

**New Times Demand New Minds: Spiral Leadership  
and the New Direction for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
by Caleb Rosado

As the Christian Church enters the Third Millennium, the challenges it will face in the 21st century will dwarf those of the 20th. This does not mean that our present challenges and conflicts will go away, but that a new mindset and mode of leadership is needed to address the tidal wave of change that is coming. No longer can church leaders at all levels of administration afford to merely engage in “problem-solving.” That approach is too “piece-meal,” and will bury the leader that gets stuck in that mode of thinking and behavior. The dynamic waves of change call for “change-anticipation” as a new way of thinking about the future, so that what appears to be problems on the horizon, can be turned into challenges that create new opportunities for mission and ministry.

How do leaders move in their thinking from “problem-solving” to “change-anticipation”? By looking below the surface of human thinking to the operative value systems beneath all decision-making and action. Let me illustrate with some present “problems” the church faces as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- The need for inclusive leaders whose vision encompasses the needs of the entire church, not just the interests of select segments of the same.
- The ever increasing non-denominational church movement.
- Liberal versus conservative faculty on our college campuses.
- The debate over the inspiration of the Bible and methods of biblical study.
- The ordination of women.
- Evangelical versus charismatic Christianity.
- The present state of race/ethnic and gender relations in the church.
- The challenge of pastoring and managing multicultural congregations.
- Differing styles of worship.
- The low levels of confidence in church leaders.
- The shallow conversion experience of members that join the church en masse, but who are still dominated by spiritual/cultural forces incompatible with the Gospel, who, under social pressure, give way to genocidal factions such as engulfed Rwanda in 1994 and Yugoslavia in 1999.

Each of these is of such import to one segment or another of the church as to have the potential of splitting denominations. Yet to focus on these issues is to do problem solving, which often only generates more heat than light. When one considers how much energy, emotion, and economics people invest in these concerns, one would think people were caught up in a life-and-death struggle with the ultimate outcome being eternal life or eternal damnation. And, indeed, for some people this is their perceived outcome.

The above issues, however, are merely surface symptoms of deeper level decision systems out of which these surface controversies emerge. Leaders and laity alike need to look below the surface in all of these areas to the underlying “belief systems” operating within the various groups or persons, if they really want to gain a handle on the present and future controversies raging within Christianity. Any hope for the church’s survival in this new millennium from destructive, self-serving forces within can only come—from a human

perspective—by looking below the social whirlpools, the theological differences, the attachments, the meanings, which are merely the surface ripples of deep-level currents of what we call ‘culture.’ These deep cultural currents are the belief systems from which surface conflicts emerge.

How are these deep-level belief systems formed? Why does each see the world differently? What happens when they clash? How can everybody be absolutely ‘right’ in their own eyes? Why is it that one group so quickly assumes that God is on their side, while viewing the other side as demon possessed? How do leaders manage all this complexity and diversity of thinking? The purpose of this article is to explore a new global dynamic process for leadership in the church for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But first, a framework for understanding—Spiral Dynamics, a scaffolding for aligning human systems—which draws from the seminal work of Dr. Clare W. Graves, late professor of psychology at Union College, NY, and whose Theory of Levels of Existence is the basis of this article.

### **Value Systems as Cultural Currents:<sup>1</sup>**

Culture is not a single point of view, with a uniform set of beliefs. Culture is more like an archeological dig, consisting of many layers, strata, or levels, each with a different worldview, bottom-line, perceptions of right and wrong, belief systems, and understanding of the world and mission of the church. A “belief” or “value system” is a view of the world, a mindset, an organizing framework for deep-level decision-making at the bottom-line—the threshold of no negotiation. Each cultural layer or level of human existence represents a value system, or to use a term coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 which will have common usage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—a “meme,” rhymes with theme and gene. Memes are to culture what genes are to biology. Memes are ideas, beliefs, values, units of cultural information, that like contagious viruses, spread from brain-to-brain through thought-contagion by word-of-mouth, media, technology, CNN, cyberspace, human action, and use the human mind as a host. The Gospel, for example, is a meme. Satellite evangelism, such as Billy Graham’s telecasts, are global memetic events infecting the world with the divine virus of the Gospel. Just as genes carry the informational codes for our biological DNA, so also memes supply the informational codes that determine our “cultural DNA.”

Memes operate at two levels—at the surface level, the memes or ideas that impact our thinking, and at the deep levels of worldviews and decision-making, the value systems or <sup>v</sup>MEMES. (The superscript “<sup>v</sup>” stands for “values”, thus, value-memes or <sup>v</sup>MEMES.) Values Systems are complex Coping Systems—decision making motivators and ways of thinking—that emerge in response to Problems of Existence. There are nearly 6 billion people in the world today, and though we all come from some 100,000 genes—ALL of us—we share only a few basic Value Systems. Graves’ research identified a spiral of eight value systems which collectively comprise the Spiral Dynamics of human development and existence (see table). For simplification of understanding, we can color-code them. The significance of the colors is only to identify the systems and has no deep symbolism beyond that.

