THE PROPHETIC TASK
RECONNECTING THE 4 ORIGINAL SCHISMS

by Ralph A. Kee
Other Little Books by Ralph Kee

Awakening Your Inner Church Planter: then putting it to work!
Diakonia: The Church at Work
Let's Do It! Multiplying Churches in Boston Now
Toward a More Adequate Mission-speak: a vocabulary to examine, communicate and do the apostolic task with clarity, forcefulness and greater fruitfulness

Each Little Book speaks to some aspect of the apostolic task and each is between 20 to 45 pages in length. James Joyce wrote, “The demand that I make of my reader is that he should devote his whole life to reading my works.” (A little humor never hurt anyone.)

Print Editions are available from Ralph Kee and from the Emmanuel Gospel Center, 2 San Juan St., Boston. Cost-free for inquiring minds.

Online Editions are available at www.egc.org. Click on “What we do,” and then “church planting.” Scroll to the end of the page.
THE PROPHETIC TASK
RECONNECTING THE 4 ORIGINAL SCHISMS

by Ralph A. Kee

Copyright © 2012 Ralph A. Kee

for permission to copy,
or for additional copies, contact:

Rev. Ralph A. Kee
21 Wellington Street
Boston, MA 02118-3005

Tapioca Press

ralphkee@gmail.com
www.egc.org
www.missionsdoor.org
The big picture tasks and the prophetic task

C
hristendom is no longer a reality in Boston. It never was, of course. But we tended to think of America as a Christian country, and perhaps, at one time, most Americans, included most people in Boston, were, in some fashion, connected to churches. We are now increasingly acknowledging a change, that nowadays great numbers of Bostonians are not connected to any church in any meaningful way. Because of this, a growing number of church folk know we absolutely must get back to Book-of-Acts practices if God’s will is to be more fully done in Greater Boston. We are coming to realize there are basic Book-of-Acts tasks, in addition to the pastoral task, that need desperately to be re-engaged right now in Boston.

If there ever was a day when the majority of Bostonians were connected to a church, those days are behind us. Back in days of Christendom, the pastoral task was the primary ministerial task needed. When most everybody is in a flock, then the shepherd’s task is the task. The office of shepherd (pastor is a synonym for shepherd) is the office that needs to be filled. However, when the majority of Bostonians are not in flocks, then the other primary tasks listed in Ephesians 4:11-12 and engaged in the Book of Acts need to be undertaken by the Church in Boston—need to be rediscovered, reinstituted and aggressively engaged.

It came as quite a surprise to me, as I was contemplating prophetic ministry in the present day Church, to discover that
the word *prophet* or *prophetess* occurs 168 times and the word *pastor* as such appears only *once* in the entire New Testament in the King James Version. The word *apostle* appears 78 times in the KJV New Testament and the word *evangelist* three times. ² Apparently apostles, prophets and evangelists were important people in New Testament times, in the Book-of-Acts time. Boston will never be won to Christ until churches rediscover the need for apostles and prophets and evangelists. Boston will never be won to Christ by seminaries training only pastors and people with the pastoral calling. The other five tasks (apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pedagogical and diaconal) need adequate theological underpinnings, too.

Ephesians 4:11-12 lists the five key gifts needed to be aggressively engaged in the Great Commission task if the Great Commission task is to be done in a non-Christendom city.

“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…” Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV)

A sixth gift was added shortly after the Church was birthed, the diaconal gift. It was added because a diaconal task emerged that had to be carried out by people adequately gifted to do that task. Physical needs arose in the early days of the emerging church, so deacons were appointed and commissioned to meet those physical needs within the flock. (See my Little Book, *Diakona: The Church at Work*.)

As I say, the last three gifts/tasks named in Ephesians 4:11-12, the pastoral, pedagogical and diaconal, are inwardly focused gifts, focused on the gathered flock. They are primary gifts needed in the days of Christendom. Nurturing the flock, educating the flock in all aspects of Christianity, making sure the physical needs of the flock are being met—those are tasks related to an existing community.

The first three gifts/tasks listed though in Ephesians 4:11-12 are outwardly focused gifts/tasks. They are not tasks to be
done primarily *within* the flock, they are tasks to be done *outside* the flock. The apostolic gift/task, the prophetic gift/task, the evangelistic gift/task don’t focus so much on what already is, but focus on what yet needs to be done if not-yet-believers\(^3\) are to come into the flock. These outwardly focused tasks call for aggressive action. We could call these three gifts/tasks the “go, show and tell” gifts/tasks. In the Western, academic, head-before-hands world, *tell* usually goes before *show*, but perhaps in the more real world, *show* goes before *tell*. Let me *show* you Jesus, then, having to some degree *seen* Him, perhaps you will be ready to be *told* about Jesus.\(^4\)

**Why is the prophetic gift the second gift listed?**

A year or two ago, I began wondering why the prophetic gift is intentionally listed in Ephesians 4:11-12 as the *second* gift, apparently intentionally chronologically second, and not fifth or sixth, added at the end of the list. Some of us think, I think, that the prophets are those who yell at us because of what we have done wrong, or what we have not done that we should have done. When things get bad enough, prophets finally rise up and try to correct things. They speak to things that have not been done right by God’s people. They seek to convict sinning believers and churches and persuade those people to change their thought patterns and their ways. So I wondered why the prophetic gift wasn’t listed as gift number five or six or whatever. Finally I thought, “Well, if things are done properly at the beginning, when new churches are just being started, then errors won’t have to be corrected later on.” So let’s start the new church’s character the right way, not the wrong way, then have to correct wrongs years later.

The prophetic task needs to go hand-in-hand with the apostolic task and the evangelistic task as far as church planting and church-planting movements are concerned. The prophetic component is just as foundational as the apostolic in the new church’s formation. “You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” Paul tells the Church at Ephe-
The prophetic component was seen as an integral component in the foundation of the very first church started, the Jerusalem church, the forerunner church (Acts 2:16-18). And the ever-needed contributions of the prophets, of male and female prophets, was recognized as an indispensable part of the configuration and further development of the whole Church and its local manifestations, of the Ephesian church, for example, as just mentioned, and of all Kingdom-of-God-authentic churches started. Walter Brueggemann’s book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, speaks of “royal consciousness”—those with prophetic vision see the King and have an imagination for the Kingdom. Stanley Hauerwas speaks of “the link between the truth of what we say we believe and the shape of the lives we live.” Nimi Woriboko writes of the “triad of nomos-ethos-kairos”; the prophetic task centers of this triad. The prophetic task is to make sure that linkage is commonplace and visible in the Christian community and to the non-Christian community, that Jesus is indeed King.

