecclesiology is accompanied by a new commitment to "sola scriptura," where scripture alone, not traditions, give guidelines for ecclesiology.

The relatively "under the radar" shift in the church meta-narrative that is occurring is being validated by how it resonates with a growing segment of followers of Jesus. Knowing how to refer to it is slippery and thus the creative attempt to redefine "protean" with a new ecclesiological application. The definition being used to describe this shift in the church meta-narrative is: Protean is descriptive of a church model which tenuously combines a foundational *grounding* of the tenets of faith to scripture while at the same time being *fluid*, diverse, and versatile, possessing the ability to "shapeshift" according to the needs of the community and culture.

This definition has two very important aspects. First, it describes a church that is grounded in the tenets of faith, one of which is the authority of scripture, which informs all other areas of belief and lifestyle. As the church disciples the community in covenant with each other, it provides a deep foundation, upon which all activities of the Body of Christ are grounded. Second, it describes a church that is fluid, meaning that it can quickly adapt and respond, that is "shapeshift," to meet the immediate needs of the community of faith and the larger community.¹⁵ To be clear, being "fluid" does not mean that the church compromises her foundational grounding. It is a deep commitment to the tenets of faith while being methodologically and practically versatile.

The Protean Church is "Grounded"

While being "grounded" could be a punishment for a pilot or a teenager, a pulverized coffee bean, or an electrical connection, in this context it is meant to be a foundational stabilizing strength for the church in belief and practice. This foundational stabilizing strength is a commitment to and growing understanding of the historical tenets of faith,¹⁶ understanding that one of the tenets is the authority of Scripture, which informs and guides the parameters of the others. It is often that new models of church are subjected to criticism, predominantly from those within the existing established church. The Great Awakening during the colonial years of the United States received energetic resistance from *within* the Church.

George Whitefield, John Wesley, and other standard-bearers of the revival withstood harsh attacks from established churches who complained bitterly that the itinerants used unorthodox means of reaching people, disrupted the status and flow of existing ministries, threatened the stability of society, and undermined the security and authority of pastors and denominational executives. Today, however, we praise God that Whitefield and his colleagues persisted in thinking outside the box and enduring the unwarranted abuse from their spiritual kinfolk.¹⁷

In the last couple of decades, whenever a new model or methodology emerges in the practice of the church, it has inevitably been criticized usually with the argument that the new methodology is not doctrinally sound or that it is dangerous into what it might become if the old parameters of methodology are not present. This author values God's Church too much to propose a perspective that would dilute the power or foundational truths of the teaching of Scripture. However, the protean church could potentially digress into something deemed to be heretical, but seems no more likely to do so than any other model. In regards to the possible presence of heresy in emerging church practices, Barna points out:

Warnings about heresy creeping into the minds and the hearts of the Christian body are always worthy of consideration. However, it is just as easy to identify heretical teachings proposed from America's pulpits as it is to identify heretical Revolutionaries. After all, our research shows that only 51 percent of the pastors of Protestant churches have a biblical worldview! The embarrassing

belief profile of Christians across the nation can be largely attributed to the mediocre teaching they have received in sermons, Sunday school classes, and small groups.¹⁸

To be clear, by definition any model of church can be protean. Mega-churches might be protean, and cell churches might not be protean. By definition, a “protean church” is one where the Body of Christ has a foundational grounding in the tenets of faith, as taught by the Scripture. The practices of the Protean Church then must be consistent with what is necessary to make this true not only now, but in the future.

One of the purposes of the church is to disciple the people who are followers of Jesus about what that means to live in faith and practice. In the Protean Church discipleship is an important component to being grounded. No particular method or model is prescribed but it is observed that the churches that would be identified as “protean” are the ones where mentoring is present in some form. In a healthy church, older men train the younger men and older women train the younger women (Titus 2:2-4). In healthy churches parents train their children to love God and follow His ways (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4). Church leaders take responsibility to train emerging leaders as Barnabas did for Paul (Acts 11:25-26). Mentoring may be defined in several ways, however no substitute can be made for the commitment of time that is a necessary investment by both parties. The most effective mentoring does not occur by the protégé only listening to sermons or reading books. Personal relationship between people and dialogue and facing the journeys of life together with a focus on the Scripture brings out the godliness of who we are in Christ transformed, and results in a foundational “grounding” to tenets of faith, so that no matter how “fluid” the methodology becomes, the Protean Church remains faithful and vigorously growing in their faith.