## **THE SPIRAL-LIKE STRATA OF HUMAN VALUE SYSTEM CULTURAL CODES**

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<sup>v</sup> MEMES	COLOR	THEME	FOCUS	THINKING	VALUE SYSTEMS—BOTTOM LINES	LIFESTYLE
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Level 8	TURQUOISE	WholeView	“We”	Holistic	Harmony and Holism	Lives for Wisdom
Level 7	YELLOW	FlexFlow	“Me”	Systemic	Natural Processes of Order & Change	Lives for Mutuality
Level 6	GREEN	HumanBond	“We”	Humanistic	Equality and Human Social Bond	Lives for Harmony
Level 5	ORANGE	StriveDrive	“Me”	Materialistic	Success and Material Gain	Lives for Gain
Level 4	BLUE	TruthForce	“We”	Absolutistic	Authority, Stability, “One-Right-Way”	Lives for Later
Level 3	RED	PowerGods	“Me”	Egocentric	Power, Glory, Exploitation, No Boundaries	Lives for Now
Level 2	PURPLE	KinSpirits	“We”	Animistic	Myths, Ancestors, Traditions, Our People	Lives for Group
Level 1	BEIGE	SurvivalSense	“Me”	Automatic	Staying Alive, Reactive, Basic Survival	Lives for Survival

These eight <sup>v</sup>MEME codes or value systems serve as cultural magnets around which our “stuff” clusters and our life is aligned. When something is not right at the surface level—the level where we express ourselves in relation to others including God—or when our priorities are distorted or our lives are out of balance, we need to carefully examine what is happening below in these deep psycho-social-spiritual currents. These determine *how* people think and respond to the world around them and not just *what* they say or do. Strain between these systems is the home of all human conflict and understanding of a “Thus, saith the Lord.” These <sup>v</sup>MEMES are the sum total of the invisible, cultural, and spiritual forces that drive our perceptions, influence all of life’s choices, lifestyles, and sense of what is right, wrong, and appropriate.

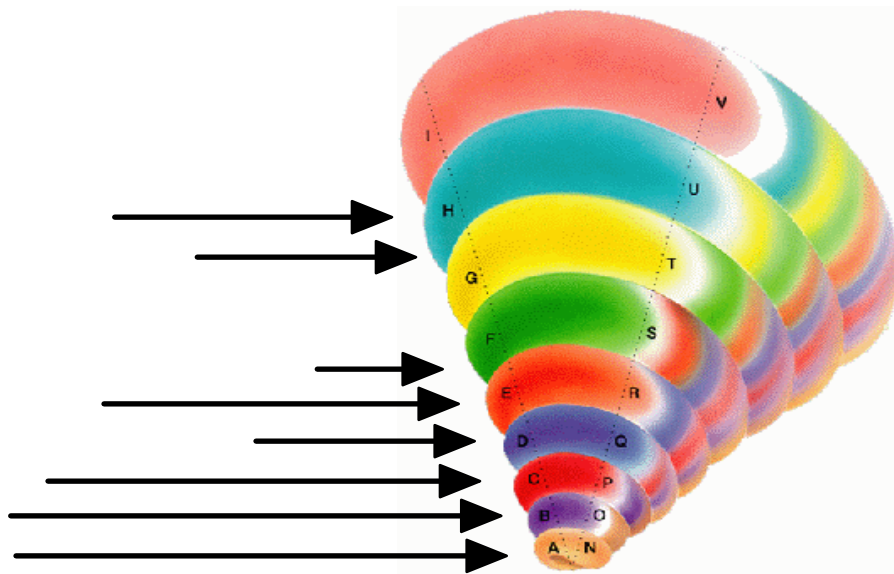
Notice how the Focus alternates between dominance of an individualist me-oriented *express-self* (warm colors) and a collectivist we-oriented *sacrifice-self* (cool colors) life focus. Note also the differences in thinking and what is valued in each system as they flow from survival (Automatic), to safety and security (Animistic), to raw power and instant gratification (Egocentric), to purpose in life (Absolutistic), to strategies for success (Materialistic), to equity and consensus (Humanistic), to alternative forms (Systemic), to harmonic systems (Holistic). The levels are open-ended. There is no final stage of development, as the ideal that God sets before us is “higher than the highest human thought can reach.” The lower levels, however, have no understanding of what the higher levels consider to be of importance. The higher levels often lose contact with the operating principles which make sense to the lower levels.

What moves one from one level to the next is when old explanations and experiences no longer adequately explain one’s reality as a result of changes in one’s Life Conditions (determined by time, place, problems, and circumstances), which now exceed the parameters of one’s present worldview. These levels are “systems-in” people, not permanent “personality” types. And like Russian Matroshka Dolls that also are “systems within,” when one’s cup overflows one then moves to the larger, more encompassing system. Previous value systems, however, do not go away; they just shift down the spiral. And, if changing Life Conditions warrant, we may return to these previous systems. When disaster strikes, for example, we are immediately reduced to Beige. It is this interaction between our “real life” experiences and our mind/brain capacities that causes these value systems to awaken, ebb, and flow. Without our latent mental capacities, the *world outside* has nothing to trigger (the situation of the mentally impaired such as those suffering from Alzheimer’s disease). Without the stimuli from outside, *systems within* may not have cause to be awakened (the case of the Amish and persons living in “closed” communities). Thus, *both* nature and nurture are important.