Going a step further and again quoting Hauerwas, “the very existence of the church is prophetic.” The church exists to be in this present today as much as possible a public incarnation of the future kingdom that is yet to come. No wonder Paul lists the prophetic task as a foundational task. It’s about as foundational, as purpose-concretized, as a task can be.

The prophet, then, is the eyes of the Body of Christ—he or she sees more clearly than most people see as to what a fully Kingdom-of-God-on-earth-permeated church will look like, will look like in Boston, in a specific neighborhood of Boston, among a certain Boston population. “We are a colony of heaven,” Moffat translates Philippians 3:20, a colony incarnated on a plot of earth. If the apostles are the feet of the Body, always moving the Body forward into populations where the Body needs to be and be at home, then the prophets see what that Body has to be and look like in that new setting: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
to design designer clothing, chefs to wow us with gourmet food, and editors to refine authors’ writing, we need those with prophetic imagination to help design communities of faith so those communities publicly maximize the Kingdom of God in their particular context.

People, of course, have two eyes, not just one eye. One eye can see, yes, but it lacks the ability to see depth and dimension. Prophetic vision is two-eyed—it is vision with depth and dimension. I’m referring to the depth and dimension of seeing both the intentions of the Garden of Eden and the promise of the coming new heaven and, particularly, new earth. Looking back to the Garden of Eden, we see how God intended things to be. Looking ahead to the eschaton, the end of this present world and the anticipated new earth, we see what God intends the new creation to look like. The backward look at the unsullied world undoubtedly brings some clarity to the imagination of restoration that looking ahead requires. The prophetic task is to bring the two poles, past and future, together in a specific neighborhood of Boston right now—to insofar as possible bring the Garden of Eden story and the new earth blueprint into a single human community of believers in present-day time and space. Bring pre-history and post-history into present-day history—that is the prophetic task.

Genesis 1 and 2 have parallels to Acts 1 and 2. Everything you need to know about the birth and intended ongoing life of humanity is in Genesis 1 and 2. Everything you need to know about the birth and ongoing life of the Church is in Acts 1 and 2. The first command in Eden was to be fruitful and multiply, multiply the human race. The first command in Acts 1 is to be fruitful and multiply, multiply the Christian faith.

The prophet speaks to “human nature, with its deadly as well as noble compunctions and inclinations.” The prophet speaks to both of those realities, the deadly and the noble, exhorting for the best and condemning the worst, he/she castigates the Church’s deadly shortcomings and demands Jesus-fullness in every aspect of the Church’s life and ministry. Someone, I’ve
forgotten who, said “the prophetic always blows away the pathetic.”

So this Little Book is about the prophetic task in Boston in 2012 and the 20-teens. (My little book, *Let’s Do It*, is about the apostolic task.) We need to more clearly identify the prophets in current-day Boston and enlist their participation as we seek to expand Jesus-permeated, Kingdom-of-God-on-earth-permeated church-planting movements.¹⁰

I’m not putting myself forward as one with prophetic insight, but I will mention three primary concerns bordering on the prophetic, perhaps, that I have and have had for some time now.

The prophetic task, by the power of the resurrection and by the power of the Spirit of God, is to reconnect again what was disconnected by sin. When sin entered the world, it entered the whole world, and not just the human heart, but the very heart of the created order. It entered everything that had been created as good. Original sin instantaneously caused schisms, what I’m calling the “original schisms.” I would suggest there were four such original schisms: the separation of 1) humanity from God, 2) of humanity from the created order, 3) of man from woman, and 4) of people from people.

**Original sin and the first schism: humankind separated from God**

God is holy. Humanity, by choice, disobeyed a holy God, acted contrary to God’s clearly stated purpose for him and her, sinned, and thus became separated from the holy God. Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, died on the cross, paying the price of human sin, and thus opened again the way for humankind to reconnect with the holy God. The evangelistic task, listed third in the Ephesians 4 ascension list of tasks, is the primary task and gift that reconnects repenting people with God. The evangelist, often more than most Christians because of his or her special giftedness, is often particularly convincing to people to open their
hearts to Jesus and thus reconnect to God. All the ascension gifts/tasks, though, contribute in some way to that reconnecting of humanity to God. It’s the next three tasks that fall primarily to prophetic responsibility.

**Second schism: humankind separated from the creation itself**

When humankind sinned, the creation itself, which had been totally good, became less than totally good. In some fashion, apparently, human sin entered the creation itself, not just the human heart. The sin affected even nature, affected even animal life, even as it, of course, affected human life; affected the “divine world, the human, the animal, the vegetable, (and) the mineral,” Northrop Frye writes.  

We tend to think of sin as only that which damaged humanity, but it damaged more than just humanity apparently. It damaged all things that had been made. Recently wandering the Museum of Fine Arts here in Boston, I was struck by a piece depicting Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden, leaving the still brightly colored pristine garden devoid of decay, and entering a colorless world of dying trees, thistles, thorns, darkened horizon. Extreme? Of course, intentionally so. But holding truth nonetheless. I hustled to find Judy, elsewhere in the wing, and asked her to ponder it, too.

So the first *negative* affecting, infecting Planet Earth as soon as Adam and Eve sinned was that thistles and thorns invaded the ground (Genesis 3:18). Now crops would be harder to grow. “By the sweat of your brow, now, Adam.” Now there were impediments to easy agriculture (Genesis 3:19). Maybe now, hurricanes started or intensified, and tsunamis? Who knows? The creation had been damaged and the creation needed to be redeemed. That’s why some think Mark’s Gospel uses the word *creation*: “present the gospel to the whole *creation*.”

Don’t just preach the gospel to humankind; preach it to the whole creation. The ground needs to be redeemed, the animals need to be redeemed, humanity needs to be redeemed.
The land needs Sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:4-7), the animals need Sabbath rest (Exodus 20:8-10; 23:12, Deuteronomy 5:14), as do people.