The Protean Church is “Fluid”

In 1999, Leonard Sweet wrote a book entitled *AquaChurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today’s Fluid Culture*.¹⁹ In this book however, the metaphor used is that the culture is a fluid body of water and that the church is a boat, which is piloted by people who were guided by God. This is a drastically different metaphor than is being used to explain the Protean Church. In the Protean metaphor, the church is fluid, which Webster’s defines as “likely or tending to change or move.”²⁰ The metaphor does not necessarily imply the church is

liquid although it does bring to mind the words of Jesus when He said to the Samaritan woman “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give to him shall never thirst; but the water that I give him shall become in him *a well of water springing up to eternal life*.”²¹ “Fluid” in this context means versatile, on the move, able to change, shapeshift, and adapt quickly to the needs of the church and the culture. To be clear, it is not the doctrine or the tenets of faith which are fluid, but the structure and methodology of the lifestyle of being the church in the community and the world. There are at least two distinct ways the Protean Church is fluid: being on the move or “missional” and shapeshifting, that is, taking different forms as needed to be responsive and obedient to God’s leading and direction.

It is observed that many people define church by the gathering. In different contexts where people are defining church I will hear people use the passage from Matthew 18:20 where Jesus says, “For where two or three have gathered in My name, there I am in their midst.”²² Believing themselves to be broadminded, they will feel as if they have given the biblical least common denominator for being a church. This author disagrees, as would many who are in the established church, however for very different reasons. Established church criticisms would argue that the verse alone is lacking essential elements to provide needed structure and authority to be a church. It is pointed out however that the verse is incomplete as well but not because it lacks structural components, but because it lacks the missional components. Being the church is not all about the gathering. Many would point out that Hebrews 10:25 says, “And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back is drawing near.”²³ This verse truly states the followers of Jesus should meet together regularly, but it doesn’t prescribe that it has to be a formalized meeting in a certain building on a certain day. The protean church sees this verse giving great freedom to be fluid as she decides the form, time, and place of her gatherings.

However, it goes much deeper than that. The protean church understands from its foundational grounding that we are not just a “church” when we gather together; we are the church 24/7 all week long. An established church might gather together for several hours week, as would a protean church. A protean church realizes however that they are also the church on mission when they leave the gathering. Actually, if you take all the commands of Jesus in the Bible, you have to leave the gathering of believers and go into the community to obey most of them.

Because of this truth, by sheer time and energy expended, the church is more the church when it is scattered all week long in its daily activities than it is when it is gathered for a few hours. For example, in a healthy church, we worship God when we meet together, but we are supposed to worship God all the time. If we worship Him all week, we are the church more scattered than when gathered. This is the on the move, missional aspect of being fluid that helps define the Protean Church.

To be clear, meeting together is part of being a church, yet the Protean Church can be fluid in their meeting times and perhaps their places and fluidly missional the rest of the week. This is a challenge and a hope. It is a challenge as a follower of Jesus to be missional, and a hope about the deep commitment of the emerging generations of followers of Jesus.

The second distinct way that the Protean Church is fluid is in its ability to be very versatile and even shapeshift as it adapts to the needs of the community of believers and the community at large. One of the ways this occurs is that as autonomous churches, they are adopting more efficient models of decision making than the more traditional committee and business meeting model. In a true expression of the tenets of soul competency and priesthood of believers, Protean Churches can make decisions quickly, mobilize quickly, and change directions on a dime.

Additionally, while the metaphor of the chameleon is often pejorative, there is much that can be positively stated about the ability to show versatility to quickly adapt to take advantage of God-given opportunities. This shapeshifting is not disingenuous. To the contrary, it shows the passion and creativity of the church as it searches for meaningful ways to be seen as contributing to the communities in which they live and work. It also allows them to very genuinely appear to be a traditional church if the occasion calls for them to ordain and commission a man to be a chaplain in the armed forces. The Protean Church can meet legal parameters for governmental regulations or respond to the requirements of the credentialing of the associations and conventions. This nature of the Protean Church adds credibility to a lost world, as they are impressed with the passion and efficiency of the church. This fluidity is a distinctive quality that the term "protean" attempts to identify.

The Protean Church: Conclusion

The world is changing at a rapid pace. Globalization is occurring at an exponential rate. There is a world economy. Technology is advancing into many new frontiers. There is a cultural

confluence in the United States. "America has become the country with the most ethnolinguistic people groups residing within it."²⁴ There is additionally an emerging culture of Christians all over the world, many of which we see in our classrooms. In the midst of all these changes, it is no surprise that the church is changing as well. Barna observes:

There can be no turning back at this point, no return to the old ways and the comfortable forms. Although we cannot predict what the Church will look like twenty years hence, we can be confident that it will be more different than similar to the Church at the start of the twenty-first century.²⁵

If this is true it is more than a slightly daunting reality, but it is also a great hope for the future. Christendom can find common ground in a shared heart to be the body of Christ. The desire is that the concept of the Protean Church is seen less as a criticism of what is and more as a challenge and a hope for the future for healthy and vibrant body of Christ in the confessional community, where all models of churches are valued as they are grounded in the tenets of faith and contribute to the Kingdom of God.