Persons or groups who exist or existed at any given level are not “better people”; they are simply different. The point is what is “appropriate” given the level of complexity of life experienced at that level of existence. [See sidebar for an explanation of the 8 Value Systems.] Picture, if you will, an ascending colorful spiral that swirls up from Beige Bands and Purple

Tribes, and with each level widens its arcs as it rises to Green Collective Communities, Yellow Integrated Systems and beyond. The ninth level, Coral, resides in the dim unknown. The higher one moves up the spiral, or the strata of our cultural dig, the more complex are the life conditions. Such is the flow of The Spiral of Human Development (see graphic).

## THE SPIRAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



### **Implications for Leadership:**

What does this understanding of human development have to do with the importance of leadership as the Christian Church begins life in the Third Millennium? Much. All of these levels of existence, with their respective value and belief systems, exist in the church at the local, conference, national and international levels. Christian denominations, from local level to world body, are far too diverse for any one single style of leadership or mode of management. Trying to manage this vast diversity by forcing everyone into a one-size-fits-all approach is what generates much of the conflict in the churches. It also gives rise to a lack of confidence in church leadership from the laity.

Traditional leadership theory usually focuses on “styles” of leadership, whether autocratic, persuasive, participative, or delegative. Other theories push a “situational” leadership depending on the situation at hand and the responses of the led. Still other efforts call for a “servant” model of leadership. Servant leadership in most human systems, however, even the church, has become an oxymoron. What passes for “servant” leadership most of the time is essentially a politically correct Green label for a recycling of old behavior that continues to practice closed Blue autocratic, one-size-fits-all mode of leadership under the guise of being inclusive. What the church often does is to rely on a patriarchal concept of God [Purple], which Jesus came to set aside, to set up leaders as lords and princes, who then baptize this lordship by calling it “service.” So much for “servant leadership.”

Yet, all three approaches fail to take into account the deep level belief systems that govern a people’s way of life. People at different levels of existence operate with totally different belief systems, worldviews, and levels of complexity of thinking. When they encounter each other on church related issues, it is as though they are coming from different perceptual planets, where they speak a ‘foreign’ language. The result is that they end up talking past one another.

Add to this the fact that people are only able to understand up-to those systems which have become operational in their life. Anything at a level higher than their own, they will reinterpret so that it comes out the way their system of thinking understands it. Thus, communication between levels, when the issues are non-negotiable, is often difficult. “Higher” does not necessarily mean “superior,” but “appropriate” to the milieu or Life Conditions of the person or group.

### **Conservatism, Pluralism and Leadership:**

The concept of “stages” or “levels” of development does not always rest easy with people. This is because as Clare Graves explains, people do not see their striving in life “as merely a stage they are going through, but as the ultimate, the permanent goal of all life.” Once people feel they have attained this “ultimate,” this “permanent goal” or understanding “of all life,” including God, the Word, and doctrinal beliefs, and their Life Conditions are relatively stable, they tend to believe they have “arrived” at “the truth,” and become satisfied and complacent with the extent of their knowledge. Result? They become conservative and cease to grow. Conservatism in the church is *a sign of spiritual stagnation and decline*, and develops *when people stop investigating Scripture* due to their contentment with what they already have received. Here is how the process works. As real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. People rest satisfied with the light already received from God’s Word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussion. When someone comes along and says, “There is *another* level or stage of development,” people, sensing that the security blanket of their worldview is being removed, will experience anger, frustration, or excitement, depending whether they are operating with a Closed, Arrested, or Open mindset. At each level, then, a person can be at an Open state of thinking (one Value System dominates yet is open to any information that may enter their perceptual field); at an Arrested state (only information up-to the Value System that is currently operating will be accepted, information that is from any later Value System will not be accepted); or at a Closed state (no information will be accepted that does not conform to the current Value Systems; generally only one Value System is operating).

Those with a Closed or Arrested mindset will regard these stages or levels of development as an example of “pluralism”—the idea that more than one view is not only possible but desirable. Pluralism is a negative only for those who operate with a Closed or Arrested frame of mind, and desire a uniform view, a “one-size-for-all” understanding of the church. Any belief outside their narrow grasp of “reality” is regarded as pluralism, and is by definition, negative. Yet pluralism is a natural outgrowth of a healthy, growing, diverse church. A church that like its Lord and Savior, values free moral choice and the idea that people are to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other people’s thought. The inevitable result will be pluralism, reflective of the various levels of existence, and the fact that we all see God, the church, “truth” and reality from our own unique experiences. This is a principle given long ago by anthropologist Melville Herskovits. “Judgments are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his or her own enculturation.” This does not mean that there are multiple “truths,” but that the one truth we hold may be seen from various perspectives.