So one of the prophetic tasks in Boston in the 20-teens is indeed to preach the gospel, the whole gospel, to the whole creation. “You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,” the Psalmist says, but the Psalmist also says “trespassers” have despoiled it.  

In other words, the care of creation needs to be built into the mission statement of new churches. It needs to be clearly in the church’s DNA, not as an option for the odd church member who is interested in the subject and has some free time to give to the issue, but into the warp and woof of what the Church preaches and practices. Even some who have been called “soulless scientists” have asked the Church to get engaged in saving the natural world, William Brown writes. Famous biologist and naturalist Edward O. Wilson, described by Brown as one of those “soulless scientists,” is one. Wilson asks the Church’s help in his book, *The Creation.* Brown writes, “Cast as a series of letters addressed to a Southern Baptist pastor, *The Creation* reaches out to the religious community to recapture the wonder of nature and, thereby, build an alliance to help mitigate the rapid destruction of the earth’s biodiversity. I, for one, want to strengthen this emerging alliance. The ‘cohort of wonder’ must form a partnership of stewardship, and none too soon. For creation’s sake – for God’s sake – we need a new Great Awakening, a Green Awakening.”

And it is becoming increasingly clear to many people that something is going wrong as far as Earth ecology is concerned. A 594-page document issued by a panel of Nobel Prize-winning climate scientists in 2012, “blames the scale of recent and future (weather) disasters on a combination of human-directed climate changes, population shifts and poverty.” The report is seen as unique in that it “emphasizes managing risks and how taking precautions can work.” The report in fact uses the word “risk” 4,387 times. Apparently it’s
not too late to head off deteriorating conditions. The Church needs to be part of that risk management. As Gareth Cook says, “Climate change is a moral problem.” The new church should be known for its concern for and care of the physical environment; should advocate, preach, and practice creation care. The prophetic task is to insist on that.

And Wen Stephenson, reviewing Katherine K. Wilkerson’s new book, Between God and Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change, concluded his review with these words: “If there is a generational shift (younger evangelicals stepping up to the climate control effort), then it may be comforting to think that it’s only a matter of time until evangelicals come around in a decisive way. But time – as mounting scientific evidence suggests – is running out.”

**Third schism: human males separated from females**

The third original schism separated the original unity of Adam and Eve, the male from the female. Sin infesting the whole creation immediately infected all human relationships, including the male/female relationship. People were now distanced from people as they hadn’t been before sin entered the picture. And the first people to be distanced from each other were Adam and Eve themselves, the only two people yet alive. Sin infestation quickly showed itself in the reaction of Adam to the very one who had been intentionally created to be his absolute equal, Eve, “flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone.”

Eve was intentionally, as an answer to Adam’s prayer, created for Adam as his absolute equal. Adam had been looking for an equal. He had carefully checked out all the animals. (That’s why he named them, so he could identify them one from another and as distinct from himself.) Was there an equal to be found, perhaps, in the hippopotamus? “Sorry, Ms. Hippopotamus. My apartment is too small for both of us.” Perhaps Ms. Tick? “I’m afraid sooner or later you’d get
under my skin.” Lovely Ms. Alligator said to Adam, “Let me
give you a great big kiss!” “Whoa!” cried Adam, backing away
quickly with protective palms in the air. Adam looked and
looked, carefully checking out all the animals, but for the life
of him, try as he could, he couldn’t find an equal (Genesis
2:20b). He wasn’t just looking for a companion; he already
had a pet dog, a cat that loved to lie on his lap. He wanted an
equal. He finally got so tired looking, he fell asleep. So God,
as a separate and very intentional act of divine creation, made
an equal for Adam. God took Eve out of Adam himself; not
out of the elements of the inorganic universe from which He
had made the animals, but out of the very essence of Adam,
of Adam’s humanity, out of the elements of the human man
himself. (Genesis 2:21-23). The absolute equality of Eve to
Adam was integral to the whole purpose of the Eve-creation.
Adam awoke from his sleep, and, wow, his dreams had come
ture! Upon seeing her he gasped. “Wow! Man, oh, man!”
“Wow-man” he called her, then shortened it to woman. J (An
old joke, but I good one, I think.)

And then human sin entered the picture. And immediately, lo
and behold, that equality was diminished. The newly arrived
sin not only damaged, but it seems nearly destroyed for all
subsequent human history that equality that Adam himself
had been seeking in equal, opposite-gender, human comp-
panionship. “The woman You gave me gave me the fruit and
urged me to eat it” (Genesis 3:12). Adam blamed Eve, and
male prejudice against the female has been the story of male/
female relationships ever since. Female gender reduction. And
the Church, ignoring the New Testament big picture about
male and female equality as per Christian life and ministry,
and often confidently quoting from 1 Corinthians 14, Ephe-
sians 4, and 1 Timothy 2 (all three of which texts can be un-
derstood in various ways) as the final texts as to male/female
ministry relationship, has failed far too often even in present-
day Boston churches and church planting to adequately
challenge this prejudice. New churches in Boston must, from
their very beginnings, be models and voices that celebrate and
practice the pre-fall relationship of male and female, coequals in every way, fulfilling each other and complementing each other as absolute equals as per authority, leadership and ministry.

So new Kingdom-of-God-in-Boston churches must incarnate biblical womanism. Wemanism? (A little touch of humor here, too, maybe?) What in the world is wemanism? There is already the term womanism. What is womanism? What, more specifically, is biblical womanism? Womanism has been coined to suggest something a little bit different perhaps from feminism. Womanism, it seems to me, intentionally stresses male/female mutual respectfulness (which feminism sometimes has seemed not to) even while concentrating on the female aspect. It respects the male and whatever male distinctiveness there may be. Womanism also holds the nuclear, male/female family in high regard. An African American term primarily, it clearly energizes full female equality within the African American family and community, but in a way that doesn’t put down the African American male but holds him up. Within the church it seeks full female equality. Any church planter, African American or not, can learn from Christian womanism.

But as my niece Susan Kee pointed out to me, womanism, as good a term as it is, is still a one-word term that leaves out any male mention (as does the term feminism). So let’s come up with a biblically balanced term. How about wemanism? I human + you human = we human. I man + you woman = we weman. Let’s go with wemanism. The Christian Church seeks Christian wemanism.

