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Safety as a Foundational Prerequisite to Spiritual Growth and Effective Church Life in the Fox Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Fox Valley District in Wisconsin

Samuel Garbi
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ABSTRACT

SAFETY AS A FOUNDATIONAL PRE-REQUISITE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND EFFECTIVE CHURCH LIFE IN THE FOX VALLEY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH OF THE FOX VALLEY DISTRICT IN WISCONSIN

by

Samuel Garbi

Adviser: Siroj Sorajjakool
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: SAFETY AS A FOUNDATIONAL PRE-REQUISITE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND EFFECTIVE CHURCH LIFE IN THE FOX VALLEY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH OF THE FOX VALLEY DISTRICT IN WISCONSIN

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Date completed: April 2012

Problem

Recent publications on the topic of safety, my observations of some church members’ reluctance to be involved, and a serendipitous experience of added safety I had outside of the church coalesced to point me to lack of spiritual and emotional safety in my church as a possible cause of deficient personal spiritual growth in some members and of a resulting want for greater church efficiency. Emotional safety seems to be a core component of the ideals of love usually professed in the church. This indicated to me a possible need to focus on facilitating practice of emotional awareness and safety that would be experientially confirmed as conducive to personal growth in contrast to simply using the traditional methods of just preaching and teaching on these subjects.
Method

The development of an added sense of safety beneficial for spiritual growth and effective church life was explored through the study of relevant biblical and non-biblical material and through the creation of a pilot group of men meeting for ten weeks in the Fox Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in Neenah, Wisconsin. My goal was that the project’s participants would feel safe enough in this group to dare starting to become more aware of themselves and of their environment and to start practicing safer interaction with one another in a way that they would retrospectively judge as having been helpful to their spiritual growth and potentially useful for the church as an organization. The curriculum was adapted for my congregational use from a curriculum I experienced in the summer of 2010. Odds for safety from social harm greater than that found in the general church setting were improved through a mutually accepted formal agreement guaranteeing full confidentiality and impunity within this group. The soundness of the concepts discovered in the study was tested at the end of the ten-week project through an analysis of interviews conducted with each of the participants.

Results

My study of relevant biblical and non-biblical material highlighted the determining potential of factors left unconscious, particularly through any escapist focus on what Robert Greenleaf calls intoxicating “idealistic pretensions,” to sabotage any action or program intended to foster spiritual growth and church effectiveness, and thus render it ineffective or even dangerous. My study also highlighted the need to address such hidden or unconscious “shadow” factors (as Carl Jung refers to them), through an effort to develop conscious awareness—first an honest and comprehensive awareness and
acceptance of oneself (including hidden assumptions about oneself); and then also, a
greater inclusive and pacific awareness of one’s surrounding world in all its diverse
reality.

The theological and biblical study specifically allowed me to describe the type of
individual spiritual growth stemming from genuine personal awareness acquired through
a sense of safety. I was able to legitimately equate such spiritual growth with the concept
of personal stewardship or “sanctification” used in the Bible—in an understanding of it
that encompasses the development of all of one’s life as part of the spiritual endeavor.
This involves all aspects of life and not just those commonly understood as “spiritual” in
a narrower religious sense. Others have used the term “individuation” to describe this
spiritual development. This is different from other understandings that associate
“sanctification” with lists of concrete attitudes and behaviors which, in the mind of some
outside observers, are “evidence” of spiritual growth, but may not always be reflective of
such.

The need for greater “shadow” awareness is the number one result of this study,
and all three subsequent findings—that is, the need for theological, structural, and
practiced safety for spiritual growth, in this order, both flow from it and are to be
improved through its practice.

My assumption at the beginning of this project was that practice of emotional
safety could enable increased awareness leading to spiritual growth. This foundational
element, in my estimate, seemed to be the missing piece in the promotion of spiritual
growth and organizational effectiveness in the church. However, my study revealed two
more foundational levels of safety that must precede the practice of safety because they
either enable it by their presence or foil it by their absence. Practiced safety is greatly impaired by a lack of structural safety (i.e., retained parts of organizational structures that enable lawful harm to some); and a lack of structural safety may be the outworking of a lack of theological safety—that is, retained personal and organizational elemental worldview, assumptions and beliefs about self, God, and the universe that generate unsafe space instead of a place of safety and trust. Lack of safety deters people from seeking awareness that can lead to growth, while the presence of safety can facilitate a fuller experience of awareness leading to satisfying and genuine spiritual growth. But such safety which enables awareness towards growth cannot occur without its foundational theological, structural, and practiced components being attended to, in this order.

A careful evaluation of participants’ input through interviews conducted with each of them individually at the close of the project yielded their confirming perception of a need for theological and structural safety as foundational pre-requisites to practiced safety towards increased awareness for spiritual growth and more effective church life.

Conclusion

Two circles of causes and effects are proposed to the consideration of the reader through this project. One is a circle of theological, structural and practiced safety which seems to facilitate individuals’ willingness to engage in the pursuit of increased conscious awareness, resulting in greater spiritual growth and a safer world. The alternate circle is one which continues to perpetuate theological, structural and practiced dangers, thus apparently metastasizing individuals and organizations’ inhibitions towards greater conscious awareness into regressive conformism and dangerous projections.
The process successfully used in this project at the Fox Valley Church in Neenah, Wisconsin, to increase a sense of safety conducive to conscious awareness and spiritual growth among project participants is proposed to all readers and entities willing to recognize a lack of safety as a reality to be addressed, and it may serve as a model to any such individual or organization to improve safety, with the ensuing increased spiritual growth and organizational efficiency, within their sphere of influence.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Project Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Samuel Garbi
April 2012
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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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Director of DMin Program, Skip Bell

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Stanley E. Patterson

Date approved
Dedication

To Bedford Hines, Counselor, ministerial support of four years, and Friend, who provided me with the safety I needed to start getting better acquainted with my true self and with reality: “I would not be where I now am, and where I will be, without you.”

To John Beck, Loving Falcon, († 3/11/2011) my mentor of the Northeastern Wisconsin Community of the Mankind Project and the inspiration behind this project. “In two years and up to the week of your death, you taught me how to live, how to make my life useful, and then also, how to die.”

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The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not comprehend it. He was in the world, but the world did not know Him. He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.

—John 1

One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular.

—Carl Jung
CHAPTER 1

SAFETY, AWARENESS, AND GROWTH—
AN INTRODUCTION

Personal History

Although I grew up in a pastoral family in the church, I never bothered to think of safety in it until recently. In my youth, I was oblivious to and careless about how I could negatively affect my parents’ life and ministry. As my father was President of the Israel attached Field of the Trans-European Division, I became aware of theological or personal pitfalls to denominational employment that some visiting students failed to avoid while in church schools. When I decided to enter denominational ministry I kept this knowledge as only useful to successfully avoid those particular pitfalls instead of considering the losses involved in taking some distance from the center of the conformed fold.

While at the Seminary as a positive young adult, my drive towards academic and professional excellence coupled with good relational skills let me enjoy social life in the church without any disturbing perception that it was in any way slighting my private life. This freedom from any sense of personal danger in the church as social context was only reinforced by denominational success that age, circumstances, and good practical seminary training, brought many years of pastoral ministry. I am sad to confess retrospectively that, as a younger traditional pastor applying regular theology and
policies, I unwittingly and ignorantly inflicted much added pain, fear, and trauma to church members already dealing with great and painful difficulties in their lives.

Only later, in the crucible of more mature parish ministry with the increased pressures of adult and family life, did I start to feel the anxiety and fears that members often experience in the church. What I had known all along of the dangers of life in the church (but had chosen to ignore) finally caught my attention. Instead of continuing to focus on the company goals of raising my baptism and tithe averages, I became acquainted with people’s lives. In his book of practical theology, Anderson (2001) writes a very personal section on clergy burnout that could ring equally true for church members developing congregant burnout. I started to notice the pain, not only inflicted by life, but also by the church, which provided little in the way of safe support and guidance. In the stresses and difficulties of life and its developmental tasks, it became increasingly apparent to me that because of the theological and “idealistic pretensions” of the church (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 182), the social atmosphere in it is often less safe than outside for people to find the help they need in coping with life and to grow spiritually. I witnessed discouragement, fear, and pain in myself, close friends, family, fellow members, and leaders, as beliefs and protocols which greatly endanger people emotionally and socially were allowed to unintentionally bring relational harm and destruction instead of life (Morin, 1983).

The situation is difficult for every organization with idealistic pretensions (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 182). Greenleaf mentions how the church in general is seen as estranged from the real world, as irrelevant (pp. 92-93). This situation seemed serious in a denomination with the highest of such aspirations. Cornered between a sense of destiny
(Rev 12:17) and expectations greater than can be met (Matt 23:4), both clergy and membership seem to suffer. The nature and urgency of a specific Adventist message, ambivalent toward grace, law and judgment and centered on the hope of a future world, further decreases the patience granted to members in dealing with life. Leaders have a constant eye on the annual baptism and tithe report. Members’ faith is disconnected from real life, as escapism in hope or prayer (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 16-17) is piously encouraged. Self-examination, disclosure, and exploration are thwarted by fear. Destructive projections of personal guilt unto others (which I will explain in Chapters 2 and 3) are also common, as sanctification is commonly understood as outward adherence to a few behaviors subject to public censure, rather than as essential growth through the experience of a “Sabbath” of safe rest (Matt 11:28) from danger and fear—an experience sometimes paradoxically enjoyed more easily outside the church community.

In the context of secular counseling and then in a non-church group setting, I stumbled upon what the church is not but should be, and experienced the safety, love, and acceptance that spiritual oversight, relationships, and fellowship within the church often do not but should offer for the spiritual growth of its members. In this context I conceptualized the cause of such unusual dangers in the very place meant to be the safest.

I reflected on what earlier sources prompted my interest in the areas covered by this project and found three of them. The first was my drawing towards pastoral ministry in early childhood, the second was my interest in the performing arts as an adolescent, and the third was my consideration of psychology as a potential field of study as a high school senior. These three interests have all run as a guiding thread in my life experience until now, and they, especially the first and third, are now all coming together in this
project, as well as in the future path I foresee for me after its completion.

But it is my experience of the pain of others and my own, and of how it may be alleviated and used for healing and growth that has been the catalyst for my passion for this project. In the course of finding my own “salvation” and in payment for how those I have ministered to have helped me, I trust I will be able to help others more significantly than I ever have before. As a secondary goal and in gratitude to an institution that has admittedly contributed to pain but has also been a uniquely supportive context for my personal quest and that of thousands before me, I may through this project make some small contribution to a possible renewal of its ability to be considered as a valid force for good in the world.

Statement of the Problem

Personal and spiritual growth is often hindered when churches do not provide spiritual, emotional and social safety to members of their congregation. Awareness of such church safety problems shows up in recent texts (Gritsch, 2009; Orlowski, 2010; Rediger, 1997, 2007); articles in denominational papers (Livesay, 2010a, 2011; Seibold, 2011); keynote addresses in constituency meetings (Livesay, 2010b); and Doctor of Ministry dissertations directly dealing with or related to pastoral support (Morris, 1987; Pandjaitan, 1999; Ramos, 2004; Rothermel, 2008; Schoun, 1982; Watts, 1982); missing members’ ministry (Nielsen, 1977; Tompkins, 2009); “isms” (Penno, 2009); sexual and family life (Osborn, 1989; Randall, 1997; Smith, 1988; Staff, 1974; Swamidass, 2010; White, 1986); the exercise of power and authority (Radu, 2001; Rico, 1997; Walikonis, 2004)—all issues which no doubt have been studied because they posed discomfort to people in the church context.
Signs of the discomfort of those whose life situation places them or loved ones on the fringes of the church or outside of its protection include: sitting in the back pews, leaving during the closing hymn, associating with non-members or other members in similar circumstances, attending sporadically, temporarily, or permanently withholding attendance and contribution, or switching to Christian or non-Christian fellowships where they feel safer and more accepted. Aware of being talked about publicly (e.g., at a baby shower) or privately, excluded from serving, or candidates to be severed from fellowship, they will often leave before being asked to leave. “Many Christian organizations have a big back door.” (Stanley & Clinton, 1992, p. 122) “Spiritual” solutions (“prayer,” “revival,” “latter rain”) or revamped church growth concepts (“contextualized” “evangelism,” “missional” church, etc.) seem to do little to improve the situation. The elephant in the room is that the church is unsafe for people to self-disclose and explore their issues. The church is, therefore, avoided and bypassed in favor of non-Christian organizations and support groups of all kinds that do this task better than the church (Buechner, 1992, pp. 331, 332).

A most puzzling aspect of this situation is that it goes against everything the church and its members stand for. “Every theologian … and pastor preaches about love, but few seem to understand … living [it]” (Rediger, 2007, p. 75). Sellon and Smith (2005) were committed to the ideal of love your neighbor but “at a loss for how to practice it” (p. xi). Members of a small group would study gossip from the Bible, but then destroy the group through it (Scanzero, 2003, pp. 44-45). The intentions are good. Members profess love at Sabbath School and church; but they go on gossiping in the parking lot. The best books are distributed and the best programs set up for teaching
members how to be friendly to family, visitors, or their own body; but much of this good advice fails to materialize. The more the members try; the more they fail. They talk about the Holy Spirit, prayer, or their human nature with full resolve to “seek the Lord.” But then, it seems that unbeknownst to them and itself, both members and the church are tripped up by something they are not even aware of in or about themselves. What is that hidden saboteur and how should it be dealt with? There is a link between the lack of safety, lack of awareness of this hidden saboteur, and lack of knowledge on how to deal with it for growth.

The unintended and unconscious safety vacuum which recent written material and personal observations point to as being present in the church, preventing people from being able to grow—this safety vacuum seems to be a problem needing attention, because while “the positive climate of a church may not be everything … it is foundational to everything” (Livesay, 2010a). Beyond reasons found in the aging of the membership, declining attendance statistics and contributions are indicators flagging this as a problem, making the lack of safety an urgent pragmatic consideration just as powerful to some as a direct mandate from scripture. The problem of lack of safety, and the indicators of its presence that I just mentioned, constitute the visible tip of an iceberg that it would be far less painful for researchers to notice and address, than it would be dangerous for the church to ignore.

**Statement of the Task**

The task of this project is to address the lack of safety for growth experienced by many in the church through the creation of a safe pilot group in the Fox Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in which participants can experience and practice emotional safety
leading to increased awareness and spiritual growth.

Realizing that many of the factors contributing to the problem may remain in place for longer than desired in the church-at-large, I wanted this project to contribute to the immediate and long-term spiritual growth of my members by offering them a small circle for men where emotional safety can first be locally experienced and practiced, and then expanded outward.

I wanted this project to provide an alternate and safer space within the church context for the exploration of personal and spiritual issues. This space would be created through the formation of a small group of men formally committed to mutual confidentiality, accountability, and unconditional support in the exploration of personal and spiritual issues. This group would be bound by an agreement and would meet once a week for ten weeks. Each session would include teachings on concepts related to safety, awareness, and growth. Each session would also include practical experiences and personal and group processes leading to the development of a greater sense of safety and higher awareness conducive to personal growth. Safe places have to be intentionally built; as a friend (Wade R. Anding, personal communication, March 2, 2011) wrote to me, “If you create a safe place, men will come and be their authentic selves.”

**Justification for the Project**

This task is important because increasing safety in the church will help the church to be more effective in accomplishing its task of assisting people in their spiritual growth. Over my past twenty years of pastoral ministry, many scholarly, dedicated, and spiritual church authors have written books on how to improve the church community. I purchased
many of these excellent books, most of which were how-to books covering all kinds of strategies and programs for the benefit of the church on various topics (see Appendix A).

These books could be listed by topic, authors, or number of items or steps (7, 12, 21, or 44). They were filled with well-intended and straight-forward, good and even excellent ideas, concepts, and strategies claimed to present the “key(s)” (Callahan, 1983), or the “secret(s)” (Wagner, 1984; Walden & Lawler, 1993), to solve the church’s problems, and their authors seemed to have full confidence that if applied, their programs would certainly improve the church.

But besides being responses based on “modernity assumptions” (Bossert, 2005, p. 66), many of these textbooks seemed to have little awareness of hidden factors which, if unattended, will jeopardize every spiritual program no matter how well conceived and executed. The hidden saboteurs did not appear on their radar screens. Only a few contained references acknowledging what is hidden. In his excellent study on Helping Pastors Cope, Schoun (1981) clearly alluded to hidden relational factors (pp. 20-48). Schaller hinted at a need for self-appraisal in the title of his 1984 book, Looking in the Mirror, and George Barna’s Without a vision, the people perish (1991b) had two excellent chapters (6 and 7) on seeking vision from self-appraisal. Holmes and Kilcher (1991) placed a good emphasis on relationships, and Aldrich (1988, 1993) was on to something that addresses real spiritual growth when noting that “If our goal is to ‘decision’ all nations … then our methodology doesn’t much matter. If we, however, are to help them become disciples … our methods become critically important” (Aldrich, 1988, p. 99). Tennyson (1992) had some appreciation for the mind games played in board meetings, although he also seemed to confidently believe that the right manipulative
“cures” (pp. 92, 102) and “remedies” (p. 102) would certainly keep them in check. Out of all his prescriptive books, Maxwell (2000) had one book dealing with the positive aspects of failure. It is only with Lee’s *Effective Church Leadership* (2003), written the same year as Scazzerro’s book, that due respect was given to the importance of self-awareness in leadership.

The idea whose time finally seems to have come is: Awareness of the hidden factors only surfaces when it is safe enough, which either enables, or prevents, true spiritual growth as will be defined in subsequent chapters. It is this idea that I am exploring in this project.

This hands-on project is needed because “beneath the surface” (Scazzerro, 2003, p. 69), far below what social and behavior ministry usually deals with, there is a part of broken humanity to which advice, scripture, and prayer have not been able to bring lasting deliverance (Seamands, 2004, pp. 10, 11). These three common panaceas of an “overly-spiritualized faith” (Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 25) have proven insufficient to bring the level of perceived safety in the church to where it must be for the church to be effective in helping people toward wholeness and growth. Neither have teaching, programs, and preaching (Anderson, 2001, pp. 195-198). Despite great knowledge, professions, and intentions at Sabbath School time, members seem to lack ability to practice safe behavior afterwards. The reason for their inability is seemingly out of their view. Therefore, it seems to me that what is needed is applied training in practiced safety; hence the title that I had chosen for this project in its proposal stage.

McBride (2009) studied the task of helping individuals develop and implement their own strategies for spiritual growth where the medium for this facilitation was the
one-on-one coaching relationship. Reading the prose poem, “Imagine a World” (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998, pp. 174-176), and considering the multitudes of relationships helpful for growth described in Connecting (Stanley & Clinton, 1992), I envisioned a church where the growth made possible in the safety of the one-on-one coaching relationship could be multiplied through interaction and practice with a greater number of participants in a small group.

**Expectations for the Project**

Through a review of pertinent literature and biblical material as well as through the practical development, implementation, and analysis of a pilot intervention, I investigated aspects of the relationships between safety, awareness, and spiritual growth. I specifically addressed the following practical questions: Can safety be provided in the church that would be seen as helpful for awareness and spiritual growth? What would be the components of such safety? What links between safety, awareness, and growth can be established in ministry practice? What is the importance of safety for awareness and spiritual growth? What are the perceptions of safety within the church? What forms do the perceptions of safety in the church take or not take? What are the effects of safety perceptions in the church to individuals and to the Church as an organization?

I expected participants to experience a sense of added safety to which they could link spiritual growth. Participation would reduce their pain and sense of isolation, increase their awareness and acceptance of reality, and suggest to them better ways to live in it.

My hope was to lead participants in experiencing a greater sense of safety in the church than they previously had, and to demonstrate that this greater sense of safety was
seen by them as essential to their personal growth by permitting a safe exploration of personal issues and greater awareness. I also hoped that participants would be motivated and equipped to become agents of greater emotional safety in the church and in the world through their participation in this program. This is the contribution this project intends to give to increased leadership in the world and in the church.

**Delimitations**

I made the intervention a small group of ten participants meeting for ten weeks. Small efforts, if consistent and sustained, will build momentum toward breakthrough (J. Collins, 2001, pp. 164-178). Small local action can have a positive effect on culture as a whole (Tropman, 2003, pp. 223, 224). I expected that the length of the intervention would be sufficient for positive results to be felt by participants at its conclusion.

The group was restricted to men. Lack of safety can be experienced by all in any setting regardless of gender, but Hollis advanced that “men’s lives are essentially ruled by fear” (1994, p. 11), and it flows from common observation that men can indeed inflict great harm on each other—the shoe fits. Since “the power of the feminine is immense in the psychic economy of men” (p. 11), limiting the group to men eliminated some potential interferences and dangers of inter-gender relationships. I hoped that the safety experienced by the group would trickle down and also affect other relationships.

**Limitations**

This was a qualitative study of relatively small magnitude: one small group in one local church. Great care was taken in gathering and processing data from interviews with participants at the close of the project, but it may be expected that some subjectivity may remain. The conclusions drawn from the data are not intended to be as scientific or
comprehensive as a quantitative study on a larger scale might be. However, I expect that the reflections offered by the participants may be powerfully representative of the potential responses of others.

As I read about Kathryn masterfully leading her group (Lencioni, 2002), I felt my skills in the art of leading group processes did not match hers. But I tackled the project relying on my willingness to learn and my heart’s desire to help my participants.