The failure of many church leaders and pastors to understand this distinction gives rise to a narrow range of outreach in ministry, which will not encompass the needs and levels of existence of the entire earthly human population. The result will then be efforts to force everyone

into a “one-right-way” approach of doing things and thinking. Such closed-mindedness can limit the church’s effectiveness and relevance in society to a narrow segment of the population, especially in the Third Millennium.

### **Modes of Leadership, “Closed” Value Systems, and Listening to Others:**

When each Value System or <sup>v</sup>MEME operates at a Closed state of thinking, each manifests a different attitude and behavior when listening to others and in respecting an other’s worldview. Each <sup>v</sup>MEME level also expresses a different mode of leadership.

Beige and Purple levels value members of their own group. They live in a world of fear of strangers—of others who are different. They have no reason to listen to or to accept the experiences of any human being outside their own group—people who are different. Purple is a communal-collective system where listening to others within the system may be important, but not outsiders who are different. And for these two systems almost anyone is an outsider. Tradition and the received wisdom from “the prophets” and spiritual leaders is what matters here. *Leadership is tradition-driven.*

Red trusts no one but themselves. They are reluctant to listen to the signals from any source except from within themselves. They don’t even begin to value the experiences of others and have no desire to listen to or to accept what others have to say—unless it can increase their own power over others and/or enable them to survive in the had/have/have-not world in which they live. Red is an individual-elitist system where self is primary—at the expense of others. *Leadership is power-driven.*

Blue has a need to listen only to the right authority. Absolutistic thinking does not tolerate viewpoints other than those of the right authority. The worldviews of others that are different from the worldviews of Blue are, at the most, tolerated, but not accepted—not even for others. When you already have the “truth” it is a waste of time to listen to another’s “truth.” Blue is a communal-collective system in which there is only listening to and acceptance of those of the same “ism.” Blue reflects a self-righteousness from the right, with a guilt-driven, “only-one-right-way” mode of thinking. It is this form of leadership that causes more problems in the church than perhaps any other, resulting in a state of non-confidence in leadership, a lack of commitment to the institution, and a voting on the part of the laity with their feet and finances, as they put their efforts and resources elsewhere. Forcing members to tithe won’t help either, for the issues are far deeper than such surface solutions resolve. *Leadership is order-driven.*

Orange may listen to others but primarily to gain any kind of information that will enable Orange to better manipulate others in the “real” world of competition. Orange is Machiavellian. Machiavellians use their rational-calculating minds to manipulate, to win over others. And they know that this cannot happen if they become involved with caring about others, allowing themselves to listen to the thoughts and feelings of others, to actually accept the worldviews of others. StriveDrive means to be driven to succeed at all costs—if necessary—over others. Orange knows that to become a caring person showing emotions is a waste of time. And time is money. Orange is an individual-elitist system where self is primary—not others. The independent church movement in Adventism and the push for congregationalism are here, so also are many GenXers. The wheeling and dealing for power and material gain prevalent among some of our leaders and laity is also found here. This mode of leadership can be very cut-throat and arrogant, because it is primarily self-seeking. Many persons whose life is oriented around this <sup>v</sup>MEME compensate for such materialistic values by adhering to a conservative theology. This is an example of the fulcrum principle, where extremes have to be counter-balanced. *Leadership is success-driven.*

Green is the first system which begins to accept others. One of the most important needs which Green has is to know the inner world of others and to share their own inner world with others. Green must be successful in interpersonal relationships. To do so means that authenticity,

congruence, honesty and trust must exist for self and others. Between individuals or within the group Green listens deeply to the experiences of others—to their worldviews. Green listens deeply to others because this is how the system operates. But even in this system there is only the beginning efforts to accept the worldviews of another. Green can accept the worldview of another as long as that worldview produces behavior which is acceptable within the group community. In this communal-collective system others are primary but the others must accept the worldview that is the consensus of the community. Even a general definition of empathy is inadequate. Empathy is the intellectual identification with or vicarious experience of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another person. It is one thing to be deeply empathetic, to know and to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of another. But it is an entirely different matter to accept those thoughts and feelings as right and good for the other person. This is why “political correctness” is such an issue for Green. Green leaders and laity can be very intolerant, especially when things do not go their way. Green often reflects a self-righteousness from the left, a rigidity of equity. *Leadership is people-driven.*

From a quick examination of these six Value Systems, it is easy to see where much of the conflicts in the church and in society come from. When one connects power to all of these Value Systems, one can quickly see that when systems clash, everyone sees Red—they move to a state of siege-mentality, shut down, protect power, and prepare for the worst by taking a defensive posture. Power is the most seductive force in the world, greater than money, food, or sex. Friedrich Nietzsche, in his book *The Dawn of Day*, declares. “Neither necessity nor desire, but *the love of power*, is the demon of humankind. You may give humans everything possible—health, food, shelter, enjoyment—but they are and remain unhappy and capricious, for the demon waits and waits; and must be satisfied. Let everything else be taken away from humans, and let this demon be satisfied, and then they will nearly be happy—as happy as humans and demons can be.” Power in its essence is “the capacity to act.” Power can be exercised either as coercion, against people’s wishes, or as choice, without violating free will. Sometimes leaders have to use both forms. True Power, however, seldom exercised by humans but always by God, is one that leaders need to develop. *This is the capacity to know that you can but you don’t.* Jesus often exercised this form of power.