**Fourth schism: humans separated from each other**

And then, what came next from this fast-moving sin infestation? Murder! Gender prejudice laying the groundwork for even worse things: brother on brother, Cain on Abel violence. Another ultimate schism: man killing man, people killing each other. Prejudice to the n’th degree. Humanity sepa-
rated from humanity; humanity hating humanity. War is war, even if it’s just one person against another. The blaming of the Other (as Adam blamed Eve), prejudice in general in our fallen world, is often a primary cause, surely a component, in interpersonal violence. And there is no such thing as violence in the world apart from a personal, an interpersonal component. Most everybody, most sinners bristle at the thought of killing people. But sometimes you’ve got to do it, people, Christians, say. So that’s a problem. Thus, in times of war (which is most of the time), many have told soldiers you can love God and man in your heart and at the same time bayonet that man with your hands. I have trouble believing that. I think Jesus has trouble believing that. Adam’s downgrading of Eve undoubtedly began a mentality that at least a little bit led to the subsequent downplaying of Abel by Cain, and subsequently the fatal violence that Cain meted out on Abel. So violence often follows prejudice, and both are not what God has in mind for His Church. Can we start new churches in Boston in the 20-teens that are Jesus-permeated to the point of challenging violence or the preparations being done to do violence in the future? Now that is a challenge! The military-industrial complex moves and rules America, and its income fills church offering plates. Few pastors have tromped down very hard on that one. Can we really hope to attract people to such a new church and, at the same time, elevate these concerns? Won’t most people, both laity and clergy, not want to be engaged in such a controversial church being planted?

Admittedly, there is a lot of ambiguity in these things for all of us. Back in 1968, I was pastoring in a small town in upstate New York. I and the only other pastor in town, the Methodist pastor, were both opposed to the war going on in Vietnam. Neither of us hid our opinions, either in conversations or in sermons. But the town generally was hawkish. Two local men had been killed in Vietnam, and the Methodist pastor and I suggested the town erect a memorial to them. We were against the war, but we felt the two soldiers should be appreciatively remembered as beloved friends and beloved community
members. The Veterans of Foreign Wars was against a memo-
rnal! “If we do it for them we may have to do it for others, too, as the war continues.” Talk about role reversal! But, as I say, these issues are complicated and much defies logic.\textsuperscript{24}

Well, it is probably true that many will not want to identify too closely with this kind of a church. If that is a reality, then it is a reality we simply have to be willing to accept and move ahead anyway. The early church in the Book of Acts faced this same reality. Paul’s letter to the Romans, some Bible scholars say, very intentionally and clearly, though discretely, speaks as to how to do Jesus-living in the imperialistic, militaristic Roman world the Roman Christians lived in.\textsuperscript{25} Jesus-followers in imperial Rome stuck to their prophetic vision and practice in spite of real risks, and through a consistent communal lifestyle and the power of the Holy Spirit, more and more people came to faith anyway (or because of).

To reiterate a bit: original sin led immediately, or almost im-
mediately, to \textit{four dis-connects}: man (humanity) from God; man (humanity) from nature; man (gender) from woman (gender); and man (humanity) from man (humanity). The prophetic task is to envision \textit{reconnection} of that which has been disconnected, and push for reconnection.

So again, the prophets are the eyes of the church, they see what should be, see what could be, see what will be when things are done right. Eyes can see things, but they by them-
selves cannot construct or correct things. Other members of the body, of the Body, exist to do that. The hands, another member of the body, can do what the eyes see should be done. The deacons are the hands of the Church, they do the hands-
on social work of the Church. (Read about the diakonia task/ gift in my Little Book: \textit{Diakonia: The Church at Work}.)
The just-resurrected Jesus re-regularizes things, and that’s our job as his followers

Now here’s another thought. Might not the very first hours of Jesus’ resurrection life show the prophetic task being put to work by Jesus Himself? Might that right-off-the-bat narrative as it emerges in Jesus’ first hours of resurrected life show clear, even extraordinary reconnecting intent and modeling in and of itself? Might the events of the first hours of Jesus’ return days on earth, after his crucifixion and subsequent Easter day resurrection, mirror exactly the first, second, third and fourth reconnect tasks we have been discussing so far in this Little Book? Does the post-resurrection, pre-ascension Jesus demonstrate reconnect intent in His very first hours of resurrected life (reconnecting humanity with God, creation, gender, peace)? Can we say that Jesus’ resurrection has to do more with Jesus’ humanity than with His deity? It’s the human Jesus who died, who resurrected, is it not? Can divinity die? But humanity can, and Jesus died as a human.

In Jesus’ ongoing resurrected humanity (his immediate resurrection acts we will discuss in a moment), is he showing us, reminding us of our own God-given commission as humans, to live as we were originally designed to live: fully connected, no disconnect, with creation, with gender, with everyone?

What are those immediate post-resurrection acts? We’re talking about the just-risen-from-the-dead Jesus 1) appearing to be a gardener in the garden; then 2) being first recognized as the risen Jesus by a woman, not by a man; and then 3) Jesus repeatedly saying to the men “peace” when he does appear to the men. Note, as I say, the order of perception as to the risen Christ’s appearances. He is first perceived to be a gardener. Then he acts as one reordering gender respect and equality because in post-resurrection order he first appears to a woman, in contrast to creation order when he first appeared to a man. Then, when he finally appears to the males in Jerusalem he speaks as one with peace foremost on his mind: “Peace” is his first word to them. Then he says it a second time, “peace.”
When he later appears to Thomas his first word is “peace.” He then sends them out with the word “peace” very much in their minds.\textsuperscript{26} Let’s look further at what to me are three powerful post-resurrection, pre-ascension prophetic ministry vignettes even more closely.

At first sight of him, Mary thought the risen Jesus was no other than an ordinary gardener, someone who tilled the ground.\textsuperscript{27} Now isn’t that interesting. How might we have expected a resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords to dress? In the attire of a king, probably? Perhaps the robe of the clergy? Or, if it had been in Boston in the 21st century, in the business suit and tie of a CEO? But as a common gardener? The risen Christ looking like a common laborer who pulls up weeds? The attire of a minimum-wage someone who is to get rid of the detritus that started to multiply after humanity sinned?