One of the greatest limitations of this project was the assigned size of the dissertation. Since what is found here is only a portion of what is available on the subject, I stretched some chapters to the maximum number of pages considered acceptable.

**Definition of Terms**

The three key terms of this project are found in every chapter title: emotional safety, conscious awareness, and spiritual growth. Physical, spiritual, and emotional safety (Livesay, 2010a) are all needed in the church. But by “safety,” I do not refer here to physical aspects of safety determined by plant soundness, the prohibition of concealed weapons, or the prevention of sexual violations. Rather, I here use “emotional safety” (and will simply refer throughout the document to “safety”) as shortcut for the spiritual, relational, social, and emotional aspects of safety. That emotions and spirituality are both experienced by the soul in all its relationships (with itself, others, and God), points to an intrinsic link between them (Scazzero, 2003). Therefore, “safety” will here be intended to mean “freedom from non-physical dangers that can often be experienced in a social religious setting, including the church as congregation or denomination.”

“Awareness” can sometimes be a term less widely used and understood in the church (p. 77) than outside of it: it will specifically refer here to being conscious of all
that one thinks one already knows about oneself and one’s world—but really does not, to one’s detriment and the detriment of others around oneself.

One of the benefits of the postmodern mindset (Bossert, 2005) seems to me that it has erased much of the distinction or compartmentalization there might have existed in the modern mind between spirituality and the rest of life. Spirituality is no longer confined to what is strictly religious but encompasses all of one’s search for meaning in their existence. The term spiritual “growth” is therefore not used here with any of the narrower religious connotations (of intellectual acquisitions or outwardly observable behaviors or practices) often associated with it; rather, I use it here to refer to the natural unfolding of one’s intended life in a way that is recognized by the individual as springing from deep personal guidance accessed through awareness. These three key terms—safety, awareness, growth, and other terms, will be further defined at length in subsequent chapters, mostly in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Fox Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church will often be simply referred to as the Fox Valley Church.

**Description of the Project Process**

I intend to reverse the suggested order of the chapters “theological reflection” and “literature review” and immediately follow this introductory chapter with a review of the concepts of safety, awareness, and growth in pertinent non-biblical literature (Chapter 2). This will give me needed tools to make my presentation of a theological reflection in Chapter 3, and will allow the Bible to confirm in an inductive fashion the presentation of the relationship between safety, awareness, and growth made from non-biblical literature.
While invitations for participants to take part in the project were made in December 2010 and January 2011, the project took place January to March 2011. I designed the ten-week pilot group to offer an opportunity to participants to explore their lives in a safe community so as to gain greater awareness and experience spiritual growth through the process, each session building on the previous ones. The project design and the implementation narrative are found in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

I took notes after each session. Feedback forms were collected at the close of the project while interviews with each participant were conducted shortly after the close of the project. A Natural Church Development Survey was taken two months later. The data from these sources was subsequently processed and the summaries and analysis are presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents recommendations for entities where there is willingness to recognize lack of safety as a reality to be addressed.

I close this chapter by recalling a substantial experience of safety for growth, outside of the church, which I had as a mature adult. During a “hot seat” process replicated in my pilot group, I tasted what Ephesians 4:15 means by “speaking the truth in love:” being simultaneously known and loved—safe, and growing through it. I intended this to be the experience of the participants in my project.
CHAPTER 2

SAFETY, AWARENESS, AND GROWTH IN
NON-BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Introduction

Spiritual growth means to me becoming aware of, and becoming, what one is personally intended to be; I will further define this below. And the simple idea behind this project is that for the church to help people to grow in it—which by necessity involves mistakes, the church needs to offer safety. Without safety, people hide and will, therefore, not be able to get the help they need from others in order to grow. The references presented here contribute to my conviction that to help people grow spiritually the church must be safe.

In this chapter, I use relevant literature to show the links between safety, awareness and growth. In section 1 (Growth), I define spiritual growth as the task of finding out and actuating what one is uniquely intended to be in the world. Section 2 (Awareness) shows the crucial role of awareness in spiritual growth. I show that spiritual growth as I have defined it occurs through our becoming aware of what we each are uniquely intended to be in the entirety of our being. Section 3 (Shadow) shows how becoming aware for growth especially includes becoming aware of what we are currently not aware of about ourselves, which I describe in the Jungian term “shadow.” Section 4 (Community) shows that the awareness of ourselves which we need for growth is best
achieved with the help of others. Although the church intends to be a community in which we can help one another become more aware so we can grow, instead of helping one another, we often prefer to hide, which results in dangers that only heighten our reluctance to come out and seek help, resulting in no growth. I expand on this concept in Section 5 (Danger) and end the chapter on a positive note by describing in Section 6 (Safety) the safety which the church could create for people in it to better tackle the task of spiritual growth.

**What Is Spiritual Growth?**

Spiritual growth (often worded “growing in the faith” in French) has been called in many different ways. Growing towards spiritual maturity may include an understanding of God and involve the practice of traditional spiritual disciplines as well as traditional religious and ethical components. But it primarily involves developing integrity with one’s true self—anyone’s first and foremost stewardship responsibility (Aziz, 1990, pp. 9-46). It is not limited to the practice of religious activities shown in a certain repertoire of culturally sanctioned behaviors. Instead, it includes every activity through which one seeks to make sense of life in a personally meaningful way; it involves a personal search that involves the whole being. It is essential not only for leaders to lead towards organizational effectiveness, but to everyone personally. The following paragraphs will develop these assertions and validate them through the witness of others.

**New Terms for “Spiritual Growth”**

A traditional understanding of spiritual life, or faith, was first enlarged to me by Parks (1986) defining faith as the activity of “making meaning” (pp. xiv, xv; 2000, p. xi).
What is adulthood [i.e., a mature grown stage of development]? [It] … is a way of making meaning … to be aware of one’s own composing of reality, … participate self-consciously in an ongoing dialogue toward truth, and … be able to sustain a capacity to respond—to take responsibility for seeing and reweaving (in the activity of one’s every day) a fitting pattern of relationships between the disparate elements of self and world. [As such,] … faith is not simply a set of beliefs that religious people have; it is something that all human beings do. (Parks, 1986, pp. 6, 12)

“Faith is … faith whether it deliberately calls on God or not” (Buechner, 1992, p. 331; Kelcourse, 2004, p. 9). Frankl (2006) describes the human responsibility to discover one’s potentialities and actualize them in a personally meaningful way.

Starting to feel the limits of traditionally understood “spiritual disciplines” (Foster, 1983, p. 1), I discovered terms new to me that proved spiritually life-giving: *individuation* (Levinson, 1978, pp. 195-198); spiritual growth as a *personal journey* in search of a *treasure*—one’s *destiny*, the seeking of one’s own *personal calling*, *truth* or *Legend* (Coelho, 1988, pp. vii, 110, 155); *pilgrim spirituality* (Dick & Miller, 2003, p. 74). One’s *self* (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 60) is intimately involved in one’s spiritual development as it guides, or transmits guidance to, the individual in the process of its own self-*actualization*. McBride (2009) offers her own definition of *maturation*, which I equate with spiritual growth:

Maturation is the process wherein one progressively gains a greater awareness of one’s true self, increases in his or her ability to differentiate that self from others, and lives with greater and greater consistency from their personal values so that they find meaning and purpose in life. (pp. 11, 75)

Ulanov and Ulanov (1975) see spiritual development as a *sense of vocation* (p. 19), as summons to become a whole self (being “whole”; Ulanov, 2008c, p. 77), and as developing “one’s own precise individuality” (Ulanov & Ulanov, 1975, p. 19; White, 2002, p. 17) away from a false self preoccupied with outward appearance and conformity.
The countless variations of the Myer Briggs Temperament Inventory (MBTI) 16 types reinforce the idea that spiritual growth cannot be a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter task. Spiritual growth is a lifelong, personal, and complex endeavor.

The Extent, Manner, Timing, and Benefits of Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth involves the whole being, including growth in emotional maturity. The “healing” of emotional wounds is a step towards one’s potential (Seamands, 2004); “Emotional maturity” is an integral part of spiritual maturity (Scazzero, 2003).

Developing spiritually can include a religious or Christian component. Ulanov (2008a) states, “Our religious instinct drives us to make meaning” (p. 47); but she broadly defines faith—similarly to how Parks does, as a call to answer: “What are you meant to be? Have you avoided this? Have you consented to this?” “Nestled in this idea is the deeper one that to find self is to find God, and to find God is to find self…. They are not the same, but they are mysteriously linked” (Ulanov, 2008a, p. 48).

Spiritual growth is an inner work. Foster (1983, p. 1) and Nouwen (1989, pp. 15-32) called for a return to spiritual disciplines and heart devotion. But great spiritual advance can also be made through exploring the “subplots” of one’s personal life (McNeal, 2000, p. xiv; Scazzero, 2003). This non-specifically religious aspect of spiritual growth is a “new myth” for our times (Hollis, 2005, pp. 159-179).

Midlife (Anderson, 2001, p. 218) can be especially propitious towards such work of spiritual growth. Help for it is often needed at the midlife juncture, “a confusing time when pressures and questions increase” (Stanley & Clinton, 1992, p. 72). The subtitle of O’Collins’ older book is full of pregnant concision: The Second Journey: Spiritual
Awareness and the Mid-Life Crisis (1978). Zweig’s search for meaning was spurred by her midlife crisis (Zweig in Zweig & Abrams 1991, p. xiv). Special opportunities towards individuation arise “as persons come into their own in the second half of life” (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 31). Hollis noted in The Middle Passage (1993) and Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life (2005) that the need to engage in this work often appears after the possibilities of the first half of life have been exhausted. Hagberg notes the same (1994, pp. 64, 70).

Although the work of “spiritual growth” as defined here benefits everybody, both secular and Christian leadership authors see spiritual growth as an essential basis for effective leadership. Christian leadership is A Work of Heart (McNeal, 2000). Individuals get to Hagberg’s (1994) penultimate stage of leadership influence by having spiritually grown (p. 117). Her “power by gestalt” is highest because it is exercised without words through integrity with the whole self (p. 133). Effective church leadership is contingent on the leader taking a personal spiritual “journey” (Herrington, Creech, & Taylor, 2003, pp. 17, 18). The leadership books from the Arbinger Institute (2002, 2006) could be added to this list since leadership remains stunted, shallow, ineffective, and even dangerous without the work of personal spiritual growth.

Partial Summary

In partial summary of what has just been covered, spiritual growth is a personal search that involves the whole being, and with benefits in personal and public areas of life. It may involve religion and traditional spiritual disciplines, include an understanding of God, and have religious and ethical components. But it primarily involves developing integrity with one’s true self. This first entails becoming aware of what one’s true self is.
Our Need of Awareness for Growth

If I want to grow into a better life truly suited to who I am meant to be, I will learn to know and face the true reality in myself and around me so that I can affect it positively, instead of escaping it in dreams or addictions of all kinds. The self which a more spiritually grown person is in integrity with, will be discovered through awareness, which increases freedom and responsibility towards choices (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 31). In the following paragraphs I want to show how awareness is mentioned as crucial in many areas, which include: pastoral leadership, emotions, beliefs, mental patterns, cultural issues, congregational use of spiritual gifts, psychological testing, science, organizational leadership, social issues such as men’s issues, life coaching, meeting management, and family/relational issues. The multiplicity (and eclectic—even disparate quality) of the sources presented is the very means by which I am intending to make the point of this section: greater awareness is essentially needed for growth in every area of human existence.

Awareness in Pastoral Leadership

Herrington et al. (2003) advocate awareness (pp. 71-75) and point to unawareness as a cause of pastoral leadership malfunctions (pp. 51, 52). McNeal (2000) wants his readers to become aware of “subplots,” factors, and “hidden scripts” (p. 78) that underlie and affect life and ministry. “Until this inquiry … is done, the leader runs a constant danger of not understanding personal vulnerabilities…. And … making blind responses” (p. 76) to “mysterious forces” (p. 118) not understood, because they are unknown.
Emotional and Worldview Awareness

The areas where greater awareness is needed include our emotions (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 51; Scazzero, 2003; Sellon & Smith, 2005, p. 14) and our beliefs: “our acts … often belie what we say—or even think—we believe” (Parks, 1986, p. 21). Strongholds of hidden mental patterns and lies are to be broken (Anderson, 2000). “You have a problem … [everybody] knows it…. The problem is … you don’t know it;” but you get “out of the box” of relational self-deception by becoming aware (Arbinger, 2002, p. 7; 2006, p. xx). Cultural issues books (Pollard, 2000) seek to heighten one’s awareness of one’s and others’ culture.

Personal Awareness and Community Involvement

Dick and Miller’s Profile of Congregational Leadership (PCL) (2003, p. 5) is a tool for greater individual and congregational self-awareness. The MBTI that Oswald and Kroeger (1988) comment on in connection to religious leadership is a tool for self-knowledge. The author of a book on abuse in the church alerts readers that the book “will most likely heighten your awareness” (Blue, 1993, p. 21). Lack of awareness is related to congregational toxicity:

Abusive members … see no sin in the damage they inflict…. Awareness of how they are thinking about what they are thinking about [is needed] … so that they can then make an intentional shift out of automatic thinking into deeper awareness and effective decision making. (Rediger, 2007, pp. 28, 117)

Awareness in the Natural and Social Sciences

Scientific truth is far more complex than we were aware of and we need to apply a different apprehension of it to all areas of our lives including leadership (Wheatley, 1999, p. 43). Awareness of the real world outside of “the cave” (Hutchens, 1999, p. 1) is what
prevents its inhabitants—and organizational leaders, to live better. Hollis wrote to unearth “secrets” (1994, p. 11) that men are not aware of regarding themselves, which limit and oppress them. Seamands (2004) describes how our awareness of ourselves is often distorted as by “mirrors” by other’s view of us in early childhood (p. 61), therefore, needing later correction.

**Awareness in Personal Development**

Coaching (G. Collins, 2001; Whitworth et al., 1998) helps clients to become aware of things in their lives that they would otherwise remain unaware of. Awareness is a concept found in the writings of all the authors in McBride’s (2009) review:

Mulholland (p. 58), Zohar and Marshall and outlined steps (pp. 64, 65), Bowell (p. 67), Bowen (p. 73), and, of course, Scazzero (pp. 57, 74, 94). The extent of the problem of unawareness is highlighted by Scazzero’s comment (2003) as he calls for a “deep, hard look inside,” “beneath the surface:”

How easy it is to remain in … illusion about our lives. Something may not be true, but … it feels right…. My … concern with … a “… look inside” is that … people believe they are already doing so…. Most Christians, I am afraid, are self-conscious, but not self-aware. (pp. 71, 77)

**Awareness in Congregational Life and in Relationships**

Awareness is needed for meeting management (Tropman, 2003, p. 83) and questions of self-knowledge are proposed to church leaders so they will integrate answers into a life-giving vision (Barna, 1991b, pp. 83-102). Schaller’s (1984) church growth book is rare in addressing a lack of congregational self-appraisal. Two of Sellon and Smith’s (2005) three relational practices involve awareness (p. v).
The forces of family, community, and time forge us in powerful ways of which we are often only dimly aware (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 13). Becoming “conscious of the realities within us and around us [is helpful]…. Recognizing … limits … encourage[s] us to make a conscious … chosen response to the questions life brings.” (p. xii)

Partial Summary

In summary, I have piled up instances where the word “awareness” related to many areas of human existence is sprinkled throughout relevant literature, hoping that concentrated repetition over two pages will bring out its importance as essential to spiritual growth into sharper focus than when scattered over the hundreds of pages represented. *Unawareness is “the problem beneath [all] other problems”* (Arbinger, 2002, p. 17, emphasis added). Awareness of hidden factors is part of spiritual growth as roots are part of a tree. Though conscious awareness is often avoided—“the condition which gives birth to all delusion … is the mind’s desire to escape truth” (Griffin, 1991, p. 210), it is the gateway to true enlightenment (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 4) and the hallmark of human evolutionary spiritual growth. We will especially benefit from becoming conscious of what we are not yet aware of in order to not be controlled negatively by it, and in order to affect it towards a life more aligned with what we are intended to be—growth. This will now be discussed.

**Our Special Need to be Aware of Our Shadow**

The term shadow describes what we are not yet aware of in ourselves—both “good” and “bad.” Because our shadow powerfully and constantly operates in us unbeknownst of us, its power is great for good or evil; it is difficult to understate the importance of this concept in our spiritual growth. It is Jung’s (Dick & Miller, 2001, p. 9;

The Shadow Described

The human shadow is elusive, in exile, and “forever in hiding” (Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. xvii) even from those searching it (cf., G. Collins, 2001, p. 175). But it never lies (Sanford, as cited by Miller, 1991, p. 21) and contains great creative energy. From our first moments, the human shadow consists of the parts of ourselves that early socialization and ego formation have taught us to hide, repress, and deny as unacceptable (Bly, 1988, p. 17), the ego being the part of us that we consciously learn to accept and develop. In outlining the task of reclaiming one’s shadow, Kelcourse (2004) describes it as:

A collection of “not-me” attributes that do in fact belong to an individual but are incompatible with one’s conscious sense of self. It is possible for positive as well as negative traits to be hidden in the shadow, waiting to be rediscovered. (p. 31).

The shadow and its contents are identified in many different ways: “mental models” (Craik, as cited by Hutchens, 1999, p. 61); “infirmities” (Seamands, 2004, p. 37); “mental patterns” and “strongholds” (Anderson, 2000, p. 60); “beliefs” and “mental patterns” (Hutchens, 1999, p. 61); “inner gremlins” (Carson, as cited in Whitworth et al., 1998, p. 9; G. Collins, 2001, p. 173); “mind-set[s]” (G. Collins, 2001, p. 172); “internal blocks” (McBride, 2009, p. 10); “patterns,” underlying agendas, and “dynamics” (Scazzero 2003, pp. 32, 104-106); “schemas” (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 4); “demons” and “mysterious forces” (McNeal, 2000, pp. 117, 118), “self-deception” (Arbinger, 2002).
Some Areas of Personal and Collective Shadow

There are as many areas of the shadow as there are of its more accepted “twin” (Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 3), which is our ego, or our persona (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 31). We all carry an individual and a collective shadow, a cultural, ethnic, and a family shadow (Taylor, 2003, pp. 96-126), a money shadow (Stanley & Clinton, 1992, p. 137), a generational and gender shadow. Countries have a political or national shadow, organizations an organizational shadow, denominations a denominational shadow, and congregations a congregational shadow:

We have a tendency to try to solve our congregational problems without addressing the real problem, namely, the inner experiences … that truly drive our congregations and leaders … the deepest and often hidden causes of difficulties in congregations … hidden, denied, or camouflaged. (Rediger, 2007, pp. 69, 70)

We even have philosophical and theological shadows: “To seek truth requires rigorous examination of one’s most elemental assumptions” (Parks, 1986, p. 12).

“Religious attitudes … need frequent reality checks because they disclose a tendency to align original teachings with spiritual convenience” (Gritsch, 2009, p. 1).

The Pervasive Influence of the Unowned Shadow

The shadow influences us unbeknownst to us until we make it conscious. “Having lived with our values for so long, we may not be aware of them” (Sellon & Smith, 2005, p. 24). “Numbers of people are … unaware of the dichotomy between their exterior and interior worlds” (Scazzero, 2003, p. 55). Our “infirmities” sabotage potentials and dreams (Seamands, 2004, pp. 49-52). “[The] shadow …. forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions” (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 2). Inner “obstacles” that remain hidden will keep
people [and organizations] stuck in old and inefficient ways of doing things …. [and] get in the way of [whatever personal or organizational] process … [while] scuttling … parts of the … [person or organization]’s life. If [we] don’t deal with these issues, they’ll [keep] popping up … and … [growth] will stall. (G. Collins, 2001, p. 174)

“Sooner or later will come the unguarded moment” (Foster, 1983, p. 5). “We act according to our actual … centers of trust (or mis-trust). Thus our acts, powered by a deeper faith, often belie what we say—or even think—we believe” (Parks, 1986, p. 21).

Recognizing and Owning the Shadow

“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious” (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 4). Awareness of the shadow involves a “descent” rather than an ascent (Hagberg, 1994, p. 231), but such humbling descent precedes spiritual growth. Only through awareness of the shadow and recognition of its influence (Scagzero, 2003, pp. 69, 87) can we start to positively use its creative power for wholeness and health. “The process … begins with … self-awareness” (Sellon & Smith, 2005, pp. 19, 41, 43). Kelcourse (2004) said:

Shadow traits, both good and bad, can be reclaimed into conscious awareness. The benefit of this effort to become self-aware is better discernment, but also more responsibility for the characteristics that one can no longer deny…. In reclaiming one’s shadow, one becomes more accepting of oneself and others. (p. 31)

Once a piece of the shadow has been met, the useful way to deal with it is to now own it as a part of the family instead of repressing or denying it once again as shameful and unworthy of love (Sellon & Smith, 2005, pp. 1, 2, 26). To do this matures it and decreases its tendency to more negatively show up sideways instead of up front when left in primitive form. Although our shadow is matured through integration—which can sound heretical to some “pure” ears, we do not have to wholesale give in to all of its
demands (Bly, 1988, pp. 50, 53), but we must “honor” it (pp. 57, 58) and enter into non-coercive “conversation” (Ulanov, 2008c, p. 82) with it.