This brief discussion on power points to a great need in the church, the need to understand power in all its ramifications. If there is one event I would highly recommend that Christian churches carry out early in this new millennium, it is a leadership conference on power—its use, abuse and misuse. The power of the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of personal influence, the power of culture, the abuse and misuse of power, the state of powerlessness, etc. All these are topics for the conference.

A spiral understanding of the church also enables us to understand that while theological wars are fought on different levels, they are fought for different reasons, depending on the dominant <sup>v</sup>MEMES.

## <sup>v</sup>MEMES

## VALUE SYSTEMS AND THEOLOGICAL WARS

- 6<sup>th</sup> Level: Communities fight *humanitarian wars* against those who commit ‘crimes against humanity,’ over issues of justice, equity and fairness, and to protect the victims.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Level: Enterprises fight *competition wars* to advance their spheres of influence, access market niches, and preserve their status-conscious image.

- 4<sup>th</sup> Level: Authority Structures fight ‘*holy*’ wars for righteousness sake, safeguard beliefs, protect the institution and preserve it’s way of life, and defend law, order, and rightful authority.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Level: Empires fight *imperialistic wars* to dominate, gain the spoils, and demand the right to power and privilege.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Level: Tribes fight *inter-/intra-group wars* to protect the family, traditions, sacred truths, and cultural norms and folkways from outsiders and/or ‘outsider’ influences.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Level: Bands fight *survival wars* to gain food, water, safety, and sex. No theological struggle here.

The solution to all these power struggles, self-canceling modes of leadership, and conflicting worldviews does not come from these first six “subsistence” levels, the First Tier, *the memes of the flesh* preoccupied with their own self-interests. The solution comes from the next systems or levels that are now beginning to emerge in the world and among some in the church. These are levels at the Second Tier, the “being” systems, levels 7 and 8, *the memes of the spirit*.

Yellow is the first system to listen to and to accept another human being’s worldview simply because that worldview is important to the other human being. This constitutes a major shift in the way human beings interact with each other—a valuing of the other in a manner that we have not historically seen. Yellow is not frustrated with ambiguity and can actually enjoy ambiguity. Yellow is an individual-elitist system and it is the beginning system of the 2nd Tier. Yellow is the first system that not only values self but it also values others. Yellow listens to others because what the other is expressing is important to the other, not because the other is a member of my group (Purple) or because there may be a power gain for self (Red) or because one must be kind to others even though there is no intention of accepting what the other is expressing (Blue) or to enable self to win over others (Orange) or in order to determine whether or not the other is acceptable in the group community (Green). Yellow values *being*, for every person has a right to be. Yellow also flattens the organizational pyramid to eliminate redundant levels in order to share power and decision-making with those who are closest to the problems. The result is ownership at all levels because the focus is on competency and on who can best do the job irrespective of who they are, either by gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, or beliefs. *Leadership is process-driven.*

The worldview of Turquoise is still in development, but its focus is on the holism, harmony, and the interconnectedness of all life-forms.

### **Spiral Leadership:**

In light of these <sup>v</sup>MEMES or Value Systems reflective of different levels of existence in the church and in society, what kind of leader will churches need for this new millennium? What kind of leaders will denominations elect in the year 2000? This is the crucial question in people’s minds as we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in view of past disappointments. We, obviously, do not want to elect leaders that brings embarrassment on him or herself and the church before the watching world. Thus, the person must be an *ethical* individual, who understands the difference between wrong and right, appropriate and inappropriate behavior. With high ethics also comes an understanding that proper ethical conduct does not mean “not getting caught,” but being above the very possibility of suspicion. It is leadership by example that is needed.

On the other hand, we do not want a leader who is “closed,” rigid, or “arrested”—one who operates only on the basis of one Value System and is unable or unwilling to explore

options other than those that conform to it. The world has seen far too many leaders (read “dictators”) operate with such a mindset. They often surround themselves with like-minded persons, thereby perpetuating groupthink—a rejection of critical judgment for the sake of group harmony.

We also don’t want a leader that is a “Flatlander.” A “Flatlander” is a person who approaches life and decision-making with a “one-size-fits-all” mindset. The term comes from Edwin Abbott’s 19<sup>th</sup> century classic, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884), where he describes a people that can only see life in two dimensions—left and right, front and back. They have no sense of up and down, the vertical dimension, but live life solely on the basis of the horizontal, in a flatland. Life is a matter of rigid categories, simplistic types, and a series of boxes with preassigned labels. In Flatland “human relations” means finding the right category or box for people and putting them in it, based on the appearances of their outlines. In spite of all the advances of knowledge Flatland still exists. And its inhabitants—Flatlanders—still roam the earth pigeonholing people on the basis of color, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, age, culture, beliefs, or some other easy marker.