Well, is Jesus in fact in his resurrected humanity greatly interested in caring for the earth, of keeping down those thorns and thistles, of reconnecting a sin-impacted earth to a Garden of Eden earth if you will; at least trying to care for the earth, not further damaging it (as we are doing in the 21st century)? Was it pure coincidence that the risen Christ was first thought to be a gardener? Or, in a sense, was the risen Jesus subtly implying he does indeed care greatly about the creation, thus suggesting care of creation is a proper care and practice of his ongoing Body on earth, the Church? A stretch maybe, but maybe not such a stretch after all. The God of Genesis walked in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8); the just-resurrected Jesus stood in the Garden of Gethsemane, revealing Himself to be the very same God as the Genesis God. Creation love and creation care is at the heart of godliness. Mary first thought he was a gardener, and it’s noteworthy to remember that creation care was originally given to and is as much a female responsibility as it is a male responsibly. In Genesis 1:26, God explicitly states that both-gender responsibility.\textsuperscript{28}

And then, of course, when this “gardener,” this real risen Jesus, speaks Mary’s name, very intentionally calls her by her
name, calls her “Mary,” then she, now spiritually awakened, knows it is, in fact, Jesus. Isn’t this story of re-creation reminiscent of the story of the original creation told in Genesis 1 and 2? In the creation story, male comes first. In the re-creation story, the resurrection story, it is the other way around: female comes first. Man, Adam, male, came first. Adam, awakening and seeing Eve for the first time, called her woman because she was taken out of his own flesh. In the resurrection story, the re-creation story, it is the other way around. Woman is the first gender awakened to the truth that Jesus Christ was indeed risen from the dead. She, Mary, is the first one to see resurrection reality. As in the Garden in Genesis, it was first the male, then the female; in the Garden near Gethsemane it is first the female, then the male. Man, the male, always coming first, always coming first in so many ways in much of human history—now in this stellar event in cosmic history, Jesus reverses things (is re-regularizes things an on-target term?). The risen Jesus at the turning point of all human history, at the very point humanity (in Mary) first recognizes the resurrected Christ, puts woman first for a change. And Mary is expressly instructed in no uncertain terms to hurry and tell the men He has risen; tell the men, the males, about the most important thing that has ever happened in human history. Talk about authoritative preaching to men, commanded by God! Talk about gender issue correction! Talk about rectifying gender inequality! Talk about full ministry call and command to Christian females!

So Mary is a latter-day Eve, only this time, the female, the Eve, is bringing not bad news to the male (the “news” she was told by the serpent that eating the forbidden fruit would actually make humanity wiser), but good news: Jesus is risen from the dead! Good news is the same word as the word gospel. The prophetic task includes insisting on, implementing, and ever demonstrating this gender correction and practicing it in the life of the Church.
Moving on now to the Cain/Abel disconnect. What is the first word the risen Jesus says when he does see the males? It is the word “peace.” “Peace.” Men, don’t kill other men anymore. “Peace” is the opposite of killing, of warfare. The fourth re-connection is to connect humanity with humanity, undoing and reversing what Cain did to Abel. Probably the Church can’t accomplish that to the degree it wishes it could. But we can be islands of peace in a war-racked world. And the people of the Church can refuse to collaborate with the warmongering that is so endemic, the wars here and there that just keep on keeping on. Rachel Maddow observes, “We’ve become a nation ‘at peace with being at war,’ in the words of the New York Times media critic David Carr.” We’ve “normalized war,” she writes.

**A caution about the word justice**

Let’s think for a moment about the word *justice*. We have to be very careful when we link in our minds or equate prophetic ministry with justice ministry. We shouldn’t assume they are one and the same thing. We can fool ourselves when we think we know what justice is, that we are doing justice. “… and justice for all.” For Christians, is that pledge to be counterbalanced with “mercy for all”? If justice and mercy sit on a see-saw, which is heavier? It’s hard for long-lifetime Americans like me, who well remember WWII, to think that the Japanese public actually sincerely thought they were seeking justice for their nation when they bombed Pearl Harbor, but apparently they did. After all, most of them well knew Asia had been taken advantage of by the West for centuries. And the average German public (and much of the German Church) thought they were simply seeking justice for Germany when they forcibly re-annexed Austria in 1938 and militarily conquered Czechoslovakia in 1939, and continued to move on from there. Nearly all average Americans thought we were doing a completely just thing when we firebombed Dresden and A-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki; when U.S. sanctions between 1990 and 1995 apparently led to the
deaths of half a million children in Iraq. We all know these stories go on and on beyond number.

“Do justly and love mercy.” How can you do both at the same time? Is there to be a balance? What does a proper balance mean? These are difficult questions. The tendency is to come down hard in favor of justice when we are convinced that what we are doing (or prefer to do) is just, and worry about the mercy question later. In a given situation, what is perceived as justice is often only in the eye of the beholder. The Christian Church in Boston needs to beware of this tendency. And it seems like the Boston Church needs to start getting more alarmed about present-day tendencies than we are so far. Today’s prophetic task demands heightened awareness.

Far too often, national churches have vastly compromised their stated morality, undercutting the gospel and the testimony of Jesus by being sucksed into very immoral national or ethnic choices and actions.

In 2011 for a few months, the Occupy Movement caught the imaginations of some evangelicals. The prophetic task is, perhaps always, an occupy task. “Occupy till I come,” Jesus taught us. We’re to pitch our tents, metaphorically speaking if not always literally speaking, and keep on keeping on. We glue ourselves to the edges of the Church, give voice to all who over time take up the full Kingdom-of-God-in-Boston cause, leave room for a bit of ambiguity since it’s always feeling our way along in the real world, and expect desired outcomes eventually. The prophetic task as found in the New Testament is not a majority task; it is given to those few God has specifically raised up. It calls for a bit of tough-mindedness. Jesus was neither passive nor violent. There is a third way: hanging tough for rightness. The prophetic task is to show the Gospel, not just tell the Gospel. Jesus often showed before He told.
The prophetic task a costly task