But since the shadow is elusive and “forever in hiding” as the dark side of the moon is invisible from its lit side, how does one go about searching for and meeting it? It is a difficult task for which we need the help of others.

**Our Need of Community to Become Aware**

Others can help us see ourselves better than we can on our own. And we can more easily see in others what we reject in ourselves (“It takes one to know one”). This is not easy to accept and even to understand, so I want to explain in this section how this can work well. The next section will then show how this often works in dangerous ways that hamper spiritual growth instead of helping it.

**Community Help Towards Spiritual Growth**

I want to present here how community is widely recognized as necessary and potentially helpful to spiritual growth in many areas of human experience. Community was part of Santiago’s search in *The Alchemist* (Coelho, 1988). All persons he met contributed to his quest and the language of love by definition involves relationship (p. 92). Fellowship as key component of spiritual life has been emphasized in Warren’s best sellers (1995, 2002). Stanley and Clinton (1992) passionately observed that

a growing leader [and every “believer who desires to grow”] needs a relational network … to ensure development and a healthy perspective on his or her life and ministry…. It is imperative … [for an] anointed ministry and … [to] finish well.

(p. 159)

“It is in … [community] that our gifts are seen, known, and cherished—or blocked and ignored” (Dick & Miller, 2001, pp. 22, 53). Healing will come to society as
men enter into community with their fathers and risk to love other men (Hollis, 1994, p. 116). Ulanov and Ulanov (1975, p. 17) list community as one of five core areas shared by religion and depth-psychology in assisting spiritual growth. “Ultimate truth is communicated and received only through the being of individual persons-in-touch-with-other-persons. Man cannot know himself by himself…. Isolation is the path to destruction” (Ulanov & Ulanov, 1975, p. 18). The value of community for spiritual health and growth, even if it be one-on-one, is the reason why people seek relationships with counselors, coaches, mentors, teachers, pastors, spiritual leaders, etc., and is exemplified by the number of books written to improve such relationships. The community provided by institutions is necessary to grow an individual taller than he could on his own (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 35). The diversity highlighted by the MBTI provides people with a variety of helpful perspectives which they could not have apart from community. Nouwen’s (1989) second of three points for a ministry, In the Name of Jesus, is that it should move away from individual pretension and performance to mutual community (pp. 33-51 & 75-81). The evidence points to the paradox that social community is necessary for personal spiritual growth in general.

Community Help Towards Shadow Awareness

Our search for and meeting specifically with the shadow is also made possible through interaction with others in community. We become aware of our shadow “in the … traits and actions of other people, out there where it is safer to observe it” (Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. xviii). W. Miller (1991, pp. 38-43) suggests finding the shadow in daily life through a number of actions involving community. “Others who live and work closely with us usually pick up some of our inconsistencies and defensive maneuvers….  

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[Though] few … have the courage and skills to point them out in a mature, loving way” (Scazzero, 2003, p. 71), we need them for us to grow. The suggestion endorsed by Cauley (2010, pp. 77, 78) that social meetings should regain a place in Adventist spirituality may be helpful since community is where we can get to know ourselves. McNeal (2000) is very perceptive of the “mirror effect” for spiritual growth found in community when he states,

We can see the process of spiritual development in others more easily than we can perceive it in our own hearts. Once we learn to see God at work in others, we can then learn to look for these patterns in our own lives. (p. xvi)

McNeal is also very wise when he adds that the goal of community is “not … to remediate flaws and deficiencies” (2000 p. xvi), but simply to assist self-understanding. The easier task of helping others is often a way for us to avoid the more difficult task of helping ourselves. But unaware and not grown, we are in fact dangerous to self and others, instead of being helpful, which I now present in the next section.

**Dangers the Community Often Presents Against Growth**

Community is needed for awareness but it can easily be dangerous to individuals because we often do not want to see our own shadow. To see how this works, please follow the logical link of the following italicized sentences from paragraph to paragraph.

**Our Common Avoidance of Shadow Work**

*Owning the shadow is unpleasant and unpopular* (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 4), *so it is escaped through endless excuses* (Griffin, 1991, p. 210). “Learning to live with imperfection” (Winter, 2005 p. 133) is unsettling to idealists. It is “painful to give up the dream of glory … for the … joy of gradual emotional growth” (Sorotzkin, as cited in Winter, 2005, p. 139). To accept the plurality of the human psyche
to live in tension between two contradictory realities, is hard for people who think that only one side of them can be allowed to exist and who bury the other half. Meeting the shadow can thus be labeled as “self-preoccupation” (McNeal, 2000, p. xvi) or “morbid introspection…. What good … could come out of tapping into my unconscious or unidentified wishes, fears, and hopes?” (Scanzero, 2003, p. 55)

Shadow Repression Leads to Discrepancies and Politics

When hidden, repressed, and denied, our undeveloped shadow emotions, beliefs and agendas are still present and active alongside our professed emotions, beliefs and agendas, creating a discrepancy between the two that is noticeable and repulsive to others. “Politics is when people choose their words and actions based on how they want others to react rather than based on what they really think” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 88). “The greatest obstacle to effective leadership is people pursuing their own agenda rather than seeking God’s will” without being even aware of their doing so (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 23). Many have noticed the frequent discrepancy between profession and action, “Those who make it hardest to be a Christian in this world are the other Christians” (Enroth, 1992, p. ix).

Shadow Repression Leads to Shadow Projection

When, at our own peril (Bly, 1988, p. 81), we ignore and deny our shadow, it not only negatively affects us; we also project it “out there” on others.

In the distasteful traits and actions of other people, out there where it is safer to observe it…. We project [it] by attributing … [its] quality to … [others] in an unconscious effort to banish it from ourselves, to keep ourselves from seeing it within. (Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. xviii)
Greenleaf (1977) already noted “there is too … little disposition to see “the problem” as residing in here and not out there” (pp. 58, 59).

Shadow Projection Leads to Unsolicited Advice-Giving

*It is easy for projecting individuals who believe they care to assuage their guilt by giving unsolicited advice to the individual(s) on whom they have projected their unowned shadow.* Winnicott (as cited in Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 43) and Hunter (2010, p. 14) can be commended for admitting to speaking too much or too soon as their problem, because this is the unacknowledged problem of many more in many well-meaning communities. The intimate knowledge one has of the hidden personal problem projected on others and the very rightness of one’s solutions make it hard to withhold advice. But even such well-meant advice is perceived as judgment, an “assault”, and “violence” (Davis, 2010, pp. 30, 31).

Actual Performance Levels Are Reversely Proportional to High Pretensions

“The relative quality of staff interpersonal relations is inverse to the idealistic pretensions of the institution” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 182). “The less … [the shadow] is embodied in the individual [or organization]’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is” (Jung, as cited in Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 16). The church’s great drive towards goodness by definition creates an equally large shadow—resistance to its unearthing in the Christian community is proof of it (Dueck & Becker, 2008, pp. 3, 4; Duffie, 1968). And the exclusively good intentions of high standards in the church (e.g., “we should be loving, healthy, forgiving, moral, etc.”) paradoxically make it harder for individuals in it to be truthful about their plurality and effective in pursuing them, unwittingly creating
inside a more fermented version of what it dreads and rejects, and thus making matters worse to all. The hypocrisy inside does more harm than all the caffeine left at the door.

Scazzero (2003) quoted a church leader and related a small group experience:

Church was always a place where I felt I had to be guarded about the deepest, darkest things about myself. It was never a safe place…. We were not … honest about what was going on inside…. Everything was on the surface. (pp. 42, 46)

Why was it so? Everything was on the surface (i.e., superficial) because it was not safe to be honest about what was going on under the surface. Lack of safety in the church creates superficiality. When shadow contents are not addressed, “people tend to resolve conflict in … [dangerous] ways” (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 101, 103). The dangers to clergy and laity alike of triangulation and hidden intergenerational family dynamics trickling down in church life have been pointed out by many others (Kelcourse, 2004, pp. 55, 56; Taylor, 2003, pp. 91, 92).

*The same dangers identified as coming from individuals in the organization are present and amplified at the corporate level.*

Unsolicited Corporate Advice-Giving Creates Pressure Counterproductive to True Growth

*Corporate teaching and advice-giving are also perceived as judgment and violence* (Davis, 2010, p. 31)—*only more so*. That is why McNeal was very wise when quickly adding that the goal of community is “not … to remediate flaws and deficiencies” (2000, p. xvi), but simply to assist self-understanding.

*Teaching and advice-giving create a culture centered on performance instead of safety, which enables conformity rather than awareness and true growth.*

There are churches and fellowship groups where one can observe honest and open confession of life’s struggles in a context of grace and acceptance. [Unfortunately
though,] ... many churches give the impression that their first priorities are performance and appearance. (Winter, 2005, p. 145)

Coercive Force Seen as Apt Means of Pressure Towards “Growth”

“Where love rules, there is no will to power; and where power predominates, there love is lacking. The one is the shadow of the other” (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 62). The temptation to rationalize force as apt instrument to encourage spiritual growth was the greatest of the tests endured by Jesus and the cause of the evils perpetrated by the church (Nouwen, 1989, pp. 58, 59). Gritsch (2009) especially amplified this in unpacking the history and theology of triumphalism in the church (pp. 85-130). The culture of success, coercion, and right-handed power, as Capon (2002) termed it, is a human temptation (pp. 15-25). Greenleaf (1977) tried to mitigate it in Servant Leader. But this huge philosophical shadow easily overpowers the best intentions of Christian vulnerability and brokenness. “The church has a bad record of diagnosing the evil of toxic spirituality” (Gritsch, 2009, p. 7), requiring from it an initial willingness to examine its theological and organizational shadows, and constant vigilance subsequently.

Corporate Structures That Enable Individuals to Lawfully Harm Others

Structural shadows work jointly with individual shadows for increased harm:

Toxins … are often composed of multiple toxic substances, each toxic in itself but more potent in combination. This multiplying effect is recognized in the field of biochemistry, but is less understood in organized religion. We say, “One bad apple spoils the rest,” but may fail to take precautions to separate congregational toxins and deal with each appropriately. (Rediger, 2007, p. 7)

The damage that any citizen could inflict to anyone in the former U.S.S.R. was ultimately enabled and caused by the country’s legislative and judiciary structures (Morin, 1983). Likewise, punitive projections of unaddressed personal shadow in leaders
and members on others in the church are not prevented and curbed but enabled and amplified by systemic structures based on unaddressed organizational shadows.

Toxic congregations [and religious organizations suffer from an] … inability to see or understand their toxicity and its consequences. They lack self-awareness. In fact they may regard as legitimate and normal what we can see as toxicity.... [They] claim frequently that they are keeping the congregation [or religious organization] doctrinally pure, they see no sin in the damage they inflict. (Rediger, 2007, pp. 22, 28)

The Pervasiveness of Harmful Scapegoating in Religious Communities

_Scapegoating damaging to all_ (Joy, 1991, pp. 150-153; Lyon, 2010, pp. 141-156) is, therefore, common in religious organizations. Pascal’s words regarding evil and religion are true though perhaps over quoted; but “solutions thought of while under self-deception actually make matters worse” (Arbinger, 2002, p. viii). Peck defines evil people as chronic scapegoaters who are destructive in their attempts to destroy evil while making the mistake of projecting the locus of evil in others rather than seeing it in their own self (Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 178).

Scapegoating allows socially and institutionally sanctioned violence (Lyon, 2010, p. 152). All four of Gritsch’s (2009) isms have been and are grounds for justifying the use of force and violence in the Christian context. “The shadow [in others] is “what … is to be punished … behind every social oppression lurks a piece of group shadow whose members are exporting onto others” (Ulanov, 2008b, pp. 56, 57). “Organized religion … [is] home to … goodness and evil” (Rediger, 2007, p. 1) and “religious beliefs have … encouraged … humankind’s greatest atrocities” (Johnson, 2010, p. 170). Johnson uses … strong words (pp. 170, 171): “oppression,” “theological sadism,” “we feel invaded and imposed upon by … ‘official’ religious interpretations (re: “how we should believe … [and live]”).” It is a vicious circle: lack of community safety hampers shadow awareness;
and shadow unawareness creates dangers by creating and enabling punitive projection—scapegoating.

Partial Summary

In partial summary of the sequence I delineated, awareness through community is needed for growth, but owning one’s personal shadow is unpleasant and, therefore, unpopular. An unowned shadow remains active however, creating dangers to self and others: hypocritical duplicity, projection, unsolicited advice giving, and relational problems. The higher an organization’s idealistic pretensions, the larger its unowned shadow and the greater the attendant corporate dangers it creates against growth: teachings experienced as violence, conformism, scapegoating, and structurally sanctioned use of coercive power. This is a sequence that despite its simplicity may be hard to understand partly because we want to evade the pain of accepting it and the work of growing ourselves. But to understand it is a crucial first step both for our own growth and to fulfill our intention of helping the growth of others around us and in the church. “Faith communities … are intended to provide opportunities for reparation and redemption” (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 5). The intentions are good. Unfortunately, however, because of the combination of individual unawareness with corporate retention of coercive capability for “gospel” advancement, faith communities often perpetuate and aggravate wounding instead of offering opportunities for “redemption” and development. The effects of leaving shadows in the dark include actualized danger and violence (Lyon, 2010, p. 152), but even more sadly, no growth, spiritual or otherwise! There is only one way out:

For social justice and compassion to be more fully realized [and for danger to be curbed and safety increased in the church], we must be aware of the interrelatedness of personal and social dynamics, and the effects of unconscious processes in both. (p. 154)
But this can only occur when some step is taken to break the negative cycle so that we can personally feel safe enough to give growth a chance. Some safety has to be intentionally created through the replacement of danger-enabling structures by safety-enabling structures, so that now safe, we may be willing to start being vulnerable, to become aware, and to truly grow.

The Safety We Could Create to Help People Grow

Safety is an essential condition needed in a community that intends to give support to spiritual development, because genuine spiritual growth is a personal, long, and “inherently iterative process” (J. Collins, 2001, p. 114). It will of necessity involve losses, and trial and errors will need to be overlooked, accepted, and forgiven by ourselves and others. Nothing but conformity and fake growth will occur without the safety to err with impunity over whatever time it takes for each individual to find his or her personal path. The next three subsections unpack why community safety serves the process of spiritual growth as described through the three adjectives italicized above.

Safety Is Needed Because Spiritual Growth Is a Personal Process

A community that intends to provide support for spiritual growth must be safe because spiritual growth must be a personal process, led by (Hollis, 2005, p. 10) or through (Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, pp. 32-37) the self (Aziz, 1990, pp. 21-22, 29-31), according to one’s “own growth strategy” (McBride, 2009), and with oneself “in control of … [one’s] own … [life]” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 185).
Safety Is Needed Because Spiritual Growth Is a Lifelong Process

A community that intends to provide support for spiritual growth considers being safe because spiritual growth is a long process, a “life-sentence” (John L. Beck, Personal Communication, July 19, 2010). The healing of damaged emotions is a slow “process” (Seamands, 2004, p. 89). Curbing anesthetic addictions is a life-long endeavor (Jampolsky, 2008; Shaeffer, 2009). “Years of patient travelling may be needed before the goal of our midlife journey shows up and that profound process of self-perception enters on its final lap” (O’Collins, 1978, p. 68).

Safety Is Needed Because Spiritual Growth Is a Process Involving Changes and Mistakes

Safety is important because spiritual growth is a process that of necessity involves losses. Because faith tends to address different issues in different eras of the life cycle (Fowler, as cited in Dykstra & Parks, 1986, p. 7), newer perspectives will not be compatible with previous or subsequent ones, or with those of different persons at different stages of their journey.

Forms of faith are finite…. Again and again we [have to] undergo the loss of our most cherished patterns of meaning and anchors of trust as we discover their insufficiency.

A richer perception of the phenomenon of faith … enables us to recognize that the recomposing of truth … may indeed necessitate a change in or abandonment of a particular set of “beliefs”—and yet be important to the task of “faith.” (pp. 15, 13)

Permission to safely experience grief and loss is, therefore, an important principle for churches where spiritual growth can occur (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 152-171).

And a community that intends to provide support for spiritual growth may need to consider being safe because spiritual growth is an inside process that’s inherently iterative: it will of necessity involve many errors. Though outside behavior is typically
most observed and judged in religious communities (Winter, 2005, p. 145), it is the inside that matters most, no matter what detours and turns this inner work takes on the outside. Peck (1993) is a godsend in writing of addiction as “the sacred disease” (pp. 135-150), of “the blessing of alcoholism” (p. 146), in acknowledging that the therapeutic process involves bringing up “all kind of things that people shouldn’t talk about” (2003, pp. 6, 7), and in declaring that depression (p. 69) or a mid-life crisis (p. 71) are conditions that can be healthy catalysts of a willingness to give up ineffective old ways so as to adopt new ones that are working better (p. 72)—spiritual growth.

Hollis (1996) includes a full presentation of many more such paradoxical blessings in *Swampland of the Soul* (pp. 207-234)—also a source of comfort, hope, and meaning for members, who in their pain often get words of counsel or looks of patronizing commiseration or condemnation rather than true help. Likewise, how refreshing and healthy, though probably shocking to some, to read Luther reporting that he occasionally indulged in some intentional “sin” (Winter, 2005, pp. 71, 72). For many in conservative Christian contexts, a cup from Starbucks is one of only a few ways available to start testing the waters of safety for growth with other believers.

This of course sets off all the alarm buttons in Christians for whom Christianity is about enforceable social conformity rather than about personal growth—as well as in the parents among us. But besides necessitating a paradigm shift in how we relate to others, this also requires us to do what Wheatley (1999) was called to do when observing forces that generate order out of chaos. “I want to trust in this universe so much that I give up playing God. I want to stop struggling to hold things together” (p. 23).
Safety also involves our being able to trust those whom we seek as supportive community in our spiritual growth:

Trust is the confidence among team members that their peers’ intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. In essence teammates must get comfortable being vulnerable with one another. … The costs of failing to do this are great. (Lencioni, 2002, pp. 195, 196)

Trust is often easier with people who have shared our experience: “Coaches can’t work with someone else where they haven’t already gone themselves” (G. Collins, 2001, p. 206). “We can trust only a person who shares our pain” (Anderson, 2001, p. 306).

Someone who has an “aroma of brokenness” (Sczazero, 2003, p. 120) because of having personally experienced brokenness makes others feel safe by his or her presence.

The Need for Structural Safety to Enable Spiritual Growth

But again, safety is not always spontaneous: a safe place often has to be intentionally created (Sczazero, 2003, p. 106). Though one-on-one coaching or counseling may be a first step to experiencing safety (p. 31), multiplied growth is fostered through multiple relationships (Stanley & Clinton, 1992). But the addiction of humanity to “the bitch goddess: success” (James, as cited in Hollis, 2005, p. 170) is rampant. So, welcoming brokenness towards growth involves a paradigm shift, and safety that would make us willing to reveal brokenness must be intentionally created for areas of our lives that we avoid and hide from others and ourselves: our limits (Sczazero, 2003, p. 132), handicaps (p. 118), weaknesses (p. 112), and losses (Capon, 1988). Bly (1988, 2004) and Hagberg (1994) speak of the necessary “descent” for growth, and the Bible talks about death as the way to life, but these activities—being vulnerable, losing, descending, dying—are all activities in which we would be more willing to engage before others whom we need to help us, if every effort had been made prior to the exercise to create a
community safe enough for doing so without additional fears of judgment and punishment—a place where dangers such as the ones presented in the previous sections have been outlawed and minimized, instead of encouraged.

Some Essential Aspects of the Needed Structural Safety

The creation of an environment safe for growth involves structural components. The safety of the coaching environment is crucial (Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. xvii-xx). Safety involves confidentiality: nothing shared will be disclosed or use against the client. It involves listening, trust (p. 16), veracity, that is, the whole truth can be said without worries of judgment or consequences (pp. 16, 17). It includes spaciousness with unconditional support no matter what the person decides to do (p. 18). It also involves giving the people being coached permission to discover in freedom for themselves. The client owns the process and the coach only helps the client own their own process.

Listening and accountability as totally judgment free are emphasized in a safe environment (Whitworth et al., 1998). Such clarity stands in contrast to the uncertainty a reader can be left with when reading the well-intended recommendation that social meetings should regain a central place in Adventist spirituality but with an intended purpose that “through this spiritual (social) meeting, missionaries (members of the local Seventh-day Adventist church) are held accountable to one another” (Cauley, 2010, p. 78). As was probably meant by Cauley, a safe community is not the place where accountability is enforced, but where people can safely hold themselves accountable on their own term with guaranteed immunity.