What the church needs is persons at Yellow. Yellow is the first <sup>v</sup>MEME in our human repertoire to recognize the elegance of the *whole spiral* and to act on the idea that *diversity in thinking* may be the greatest diversity of all, above the diversity of race, gender, culture, class, or age. What you have at Yellow is a “Spiral Leader.” *A Spiral Leader is a person who able to see the whole spiral of human differences within the church and in society, and knows how to communicate with people at their respective levels of existence globally, while keeping the well-being of the whole—the church—in mind.*

Yellow or Spiral Leaders understand power. They know what power is, how to create it and use it. But they also know how limited is its usefulness. A Spiral Leader is not caught up with status, but is focused on competence—on who can best perform the tasks before the church. Social cultural barriers that divide that church and create conflict at the first six levels, such as the memes of race, ethnicity, gender, age, beliefs, education, etc., are of no concern here. For the Spiral Leader the question of women’s ordination, for example, is no longer an issue to be debated. It is simply a principle to be implemented in harmony with Joel 2:28 and Galatians 3:28.

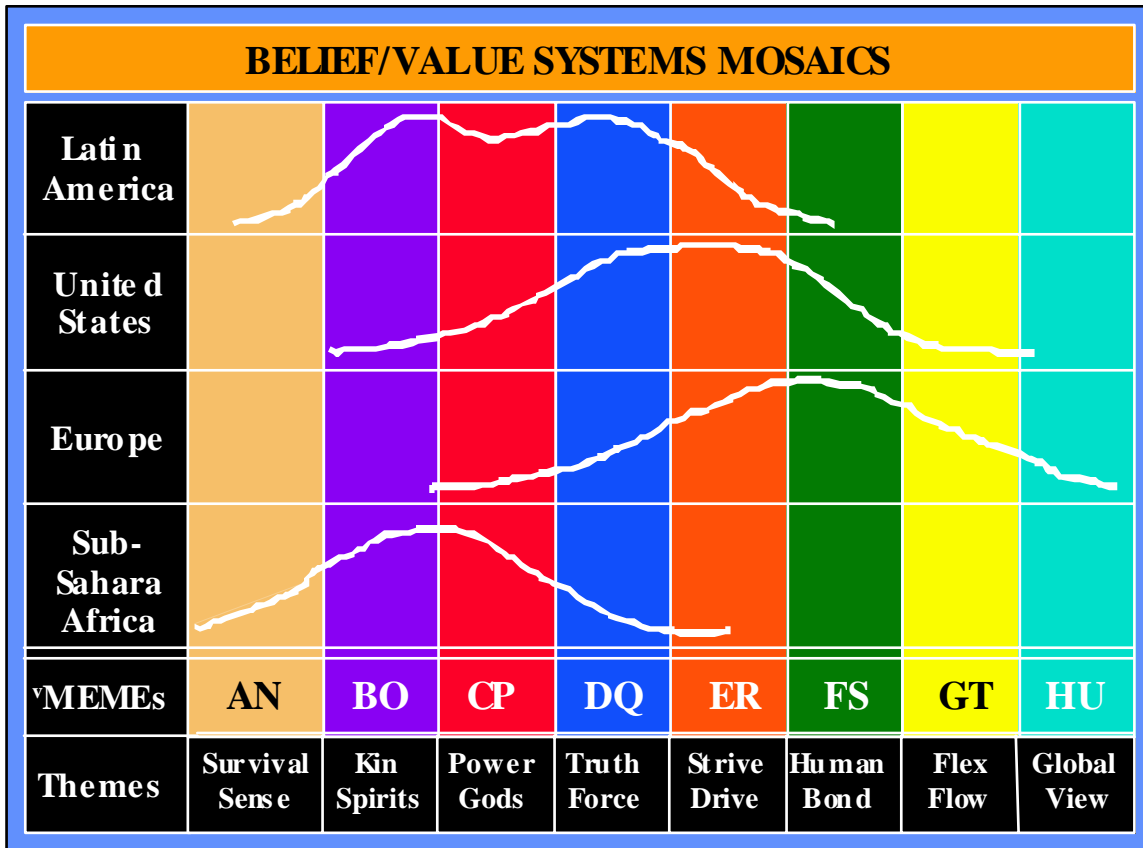
Spiral Leaders also model two additional life principles. The first one I call the “Human Relations Principle of Leadership,” and it is rather self-explanatory. *Be careful how you treat people when you are at the top, you may meet them on your way down.* The second principle Spiral Leaders live by is the “Sabbath Principle.” It was first given by Jesus 2,000 years ago when He declared: “The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, NRSV). Here is the principle: *The institution exists to meet the needs of individuals and not individuals the needs of the institution.* In other words, the needs of church members come before the needs of church structures, since the members *are* the church. Blue leaders are focused on the needs of church systems; Spiral Leaders on the needs of church members. Seldom has this principle been followed by institutions, especially the church, which more often than not takes a self-serving and self-perpetuating approach to ministry. Yet the practice of both of these principles is what gives rise to the highest confidence in leadership. The reverse is also true. Malpractice in this area can cause leadership confidence to crash.