And the prophetic task, when done, can be a costly task. Prophets sometimes suffer, not just in the hands of the world but even in the hands of the Church. But Jesus’ interaction with Thomas can tell us something. Thomas, before he saw the risen Christ, said, “until I see the wounds in His body I will not believe.” (John 20:25-28) And perhaps 21st century Boston skeptics think, “until I see the wounds in the Body of Christ in Boston, wounds they bear for truly standing up for the right, I will not believe.” And that’s where the evangelistic task kicks in. When skeptics see wounded Christians, wounded simply because they stood for prophetic truth and paid a price for doing that truth, some, like Thomas, will believe. It’s the Body wounded-yet-faithful in today’s Boston that will bring many to deep faith. Eventually, prophetic effort, at least in part, will carry the day. “The way things are is not the way things have to be,” theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas came to believe. Let’s more and more put prophetic DNA into newly forming Boston churches, and more and more direct the Boston Church to fuller Kingdom presence. Some come to Jesus because they appreciate what the prophetic is accomplishing in the world which is their world. The prophetic task has a connection with the evangelistic task, and is the convincing apologetic, I think, in our day.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.

Kings, presidents, the military can’t do it; can’t put Humpty back up in his unbroken, pre-great fall state. To a degree, Jesus communities can, and do, do it. We’re fragile human beings; our shells are easily broken, and we have fallen. As the Church puts broken people, broken communities, back together again, at least to a truly discernible degree, unbelievers will take note of that and ask themselves, “is this gospel, this Jesus, something, someone, I should perhaps believe in after all?”
The apologetics of the 1950s, explaining the intellectual arguments, say, for the virgin birth, may have been effective apologetics then, but the effective apologetics for 21st century Boston is the apologetic of showing the remarkable flesh and blood reconnects the Jesus-communities of Boston are enabling in Boston. So saying it one more time: when honest Boston skeptics of Christianity start seeing much-needed reconnects happening more and more in Boston, many will step forward and join the Jesus-camp themselves, joining with their whole hearts.41

The pedagogical task and the prophetic task

How does the pedagogical task (the fifth task in the Ephesians 4:11-12 list), connect with the prophetic task? If the prophets are the eyes of the Body of Christ, perhaps the pedagogues, the academics, the teachers if you will, are, in a special way, the brains of the Body. The brain (I guess) takes what the eyes see to do, and figures out how to do it. The prophetic sees how things really are, should be, could be and can or will be. The pedagogue, the academic, adds knowledge, brain power, as to how to do it. The pedagogic follows the prophetic. (Pedagogues often should ponder that, and ask themselves, “Am I following the prophetic as to my teaching?”) And it is essential in our day in Boston that this connection be more thoroughly thought through if convincing, prophetic work is to be accomplished, if prophetic effort, among other things, is to buttress the evangelistic task. The prophetic task needs the assistance of the pedagogical task, and the apostolic task needs both.

The Christian pedagogic is way too ivory-tower in Boston; it needs to get out of the university post-doc classroom and onto the streets where prophetic reconnects shout to be done. Who are the clearly, unabashedly Christian experts in Boston relative to creation care? Relative to the sometimes hard but honest questions as to gender issues and the Bible? As to the questions of war and peace, of “just” war and pacifism? These pedagogues need to be found and sit around the table with
those with the prophetic passion, figuring things out together. Then those with the evangelistic calling need to enter the discourse. The pedagogues can, more than others, perhaps, help the Church to go about actually doing what those with the prophetic gift envision, insist, needs to be done. And the evangelists need to include in their public preaching the big vision of the whole gospel to which the hearers are to be convincingly drawn.

And what about the pedagogues of theology? The nature, purpose and *nomos* of God, interfacing with a given human environment, then both interfacing again with the enlightened reason and divinely empowered efforts of God’s people as agents to embed the reality of God into that human environment—that point of interface is called *theology*. “Mission is the mother of theology,” Martin Kahler says.43 Missiologically shaped theology, as it matures, further augments missiological service. Prophecy, embedding the reality of God into a particular human environment, is a necessary contribution to a full theology, and a full theology is the particular purview of the pedagogue or teacher. Other than mentioning these things, however, the pedagogical task is beyond the range of this particular Little Book.

**Summing up a tough but critically important task in today’s Boston**

To sum up then, in my mind, the *prophetic* task explored by this Little Book connects to the Boston-based *apostolic* task, connects to the *Great Commission* task, connects to the task of *multiplying church planting movements* in and out from Greater Boston. It is that ultimate task that underlies each of my five Little Books.

Xtreme Missions: pushing the Body to its limits. It’s for the hardy.44 The prophetic task is to push hard as to the moral nature of local churches. We can’t be Jesus-permeated, Kingdom-of-God-on-earth-permeated communities of faith otherwise.
Endnotes

1. Apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, pedagogical, diaconal.
2. Surprising because the word used in my church circles generally is pastor, though the word elder as far as church leadership responsibility is concerned, appears many times in Acts and the Epistles.
3. I like a term the organization E3 uses: pre-believers.
4. What I’ve written above I have written more fully in other Little Books I’ve written. This Little Book is primarily about the second gift/task listed in Ephesians 4:11-12, the prophetic gift/task.
5. “Your young men shall see visions and your old men dream dreams, my servants and handmaidens… shall prophecy.” Acts 2:18
6. Stated in Marcus J. Borg, The Heart of Christianity, HarperSanFrancisco, p. 146. Gregory Boyd writes “the heart of Jesus’ teaching was ‘the kingdom of God’. He spoke about that topic more frequently than any other, and it pervades all his actions as well. Indeed, the Gospels make it clear that Jesus was the embodiment – the incarnation – of the kingdom of God. When Jesus was present, so was that kingdom (see Matt. 12:28, and especially Matt. 3:2 and 4:17).”
10. Prophetic task – envisioning the church, the content, the shape of the Church; a proleptic prophetic, insisting the church bring the eschaton into the present, a right now reality visible to both believers and (critically important) unbelievers, the repertory for doing so the action of Jesus in the Gospels; awakening and satisfying the prophetic imagination (a phrase of Walter Brueggemann); awakening the inner Eutopian impulse, turning the oneiric Eutopian impulse into the doable Eutopian project (the project being the eschaton made present, the Kingdom of God anatomized, in the local church). “It is given unto YOU to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus said to his close circle of friends (Matt. 13:11). The word “you” in the verse is emphatic. All Jesus-followers to some degree have that knowing of the mysteries, but some, it seems, and perhaps they are the prophets, have it more than others.