In professional coaching, accountability doesn’t include blame, scolding, punishment, of judgment. Accountability is a tool for the client’s action and learning. To be accountable simply means that: to give an account. What worked? What didn’t work? What happened? What would you do different the next time? … As coaches we hold
clients accountable—not to see them perform, or measure how well they perform, but to empower the change they want to make. (Whitworth et al., 1998, p. 81)

Summary

In the previous six sections, review of relevant literature in a number of areas connected to my subject has yielded that spiritual growth is the personal task of developing greater integrity with one’s true self (Section 1). But it is difficult to change or actuate what we are not aware of; therefore, spiritual growth entails greater conscious awareness of reality, instead of escaping it (Section 2). Because of the nature of the shadow part of ourselves—the part of ourselves that we know and accept less, always hiding from us and more easily seen by us in the mirror others present to us (Section 3), this task can benefit from being pursued in community rather than alone (Section 4). However, our reluctance to become aware and work causes human community—including the church community, to easily present dangers to those who would dare to enlist its help in dealing with tender areas and issues in their lives (Section 5). In such circumstances, the spiritual growth that comes through added awareness is thwarted until safety is intentionally created through structures in a community that will provide safe support for spiritual growth (Section 6). This is a cycle of safety, awareness and growth leading to greater safety, or of danger, unawareness, and no growth leading to greater danger. The key to growth is therefore to do whatever it takes to create structural safety that will enable the practice of safety. As much as practiced safety is needed, structural safety is even more foundational than practiced safety because to enable practiced safety, structural safety must precede it.
Conclusion

Structural Safety Is Foundational to Physical and Spiritual Growth

Safety is a foundational need to life in general. Our first two human fears at birth include the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises: we need not only to feel safe but first, to be safely held. Then, the first human developmental task is to learn how to trust a safe environment. According to Rediger (2007), there are three agendas of human behavior (survival, identity and relationship), each with its attending emotion (fear, anger, and sadness), the first and most basic being the most potent and the least conscious (pp. 71, 72). One cannot move to a higher agenda without first answering the question of the previous one. The first question concerning survival (Am I safe here?) must be answered before the higher meaning-making identity question (Who am I?) can be asked. If threats occur to the foundational issues of survival and safety, the individual reverses from seeking answers to the higher questions of meaning-making to those of the lower concern: safety. Kelcourse (2004) concurs with this when she writes, “In anthropological terms, trusting faith is foundational … a red thread that links all our experiences of receptivity to self, others, and God” (p. 7). Spiritual growth is directly dependent on safety; it is foundational for spiritual growth, and to optimized effectiveness.

Structural Safety Is Foundational to Organizational Effectiveness

That this kind of safety is foundational to effectiveness (i.e., functionality, instead of “dysfunction”) is illustrated by the fact that the trust building involved in “forming a guiding coalition” is only second in Kotter’s (1996) eight steps to Leading Change: “trust is always an essential ingredient in teamwork” (p. 60). This is even better illustrated in Lencioni’s (2002) model and charts (pp. 174, 188). There, trust is placed at the bottom,
that is, at the very first, foundational, level of the pyramid. There is no other component more foundational below it. Safety and trust make possible all other components of effectiveness when present, and impossible when absent; effective “teamwork begins by building trust” (p. 63). Safety is foundational for dealing with all factors that will either create effectiveness or detract from it. Little growth and few effective results can be expected to occur without commitment and accountability, but people are unlikely to take such commitment and venture into such accountability without first knowing that it is safe for them to do so.

Cohen (1995) demonstrates professional concern to not turn off the person being mentored through premature confrontation or directiveness, and financial concerns are relevant as motivators for businesses to eliminate potential dangers out of their business relationships. Productivity flounders when safety is not adequate. Even in the context of the church, “Facilities and programs, no matter how excellent, do not finally satisfy unless the deeper relational needs are met” (Sellon & Smith, 2005, p. 6).

Deadly and impairing realities … [cause] much abuse to pastors and collateral damage to congregations and denominations…. Unless … [foundational problems such as safety are addressed] … a portion of [a congregation or organization’s] … energy will be dissipated in confusion, defensiveness, or in trying to heal itself in inappropriate ways…. Such congregations [where damage occurs because of lack of safety] are … one of the chief causes of decline in spiritual health, lowered levels of outreach and mission, waning membership, and diminishing financial resources of the entire church. (Rediger, 2007, pp. 7, 33, 34, 45)

Besides possible financial implication urging the church to work towards increased safety, would not the spiritual cost of non-growth be enough of an incentive to help it decide to put increased safety at the top of its agenda by creating the more foundational structural safety needed so that safe relations for awareness towards growth can be practiced in it?
CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SAFETY, AWARENESS, AND GROWTH

Introduction

Since spiritual growth by necessity involves trial-and-error, it requires the help and forbearance of others instead of the danger of their judgment and condemnation: a safe community. The simple idea of this project is that the church will better carry its intention of helping people grow spiritually if it makes itself safe for people to do so in it.

In this chapter’s four sections, I elaborate on how the links between the three basic concepts of my project—growth, awareness and safety, are also found and affirmed in the Bible. In section one (Plurality) I first clarify what biblical sanctification is not. It is not about the repression or destruction of what initially appears to be bad because it is undeveloped—as some traditional understandings of sanctification would have it, but about the identification, integration and development of those parts needing maturation towards wholeness. Section two (Sanctification) develops an outline of this comprehensive task especially showing the crucial role that awareness of yet-undeveloped parts in ourselves plays in it. Section three (Safety with God) describes from a Christian perspective the safety which God created for this process by eliminating all negative consequences in the gospel. Section four (Safety in God’s Church) delineates God’s intention that the church reflect this safety for growth, and the discrepancy there
often exists between his intention and reality. The biblical data of the conclusion proposes unexpected answers as to why such discrepancy exists.

This is not a formal exegetical study but a free interpretative theological essay not limited to the intellectual restrictions of exegetical science in which, while aiming at logic and faithfulness to reality, I reflect on the Bible by tapping into intuition and imagination. Many texts are cited, but this should not be disparaged as “proof texting.” In-depth study of one passage is one of many ways the Bible can be absorbed. An extensive use of texts shows how widely the concepts are presented in the Bible and their compatibility with it.

Plurality as a Foundation for the Understanding of Sanctification

Plurality in God and Primordial History

A farmer’s horse escaped to return with wild horses. At training, a horse broke the farmer’s son’s leg. As friends visited, the farmer repeated: “Good, bad, who knows?” The army recruited, but the broken leg kept the boy home (Forest, 1996, p. 35). Judgments of things being “good,” “not good,” and “good and evil” are not absent from the first pages of Genesis, but it is not always completely clear what’s good and what’s not: Is darkness part of goodness though not termed good? Are water, land, radioactivity, salt, or wind “good?” Potential for good exists in each. The identification/separation/division (Gen 1:4, 7) and integration of matured opposites (light/darkness, sky/land, land/water, etc.) created goodness (Gen 1:31). God blessed as “very good” the variety of differentiated astral, vegetal, animal, and sexual creation. He created butterfly and storm, the green watery ball and the ball of fire that warms it and everything in between (Job 38-41).

The question stays as things turned “negative.” One wonders about God’s foresight: he allowed the serpent and tree in the garden, warned man to not eat of it, said,
“It is not good that man be alone” (Gen 2:18), and created the woman. Nowhere in the Bible is a reason for the tree given. The fact is: having explored it, humans knew evil and good. The clearest hint to resolve the dilemma is in God’s words after “the Fall”: “Man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil” (Gen 3:22, emphasis added).

In creating humankind, God intended that humanity be like God (Gen 1:26). At the Fall, the serpent postulated that “knowing good and evil” (even “knowing” in a biblical sense, leading to procreation)—is linked to having creative powers, like God (Gen 3:5). Lastly, God confirmed this link in his own observation after “the Fall” from innocence: now that the “forbidden” knowledge was acquired, “Man has [now] become like one of Us…” (Gen 3:22, emphasis added). Though like all parents, God had initial ambivalence (Gen 2:16) about sharing the “key” (“The key is [always to be taken from] under your mother’s pillow” [Bly 2004, p. 11, 12]), his observation confirms that its acquisition by Adam and Eve completed an important developmental stage in the life of his “children”, fulfilling his intention that humanity be “like” God (Gen 1:26; 3:5; 3:22, emphasis added). “Negative” consequences ensued: the innocent child in them died that day, joys and woes of relationships and childbirth would come, and instead of playing in the garden, man had to earn a living; but Christianity sees the ultimate consequence as falling on God.

Is “sin” then not sinful? Was the event interpreted by Paul thousands of years later as a major accident caused by woman (1 Tim 2:14) only a potentially dangerous part of the plan? I am aware other interpretations of the passage can (and should) be given (Heb 4:12a) and that answers to these questions suggested by the previous paragraph may seem shocking. But we should not act shocked. Popular theology reveals our gratitude for the
benefits of “the Fall,” glorying in humanity’s superiority over “unfallen [angelic] beings” (White, 2002, p. 308): “For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings” (Review & Herald, 1985, #425); (and they sure did not). Could these unsettling questions then point to a more inclusive, effective, safe, and godly way of dealing with “sin” towards real sanctification and maturity? What we think is bad may have precious potential for good.

Plurality in Our Being

Are we mostly bad, good, or with potential for both? The determination of what is bad or good in us affects whether we see sanctification as repression or as maturation—and the results, both ways. Neutral words like self, ego, flesh, world, have mostly acquired negative connotations in Christianity: self is a villain; selfishness, evil; “I”, center of sin. Scripture admonishes to deny oneself (Mark 8:34). But is repressing our drives as bad what is meant? Loss of creative energies has occurred through sonnets like: “JOY: Jesus first, others second, you last.” Some even distrust “soul” and “spirit” in fear of “spiritualism” and related issues. But these negative readings create reliance on outward “truth” easily tampered with, and minimize intuition and perception as valuable guides. Hedged by fears that their self, ego, body, soul, spirit and world are mostly sinful, many Christians have no workable handle to hear and follow immanent truth personally given them and necessary for their growth. They are only able to access a blind and repressive god and are “tone-deaf” (Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 21) to truth for growth.

To restore a positive view of these words is helpful and faithful to reality; to keep them bagged as wholly “bad” is harmful spiritually and otherwise. In God’s image, our ego can not only be egotistic but also a good steward. Beyond the possibility of being
selfish, we also have selfhood not to be sacrificed to conformity. “Whatever is not done from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). Growth toward selfhood is not a burden but light, because it flows from holistic truth (Matt 11:28). We need to tune to the self, not disparage it.

The ego’s concerns for survival, comfort, status, outwardly determined success, are legitimate, but can distract from the self’s deeper call (Nouwen, 1989). We must heed it before blood relationships (Matt 12:50) though it cut the ego’s agenda (Matt 18:8). “Let [a man] deny himself [i.e., ‘his ego’] and follow me” (Mark 8:35). Placing conformity above self is costly (Matt 10:28; Mark 8:36). The self wants the “pearl” or “treasure”; the ego can safely be sacrificed for it (Gal 2:19-20). Jesus’ ego-“less”-ly entered his passion to fill the higher demands of self. In a match with inner truth, outward truth must back off. Talks of “rejecting self” have locked cripples (John 5:5) in conformity, depriving them of courage needed to be renewed into the “perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2).

To read the Bible this way is liberating. The self is the midnight friend who knocks at midlife (Luke 11:8), the neglected Lazarus who gets rewarded with a second life (Luke 16:22). The self worships God in truth (John 4:23, 24) not for a show (Matt 6:5). The inner temple must be cleansed not of the true self through which God is heard, but of religious items that clog that relationship (John 2:14-16). We need water for daily life, but waters of Life are provided through selfhood (John 4:13, 14). But before, the ego must be exposed for a fraud (John 4:16), even when this takes religious forms (John 4:21). Though amplified by witness (John 4:39-42), the harvest is white (John 4:35) for God has been growing it in each life experience (Capon, 2002, pp. 69-70). The Spirit through the self points the way (John 3:22; John 14:6) and brings a divine perspective by making the darkness conscious (John 3:14) “not to condemn but to save” (John 3:17),
that is, to integrate every part in stewarding creation (Gen 1:28).

We become aware through the self (“I am the light of the world” John 9:5). It intimately knows us. We know the Shepherd (John 10:4) through it. The grain that needs a regenerating demise is not the self but the ego (John 12:24, 25). The ego will become weary and fall (Isa 40:30), but those who relinquish it for truth will gain (Isa 40:31). The ego finds it hard to receive the spirit of truth (John 14:17). Its comfort is threatened by growth mediated by the self as the self gets teachings and remembrance of useful things at the right time (John 14:26). Paul called “dung” “good” things of the ego—not of the self (Phil 3:7). The self is that part of us through which we access knowledge gathered since before conception (Ps 139), that knows where to “tinker” (Seamands, 2004, p. 23), heal (Rom 8:26, 27), and engineer growth towards wholeness (Hollis, 2005, p. 10).

Sanctification does not occur in the quick repression of what is initially perceived as bad in self or elsewhere. It starts in recognition of plurality in God, creation, and us as good, followed by an identification of all parts of ourselves in awareness, maturation of their potential for good, and integration towards wholeness that reflects God’s image and intentions.

**Sanctification**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, *holy*, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:1-2)

The words of the above text are italicized below as substantiation for its following interpretation. This text speaks to me about biblical sanctification because sanctification (from Latin) is to become *holy* (from German), a word specifically found in it.
Sanctification is based on the mercies of God, that is, God’s unconditional acceptance of us in Christ apart from work (Section three, below). We all approach this task of growth as equals ("brethren") no one inferior or superior to others. We, therefore, can only “beseech” one other to consider it, with no authority to use force such as judgment, condescension, etc., as means to coerce others to accomplish it (Section four below).

Sanctification corresponds to “individuation” in the previous chapter. This is justified by the meaning of the word “holy” in Hebrew, that is, k’dosh, “separated” (for God’s use). Sanctification is to be “separated” (Heb.) for God’s purpose in our individual creation, that is, progressively individuated from herd conformity. This entails the formation of one’s unique self by our stewardship (Gen 1:26)—through maturation and integration, not repression—of all its unique parts.

Body first refers to the whole “being”; sanctification includes all of life. The text refers to all aspects of life involved in this task: its physical aspect (present your bodies), intellectual aspect (renewing of your mind), and spiritual aspect—the soul (that you may prove that ... will of God) so that we live in worship or service (id. in Heb.) to God. These three aspects are cited in the sh’ma (Deut 6:5), the great commandment (Mark 12:30), and 1 Thess 5:23. All creation is good (Gen 1:11-28). As part of humanity’s care for creation (Gen 2:15; 1:26), sanctification involves caring for every part of us. God must sanctify us “completely” (1 Thess 5:23). It is a process towards wholeness.

In typical Hebrew fashion, the Hebrew writer of Rom 12:1-2 describes the process of sanctification starting with the end. Sanctification starts in the soul, where one “knows what one knows” and “proves” everything to the test of personal truth. It then
goes to the “mind,” involving two separate actions of the mind. The first is a negation (“do not …”) of conformity (“… be conformed”) to the world, which I see as the acquisition of a healthy mature ability to now reject outward influence (from any well-intended source that previously held temporary God-status, such as parents, church, society, etc.) now judged to contradict God’s personal call because it does not fit the individual. And the second is the adoption of a “new” (“be ye renewed”) that the individual knows fits him or her better. The teleological goal of sanctification defined this way is that God’s unique purpose for the individual be actuated in the world by the “body” in all activities of life. This requires focus: a living “sacrifice” to the living God.

However, for all parts of our being to be matured, integrated, and actuated for the glory of God, they first need to be identified. Our awareness of them is needed, instead of our repressing them, which I will now cover in the next subsection on “Awareness.”

Awareness

You say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to... anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. (Rev 3:17, 18)

“You do not know.” Not knowing—lack of awareness, is the basic problem. “Our conscious intentions are … crossed by … relatively unknown—opponents in the unconscious” (Hannah, 1991, p. 296). “Infirmities … are qualities … which … predispose … us to sin … without … conscious choice on our part” (Seamands, 2004, p. 38). Sin “so easily besets us” (Heb 12:1). “The heart is deceptive above everything” (Jer 17:9). We are all “wounds” from head to toe (Isa 1:6). “Confusion of heart” (Deut 28:28) is a condition of all exiles (Gen 3:24). It requires “vigilance” (1 Pet 5:8), being “wise as serpents” (Matt 10:16) even in regards to dangers within. All must ask: “Search
me … know my heart” (Ps 139:23) because “the condition which gives birth to all
delusion … is the minds’ desire to escape truth” (Griffin, 1991, p. 210). Lack of
awareness is root to every ill and a willingness to become aware is a basis for all good.
Awareness is the first step (of 12-step programs) or competency (Ramirez, in Pollard,
2000, p. 116) in any conversion, change of mind (Gr. metanoia) or return (Heb. t’shuva).
Only when aware of the world and ego’s lies, can one turn away from them and toward
truth:

The … [NT] says the devil is father of lies…. The shadow never lies; it’s the ego that
lies about its real motives. That’s why successful psychotherapy, and any genuine
religious conversion, requires absolute honesty about oneself. (Sanford, as cited by
Miller, 1991, p. 21)

The prodigal “came to himself” (Luke 15:17, emphasis added), and started walking. Both
the first and the new birth enacted in baptism involve a new awareness and leaving a now
inadequate old for a better working new.

Despite a tendency in Christianity to hide, repress, and deny unwelcome aspects
of ourselves, Sanford (Sanford, as cited by Miller, 1991, p. 21) sees our becoming whole
as involving awareness of everything early socialization has taught us to reject as not
fitting the ego ideal. Jesus was not alone to meet the dark side (Matt 4:1-11); we all do.
Strongholds (2 Cor 10:3-5) must be pulled down as they hide synenergetic parts of us to
be matured—needed for wholeness, “animals in the basement” (Ulanov, 2008b, p. 57)
“of the ark” (de Souzenelle, 2008, p. 23).

Sanctification is more about healing inner wounds that cause us to malfunction
than fixing outward performance. Outward performance without inner cleanliness is often
overvalued (Matt 23:25-28) but God first saved/healed us (Sozo, Gr. “to save” and “to
heal”) so we could then grow. Stating that religion is “our mother tongue,” Ulanov and
Dueck (2008) posit that depth-psychology is a “corrective to an overly spiritualized faith” (p. 25). I find fascinating the timing of depth-psychology in an Adventist understanding of this time as anti-typical day of the cleansing of the sanctuary, and of its task as proclamation of the everlasting gospel. Anyone hoping that real change can be mediated solely through disciplines that mostly address the conscious—preaching, studying, or teaching, “might appear slightly naïve” (Capon, 1988, p. 100; Jones, 2010, p. 113). Only the arts (Bly, 1988, p. 66; Ulanov, 2008a, p. 32; Ulanov & Ulanov, 1975, pp. 27, 25) approximate the effectiveness of this tool for removing causes of our shortcomings from the inner sanctuary of our psyches.

Paradoxically, the coming to awareness needed for sanctification (i.e., for growth) entails a “descent” rather than an “ascent” (Bly, 2004, p. 56-91; Hagberg, 1994, p. 231; Young, 2007). I will italicize the words that connect the following substantiating examples with the thesis sentence which I just stated: Noah was locked up with “the wild herd” down below (de Souzenelle, 2008, p. 23). The partnership of the black raven with a white dove suggests the complementary roles of unearthing darkness to seeking light (Bly, 1988, p. 7). Besides hardships in Padan Aram, the catalyst for Jacob’s breakthrough was a nocturnal wrestling through which he came out champion (McNeal, 2000, p. 117).

Jonah (de Souzenelle, 2008), “dove,” son of Amitai, “my truth,” needed a descent in his guts (recesses of a big fish, Jonah 1:17-2:2) and the folds of his brain (through the failing shade of a withered plant, Jonah 4:7-8) to see himself (the images in this luminous story are far too numerous to all be italicized and must be taken in as intuitively as one can). The treasure is in dirt (Matt 13:44), not in heaven; the pearl of great price (Matt 13:45) in the depths, not floating on the surface. Down there, “sanctification” takes on
new meaning: “by their fruits ye shall know… (Matt 7:16), by their roots you shall understand … not judge them” (Seamands, 2004, p. 12).

Jesus (John 21:18) pointed to powerlessness as way to meaning (Nouwen, 1989, pp. 61-64). The life of Christ was a kenosis, an emptying and a descent (Phil 2:8) as it is for us. It is in loving ourselves as the “glory of God” in “shadowy” (Hillman, 1991, p. 242; Ulanov, 2008c, pp. 79, 82) faces (2 Cor 3:18; 4:6), that we become more fully human (Dan 7:13), not dangerously beastly (Dan 7:3-8).

Though necessary for sanctification (i.e., growth), recognizing our darker aspects is unpleasant, so we delay doing it (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 4) in the illusion that we can hide (Gen 3:7-10). But “spiritual things are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). “You have a problem, [everyone] knows it” (Arbinger, 2002, p. 7). “There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known” (Matt 10:26; Luke 12:2). Inner reality “that … we do not bring to consciousness appears in our lives as fate” (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. v) in matching details.

Moses hid the Egyptian (Exod 3:12) but had to hide from Egypt (Exod 2:15). Jacob heeded his mother in tricking his blind father, causing his brother distress and loss (Gen 27:1-38), but he was tricked in blindness of the night by his mother’s brother into union to sisters (Gen 29:23-25) wherein he lost peace he could have had (Gen 47:9). Thank goodness that something was put in us that will urge us to grow, even if we are reluctant.

Can we be made willing to see apart from crisis? (Hutchens, 1999, p. 68). Because it brings a visible crisis, alcoholism is “a blessing.” AA has “genius;” it maintains the crisis (Buechnner, 1991; Peck, 1998, p. 146). “Grace can only descend on
what is … willing to claim its own destitution” (Fjerkenstad, 1991, p. 227). “Harlots” are ahead of saints (Matt 21:31) because since “we [the “good people”] will never get caught, our process will [often] never begin” (pp. 229, 230). But caught or not, becoming aware of reality and especially of darker parts in us is an ineluctable necessity for growth (i.e., sanctification).