Appendix 1	IMB's Ecclesiological State (From Clyde Meador, Exec. VP, IMB) May 10, 2005
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Church Definition and Guidelines

Definition

The definition of a local church is given in the 2000 edition of the Baptist Faith and Message:

"A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

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Guidelines

We believe that every local church is autonomous under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His inerrant word. This is as true overseas as it is in the United States. Some churches to which we relate overseas may make decisions in doctrine and practice, which we would not choose. Nevertheless, we are accountable to God and to Southern Baptists for the foundation that we lay when we plant churches, for the teaching that we give when we train church leaders, and for the criteria that we use when we count churches. In our church planting and teaching ministries, we will seek to lay a foundation of beliefs and practices that are consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, although local churches overseas may express those beliefs and practices in different ways according to the needs of their cultural settings. Flowing from the definition of a church given above and from the Scriptures from which this definition is derived, we will observe the following guidelines in church planting, leadership training and statistical reporting.

1. A church is intentional about being a church. Members think of themselves as a church. They are committed to one another and to God (associated by covenant) in pursuing all that Scripture requires of a church.
2. A church has an identifiable membership of baptized believers in Jesus Christ.
3. A church practices the baptism of believers only by immersing them in water.
4. A church observes the Lord's Supper on a regular basis.
5. Under the authority of the local church and its leadership, members may be assigned to carry out the ordinances.
6. A church submits to the inerrant word of God as the ultimate authority for all that it believes and does.
7. A church meets regularly for worship, prayer, the study of God's word, and fellowship. Members of the church minister to one another's needs, hold each other accountable, and exercise church discipline as needed. Members encourage one another and build each other up in holiness, maturity in Christ, and love.
8. A church embraces its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, both locally and globally, from the beginning of its existence as a church.
9. A church is autonomous and self-governing under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word.
10. A church has identifiable leaders, who are scrutinized and set apart according to the qualifications set forth in

Scripture. A church recognizes two Biblical offices of church leadership: pastors/elders/overseers and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

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NOTES

1. Clyde Meador. "Church Definition and Guidelines" (an unpublished working document of the International Mission Board, originally cited on a website that has since been removed), Richmond, Virginia, May 10, 2005. (This document can be seen in its entirety in Appendix 1 of this article.)

2. Linda Kulman, "Young and Hungry," U.S. News & World Report (May 9, 2005): 70

3. Ibid.

4. Merriam-Webster Online. "Protean"; available from <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/Protean>; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.

5. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "protean."

6. *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus, 3d ed.*, s.v. "protean."

7. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.365

8. This same island much later became the site of the lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World; available at <http://ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/pharos.html>; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.

9. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.365

10. Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 1.14

11. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.731

12. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. 1.4

13. Robert J. Lifton, *The Protean Self*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9. (Emphasis mine)

14. George Barna, *Revolution*. (Chicago: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 123-124.

15. My missiologist friend, Linda Bergquist, in our dialogue to attempt to grasp the meaning of this shift introduced me to the metaphor of the "Egg Yolk Jelly (*Phacellophora camtschatica*)" The Egg Yolk Jelly

is a large species of jellyfish that is identifiable by its yolk yellow center surrounded by hundreds of tentacles clustered around the margin. It resembles a large bird egg cracked open and poured into the water. It moves through the water with gentle pulsing, fluidly responding to its changing environment. It has a stable center with a fluid periphery.

Monterrey Bay Aquarium: Online Field Guide, "Egg Yolk Jelly"; available from <http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living%5Fspecies/print.asp?inhab=444>; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.

16. For the purposes of this presentation, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is seen more as a particular example rather than a general example. For example, there is a section in the BFM 2000 on "Education" that would not be seen by many as foundational to salvation faith, and not spoken of directly in scripture.

17. Barna, *Revolution*, 111.

18. Barna, *Revolution*, 117.

19. Leonard I. Sweet, *AquaChurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture*. (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing), 1999.

20. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "fluid."

21. John 4:14, NASB

22. Matthew 18:20, NASB.

23. Hebrews 10:25, NLT.

24. Jim Slack, "Understanding the Urgency," presentation as part of the Summer State Leadership Meeting of the North American Mission Board, Atlanta, GA, 31 July 2007.

25. Barna, *Revolution*, 124.