13. Mark 16:15 (NIV)


18. I am indebted to Ed Brown, founder of Care of Creation, for creation care terminology.


20. I’m taking liberties using the term womanism instead of feminism. Womanism is used almost exclusively in the African American community as an African American term. However, the African American understanding as expressed in womanism, though certainly compatible with feminism in most ways, has insights and a worldview that I think is even more biblical than the term feminism sometime projects, hence I am borrowing the term for this paper. I, in fact, asked several African American women pastors if in their opinion it was alright for me as a Caucasian to use the term and they told me that would be okay. In her book, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, Delores Williams defines womanism in the following way: “Womanist theology is a prophetic voice concerned about the well-being of the entire African American community, male and female, adults and children. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm, and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women’s struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women’s and the family’s freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste.” *Wikipedia*, Womanism, accessed March 28, 2012.

21. Now there is this thought, which can be seen to buttress some of my arguments, but perhaps not buttress others. I asked Rev. Lorraine Anderson about some of the Hebrew in early Genesis, and she, knowing Hebrew, which I don’t, and having studied some of these things more than me, e-mailed me this: “…*adam* in Hebrew means ‘people or humankind’ in the collective sense. It can also mean ‘ground’ and ‘of
the earth.’ *Adam* in Genesis 1-4:24 is understood by many to mean ‘the humans/people,’ hence the first two humans were ‘of the earth.’ Adam as a name is first used either in Gen. 4:1 or Gen. 4:24, depending how you read the Hebrew. I have generally understood *adam* as ‘earth-creature, or earthling,’ including the man and/or the woman – and only in Genesis 5 as the man’s (male’s) name. Genesis 5 is the first place where Adam’s lineage is outlined – so it makes sense that *adam* here is actually a name, not ‘the human.’” Rev. Lorraine Anderson in a personal e-mail to me, May 14, 2012.

22. Oliver Thomas has a book entitled *Ten Things Your Minister Wants to Tell You (But Can’t Because He Needs the Job)*. Henri Nouwen writes “Persons…who proclaim a new world and set the old world reeling become the occasion for a stifling oppression at the hands of those very ones who consider themselves the protectors of order and the upholders of peace and calm. For those who want to maintain calm and order in the present-day world, these visionaries unmask the illusions of the age and are intolerable agitators. The aggression is stirred up against them usually results in their excommunication with all the means the prevailing order has at its disposal.” Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*, Ave Maria Press, 1972, 1995, 2005, p. 112.

23. A subset of the prophetic task may perhaps be to alert Christians to check the business practices of business leaders and companies for whom they work or are thinking of working. Reading *Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power*, for example, may very well and maybe should push a Christian Exxon employee to wonder about his own employment life and even ask himself, “Should I quit working for these people?” Steve Coll, *Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power*, Penguin Press, 2012.

24. As I say, there is some ambiguity in all this, and I certainly have not figured everything out. For example, as my colleague Sam Kim pointed out to me, the first killing reported, or at least implied, in Genesis, before Cain killed Abel, is God providing leather clothing for Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:21 (MSG). Presumably an animal was killed to provide that leather (though, since death had already entered the world, maybe an already dead animal was the source of that leather? In that case, killing was not required.) I guess if we wait to remove every last bit of cranial ambiguity we’ll never have the confidence to do much of anything as far as the human predicament is concerned. A thoughtful exploration of this question of ambiguity: “Ain’t Gonna Study War No More: Biblical Ambiguity and the Abolition of War,” by Albert C. Winn, www.religiononline.org/showchapter.asp?title=3270&C=2722
Elliott writes, “If we intend to approach the letter to the Romans with the sort of theological seriousness that Karl Barth offered in the early twentieth century, we will need, like him, to read Romans alert to ‘the situation in which we ourselves actually are.’ Barth encountered in Romans ‘that which urgently and finally concerns the very marrow of human civilization.’ In Romans, I contend, we see Paul’s critical engagement with the claims of imperial ideology and with the corrosive effects of those claims within the Roman congregations of Christ-believers. The material realities in which we live require that a contemporary Sachkritik, our own effort to penetrate to ‘the inner dialectic of the matter,’ must take with utmost seriousness the ideological forces that shape our own perceptions, determine our own attitudes, elicit our own compliance (or at least our acquiescence) as well. No legitimate reading of Romans in our contemporary situation can remain oblivious to the effects of empire today. Precisely because of the ideological forces that constrain our perception, however, such a Sachkritik will not come easily to many of us.” Elliott, ibid, p. 9.

John 20:11-22

John 20:15

As I say, perhaps this is a bit of a stretch. But I like it anyway. Surely there are many passages in the Bible that speak to creation care more explicitly than does this hint of the risen Jesus as an active gardener vignette. But I was rather struck with the notion when it came to me that all four aspects of the disconnect/reconnect story can be noted at least a little bit in those first post-resurrection hours, so I’m stressing this narrative particularly in this Little Book. As a Little Book, space is limited to just a very short look at each of the four disconnects/reconnects. Whole books can be written about any of them. So anyway, I’ve gotten a kick out of this little piece of the bigger picture.

Credit Jessica Kontchou for suggesting this word, regularizing.

John 20:19

This reconnecting can be seen in subsequent actions of God and Church in many ways. For instance, on the Day of Pentecost, multitudes of divergent languages were immediately heard as a single language, that is, speakers of many language groups all simultaneously heard and understood the word, purposes and intent of God as if hearing it is single language, uniting as one the divergent language groups of men.


Dower writes this (p. 196): “Over a half-century later (after Hiroshima), one of General LeMay’s then-young bombing planners suggested that even the hard-boiled architect of the all-out incendiary bombing of Japan’s cities was sensitive to the moral and legal ambiguity of his actions. In an Academy Award-winning documentary film, Robert McNamara (who served as secretary of defense during the Vietnam War) recalled his superior’s thinking right after the war, and placed it in the context of his own retrospective rumination. “LeMay said, ‘If we’d lost the war, we’d all have been prosecuted as war criminal.’ And I think he’s right. He – and I’d say, I – were behaving as war criminals. LeMay recognized that what he was doing would be thought immoral if his side had lost. But what makes it immoral if you lose and not immoral if you win? The answer to McNamara’s rhetorical questions is not far to seek. Victors control the history books, and rewrite moral codes as well.” (p.196). So Jesus-followers must beware.

34. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and walk humbly with thy God.” Micah 6:8 KJV

35. “While the United States is far from the brink of dictatorship, it is not irrational to be concerned about abuses short of tyranny that are nonetheless grave.” Then Cole gives several examples. “Are We Stuck with the Imperial Presidency”? David Cole, “The New York Review of Books,” June 7, 2012, p.62.

36. Barbara Coloroso, in *Extraordinary Evil: A Short Walk to Genocide*, explores three genocides, the Armenian, the Jewish Holocaust and the Rwandan. She writes “It was with heavy heart and troubled mind that I, a former Franciscan nun, studied the complicity of religion in these genocides.” Of the Rwandan, she writes “the failure of the leadership of the religious communities to speak out the genocide of the Tutsis – and for some in the highest ranks to actively participate in planning, instigating, and perpetrating the mass extermination of the Tutsis – rendered the hierarchies of all the major churches morally and spiritually bankrupt.” I remember when revival going on in Rwanda was viewed by U.S. evangelicals as a very hopeful forward step for the evangelizing of all East Africa. In 1990 or so, it was thought that Rwanda was 90% either Catholic or Protestant (the genocide took place in 100 days in 1994). As far as Germany was concerned, the Church generally supported Hitler, actively or tacitly, right up until 1940 or 1941, and by then it was too late to resist his demonic programs. Coloroso writes “we must become very concerned when religion and nationalism join forces.” Barbara Coloroso, *Extraordinary Evil: A Short Walk to Genocide*, Nation Books 2007, pp. 174, 175, 177.
This is a difficult thing to even write about: When the prophetic is missing in the Church, the results can be horrific. In the American Civil War, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians in the North and South killed each other in unbelievable numbers. They sang the same hymns, and 20,000 were killed or wounded on a single afternoon at Antium. One in three military age Southern males (17-49) were killed. The War was the largest loss of life in American history. Near my camp in rural New Hampshire is the remains of a tiny village completely engulfed by 100-year-old trees. As a boy, I used to walk through the two or three houses still standing among the cellar holes. The furniture and dishes were still there. All the men of the town were killed in the Civil War, so the woman and children simply left, abandoned the hamlet, leaving everything behind them. World War I – the trenches were so close British and German soldiers could occasionally hear each other singing familiar Christian hymns, often the same hymns in two different languages. One Christmas Day, a cease-fire was observed by both sides to celebrate Jesus’ birth. British and German soldiers put together a football game on no-man’s land between the opposing trenches, the German team playing the British team. The next day they went back to killing each other – 7,000 killed per day for four years.


The task of simply being a Christian, not necessarily a prophetically called Christian, can and sometimes is tough. In fact “to be a Christian is to make your life difficult for yourself,” Hauerwas says. Hauerwas, ibid., p. 209.

The third task listed in Ephesians 4:11, intentionally chronologically coming after the first task, the apostolic, then the second task, the prophetic. Seeing the prophetic task being done by the Church will lead some people to themselves come to faith.

Hauerwas goes on to say “That thought began to shape my understanding of what it might mean to be a Christian – namely, Christianity is the ongoing training necessary to see that we are not fated.” Hauerwas, ibid., p. 84.

“So let’s go outside, where Jesus is, where the action is—not trying to be privileged insiders, but taking our share in the abuse of Jesus. This ‘insider world’ is not our home. We have our eyes peeled for the City about to come. Let’s take our place outside with Jesus, no longer pouring out the sacrificial blood of animals but pouring out sacrifi-
cial praises from our lips to God in Jesus’ name.” Hebrews 13:13-14 (MSG)

42. For Peter Berger, *nomos* is a sociological term for “meaningful orders or worldviews of individuals.” Wikipedia accessed Dec. 15, 2010.


44. So-called Xtreme sports include such things as ultra-marathon foot races, ultra-marathon river races, etc. They call for extreme effort on the part of the runner, paddler, Himalayan mountain climber, etc. They also bring many benefits and joys to the participants and even to the onlookers. I am suggesting extreme effort is called for by the Lord Himself as to our carrying out the prophetic task, and the Great Commission as a whole, in Boston in the 21st century.
Since 1971, Rev. Ralph A. Kee has served in Boston, Massachusetts, as a missionary with Missions Door of Denver, Colorado. Though, over the forty years, his level of organizational responsibility within Missions Door has varied, his personal engagement in new church plants in Boston, sometimes as the key church planter, has been constant. Over many of those years, he has had a particularly close working relationship with the Emmanuel Gospel Center of Boston. Ralph serves on the Board of Directors of several Christian organizations and is an adjunct professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Boston campus, the Center for Urban Ministerial Education. He and his wife Judy live in Boston.
From Eden to Bethlehem to Boston. In this Little Book, Ralph Kee makes connections that will lead the church in Boston to a new era, an era where all the gifts of God come alive. Without full realization of each gift from God the church will continue to miss some of those so desperate for salvation. Ralph Kee explores the gift of prophecy and makes it relevant to Boston today.”

Susan Kee, MSW
Child of God
Tulsa OK

Ralph Kee writes with the directedness and passion of an inquisitive mind truly dedicated to doing God’s work. This is no empty sermon – it is a convocation that can only be delivered by an author that both talks the talk and walks the walk. The Prophetic Task is not just a call to the Church, but a call to all believers. This Little Book unveils a surprisingly refreshing interpretation of the Word and poignant, well-researched analysis that will forever change the way you view your relationship with God, one another, and the world.”

Jessica Kontchou
International Colloquium Assistant
Boston College High School
Boston MA

With a unique sense of humor and profound insight, Ralph Kee challenges the church to provide the prophetic gift/task to become a reality in its midst. He reminds us why the health and mission of the church in the twenty-first century is dependent on restoring, once again, a biblically based practice of Ephesians 4:11-12. This is a little gem of a book – biblically sound, theologically cutting-edge, and prophetic in its own right.”

Rev. Eldin Villafane, Ph.D.
Professor of Christian Social Ethics
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (CUME – Boston)