Welcome

Once aware of them, what are we to do with unacceptable parts of ourselves? We are not to despise or kill them but instead care for “the least of them” (Matt 25:40). It starts with confessing them (Gen 2:19). “Confession” is not a transaction—confessing to one who grants absolution in exchange of penance, sorrow or resolve. “L’odot” (Heb.) is from ‘Ed (Heb.) “witness” from ‘Ayin “eye.” “Exomologeo” (Gr.) even means giving praise to someone’s honor: To confess is to start welcoming by honoring and acknowledging.

How far can our love extend to the broken … ruined parts of ourselves, the disgusting and … perverse? How far can we build an inner society on the principle of love, allowing a place for everyone?… Loving oneself is no easy matter … it means loving all of oneself, including … where one is inferior and socially so unacceptable. (Hillman, 1991, p. 242)

“Nothing about … [us] can be changed without being first accepted” (Kopp, 1991, p. 247). And it is not so if only provisionally on the condition of later change. Instead of hating, ignoring or tolerating, learn to “love the man [or the woman] in the mirror” (W. Rick Broniec, personal communication, February 24, 2011).

This is not unbiblical; complementarities are in God (Exod 13:21), creation is the integration of matured opposites (Gen 1). Jewish tradition recognizes a perennial Yetzer ha-Ra existing prior to the Yetzer ha-Tov. “Non-chosen” humanity was allowed a place
to dwell (Gen 12:10), and the writings contain shocking wisdom (Prov 8:12). “There is a 
time for everything” (Eccl 3:1-8). “Who can make straight what God … made crooked?” 
(Eccl 7:13). “Don’t be overly righteous or … wise” (v. 16a).

Though religion may mean well (John 16:2) in disposing of undesirable parts, a 
repression of darkness for an exclusive pursuit of light only worked in times of “revival” 
under the anticipation (Saul), experience (Elijah), or memory (Nehemiah) of hardship.
Such methods have not been able to maintain morality well and long in regular times.

Instead, Jesus advocated a pacific relationship even with the “undesirables”
referred to in the following paragraph, an inclusive talk with no coercive force involved. 
Agree with a brother (even in you) having ought against you (Matt 5:24). Do not resist an 
evil person (even in you) (Matt 5:38-42). Win the enemy (Matt 6:43-48). Blessedness 
comes through sorrow (Matt 5:3-12). The drag net gathers every kind (Matt 13:47). The 
crooked steward is praised (Luke 16:8). The wounded (Luke 10:34) and all parts (of 
one self) are to be cared for (Matt 25:35-40), and honored at the table (Luke 14:7-24).

Jesus loved the “little, last, least, and lost—the losers” (Capon, 1988, p. 32) and 
washed feet (John 13:1-11). He will not overlook service given the least of his brethren 
(Matt 10:40), which includes the brethren in us. All talents are to be improved, not hidden 
(Matt 25:14-30). The ego says, “Better that one should die” (John 11:50), but owning and 
maturing the rejected says that one lost part is more important than 99 left (Luke 15:4, 7). 
All “gifts” texts stress the value of all—even the despised (1 Cor 12:22-24). Paradoxes 
are found in 1 Cor 1; 2; 2 Cor 12:7-10, and woes have reversals (Luke 16:19-31; 
Jas 5:1-6). The undesirables in the verses just quoted are often avoided and disregarded 
by people, but a pacific conversation with them is seen here as having positive value.
Inclusive conversation with undesirable parts in us need not be destructive (Bly, 1988, p. 79). But to deny them is to our disadvantage and perilous. Lost parts of ourselves make us whole and useful as we admit them in consciousness (Ulanov, 2008c):

They do not go away; they ... go unconscious and ... present the danger of our projecting them.... Consciousness provides ... a suffering that does not have to be inflicted onto our body as illness or unto our children [see Rilke, 1993, p. 60] so that they carry the illness for us. Conversation with these images may bring ... suffering ... that assembles meaning. (pp. 79, 82, 83)

God’s power shows up in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9), that no one should boast (Jer 9:23). We think we help others from strength and treasure successes more than Paul did (Phil 3:4-7), but our true mission comes from our deepest wounds. All things do not just “work out” but “work together for good” (Rom 8:28, emphasis added; Gen 50:20). Light (2 Cor 4:7) in earthen vessels (Gen 2:7) only shines through a breech (Judg 7:19). We make mistakes as we grope (Acts 17:27). But though the vessel was marred, the potter reshaped it with the same clay (Jer 18:4). As the old violin in The Touch of the Master’s Hand, the clay should not be thrown away or “auctioned cheap” after 3, 7, or 70 times 7 times (Matt 18:22) as people or traits of ours so often are under the claim of doing God’s work (John 16:2).

Concluding this section on sanctification, it is good for us to engage in it with gusto knowing that from birth to death, it is the task of life. Grace is not to be made cheap, and “living cautiously” was called a “crime” (Shaw, 2005). So, we must grow with dedication “knowing … that … it is high time to awake out of [unconsciousness]” (Rom 13:11). “Mortification” is a component of psychology and theology. It is a “dying to all that ... conflicts with one’s central devotion … [the imposition of] an order of priority on our lives ... [to] put first what is first as much of the time as we can and ... order all else as secondary ... saying yes to one central commitment, ... [and] no to
the claims of all other commitments. We may still pursue … secondary occupations, but our preoccupation with them is … chastised…. ‘Purity of heart is to will one thing.’ (Ulanov & Ulanov, 1975, pp. 20, 21)

No matter how “holy” others seem, (1 Kgs 13:18) disobedience to this voice (v. 17) costs life (v. 24). Exclusive integrity is needed (Matt 10:32, 37-39). We each must take the way too narrow for the herd (Matt 7:14), or face destruction (v. 13). The NT warns of loving not the truth, falling away (Heb 6:6), grieving (Eph 4:30), rejecting the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:12, 31) so we turn to fables and succumb to delusion (2 Tim 4:3, 4; 2 Thess 2:9-12).

If the … gifts are not acted upon … [they] evidently retreat … and return…. It gives the … person ten or fifteen years to change his life, in response to the amazing visions … brought him … but if that does not happen, … [it] goes back…, abandoning him, and the last state of that man is evidently worse than the first [Luke 11:26]. (Bly, 1988, pp. 80, 81)

Shlemut (Heb. “perfection,” “completeness,” “wholeness,”) describes the goal of sanctification. “In [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead … and you are complete in Him” (Col 2:9, 10). We are safe when we cooperate with God as he actualizes us. “Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (Jas 1:2-4). “The God of peace [shalom] … make you complete (shlemim) in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight” (Heb 13:20, 21).

Partial Summary

Biblical sanctification is not about repression and killing of parts perceived as being bad in self or others, but about identifying them through awareness, welcoming them by confessing (i.e., acknowledging them), conversing with them and caring for them so they mature, and integrating them so we become whole reflections of God.
Growth by necessity involves trial and error, just as learning to walk entails falling, and as toddlers break a few things. A harsh stance towards errors is inhibitive to growth but gentleness and unconditional love speed up the process. God knew that.

**Safety With God**

*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved.* John 3:16, 17

Sanctification was made possible by God creating total safety for us to engage in it and make the mistakes it entails. The Christian message is that “God has given us the Gospel to create a safe environment to look beneath the surface” (Scazzero, 2003, p. 83). But salvation starts with bad news. In the section below, please carefully follow the logic from paragraph to paragraph, not assuming that you know all of this “simple” material and without being prematurely prejudiced against it.

**The Mechanics of Salvation**

First unfairness: sin. Connected to parents and apart from choice, children can inherit negatives from conception. Mankind got negatives from Adam by connection to him (Ps 51:5; 58:3). As AIDS affects the system’s ability to deal with threats—leading to many symptoms, the “sin” virus affects humanity by tampering with the system’s ability to spot and deal usefully with potential negatives of creative energy (ex., anger)—leading to many “sins” (ex., murder). Humanity is not only sinful by the performance of errors, but by nature, that is, by birth and a tendency to avoid growth (Jer 17: 9; Rev 3:17). Sins can be dealt with as ills in AIDS patients can be treated, but the cause stays. Humanity cannot better its performance to where no error is made. “Most people think they are
sinners because they have committed sins; but … we commit sins because we are born sinful” (Sequeira, n.d.). Despite countering of ills affecting AIDS patients, the virus leads to early death. So, despite efforts to counter sins, humanity keeps from its association with Adam the negative credit of judgment, condemnation, and death (1 Cor 15:21a; Rom 5:18a, 19a). This is “unfair” but God countered it matching the “unfairness” (see below).

**Love.** God is love (1 John 4:8) and knows “nothing … can be changed without being first accepted” (Kopp, 1991, p. 247). Love alone saves (Hillman, 1991, p. 242). Higher than human love (Matt 5:43) even for children, God’s love is unconditional (Matt 5:45), infinite (Eph 3:18, 19), and eternal (Jer 31:3b; Rom 8:35-39). Nothing we do makes him love us more, or stop loving us. This love is seen in the gift of his Son (John 3:16; Eph 2:4-6; Titus 3:3-5; Rom 5:6-10) and draws humanity back to him (Jer 31:3c).

**Incarnation.** Note the wording in the following texts. Because God’s love, we are now in “Christ Jesus, who became [KJV was made] for us …” a Savior (1 Cor 1:31). When did this happen? “The Word became [KJV was made] flesh [Lat. “carnem” as in incarnation]” (John 1:14). The gift was given at Jesus’ conception when the heavenly “Word” “was made” an earthling (from Eng. earth), an Adam (from Heb. adama), a human (from Lat. humus). “Christ was without sin, but … God made him share our sin so that in him we might share the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). Christ’s incarnation established the connection to humanity needed to qualify him as humanity’s Savior; and it established humanity’s saving position in union with Christ (2 Cor 5:17, 21; Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-10; 2 Tim 1:9; Rom 6:2). The NT has no value for salvation without the expressions in it that refer to our connection to Christ. This connection was established
not by our faith but by his incarnation. This connection of Christ with humanity is eternal (White, 2003, p. 74). “The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God (White, 2006b, p. 244).

**Perfect in life and death.** In every detail of his perfect life, Christ fulfilled (Matt 4; 5:17, 18; Heb 4:15; Paulien, 2003), as representative of humanity, all *positive* demands of the law (i.e., “obey and live,” Deut 28:1-14; Rom 10:5) which Adam and humanity failed to meet. In his perfect death, Christ fulfilled in every detail as humanity’s substitute all *negative* demands of the law (i.e., “disobey and die,” Deut 28:15-68) earned by humanity’s sin. Fulfilling the sacrificial system (Heb 9:22, 23, 26; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 John 1:18, 19; 2:2; Rev 13:8), Christ suffered the curse of God (Gen 2:17; John 19:5, 7; Lev 24:16; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; John 10:30, 31; Deut 21:22, 23; Gal 3:10, 13; Matt 27:46; White, 2006a, p. 25) on behalf of all humanity (Isa 53:6, 10, 11; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2) and for it (Ezek 18:20; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Pet 2:24; Gal 2:19, 20; John 12:31-33; Rom 7:4).

What happens to a mother happens to her not-yet-born baby. She drinks juice; baby does too. She fears; baby’s heartbeat goes up. She dies in a crash; baby dies as well. So, humanity which became guilty in union with Adam (1 Cor 15:21a, 21a; Rom 5:18a, 19a) was judged, condemned, and executed—and thus freed from any further judgment, condemnation, and death—through being judged, condemned, and dying in union with Christ. It is illegal for a penalty to be imposed twice for the same crime. Therefore, there is now no condemnation, and we now have peace with God (Rom 5:1; 8:1).

**Second unfairness: grace.** The following short paragraph is of special importance. Humanity received “unfair” negative credit from Adam through simple
bodily connection to him (1 Cor 15:21a, 21a; Rom 5:18a, 19a) at birth, apart from choice. The matching “unfairness” God used to cancel out this injustice is that humanity receives “unfair” positive credit from Jesus through simple bodily connection to him as second Adam (1 Cor 15:21b, 21b; Rom 5:18b, 19b) at birth, apart from any work of faith. This second “unfairness” is called “grace;” anything less favorable would not fairly match the first “unfairness” and would thus make God unfair.

**Faith.** Only divine grace saves. Human works or faith never do. But human faith is needed to experience divine grace (Eph 2:8-10; Mark 16:16; John 5:24); “God so loved the world … that whosoever believes in Him should … have … life” (John 3:16). The term “faith” is often hijacked by well-meaning Christians who qualify it, thus neutering its power to secure assurance of peace with God. But faith consists of any positive response to God appropriate to whatever knowledge of God’s salvation a human being was privileged to receive (Rom 1:21; 2:12, 14-16), for there is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11; Acts 10:34, 35). Therefore,

Faith is something … I … resolutely refuse to … [qualify]…. It is simply saying yes … rather than no … at its root, a mere “uh-huh”… it does not necessarily involve any particular theological structure or formulation … [or] … degree of emotional fervor; and above all, it does not depend on any specific repertoire of … works—physical, mental, or moral (Capon, 2002, pp. 24, 25). So but me no spiritual buts. And above all, faith me no faith that needs to be made greater, or purer, or warmer. It is not as if we have a faith meter in our chests, and that our progress toward salvation consists in cranking it up over a lifetime from cold to lukewarm to toasty to red hot. We cannot be saved by our faith reading any more than by our morality reading or our spirituality reading. All … those recipes for self-improvement amount to nothing more than salvation by works; and none of them is any better than the idea that you might be saved by being able to go twenty hours nonstop on a Nautilus machine. If we have anything in our chests, it is not a metaphysical pulse register or an ethical pressure gauge but a simple switch: on, for yes to Jesus in our death; and off, for no. The head of steam we work up on throwing the switch, either way, has nothing to do with the case. (Capon, 1988, pp. 162, 163)
I arrived full circle and do not need to repeat my earlier words on “Sanctification.” But before describing “Safety in the Church,” I want to make as tight a case for guaranteed safety as I can by adding a few biblical notes of special Adventist interest.

**Works.** Paul emphasizes how humanity is saved (i.e., by grace through faith) and also how it is *not* saved (i.e., not by works of the law Rom 1:17; 3:28; 4:5; Gal 2:16; 3:24, 28; Rom 9:30-32). We *are* lost by our works and then saved by God’s grace. But statements such as “You are saved by grace, and could then be lost by your works,” in *that* order, lack logic and destroy one’s assurance of salvation by granting negative salvific potency to our works which they can never have. The two systems of salvation by faith or by works are incompatible (Gal 4:30; 5:4). “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work” (Rom 11:6). This logic is inescapable.

**Law.** In Paul’s writings, a positive focus on the law or law-keeping seems neglected for “life in the Spirit,” lived not in the oldness of the “letter” but “in the Spirit” (Rom 7, 8), and which causes the requirements of the law to be fulfilled in us apart from our focusing on it (Rom 8:4). But the NT presents three functions of the law (tutorial, Gal 3:24; gospel, Matt 5:17-18; Rom 10:4; standard of Christian living, Matt 5:19; Rom 7:12) and they all remain in effect after salvation. Commandment-keeping is listed as a characteristic of end-time Christians (Rev 14:12).

**Liberty.** Salvation was given (John 3:16; Rom 3:24), never lent, sold, or sent as temporary no-interest incentive. No strings attached or fine print demanding that humanity complete salvation by returning the favor with reformation or forfeit the gift
and pay cumulative interest. Though it is careless or stupid to do what hurts self or others, and though there are consequences to sin in life, society, or court of law, Christians are “free” to sin in regards to salvation (Gal 5:1, 13; 1 John 2:1). This is crucial to maintain for sanctification where the saved sing “true and just are your ways” (Rev 15:3) apart from hope of reward or fear of punishment (White, 2006a, p. 480).

**A process.** Salvation has three consecutive stages: humanity has been delivered from the guilt and penalty of sin (i.e., justification—Titus 2:11; John 5:24c; Rom 5:1) is being delivered from the power and slavery of sin (i.e., sanctification—Titus 2:12; John 5:24a; Rom 8:4; Gal 2:20; 5:22-23; 2 Cor 3:18), and will be delivered from the presence and nature of sin (i.e., glorification—Titus 2:13; John 5:24b, 1 Cor 15:21; 54; Rom 5:19) at the return of Christ.

**Assurance.** Members who live in fear of negative judgment, death without confession or a god who keeps a … list … for sinners who … sinned after faith instead of only before it … [need to discard] … that … baggage about repentances that come too late or acts of faith that peak too soon, all the fine slicing about how maybe a suicide who has time to think between the bridge and the river is in better shape than one who blew his brains out. (Capon, 2002, pp. 486, 512)

Jesus knew all things ahead of time (John 13:38) but still forgave Peter in advance (John 13:7, 8) of Peter’s fault (John 18:17, 25, 27). Christians do not become unsaved every time they make a mistake (1 John 2:1). We may always rest in full assurance of our salvation in Christ (Rom 5:1, 2) as “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2).

**“Once saved always saved.”** This does not mean “once saved, always saved”—“false security” or “false safety.” If one turns their back on Christ through “untrust,” they are also turning from salvation in Him (Heb 10:38, 39). “The righteousness [or “right
doing”] that saves us and qualifies us for heaven is always in Christ; and the devil cannot touch that. But the faith that makes that righteousness ours is in us. And that, the devil can destroy” (Sequeira, n.d.). So, we must hold on to our faith at all cost despite any shortcoming (John 14:1; 2 Tim 4:7, 8; Heb 10:35, 38, 39; Matt 10:22; Rev 3:11; 16:15; Luke 18:8; Matt 24:22) because as long as we have faith in Christ, our salvation is fully guaranteed.

This is the complete safety God created for us to reach wholeness and maturity.

**Safety in God’s Church**

**Intended Safety in the Church and Its Benefits**

God’s concern to create safety for true growth is seen from the proto-gospel to the millennium, through the OT cities of refuge and the NT biddings to love. And God wants that the safety He created be practiced in the church so that it can be a place for growth.

The growth benefits of the church as a safe community are many:

**Increased awareness.** We often see ourselves better in the mirror of others: by his presence and a story, Nathan created a special learning ("agogic") moment (Anderson, 2001, p. 198) to cure David’s blindness. A friend can help you see discrepancy between intention and result often better than you could on your own (Hutchens, 1999, p. 66).

**Healing.** “Confess to, and pray for, one another, that you be healed” (Jas 5:16).

**Restoration and support.** “Gently restore spiritually others overtaken in trespass. Bear each other’s burdens. Let each one examine his own work” (Gal 6:1-2, 4). The trigger for me to start this project was hearing “the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).
Improvement through interaction. “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens … his friend” (Prov 27:17).

Encouragement. “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together … but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb 10:24, 25). Warren points out (2002, p. 130) how “one another” and other similar expressions are found throughout the NT. A safe community is where our relationship with God and others should grow best.

These are the benefits of the safety intended in the church; it leads to growth, to sanctification. But the reality is often different.

The Unintended Reality of Danger in the Church

Adam, Eve, and their descendants started a cycle we are often part of in community (Gen 3; 4). Aware and ashamed, they hid and disowned their action, projected the “blame” of it off onto the person closest to them (Gen 2:23) creating an unsafe world where murder (Gen 4:8) and wounding (Gen 4:23) ensued. So, despite their intention to contribute growth (i.e., sanctification) humans and “saints” who hide, repress, and deny who they are and what they do, project it on others and contribute to danger in world and church instead of contributing to safety for growth.

Instead of a church safe for awareness, healing, restoration, support, encouragement, improvement, maturation, sanctification, and growth, we find:

Superiority and conditional acceptance. “You will be saved, lost, accepted, approved, and given responsibility if you …,” etc. I will not resist quoting: “[Women] will be saved in childbearing” (1 Tim 2:15, emphasis added).

Blindness. “Man looks at outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”
(1 Sam 16:7). When Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath (John 9) as object lesson of bringing the light of consciousness (John 9:5; also 8:7), some remained in the darkness of unconsciousness by not seeing the miracle but only the transgression of their church polity (John 9:16; also 7:23, 24) complete with page and line number.

**Insistence on visible reform.** The church values outward performance and judges deficient reform. Even when claiming to agree with Jesus’ point in “the Pharisee and the Publican” (Luke 18:9-14), it expects the Publican to work out some visible reform after his first, or 100th subsequent visit(s), and would prefer the Pharisee with outward uprightness for a member or officer in the congregation rather than the other who is right with God on the inside, but a loser on the outside (Capon, 1988, pp. 179, 180).

**Moral teaching and advice giving.** The church goes on its “kerygmatic” or “catechetic” mission, despite that “giving the human race religious reasons for not sinning is about as useful as reading … [the Encyclopedia Britannica] to an elephant in rut” (Capon, 1988, p. 100). From Confucius to Al Gore, the world has received lots of good advice, but “if the world could have been saved by providing good examples to which we could respond with appropriately good works, it would have been saved an hour and twenty minutes after Moses came down from Mount Sinai. “For it there had been a law [i.e., teaching] given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by [it]…. (Gal 3:21, 22. (Capon, 1988, p. 62)

**Substitutes for real growth.** Smokescreens for real growth include “creedal and intellectual correctness, doctrinal orthodoxy, cultic performance or ethical achievements” (Capon, 1988, p. 28), an insistence on “creed, cult, and conduct” (p. 29) which are not only ineffective but dangerous to salvation.