The implications of all this for the church at all levels are quite profound. Take the local church, for example. At this level one can find a varying degree of positions on everything from doctrines, to music, to worship, to evangelism, to standards, to what constitutes good preaching,

to lifestyles, and more. All of these memes often clash in board meetings and church policy, which can result in factions and schisms. A pastor that fails to recognize such diversity of thinking, and operates with a Flatlander perspective will only worsen the problems. Thus, there is a great need at the local level for “spiral pastors” who understand, respect, and value the diversity of thinking in his/her congregation. Here lies a most important principle in multicultural ministry, which will be the new frontiers of mission for the church in the Third Millennium. *The key to successful multicultural ministry lies in understanding the diversity of Value Systems operant in the church.* This diversity of “thinking systems” has a far greater impact on a multicultural church than the diversity of races, ethnicities, and cultural expressions could ever have. People from the same culture, ethnic group, or race, for example, often have differing <sup>v</sup>MEMES or Value Systems, while other people from different groups often share the same <sup>v</sup>MEMES. Since <sup>v</sup>MEMES are deep decision systems *in* people, not types *of* people; colors *in* people, not colors *of* people; they transcend race, gender, ethnicity, age, class, culture, and national origin. Spiral Leaders understand all this. Flatlanders, on the other hand, will not recognize this deeper diversity, and will resort to surface categorizations and labeled boxes based on belief, biological, and cultural markers.

At the local conference and union levels the church needs “spiral presidents” who understand the diversity of thinking of their constituents. Different churches and regions of the country operate with different value systems. The Southern part of the United States, for example, is more Purple, Red, and Blue; the West is more Orange and Green, and Red in Hollywood; while the Northeast reflects both Orange and Purple <sup>v</sup>MEMES; and the Midwest is Blue and Orange. Yet even within these broad areas can be found the whole Spiral of value systems as a continuum of mixes and mergers. Some churches are most open to women in local leadership, others see such action as anathema; some churches are involved in community action, others regard such efforts as contrary to the mission of the church. Some pastors are closed, others are open, and some are arrested. The president that fails to recognize such diversity will have limited success in this new millennium. The higher one moves up the leadership hierarchy of the church, the more diversity of <sup>v</sup>MEMES will one encounter, and therefore the greater the need for Spiral Leaders. In this new millennium the church will need a whole array of Spiral Leaders—spiral pastors, spiral teachers, spiral administrators and spiral staff, even spiral members at the local church.

Ministry is also different at each level of existence and must meet the needs of people at their respective levels of need. The work of Habitat for Humanity, for example, is with people at Beige, seeking to stay alive. Ministry and leadership must therefore understand the operational value systems, both in the church and in society in order to have any semblance of relevance and opportunity for success [see Mosaic graphic<sup>2</sup>]. The bell-shaped lines in the graphic depict the value systems operative in the various societies. Latin America and Sub-Sahara Africa, for example, are dominated by Purple and Red <sup>v</sup>MEMES; while the USA is more at Orange and Green, and Europe, especially Northern Europe is more at Green and Yellow. The Christian Church, however, in all these continents tends to operate at a Blue <sup>v</sup>MEME with a Flatlander perspective.



Take the issue over the ordination of women. Many conservative church leaders at Blue try to fit a diverse church into a single, narrow, memetic band of operation. And, for the sake of unity [read “uniformity”] sided with the Purple <sup>v</sup>MEMES in their churches, which adhere to a patriarchal view of God and traditional roles for women. A Spiral Leader would immediately recognize the unwisdom of such a position in a diverse church. Such leadership also recognizes that the different congregations must each develop structural models of ministry that are sensitive to the respective <sup>v</sup>MEMES in the church and in the societies where each labors. Flatlander leaders, on the other hand, will see this as a “compromise” of a “thus saith the Lord,” and as pluralism, much the same way the Pharisees saw Jesus casting out demons by Beelzebub (Matthew 12). Why? Because what Jesus was doing did not fit within the narrow parameters of their closed Blue value system.

However, we need to understand that a strong, healthy Blue <sup>v</sup>MEME is *foundational* to the entire spiral. It provides the anchors of law, order, good authority, responsibility, and righteousness without which the individual, the organization or nation stands weak. If we lose this crucial system, we lose direction, our moral compass, the inner core, and the essential foundation of the more complex systems. This is the problem in America and in the world today. The result is the proliferation of the violence and moral decay we are seeing. On the other hand, in a closed mind, the Blue <sup>v</sup>MEME can become an unhealthy system with rigid authoritarianism, that is judgmental, self-righteous, exclusive, and guilt-driven. Thinking within the “natural flows” of systems is the essence of Spiral Dynamics. Not the labeling of people as this or that, or showing considerable pride in claiming to have “arrived” at a certain stage of self and moral

development. Jesus, as a Spiral Leader, understood all this. He saw the whole spiral of human need and met people at their respective levels of existence, awakening in them the “natural flows” of the Kingdom of God.