**Projection on others.** “Can the blind lead the blind? … Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your … eye?” (Luke

You are inexcusable, O man … who judge, for in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things (Rom. 2:1). Why do you judge…. Or … show contempt for your brother?... let us not judge one another. (Rom 14:10, 13a)

But scapegoating is “one of the most common dynamics in group life … [and] also one of the most virulent” (Lyon, 2010, p. 141).

**Neglect and irrelevance.** Its wounds uncared for, the religious purist (Luke 10:31, 32) leaves the wounded in self and others to die. Unexpectedly, it is the syncretist (v. 33) who helps in a humane way. “We’re here for worship, and this is more than I want to hear.” So taverns take over the church as a better place for healing (v. 34). A member confided:

I knew that only the “godly” part of me was welcome in the “loving” church group; but there was only spiritual jargon, good intentions, and prayer. Not many came back. But in non-church groups that I attended, all of me was welcome.

**Spiritual violence.** Instead of a Savior who paid in advance and out of pocket (v. 35) for all expenses towards our full recovery, here is a miserly god who waits to whack non-responders at last, and instead of a caring innkeeper, an “evil servant” (Matt 24:49):

The bad church … [who] beats its fellow servants’ knuckles with the carving knife of ethical requirements and … [gets] drunk on the cheap wine of successful living or the rotgut booze of spiritual achievement … *turning the good news of Jesus into the bad news of religion*…. Therefore, when the church preaches anything but faith alone in Jesus, it is an unfaithful church and deserves only to be put with the rest of the world’s hypocrites who think they can be saved by passing tests. (Capon, 2002, pp. 488, 489, emphasis added)

**Use of coercive power.** “Where love rules, there is no will to power; and where power predominates, there love is lacking. The one is the shadow of the other” (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 62). Jesus warned against coercive power (Matt
predicted religious witch hunts (Matt 10:25), violence (Matt 24:49), and excommunications (John 16:2), and noted them in the past (Matt 23:29-35). Forms of coercive power present in our age should be as deplored as previous ones (Matt 23:30). Except once, God himself refused to use coercive power (Capon, 2002, p. 16) and used “left-handed” (Luther, as cited in Capon, 2002, p. 19) paradoxical power instead:

Power that looks … like weakness, intervention … indistinguishable from nonintervention … that ensures only one result, i.e., that you won’t have messed up any relationship from your side. This looks like no power, but is in fact so powerful that it “is the only thing in the world that evil can’t touch. (pp. 16, 19)

But the devil is “a worshipper of right-handed power” (Capon, 2002, p. 28) and Jesus raises interesting questions (John 8:44) on how to call individuals and organizations following that lie (Capon, 2002, p. 43). They can hardly claim to really be God’s agency for sanctification. They use the devil’s methods for doing God’s work.

“Church discipline.” Maintenance of coercive power in the church has led to applications of scripture in history that make one shudder. Except for the “sharia” laws of Lev 20, 21 and the stoning of Achan’s goods and family (Josh 7), I will not list OT texts. NT texts include: “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved” (1 Cor 5:5), suffering in the flesh purges one from sin (1 Pet 4:1), do not keep company with brothers who sin (1 Cor 5:11), determine judgments on members (1 Cor 5:12), “put away the evil person” (1 Cor 6:13). Paul admitted some of his writings were opinions (1 Cor 7:25), but his advice on keeping daughters from marriage (1 Cor 7) or on women’s hair (1 Cor 11) can still look strange or cruel today. He urged a community “purge” (1 Cor 5:1-8) about which he later had mixed feelings and thoughts (2 Cor 2:3-11; 7:8-12).
If one sees anomalies in Paul, one should excuse him by granting him credit he could not give others. Shaped by early experiences, his ministry had stresses that could leave anyone unsettled. But one should also know how his writings were used to erect stakes and for suffering by the church. Paul was righter when he wrote: “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12), and “Let a man examine himself” (1 Cor 11:28). “Discipline of the Lord” (Heb 12:3-11) is different from “discipline” by humans.

I will now dwell on the three verses holding the distinction of having been most used as scriptural basis for the excommunication practices the church seems to delight in.

If your brother sins against you, tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. If he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (Matt 18:15-17)

The context of these verses includes Jesus’ preceding words on the least (Matt 18:2-5), not offending the least (vv. 6-9), and on the unconditional valuation by the shepherd of any one lost sheep (vv. 10-14). If these verses (i.e., vv. 15-17) flanked with the “Lost Sheep” (vv. 10-14) and the “Unforgiving Servant” (vv. 23-35) are taken at face value—as they usually are—Jesus is then reneging in them on everything he’s taught before and will teach after (Capon, 1988, p. 41).

Before (i.e., in the Lost Sheep) he presents the Shepherd’s unconditional forgiveness of the lost sheep. After (i.e., in the Unforgiving Servant), he presents the King’s little tolerance for unforgiving types. There is, therefore, a case for proposing these words of Jesus as a masterful didactic set-up of his students with a scheme of “three strikes and you’re out” “rules for limited forgiveness” “written by the Committee for the
Prevention of Wear and Tear on the Righteous” (p. 43) to elicit Peter’s suggestion for a more generous forgiveness—“seven times perhaps?” Evidence that this reading is justified is found in the fact that this is exactly what takes place (Matt 18:21-22). The disciples’ lack of understanding now made evident by Peter, Jesus frames his teaching with utmost clarity. The only unforgivable sin is not forgiving as unconditionally as God equally does for all the losers of the world.

But backed by church policy based on misread texts, church people condemn. At nomination time, they insist on enforcing small-debt collection (Seamands, 2004, pp. 25-35) on a young lady who would like to be assistant on the flower committee because of some cigarette smell on her coat—when they have gotten away with murder (Matt 18:22-35). It is unsafe to live with such “saints” and confess with them.

**Spiritual Safety in the Church**

I described the safety God intended in the church—impunity for errors, and the reality one often finds in it instead—the use of force. I now end with a matching reflection of what safety for growth could look like organizationally. Paradoxically, biblical sanctification requires great tolerance, apparent “liberalism” (as some would label it), even permissiveness. This does not detract from goodness but only increases it.

**From the Bible.** In the “Weeds” (Matt 13:24-30), the enemy “depends on the forces of goodness, *insofar as he can sucker them into taking up arms against the confusion he has introduced* … to do [his] job … [of eradicating good in God’s name]. Goodness itself … if … committed to … right-handed, strong-arm methods, will in the very name of goodness do … more than … evil ever had in mind” (Capon, 2002, p. 87).
The word of the owner is proposed as the way God and his forces deal and should deal with disturbance: “let” (v. 30) “aphete” (Gr.), that is, “forgive” (Matt 6:12), and even “permit”—a freeing of sin past and future in “the black hole of Jesus’ death” (Capon, 1988, p. 39). Before ending,

one word in passing. If you are worrying that this exposition might form the basis of a case for pacifism, you should continue to worry. But you should also make a distinction. The parable … does not say that resistance to evil is morally wrong, only that it is salvifically ineffective. You may, therefore, make out as many cases as you like for just wars, capital punishment, or any other sensible, right-handed solution to the presence of malefactors on earth; but you should not assume that such solutions will necessarily make the world a better place. You may, in short, take the sword, but you should also remember that those who do so inevitably perish by the sword—descriptively, not prescriptively. (Capon, 2002, pp. 87, 88)

From secular authors. “[There is] … too little disposition to see “the problem”… in here and not out there” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 59). “If only it were so simple!” exclaimed Solzhenitzyn,

If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart? (Solzhenitzyn, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. v)

Strangely enough, evil people are often destructive because they are attempting to destroy evil. The problem is that they misplace the locus of the evil. Instead of [scapegoating and] destroying others, they should be destroying the sickness within themselves. (Peck, 1991, pp. 178, 179)

From Eastern wisdom. Tao wisdom, too, (Acts 17:28) knew about God’s left-handed power “power that looks … like weakness, intervention … indistinguishable from non-intervention … that … looks like no power, but … [is in fact so powerful] … that it is the only thing in the world that evil can’t touch” (Capon, 2002, p. 19). Wang Wei once spoke of the most powerful action one can take, which is “giving up having an effect
upon the world,” “wu-wei,” which is “not playing any role … doing nothing … like these walnut trees. (Bly, 1988, p. 80)

**Conclusion**

I defined sanctification not as the repression or killing of parts perceived as “bad” (Section 1—Plurality), but as integration of matured opposite towards wholeness (Section 2—Sanctification). I unpacked salvation in Christ as the safe context God created for this to take place (Section 3—Safety with God), which he (and we too) intend to be reflected in the church (Section 3—Safety in the Church). Reality however, can often be different and the question begs: Why such discrepancy?

Through two expositions of Genesis 3, I noted that Adam and Eve created an unsafe world of wounding and murder by hiding, repressing, denying, and disowning what they did and who they were, and then, instead, projecting blame on each other. What I have deliberately kept for now is the crucial point of: *Why they hid*. Why did they hide, which caused them to disown, which caused them to blame and project, which caused them to create a dangerous world? *They hid because they feared God* (Gen 3:10). *They feared God because they did not believe in his unconditional, infinite, and eternal love for them* (1 John 4:18).

The cause of the danger Adam and Eve created in the world is the danger they thought there was with God. The cause of danger in the church is the danger it thinks there is with God. The church teaches that God loves us, but it also says, thinks, and feels different. Instead of clarity, one can observe *confusion* in what it says—even glaring illogisms, as shown above in the reference to Romans 11: 6. The justifying reason often given for this “confusion” or “lack of consistency” (Office of the Adult Bible Study
Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011, pp. 41, 52) is that “we” (Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2012) “should” (pp. 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95) be “balanced” (pp. 47, 53, 59). Its first week appeal sermon is “The Grace and Love of God,” but the following three weeks are spent on how “Grace Should Not Become a Disgrace.” Peter is rightly judged to have caused damaging confusion by speaking from both sides of his mouth (Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011, pp. 36-41).

From White’s words, he is not alone: writing about the “imputed righteousness of Christ” with all the safety it brings, she said: “I have been shown that many have been kept from the faith because of the mixed, confused ideas about salvation” (as cited p. 52). Discrepancy between the church’s intention of providing safety for growth and the reality often experienced in it may stem from confusion in what it presents. There is a tendency for the church to convey conflicting messages: two things from the same publishing house and houses of learning, sometimes from opposite pages of the same quarterlies (e.g., Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011, October-December, pp. 41-52). Since there is confusion about God’s love, there is no certainty about it. The lack of certainty in God’s love generates fear, and fear results in hiding, disowning, blaming, projecting, wounding … and murder (Gen 4:8). Again, the cause of danger in the church is the danger it thinks there is with God.

The cause of a discrepancy between the church’s intentions of safety, love, and growth, and the results of danger and conformity in it, may therefore well be partly attributable to confusion about what it believes: theological confusion leads to structural
danger that enables danger; and structural danger that enables danger leads to practiced
danger that causes harm and lack of growth among members.

If the cause of danger and conformity is confusion about God, could clarification
of the confusion about God be a cause for increased safety and growth? And wouldn’t it
make sense that a Christian organization raised for the proclamation of the everlasting
gospel (Rev 14:6; 18:1) or “good news” would become best in actually doing it?
CHARTER 4

SAFETY, AWARENESS, AND GROWTH IN A PILOT GROUP
AT THE FOX VALLEY CHURCH IN WISCONSIN—
PART A: DEVELOPMENT AND NARRATIVE

Introduction

Can safety be provided in the church that will be seen by those experiencing it as helpful towards increased awareness and their spiritual growth as defined in the previous chapters? What would be the components of such safety? What links between safety, awareness, and growth can be established in ministry practice? What is the importance of safety towards awareness and spiritual growth? What are the perceptions of safety within the church? What forms do the perceptions of safety in the church take? What are the effects of safety perceptions in the church to the individuals in it and to the Church as an organization? My passion is to create in the church the safety for growth that God intended and which many long for (Sellon & Smith, 2005, pp. 5, 8, 9). This chapter will present my recent efforts to create this safety for growth in my ministry context of the Fox Valley in Wisconsin.

Concise Profile of Ministry Context

This project took place in the Fox Valley Church, a theologically conservative midsize congregation in the Fox Valley District in Northeastern Wisconsin. This congregation was rocked by a serious issue within weeks (October 2005) of my arrival in July. It experienced temporary mellowing through support and preaching, but old
dynamics resurfaced as church discipline was urged in 2007 and additional issues arose in 2008. This resulted in polarization and families leaving. Two employees were threatened and another family left through blackmail during the yearly congregational election process (i.e., nominations) in 2008. Many found safety only in being “good old boys.” In all church activities the battle persisted with projection of blame, toward the goal of eliminating alternative perspectives. With no effective place to turn to within the church for support as pastor (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 4; Schoun, 1981, pp. 88-108, 103), I was fortunate to stumble on needed personal and ministerial help in secular counseling from November 2008 and in secular groups from July 2010.

Description of the Research Methodology

One’s sense of safety in life and in the church can be affected by the many factors—gender, ethnicity, culture, religious background, age, personality, family dynamics, experience, lifestyle, etc.—through which one interprets and copes with life experiences. This project does not seek to delve into the specific role of these causative variables but aims solely at examining the effects of an increased sense of safety in the experience of the study participants.

The project consisted of a pilot group of ten men meeting ten weeks in a context where it was safe for participants to learn about and practice safety. The data came from field notes, participants’ feedback forms, and interviews constructed around open-ended questions related to the experience of the participants and the impact of an increased sense of safety on awareness and personal and spiritual growth. Supplemental feedback came from Natural Church Development Surveys. The interviews were conducted, verbatim created, summarized, reviewed, and analyzed. Common themes in them were
identified, coded, and tabulated. The tables illustrate the presentation of the project results and evaluation (Chapter 5). The project results and evaluation form a basis for recommendations concerning increasing safety to promote growth and organizational effectiveness for interested congregational and denominational leadership (Chapter 6).

**Development of the Intervention**

Preaching regarding safety (Chapter 3) was useful but insufficient to produce safety in the church (Anderson, 2001, pp. 196-198 on practice and agogic moments versus mere preaching and teaching; Jones, 2010, p. 113 on the insufficiency of conscious teaching in mediating real change). Therefore, my intention as elaborated in Chapter 1, was to use my experience of safety outside the church to increase church safety through the practice of safety in the church (Sellon & Smith, 2005).

Implementing practiced safety in the whole church at once was not workable. This project was, therefore, designed to start practicing safety in a small group that imitated safety I had experienced elsewhere. It was to be a heterotopia (Foucault, as cited by Johnson, 2010) in the church.

*Heterotopias* … are privileged or sacred or forbidden places reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis…. Their role is to create a space inside of which human life is partitioned and organized when all other societal spaces are “ill constructed and jumbled”. Foucault defines them as spaces of “liberty” outside of social control or places of alternate ordering. They are, therefore, spaces of freedom and change … “sites of resistance” [“… and liberation” 171]. In essence they provide opportunities where subjects can deflect or detach themselves from hegemonic structures of power and make creative use of “space” for formation of the self. (pp. 166, 167)

Johnson considers this central to any pastoral theology that seeks to care for subjugated communities in the context between “colonialism” and “globalization,” but the concept
can be applied to any setting where domination other than economical or financial is experienced.

The safety for growth that God created for humanity in salvation is often less than adequately reflected in the church (Chapter 3). In the pilot group, I strove to create structural safety where safety could be practiced by basing it on administrative agreements safer than those in the church, agreements guaranteeing confidentiality and impunity.

Pursuant to increasing structural and practiced safety, the goal was to create a human “container” where exploration fostering increased awareness towards growth could occur. Others have used the term “container” or related concepts in similar non-literal ways. Ulanov called consciousness a “container” for the testing of reality (2008c, p. 83). Davis (2010), also noting how Winnicott called moments in which “someone shows confidence and trust” “sacred moments”, saw creating a “holding environment in which the person’s significant concerns might emerge and be understood” as his main task in a pastoral visit (p. 23). As a friend of mine said many times, “If you create a safe place, men will come and be their authentic selves” (Wade R. Anding, personal communication, January 13, 2012).

Alarming statistics on fatherless men (Collins, 2001, pp. 235-236) concern not only those raised in non-traditional families but also most contemporary men. Hollis (1994) deduced from the growing proportion of men in his practice over the years that “men are in deep trouble” (pp. 122, 125). Some males may resist social interaction without their wife’s presence at their side. Among other fears, this can indicate overreliance of the child in them on the mother complex, as the child is afraid without the
mother (Hollis, 1994, pp. 33-36). The immense power of the feminine complex in men is the third of “eight secrets … men carry within” (pp. 11, 28-61). But while women give birth to boys, only men can give birth to men. Older men’s early morning coffee circles at McDonald demonstrate the surprising element of safety, wisdom, and support towards healthy male maturation found in same-gender groups. I thus chose that this pilot group developed with utmost attention to added safety for growth, be composed solely of men.

Curriculum

The concepts taught and practice opportunities offered in each session were designed to methodically build on each other in logical order and in order of difficulty. The activities of the group would first (Session 1) create structural safety (i.e., it is safe) through guaranteed agreements (Whitworth et al., 1998, p. 13-28) as the basis for enabling an experience of safety (i.e., it feels safe) through the practice of mutual self-disclosure (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 119-120).

They would build knowledge to identify fears (Hutchens, 1999, pp. 61-67; Sellon & Smith, 2005, pp. 13-27, 47-66) created by undifferentiated facts, judgments, projections, and feelings. They would defuse a fear-inducing sense of powerlessness against these facts, judgments, projections, and feelings (Hutchens, 1999, pp. 72-78; Sellon & Smith, 2005, pp. 29-46) through building skills for owning and deflecting them (Session 2).

Unsafe situations and fears deriving from poor communication would be reduced through teaching and practice on listening and sharing (Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. 31-112; Session 3). Connecting with a sense of personal mission and providing support for actualizing it in life would alleviate dangers and stresses deriving from living a non-
satisfying life misaligned from one’s central purpose (pp. 115-156; Session 4). Training and processes useful for learning about, connecting with, and owning basic feelings—fear, mad, sad, glad, and shame/guilt—would diminish hazards due to emotional unawareness (Sessions 5 and 6). I would provide tools and opportunities for participants to safely deal with personal issues in the group (Sessions 4-8).

Sessions 7 and 9 would address the original source of danger in the church in positive processes exploring Jung’s arch-concepts of shadow and shadow projections. An archetypal framework for safe masculinity would be offered to the men before being released into the general church community (Session 10).

**Implementation Narrative**

Safety in the Selection of Participants

I first intended to start this project with district elders but realized at a September 2010 elders’ meeting that not all were equally ready for this work. “Stage Three [with its interest in the outward, and lack of it for the intangibles of the inner life], is the most prominent form of leadership in organizations, followed closely by Stage Two” (Hagberg, 1994, p. 160 and 63), even in the church. All were willing to “do work for the church” but there was reluctance to get close or to commit formally to mutual love and support. Jung made two observations I found relevant: “Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life (as it is in early or arrested self-development), the blacker and denser it is” (Jung, as cited by Dueck & Becker, 2008, p. 16), and “when the shadow is successfully repressed, the person doing it finds it very difficult to talk to other people about feelings” (Jung, as cited by Bly, 1988, pp. 50, 51). Unfortunately, the fear to open up to the world of emotions was greatest in top
leadership. Seeing that any attempt to induce this work on this group would not be productive, I dropped the project for a while.

I decided a few weeks later to reopen it to all who would be ready and willing to undertake this work. I issued a general invitation in December 2010 for a ten-week men’s group from January to March 2011 that would be placed in my larger church bulletin and disseminated by email and pulpit announcement in my two smaller churches. This made the process open to all men. As can often be expected especially during the holidays, by January 4, 2011, no one had responded to the general invitation. Therefore, I made two lists of potential participants on January 4, 2011, with the purpose of extending personal invitations. One list contained names of leaders whom I judged could be ready for this work, and the second names of members whom I judged could be ready for this work and also to have leadership potential. When I got in touch with each of them by phone or email between January 6 and 11, 2011, I requested provisional acceptance or refusal to participate and a best day and time for weekly meetings. This provisional acceptance would be confirmed or declined once the most convenient time for meeting from the poll was made public by blind copy e-mail on January 12, 2011, to potential participants. This made it easy for contacted members to privately and safely accept or refuse according to their true preference.

A group of ten men formed, made up of those whose schedule permitted them to participate and who were willing, ready, and able. The group consisted of a good balance of leaders and members from my main church; ages ranged from 35 to 60 with most between 40 and 55, a most propitious time for personal growth. Due to job uncertainties and rising gasoline prices, men from further away found it difficult to commit to weekly
meetings at the church location. The ten meetings took place on Mondays from 6:00 to 8:30 pm from January 24, 2011 to March 28, 2011.

Safety in the Physical Set Up

I intentionally created a special space of physical safety for meetings in every detail.

**Safe room.** Meetings took place in the “youth room” in the church basement. Newly renovated with sofas, carpets, warm colors, soft lights, and audio-visual equipment, it is the most comfortable, functional, and private room in the building. The window treatment of modern venetian blinds conveyed a sense of protection, privacy, and safety. I placed in the room a small elegant electric space heater from my office.

**Safe circle.** I set up the exact number of padded chairs needed for the participants expected each night, providing the safety of equality for comfortable work. I set them in a circle on a special Persian carpet, all participants being able at all times to see all others and to know what was occurring. I removed the barriers of tables used for intellectual functions, to encourage self-disclosure. My chair was at one end, providing the safety of clear leadership.

**Safe relations.** I placed and lit a large white candle at the center of the circle. I meant this as a symbol of the unity of men around and beyond the circle in meetings. As one of the four elements present in nature (i.e., earth, water, air, fire), the presence of fire also served to honor the link of men to physical nature (which is core to male identity—boys must move, touch, sweat, etc.), but much lacking in modern urbanity. I biblicized any Adventist concern associating candles with Catholicism by making mention of the many evenings when Jesus was with men like us around a campfire.
Safety in Regular Agenda Items

I established the safety of a predictable pattern through weekly activities including the following.

**Opening.** I helped the men leave the world behind and enter a safe time by reducing the two first and basic human fears of falling and loud noises at the beginning of every meeting through feeling grounded (supported by the ground and visually by each other) and present (not absorbed in past or future)—allowing some silence to permit greater attention to the body. After some quiet moments, I would sometimes say or read a few words of secular inspiration.

**Logistics.** Regarding organizational safety, I reminded the men to turn off cell phones, mentioned upcoming bio breaks, stated ending time, checked roster and reported those who had indicated inability to attend a meeting, provided folders where they could store handouts, and addressed other logistical matters.

**Check-in.** Addressing emotional safety elements included briefly identifying and owning the basic feeling(s) one brought into the circle (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 78; Sellon & Smith, 2005, pp. 18-22; see Session 1 below).

**Clearings and accountability.** Relational safety was increased through briefly identifying and working through negative energies one may have with another participant in the circle (clearing) or with oneself (accountability) (see Sessions 2 and 3 below). The training and a work round would follow (see Sessions 4-8 below).

**Closing.** The regular exercises included a weekly Mission Stretch (see Session 4 below), Check-Out (briefly identifying and owning the basic feeling(s) one has at the end of the meeting; see Session 1 below) and attending to psychic safety by Closing the
special space through a physical act done before leaving and intended to symbolize the release of psychic energy (see Herrington et al., 2003, p. 80) generated in the meeting.

Session 1 Narrative

**Introduction to the ten-week men’s group.** The “check-in” activity would usually came right after “Logistics,” but the first evening I chose to give an introduction to the ten-week group by reading an inspirational poem I adapted for my context from Phil Hart’s “A Circle of Men.” I explained the meetings would give the participants tools for safer relationships and a more productive life and expressed my dream that each man would taste truth spoken in love (Eph 4:15) in the group. Some men showed up with Bibles. Since an “over-spiritualized faith” (Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 94) can contribute to danger just as much as to safety, I assured participants that I prayed but emphasized that the group would be experiential rather than intellectual or religious as we would practice real safety leading to real growth. The fear of coercive Bible teachings removed and now aware of my intention to remove gobbledygook that often covers church dangers instead of dealing with the real thing, the men revealingly seemed to start breathing better. My introduction ended by explaining my desire to establish this group as a safe container for one other.

**Check-in.** Emotions which are felt in the body, as advanced in *The Treasure of Earthen Vessels* (Capps, 1994, pp. 91-102; Scazzero, 2003, p. 76; Ulanov, 2001, p. 43), rather than conscious thoughts, are the most powerful and yet most overlooked element anyone brings into any interaction. Unrecognized and unacknowledged emotional energies color everything in group interaction unbeknownst to their recipient, often dangerously coming up sideways in unexpected and negative ways. A basic “check-in”
involved one or two clockwise rounds in which each man stated his first and last name, got in touch with, and stated his present dominant basic feeling(s): fear, mad, sad, glad, shame, guilt. During the second round, participants elaborated some succinct background to the feeling(s). I reiterated that all of what each man is or feels—not only the “good” Christian part, was welcome in this circle. I taught the men a non-religious acronym—A.H.O. (Authentic, Honest, Open) as a way of responding to each man’s check-in contribution. I modeled the check-in by stating my full name and feelings.

Especially in the first round, most men were very uncomfortable with this process, unable to get in touch with any feeling, chuckling with embarrassment, or even attempts by one or two men to exchange some mildly disparaging raisings of the brow about me with others. I was prepared and let it go. Responses included “fine,” “good,” “I am not sure where this is going,” “I’m not used to this,” “I’m fine,” “I’m tired,” or a frustrated or happy story with no feeling identified. Many did not know the difference between how their body felt (e.g., “tired”), what their mind was thinking (e.g., “I am not sure where this is going”), and what their feeling(s) was/were (e.g., “I am afraid”). Knowing they needed time, I did not press it or get alarmed, but kept modeling what I expected. By the second round, all the men responded with a hearty “Aho!” and seemed prepared for more.

**Principles, agreements, and guidelines.** The first task of the first meeting was for the men to read two foundational documents. The first one was “Principles.” The second was “Agreements and Guidelines”—“a group covenant” (Hamlin, 1993, pp. 15-18; Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. 13-25) to which the group would be held. The men were invited to provide feedback and then sign a copy of the Agreement document (Appendix
B). One man asked what was meant by “work.” The dangers of self-disclosure in the church and confidentiality with wives were mentioned. I read “The Eight Secrets Men Carry Within” (Hollis, 1994, p. 11). After adequate discussion, questions, and comments, everyone signed. This crucial signed document provided foundational structural safety for all, as well as a basis for teaching about accountability in session 3.

“Talking stick” and “staff.” Accuracy of expression is compromised by simultaneous verbal communication considered the norm in many cultures. The Native American “talking stick” is a valuable visual tool that helps prevent loss by preventing cross talk (Sellon & Smith, 2005, p. 58). I used a pheasant feather as a “talking stick.” More chuckles materialized as I introduced the concept. But the men felt safety and empowerment while holding the feather and kept their thoughts to themselves until invited to give feedback by the speaker when he finished. I also introduced the future use of a wooden staff.

Bio-break. The introduction and “preliminary” agenda items finished at about 7 p.m. I was drained. All were in need of recuperating, so we took a five-minute bio-break.

Process “my story.” This group process has four parts for each man: 1. One minute to share a public short version of his life. 2. Short silent reflection by all to check beliefs, judgments, etc., formed about the man based on what he said. 3. Three minutes for the man to share a longer version of his life he would only share with a safe group of trusted friends. 4. Short silent reflection by all to compare assumptions previously made with new judgments, beliefs, etc., made after the longer version. Each speaker received no feedback.
Purposes of “My Story” include participants getting introduced to each other and showing the gap between assumptions and reality. The main benefit is that mutual disclosure helps build trust and increases the tightness of the container. Agreements and Guidelines in the first part of the session provided foundational structural safety; but safety could be experienced only through the practiced safety it enabled. “My Story” fulfilled this function.

All men shared honestly and listened intently, immediately taking advantage of a chance to satisfy an unfulfilled longing to tell, be heard, and be safely held. They were surprised to hear stories similar to theirs across the circle. At the end of the round, faces were flushed. Each felt the sacredness of what had been shared and their privilege in being part of this. Many spontaneously said they were tired of playing church where being real should be possible.

Check-out. After a short but adequate debriefing, I led the group in a check-out round. Progress was evident even in men for whom check-in had been difficult. One unexpectedly volunteered, “We are much closer to each other than at the beginning.” Another said without any prompting, “I don’t really want to leave, I feel like I am leaving a safe place.” All seemed to heartily agree.

Release energy. No usual religious item or ritual (see Introduction above) was used for closing. Instead the men physically dispelled the generated psychic energy by piling their right hands in the center of the circle, lowering them and throwing them upwards together with a loud, “Oh!” This time with no chuckling or rolling of the eyes. Judging by the hugs exchanged after blowing out the candle and their quick departure, the men left feeling safe and grown.
Session 2 Narrative

**Check-in and preliminaries.** (See above) Check-in went well, though I got a bit unsettled by the recidivist chuckles of some “still wondering what this is all about.” One man who was not able to attend the first session shared his short and long My Story. It was concise, deep, well done, and very moving in the disclosure it facilitated.

**Teaching on data/feelings/judgments.** This made the participants aware of a common failure to differentiate between data, feelings, and judgments (Hutchens, 1999, p. 72). This teaching is useful to the issue of practiced safety because much experienced lack of safety does not come from objective data but from unconscious subjective interpretation. We constantly express and receive judgments and feelings as data which in reality are not so. If we remain unaware of the difference, we easily accept them as fact. This unawareness causes us to feel helplessly unsafe at the mercy of feelings and thinking based on error and it leads us to create additional danger by making decisions based on faulty premises and unknown feelings. Conversely, to be able to accurately examine data, and own judgments (thoughts/opinions) and feelings associated with data, is empowering and crucial to increasing perceived and real safety to self and others.

**Shield teaching.** An imaginary psychic shield can be raised silently as protection to deflect unwelcome energy from others (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 147, 148): “No, I raise my shield, what you say is not me, it does not fit me.” It is not a blocking wall but an empowering tool to be used to reclaim the right to choose what to let in as true and what to keep out when one judges it necessary. Without it one can suffer from indiscriminately absorbing anything thrown at him/her or even recoil from others, conversation, or
engagement in life. It is helpful for one to remain in the battle of life safely and constructively.

**Shield process.** This group process was done in pairs: each man stood a couple of feet from another, eye-to-eye. It involved four one-minute steps, each done twice, once for each man in each pair. The first step involved sending, feeling, evaluating, and deflecting *silent non-verbal negative* energy through raising the shield. The second step involved the same for *verbal negative* energy. The third step involved *exaggerated verbal positive* energy (one must learn to shield from flattery as well). The fourth and final step involved receiving *non-verbal unconditional love and acceptance*, this time without raising the shield. Some very short feedback was allowed between each step.

Some men had a hard time especially with negative “role play” so I modeled it. Some men noticed it was most difficult for them to receive non-verbal, through the eyes, unconditional love/positive energy, perceptively concluding that they were not used to love but most familiar with receiving negative energy. This was an unplanned serendipitous affirmation of the activities of the group. The men took a mid-session bio-break after the exercise.

**Teaching on clearing.** A clearing is necessary when a man experiences a charge, usually negative, between him and another man. The man’s responsibility to himself is to clear it, return to a safe grounded place, and restore his relationship, and the clearing process allows him to do so safely. It also allows him to discover things about himself he is not yet aware of—a piece of his “shadow.” Clearing is not about the man cleared, but about the clearer: “The man I cleared with did push my buttons, but they are *my* buttons” (John L. Beck, personal communication, February 21, 2011).
We practiced one successful clearing, with me as the facilitator and using the wooden staff referred to in the “talking stick” paragraph above. Despite the discomfort involved, the clearer was able to restore his relationship with his brother; and even though forewarned, the man was surprised, as one always is, when the process suddenly caused him to see clearly a previously unseen piece of his shadow. We had time for some feedback. The men saw the potential benefits of exploring and experimenting with this process beyond the group meeting practice.

**Check-out and closing.** As we checked out, all noticed with pleasure that all men had disclosed themselves freely in the check-in. The magic happened. Some in the group voiced the container was getting tighter and this work was needed and good.

**Session 3 Narrative**

**Check-in.** It was again hard to break through the men’s reluctance to go beyond what they are used to saying to others (i.e., “I’m tired, curious, fine,” etc.) to identify and disclose feelings. It took three rounds for all to acknowledge having peeled a couple of layers they had not exposed before.

**Review of clearing intention and clearing.** We reviewed the clearing intention and I introduced clearing as a standard item on the agenda. A man decided to clear and the clearing was good though I failed to help him contact a piece of his shadow. This offered a chance to give some helpful teaching about the shadow and its potential for furthering safety in their world.

**Accountability.** This was another new standard process. Clearing involves negative energy with someone, but accountability is about integrity with self or others regarding agreements made. This process is entered into voluntarily by a man conscious.
of being “out of integrity” (misalignment of thoughts, words, actions, and values), but “support accountability” can be offered to a man not aware of being “out of integrity.” The man offering “support accountability” can undertake this process successfully only if he has no negative charge against the other man in the matter at hand (or it would be a clearing). The man who is offered support accountability can accept or decline it. In accountability, as in clearing, the man doing the work has a chance to contact a piece of his shadow that unrecognized and unacknowledged, caused him to choose behaviors “out of integrity” with his stated values and, therefore, dangerous to himself (and others).

Three men stated they were “out of integrity” and two of them did a bit of work, just to get a taste. Again, I felt I partially failed, but it was good practice for all. The break was taken at this point.

**Communication.** The men reviewed teachings on communication and commented on how these apply, especially in church. I restated this is a group where all of what each man is—the good and the bad, is welcome and held as precious and safe, and I gave personal examples. All men check out freely; one said “the group is really jelling together.”

**Session 4 Narrative**

This was one of the fullest and best sessions one could ever lead; the first part full of life-changing processes, and the end with an incredible work round.

**Introduction to mission.** Mission statements have recently been *en vogue* in organizational leadership, with efforts to help leaders develop personal mission statements. Unfortunately, a true mission’s life-giving energy is most often entirely missed by not delving deeply enough to get to its source. To be of any use at all, a man’s
mission must be so linked to what one is at the deepest level that it can wake him up every morning for action without having to be invoked artificially. Such mission will apply to every activity of a man’s life. It provides the man and the world of which he’s a part the only platform from which he is safe from harmful distractions that deprive self and the world of his goodness.

So formative are life’s earliest experiences that a man’s mission will almost always reflect the deepest need of the little boy he once was and still has in himself, his original wound (Hillman, 1985; 1 Cor 4:7). The Mission imagination exercise was intended to help the men connect with what their inner little boy’s deepest need was and still is. This was then used as basis for each man to discover his life mission. The inbuilt urge to bring healing of that wound to self and world is the unstoppable drive of this authentic personal mission to be actuated 24/7. Any other mission is inauthentic, coerced, and, therefore, doomed to fail sooner or later. Any other mission robs the man and the world of what each individual has to offer. Worse, “Violate a man’s soul, and some part of him becomes violent” (Hollis, 1994, p. 106).

Mission process. The following is a drastic summary. The process consisted of alternating imagination (I) and teaching/reflection (R) parts. None of the previous introduction was given as teaching before the process. (I) As in bedtime story-telling, I invited the men to connect with the little boy each one was and with his little boy’s deepest need. (R) Each man was asked to write what his little boy’s deepest need was. (I) I invited the men to see their little boy’s deepest need met and then to expand this to a vision of the world healed of that wound. (R) Each man was asked to draw a picture of that world and to extract three powerful words describing it. (I) I invited the men to
imagine themselves in action in the scene, doing what heals the world of the wound. (R) I asked each man to draw themselves in action and then to extract three action verbs describing it. This completed the gathering of the two building blocks needed for identifying a personal mission: Vision + Action = Mission. I instructed the men to write a first draft of their personal mission statement from the six words previously extracted: “I create a world which is [three words describing the vision], by [three words from the action].” I had three volunteers read their statement and receive feedback from the group regarding whether or not the mission statement matched the requested form (i.e., vision + action). No critique regarding the content of the statement was allowed.

This modeled the discussion now to be done in groups of three, with the task of tightening up the first draft. I also introduced the additional concepts of shadow mission (it is the exact opposite of the golden mission just discovered and because it is so ingrained, we naturally fulfill it without thinking unless we make a conscious choice not to); stretch goals (weekly steps towards actualizing the mission, for “emotional and spiritual introspection will not help a man without action” (Michael C. Rodriguez, personal communication, September 24, 2010; see also “faith at work,” Greenleaf, 1977, p. 257); and affirmation (a short statement from the vision or the action that creates personal energy towards the mission in the present tense (Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. 123-124).

Despite Foster (1978, p. 38) and Sellon and Smith (2005, p. 34), I wondered if some men would see guided visualization as New Agey (Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. 216-221) or be reluctant to relax and be engaged. None of them were; they all participated willingly and with trust.
Bio break

**Introduction to work round.** From Session 4, the men were given opportunity to “work” on personal issues in the group. I offered formal ways to do this work.

**What’s at risk** gives a man the opportunity of looking into his head to find out the story he’s been telling himself as to why he can or cannot do something to change his life. **Dialogue Chair** allows a man to safely practice a difficult conversation he needs to have. **King’s Court** is a way for a man to safely get feedback concerning an issue in his life. In all these processes, permission was given through the documents signed in the first session to explore safely, protected from the dangers that one would find in the regular church setting.

**Actual “work.”** All the men had interest in doing work on a variety of issues. Two were pressing, but we only had time for one man to do King’s Court. The work was magical: the man disclosed data and feelings; the men listened intently and gave thoughtful and heartfelt care despite their inexperience and church moralistic background. The group rose to its mythical shape of a unified circle of men, with far greater wisdom and love than the addition of what each man brings, and into which a man can safely come for help whenever in trouble (Bly, 2004, p. 54; also Grimm, in Zipes, pp. 482, 256-259). The evening lead man wanted to end with prayer for the man who did work so the meeting ended with a prayer circle around him in an unusual feeling of safe and clean love.

Session 5 Narrative

The beginning of this meeting seemed anticlimactic as compared to how we left the previous meeting. Participants were late, check-in was rushed, and the group seemed
tired and reserved with not much desire to work or share. But my processing two personal accountability issues helped by priming an unplanned conversation started by one participant on the difficulty of achieving closeness, openness, authenticity, and safety in the church. This participant was open in sharing his anger that church members cannot feel safe in the church. Many others in the group concurred and deplored the heavy burden members have, a burden to perform, hide, or be castigated. Participants mentioned members who would not come back to church because of hypocrisy, lack of understanding, support, and safety in it regarding “the standards” and people’s struggles.

**Teaching on fear.** “Men’s lives are essentially dominated by fear” (Hollis, 1994, p. 11). Fear and safety are opposites. This session training on fear sought to help the men to face their fear and their power so they could use their fear in a purposeful, positive and constructive way that would foster a realistic sense of increased safety. Two short stories were used—one from the Samurai tradition to illustrate the benefits of embracing one’s fear, and the other on lions and gazelles, on the disadvantages of eluding danger instead of facing it.

**Fear exercise: Tell me who you are.** The men paired up in twos. Man one said, “Tell me who you are.” The other said, “I’m a __,” stating a negative truth about himself. Man one responded with, “Thank you” again followed by, “Tell me who you are.” The men switched after two minutes.

**Deepest fear.** The men paired up in twos. Man one said, “Tell me your deepest fear.” The other answered, “My deepest fear is __.” Man one said, “Thank you” and again “Tell me your deepest fear.” The men switched after two minutes.

**Samurai sword.** The men then regrouped in a circle, and I helped them to
connect their fear with their power through a short visualization, ending with the words:

“Know your fear and feel your power.”

Bio-break

Teaching on bucketing. A large but unconscious portion of how we interact with the world comes directly from what we have learned from previous experiences (Scazzero, 2003, p. 87). “Bucketing” is yet another way to do “work” towards safety and wholeness. It is an amplification of the “clearing” process, but rather than only recognizing ownership of the charge, “bucketing” allows the man to follow the emotional charge to an earlier source, peel some layer or gather some little scoop of previously concealed messages, complexes, influences, and release them, thus depriving them of their power for harm and making himself and the world safer. This is complex but not luxury work that tackles the very thing that makes the world and the church unsafe.

Bucketing round. There was no bucketing round, because there was little willingness to even self-disclose in the opening whips of a work round. The only conversation topic the men were disposed to have that evening was the burden it is to be member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the difficulty in it to establish discipleship support and intimate relationships where one can be one’s self with other church members. I was not unhappy about not leading a bucketing work round as this is an intricate and complex process that goes deep and requires greater skills than previous processes.

Closing. I ended by reinforcing the usually unwelcome fact that looking for unconscious truth is hard (Jung, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 4) with the
amusing and deep story of Mulla Nasrudin searching in easier outside light for a key which he lost in the darkness of his house (Forest, 1996, pp. 62-63).

Check-out

Session 6 Narrative

Session 6 consisted of a simple conversation with activities on the basic feelings of sadness, anger, shame/guilt, and love/fear, complementing Session 5 on fear. This is useful because when asked what he feels, a man will often explain what he thinks, or what the problem “out there” is (Hollis, 1994, p. 74). But unconscious feelings are still brought into every interaction, coming sideways at the least opportune moment with dangerous results. The discussion on this subject was helpful in bringing greater awareness and healing of what can lie underneath sadness, anger, and shame/guilt, and practical knowledge of how to deal with these feelings usefully in self and others.

The shorter agenda allowed for a good work round and occasioned time for men to dialogue as they lingered in the parking lot.

Session 7 Narrative

Trust most/trust least process. The shadow is difficult to describe and see; even in clearing and bucketing, the reflection of our shadow in others is elusive. Trust Most/Trust Least powerfully demonstrates that energies activated in us by others reflect to us what is part of us. It is one of the toughest processes. I prepared the men for it with a review of “Shield.”