### **The Kind of Leaders Churches Needs in the Third Millennium:**

If the churches elect leaders in this new millennium who fails to recognize the spiral needs of their respective church, but are centralized at Purple (group-focused, tradition bound) or Red (egocentric and power-driven) or Blue (one-right-way and authority-driven), he or she will have much difficulty understanding and working with those segments of the church that are at Orange (multiplistic thinkers desiring a success-driven church and focused on a me-oriented spirituality). He/she will also have difficulty working with segments of the church with a Green value system (consensus-building, egalitarian, concerned with social justice, equity, and issues of women’s ordination). Both of these levels reflect the state of many baby boomers and generations X & Y church in North America, as well as in Northern Europe, while the Purple and Red levels of the church are more seen in Africa, Latin America, Southern Europe, and among many of the older generation in North America. Thus, to avoid fractures and schisms in denominational churches in the Third Millennium, churches needs leaders, who, like Jesus, are able to apprehend the value systems of *all* the church, and to communicate effectively with a national and global church family at all their respective levels. Such a Spiral Leader, like the Master, will be a visionary, inclusive, and competence-oriented. He will also be one who understands the “natural flows” of human development, and how the Holy Spirit desires to guide this church into the Kingdom of God.

Thus, the kind of leaders the Christian churches need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be one who is not “arrested” nor “closed” at any one level. But as Spiral Leaders they will be one who understand the whole spiral of human development, and are able to speak the “psychological languages” of people at those levels, and enable them to see the next step they are to take in their spiritual growth. What this means is that such a leader understands the “5% Rule of Change.” As Ken Wilber declares in his latest book, *One Taste: The Journals of Ken Wilber* (Shambhala 1999): “A good rule of thumb is that people are not going to expand their present views or outlooks by much more than 5% at any given time. So if you are trying to push a very big picture at them they are probably going to shut down, and maybe get angry . . . Remember that belief systems are not merely beliefs—they are the home of the ego, the home of the self-contradiction. When you challenge any belief system, the separate-self experiences that as a death threat.” Thus, such Spiral Leaders know how to “read” his audience. This is an example of “speaking” the “psychological languages” of people. Such leaders will model a form of leadership, which, as stated previously, *we have not historically seen*. At least not since Jesus walked this earth.

### **Multiple Futures Ahead:**

As we enter the Third Millennium, a new type of leader is emerging, one who knows how to “draw outside the lines”—operate outside the traditional boundaries of a “we-have-always-done-it-this-way” mindset. It means that the way of thinking which created the problems we are experiencing cannot be the same thinking that seeks to solve these problems. In other words, the solutions to the current problems that human systems—from individuals, to organizations, to nations—are experiencing cannot come from the same level of existence and MEMES where the problem is located. This is because the present modes of thinking, worldviews or coping systems are far too narrow or closed and cannot address the opportunities

posed by the emerging challenges of societal change. Albert Einstein recognized this dilemma when he declared, “The world that we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far, creates problems that we cannot solve at the same level as they were created.”

While the ultimate future for the church will be the heavenly kingdom, the intervening future of the church in the 21st century will be multiple ones. There is therefore no *single* future for the church, just as there is no single memetic level at which all of humanity is located. What lies ahead for the church is one of *multiple* futures depending on the memetic level where members and leaders find themselves (see table).

## THE MULTIPLE FUTURES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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If the active <sup>v</sup>MEME is . . . . . then the Church structure, thinking, and action will be . . .

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<b><sup>v</sup>MEME</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Thinking</b>	<b>Action</b>
YELLOW—FlexFlow	Systemic Flow	Integrative	Process-Driven
GREEN—HumanBond	Social Network	Personalistic	People-Driven
ORANGE—StriveDrive	Strategic Enterprise	Materialistic	Success-Driven
BLUE—TruthForce	Authoritarian Structure	Absolutistic	Order-Driven
RED—PowerGods	Exploitive Empire	Egocentric	Power-Driven
PURPLE—KinSpirits	Tribal Order	Tribalistic	Tradition-Driven

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Since various segments of the church are at different memetic levels of existence throughout the world, each will experience a different future, depending on their next level of spiritual and social development. Because of this memetic diversity of thinking, action, and Value Systems, church leaders need to plan for *multiple futures*, not just a single one. Thus, the need for Spiral Leaders.

The new millennium leaders we as a church elect must understand all this. And this understanding will go a long way in healing conflicting and divisive church interests. Such Spiral Leadership in cooperation with the Holy spirit will also enable the church to go through the metamorphic transformation from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. Welcome to the future, Church!

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<sup>1</sup> The basic framework for this article comes from the seminal research of Dr. Clare W. Graves (Union College, NY), “Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap, *The Futurist*, April 1974, and his students Don E. Beck, Chris C. Cowan, *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change* (Blackwell, 1996), and an e-mail the author received from William Lee, another former student of Graves. Richard Dawkins’ concept of memes is from

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his book, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford 1976). Additional thoughts come from Beck's article, "Turbulence in the Balkans, a Paleo-Cultural View," e-mail to author April 20, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> This graphic is adapted from a similar graphic in Don E. Beck and Graham Linscott, *The Crucible: Forging South Africa's Future* (New Paradigm Press, 1991). The letter scheme at the bottom of the graphic [AN, BO, CP, ....] is the code Clare Graves used to identify the various Value Systems. Now these same systems are identified through a color scheme [Beige, Purple, Red, etc.], as it is easier to remember and is not hierarchical.