The process is in four parts: First, the men stand and must choose the man each trusts most by placing the right hand on his shoulder. One at a time, each man then takes up to 60 seconds saying to that man, “I trust you most because …” and remembers it.
Second, when all are done with this, the men must choose the man each trusts least (there can be resistance to this) by placing the left hand on his shoulder. Each man then takes up to 60 seconds saying to that man, “I trust you least because …” and remembers it. Third, each man in turn stands again in front of the man he trusted least but this time he repeats the remembered words, “I trust you least because …” to a long mirror propped to the right of the man. This is a serendipitous moment of great surprise and unplanned self-discovery for which the men were unprepared. Time was taken to assimilate what fits in the projection and to thank the man who acted as mirror for his service. Fourth, when all were done with this, the process was repeated for each man one at a time with the mirror to the right of the man they trusted most. Time was taken to validate or repudiate the projection and to thank the man who acted as mirror for his service. The process ended with the mention that trust of the container among all participants is what made it possible. The group debriefed to facilitate any potential need for healing.

Bio break

Teaching on judgments versus projection. This complemented the basic level of differentiation between data, judgments, and feelings established in Session 2 with an additional level of differentiation: that is, between judgments—interpretative opinions that are somewhat more objective because based on data (i.e., who, what, where, when, and how), and projections—interpretative opinions that are highly subjective because based on assumed reasons (i.e., the intent of another person—why; Sellon & Smith, pp. 47-50). Coming from us instead of outside reality, they give us a picture of ourselves rather than a truthful picture of outside reality. Taken at face value without being questioned or ascertained, projections can be the erroneous basis for great danger and
harm in any relationship. Just like all other parts of the shadow, judgments and projections are part of who I am and not bad in and of themselves, but they must be owned as such, as personal and subjective, and their various degrees of consonance with outward reality validated through clarification and feedback.

Session 8 Narrative

**Work round.** The main purpose of this session was to offer the experience of a full monitored work round.

Session 9 Narrative

**Hot-seat process.** Ephesians 4:15, “speaking the truth in love,” describes what our relational world should be like and what the Hot Seat process does. This process is similar to the 360-degree method of evaluation used in the business world (Pollard, 2000, p. 125). In it, honest feedback is lovingly given and received on negative and positive aspects of each man. This is what men can do for each other when freed from fear and when they feel loved and safe with each other. It is the culmination of the ten-week training. The result is a safe and exhilarating feeling of being simultaneously known and loved.

The “hot seat” has two rounds: the first round is about giving each man feedback on negatives in his life: “The shadow I see in you that I also see in myself is ….” Each participating man receives this feedback from all other men willing to give it. The second round is about giving each man feedback on positives in his life: “The gold that I see in you that I also see in myself is ….” Notes are taken to be given to the man at the close of the evening. I closed this process by honoring the men for their work and gave an
opportunity for any man with unfinished business around this work to take care of it before feedback.

**Session 10 Narrative**

Apart from the regular agenda items, the following took place on the last session:

**Review on the shadow.** I gave a review of the arch-concept of this ten-week training—that of the shadow: Hidden and suppressed shadow contents are dangerous: they will sabotage goals and drain energy from living the truth. When brought to light, embraced, and used wisely, they are a great source of vitality and powerful allies for good.

**Archetypes.** A discussion took place on four archetypes of the mature masculine (Moore & Gillette, 1990).

**Feast.** Each man had been asked to bring some food for a feast. Some spent much time preparing food in the kitchen; others bought goodies, etc.

**Closing.** When time came to close, I asked the men to pack up their things and set them outside the door so that after coming back to the room for closure, they could pick the things up, go quietly, and not talk with each other until in the parking lot. When they came back inside, I lined them up by the door. Starting with the one furthest from the door, each man then walked up the line towards the door, stopping on his way in front of each man for ten seconds of silent eye-to-eye contact. This giving and receiving of a silent blessing and farewell to and from each man, with no word or touch exchanged, was the last action of the group. It powerfully exemplified the goal of total safety for growth I had in mind for this group.
Conclusion

This chapter presented my perspective of how I successfully created safety for growth in a pilot group of the Fox Valley Church in Wisconsin. This setting promoted self-exploration for growth more safely than can usually be experienced in the general church setting. The assessment of this project will be presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
SAFETY, AWARENESS, AND GROWTH IN A PILOT GROUP
AT THE FOX VALLEY CHURCH IN WISCONSIN—
PART B: EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to use the data gathered at the end of the intervention to assess program effectiveness as shown in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Assessment Methodology
The qualitative data for my project comes from participants’ interviews, supplemented by participants’ feedback forms (Appendix E), and the results of two Natural Church Development (NCD) Surveys; the first NCD Survey (Appendix F) was conducted at the Fox Valley Church in 2009 and the second (Appendix F) was conducted two months after the intervention.

Interviews were conducted with each of the 10 participants from April 15 to April 26, 2011. Four open-ended questions provided an outline for the semi-structured interviews:

1. Can you describe your experience with the men’s group?
2. What impact does an increased sense of safety have to help you process your personal issues in a way that contributes to your personal growth?
3. What impact does an increased sense of safety have to help you process your spiritual issues in a way that contributes to your spiritual growth?
4. What impact does an increased sense of safety have in helping you to be more effectively involved in the life of the church?

I typed Verbatim of the interviews, read them, and deleted identifying elements in them for confidentiality purposes, highlighted their most relevant portions, and distilled the document into a Verbatim Summaries document containing only the comments relevant to my project.

I then reread the Verbatim Summaries, identifying, analyzing, and ordering the salient concepts in a logical order that made sense to me for this presentation; I classified them by concept-identifying letters (A, B, C, etc.) according to the order in which I selected to organize them, and compiled them into a Concept List (Appendix C). I turned back to the Verbatim Summaries and followed each comment with the concept identifying letter(s) corresponding to the relevant concept(s) presented in it, providing easy reference to the concepts found in the semi-structured interviews. I checked the accuracy of the correlation between comments, concepts, and concept-identifying letters by looking simultaneously at the Verbatim, Verbatim Summaries, and Concepts List numerous times, occasionally making some slight additions or adjustments based on my full knowledge of the participants’ words and attitudes during the interviews and during the sessions. This was a tedious and lengthy process of data analysis, but out of it emerged the independent, magnificent, unarguably clear and powerful, collective voice of this study.

I inserted the concepts and concept-identifying letters into six tables (Appendix D) to organize the results. In all the tables, the key concept-identifying letters have been inserted in parenthesis after each concept (e.g., letter (N) after “Safety” in Appendix D)
to substantiate that the responses relating to the concepts are found in the interviews just as the concept-identifying letters indicate. The tables could thus be correlated with the Verbatim Summaries. In all tables, an X indicates the presence of the participant’s perception of the concept.

**Outcomes**

Concepts (Appendix C) related to safety (A to P) are presented first, followed by those related to danger (Q to Z).

**Concepts Related to Safety**

**Safety and added safety in the group—Concepts (A) and (B).** None of the participants failed to mention added safety as crucial component of their experience. The first interview item posed to them was: “Describe your experience with the group” and their immediate answer nearly always included safety: “My experience … was one of acceptance and growth” (Participant 1). “I was very comfortable…. I don’t have anything to fear from anyone in the group” (Participant 2). “At first, most of the people in the group I trusted” (Participant 3). “It’s good to see everybody … open up” (Participant 4). “I got something out of it” (Participant 5). “We had trust … that made me feel safe” (Participant 6). “The guys … in the group … you feel safer around them” (Participant 7). “Several men … I felt pretty safe around them” (Participant 8). “I felt much safer … than I have with probably any other group” (Participant 9). “I was … very apprehensive going into it” (Participant 10).

**Greater safety in the group than in church—Concept (B).** Safety experienced in the group was seen by the participants as greater than in the church: “I am not as comfortable sharing “dirt” with church members as I did with the group. I am very
guarded in the church, and less guarded in the small group. There was a greater sense of safety in the group” (Participant 1). “I … shared some deeper inner things than you would normally” (Participant 5). “People talking behind my back … there was just none of that in the group, and that made me feel safe” (Participant 6).

Two sources of added safety in the Group were universally identified by all the participants. The first—“administrative” (Concept C), came from me as organizer of this project, and the second—“non-administrative” (Concept D), from the men themselves.

**Administrative sources of safety in the group**—**Concept (C)**. All participants made mention of the Agreement (Appendix B) signed in Session 1 as important to safety. As will be shown later (Concepts S and T), two main dangers feared in church life are informal gossip and formal discipline, both of which entail breaks of confidentiality; therefore, the official agreement to confidentiality signed by all represented the effective removal of all possibilities of negative consequences in the church as a result of inappropriate sharing. This was experienced as enabling safety even by participants who at first were not sure that the commitment could be fully trusted.

“The ‘container’ … was very important: a safe group, knowing that it wasn’t going to go anywhere” (Participant 1). “Nobody was going to use the information against me…. We made agreements … rules … that we would not share this with other individuals” (Participant 3). “As far as being able to say something … the group was … [safer]; the safety net was there … the agreement that we had going into it … that … we will keep whatever was said there, there” (Participant 4). “The knowledge that … everybody agreed to … keep everything confidential” (Participant 5). “We could trust each other to not share information … with others outside of the group” (Participant 6). “I
believe everybody … will stick to the oath that we weren’t going to share anything outside the group” (Participant 8). “Being safe with the guys, you know what was said. Everything was going to stay there, so that’s where the safety is” (Participant 10).

This official agreement created the foundational, structural context in which the men could then be instructed in safety-related issues and start practicing safety with each other.

**Non-administrative sources of safety in the group—Concept (D).** The second source of added safety mentioned by all men was the mutual sharing they started from the first session: “We all have common problems … challenges … very similar …. We are all in the same boat” (Participant 1). “I’ve said … things that I haven’t said to anyone else and … maybe them too, so now, we all got skin in this game” (Participant 2). “What helped make it … safe … was that everybody had … ‘skin in the game,’ … [what] helped was [that] we shared something that we wouldn’t share with anybody else, [so] … there was … interest to keep those things safe … confidential” (Participant 9). “What made it good was to be able to open up with each other…. The environment made it that it just felt safe…. We all can relate. We all have our hang-ups and issues … a lot of them … the same” (Participant 3). “[Hearing somebody else’s story created safety because since] they’ve made themselves vulnerable, … I can make myself vulnerable…. Vulnerability creates safety” (Participant 4). “It’s mutual disclosure that allows people to be a little bit more open” (Participant 5). “Knowing that they have talked about similar things … you trust the people that you’re talking to” (Participant 6). “We have a lot in common with other people, but … [not] until they … bring it out, … can [you] trust each other” (Participant 8). “After they … related … their … experience … I felt more at ease
with them…. I disclosed and they disclosed, both ways” (Participant 10).

The men took advantage of being safe as soon as the Agreement was signed; they could take off their “expected spiritual shoes” and feel at home in church. In contrast to their reluctance two hours before, they volunteered at the end of the first session unexpected comments: “We are much closer to each other than at the beginning.” “I don’t really want to leave, I feel like I am leaving a safe place.” The Agreement made this possible. A visual illustration of the participants’ perception of (added) safety and sources of (added) safety in the group (Concepts A to D) can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Perceptions of (Added) Safety and Sources of (Added) Safety in Exit Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
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<tr>
<td>Safety in Group in General (A)</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater in Group than in Church (B)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>From Administrative Sources (C)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Non-Administrative Sources (D)</td>
<td>X</td>
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Note: There is a reason for participant 2 being the only one to not recognize some measure of added safety in the group as compared to the church, but stating the reason for this would be identifying, which I, therefore, must withhold to protect confidentiality.

Links between safety and growth—Concept (E). Various sub-links between safety, (disclosure, awareness), and growth were perceived differently by participants, but all participants saw the general link between safety and growth, as seen in Table 2. Their answers to the second and third questions often revealed their acknowledgement of the
Table 2

Perceptions of Linkages between Safety, Awareness, and Growth in Exit Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General link Safety and Growth (E)</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety and Disclosure (F)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Disclosure and Growth (J)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance/Benefits of Shadow Awareness (K)</td>
<td></td>
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link between being in a safe community, becoming more aware, and growing. In the interest of space, only some of the best summary comments will be shared here:

“If you don’t feel safe, you … [won’t] bring your issues out and … get help, you … [will] be … guarded … and … hide…. Safety helps … awareness and acknowledgement…. If you are not aware, you are … blind…. When you become aware … you can … choose…. If you are not aware … it’s … a random choice” (Participant 1).

“When you feel safe, your guards come down. You’re able to talk … be yourself…. To share helps you to get it off in front of you … connect with something … I was not aware before…. [It] helps me to think differently about it: What can I do so that it’s not going to happen again?” (Participant 2). “When you’re safe [and] feel safe … you can open up and share things … you wouldn’t normally share with people…. In that process … you learn … your mind works better … you start to realize … some of the things you’re feeling … saying, [or] … thinking]” (Participant 3). “Everybody … [made me aware in a way that I
wasn’t before by what they were saying] … that just would trigger stuff in me” (Participant 4).

“Sometimes I … [couldn’t] … put it into words … but when somebody else says something similar … I can relate to it and … bring it out. Greater awareness of self and others came out through the group interaction. [So now] I’m able to see things…. I can understand … what’s behind … and … what motivates me to behave that way. And … just being more conscious … makes me more aware of how to interact in a more positive way” (Participant 8). “The [group] activities … [were] revealing … a lot of self-awareness…. We learned about our own selves…. That was a huge helpful point, because if you don’t … know yourself, you’re going to have trouble knowing … your potential” (Participant 9). The special benefit of added awareness for growth by being part of the safe community of a small circle of peers was noticed: “Being in a group…make[s] a difference … when you try to discover what is hidden … other people are going to see … differently, and help you see it better” (Participant 10).

**Importance and benefits of shadow awareness—Concept (K).** Participant 10 identified in the last quote the importance of becoming aware of “what is hidden.” Other participants saw the link between shadow awareness and creating safety: “The golden mission and … shadow mission were … very powerful…. So easy for that shadow mission to rule your life, unless you … take charge! So, that’s … the thing that stood out the most above everything else…. I could see right away … my withdrawal, certain things … just a habit … making [the shadow mission] stronger, and … not … the golden mission … that I really want. And so … at that point, I had a choice…. Before it didn’t … seem there was a choice, because I didn’t know there was a difference. Awareness!...
Now, I … had a choice…. I could either go [and] withdraw … or … go back … with a better attitude” (Participant 1). “The cruel people … don’t realize … [the damage] they are doing to others. So, it’s good to be in a group … where people can realize [that] … some things do … affect people, just … something they say” (Participant 3). “Some people … [in the church] are … happy to let you know you’ve overstepped your grounds and … rub your nose in it when they are … as guilty of the same thing…. People will point out your shortcomings but they are guilty of the same thing, and until they … admit to [and reflect on] that … they don’t see that what they are doing wrong is the same thing!” (Participant 8). “[In]…the “hot seat” activity, … you … [and] each person … saw … what … maybe [was] tripping you up…. You got to discover a few things … that … people identified with you, in a way that you wouldn’t have otherwise known” (Participant 9).

What makes organizations and the people in them dangerous is not what they say they believe or want to do, it’s what they are not aware of, “what they’re hiding, what we learned in our group [is] … their shadow mission” (Participant 9). “I know people that are very accusatory … and I know for a fact that those people have some [pretty severe] skeletons in their closet … [but] it just seems proportional that the more we … pretend the bad stuff doesn’t exist for ourselves, the more we project it on others” (Participant 9).

To the question: Aren’t you dangerous when you’re not aware of all these things that work in us in the background? Participant 10 replied: “You are very dangerous…. Our defenses … our feelings come up that we’re not even aware of … behind us until we turn around and look at it head on…. As you said, [when] you’re not aware, you’re dangerous.
A group like that doesn’t change the church but … makes it … safer … to look without fear at ourselves” (Participant 10).

**Two additional aspects of safety—Concepts (L) and (M).** The strength of a specific perception is not always linked to the number of those who thought of expressing it. Certain perceptions expressed by a few who are more perceptive or vocal than others, likely reflect identical perceptions by many more, even though those perceptions in the majority are less conscious or not voiced. A few participants commented on two concepts related to safety not mentioned by the others: advice-giving, and theology (Concepts L and M).

**Safety as refraining from advice-giving—Concept (L).** The participants specifically became aware of the potential for even well-intended teaching and sharing to create a sense of danger, “violence,” an inept “assault” (Davis, 2010, p. 31), and of the value of offering silent support without advice-giving unless such is requested. “[In] my toughest times, the best help is just having a friend … willing to bend his ear…. I had … a couple of friends … [who] would … keep me on the phone until late at night…. They didn’t give … advice or anything, but … he just let me [talk], so I could hear myself and then realize … after hearing [myself] … well, why am I thinking like this?” (Participant 5). “[My friend] didn’t need me to talk…. He just needed to be listened to…. I didn’t finish one sentence, and he solved his problem for himself…. I don’t … need to get people advice all the time…. I have a set of ears, and that’s all he needs” (Participant 9).

**Theological aspects of safety—Concept (M).** The second additional concept related to safety was only commented on by one participant—theological aspects or sources of safety for spiritual growth:
Growth because of safety] relates not only to the individuals but God. If you don’t trust God … there’s no growth, because you’re fearful…. I came to the understanding that I’m okay with God, [and] that’s where the growth started…. I’ve been here [x number of] years, and … never even felt saved…. I preached … it but … never believed in it … deep down; I believed that I was lost, the whole time through. Finally coming to the realization that I am saved, even though I still have my issues, helps me to grow. Before … I was suffocating, I couldn’t, there was no growth … no hope, I tried, I can’t do it, so finally, you give up! But now, it’s a different one, when you know that it’s all right. You’re saved first and foremost no matter what, and then, you can … the growth starts and the change occurs. (Participant 3)

Partial summary. Table 3 is meant to show that not one participant in this project failed to appreciate the benefits of, and link, between the three basic concepts of this project—safety, awareness, and growth, and that all saw the foundational importance of safety to the other two.

Growth—Concept (P). Participants often described growth as greater understanding and closeness in relationships, or as the ability to independently make better choices. The definitions of personal and spiritual growth given by Participants 4 and 9 are especially worth noting, referring to secular conversations. Participant 9 said, “We never had a talk about … anything ‘spiritual’…. But … to me, those would be spiritual conversations.” Spiritual growth is “trying to figure out life” (Participant 4) in a personal way by each individual (i.e., “individuation,” as Jung and Bowen called it). Participant 4 referred to totalitarian coercion and fearful conformity as opposites and detractors of growth: “[that] fear … [of not being] … the same; [the] … fear to explore…. [Coercion] maybe conducive to growth in the direction that some leader has in
Table 3

*Perceptions of the Importance and Benefits of Safety, Growth, and Awareness and Their Linkages in Exit Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tr>
<td>Safety (N)</td>
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<td>Awareness (O)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth (P)</td>
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mind, but not to true growth…. Hitler got everybody to do everything with a gun to their head, but as soon as you pull the gun away, people … stopped, and … become who they are” (Participant 4).

**Awareness—Concept (O).** As amply shown above in the comments on Concept (E)—General Link between Safety and Growth, and (K)—Importance and Benefits of Shadow Awareness, unawareness was seen as barrier to growth or indicator of non-growth, and awareness as the mediator of growth.

**Safety—Concept (N).** Finally, safety was seen and loved by the participants as the needed context for awareness-leading-to-growth to emerge. “I loved the safety aspect” (Participant 3). It was not difficult to gather from the interviews descriptions of what emotional safety looks like, and aspects of what made the men feel safe: i.e. confidentiality—“The people … I trust … keep it to themselves…. People … you don’t trust, would … use my information in general discussion and it’d … get twisted around” (Participant 7), absence of fear of judgments and consequences—“You are not going to get laughed at … and if you do, it’s not in a hurtful way…. You know … that you’re not going to get judged…. When you have judgments out of the way and … safety is there,
that makes conversation … easy” (Participant 9), *listening support*—“Knowing that someone is willing to listen … cares, is willing to share in their angst … and knowing that they can trust that person to not share it with other people” (Participant 6), and *refraining from unrequested advice-giving* (Concepts L above and T below)—reduction of danger and fear.

**Partial summary.** In their responses participants recognized a sense of added safety in the group (Table 1). Not only did they see and experience the links between safety, awareness, and growth (Table 2), but also they came to a greater valuation of safety as foundational to spiritual growth (see Table 3). They drew the sense of added safety experienced in the group from the Agreement to confidentiality that was signed by all as well as from mutual sharing (Table 1).

**Partial conclusion.** The new order of relationship that emerged in the study presented in Chapter 2 between *practiced safety* and *structural safety* was confirmed by the participants. (After the importance of shadow awareness,) this was the second most important finding of this project (the most important and foundational being the one presented in the conclusion of Chapter 3). It was the effective reduction of objective danger through official administrative action that led to a greater willingness by participants to start practicing safe relationships in a way that would increase the more subjective, but determining, sense of safety needed for developing awareness and achieving spiritual growth. The determining sense of safety needed for developing awareness and achieving spiritual growth came from *practice* by the participants (i.e., I feel safe), but practice was only made possible chronologically by the *structure* over which only I as administrator had control (i.e., It is safe). The only act of coercive force
needed to create safety was my forceful outlawing from the group of any “weapon”
participants could use against each other. That single action effectively removed all other
coercions instead of fostering or allowing them as is often the case in the church.

Concepts Related to Danger

Having completed the section presenting the outcomes concepts related to safety
(Concepts A to P), in the next section I will present the outcomes concepts related to
danger (Concepts Q to Z). As already noted above—“I am not as comfortable sharing
“dirt” with church members as I did with the group” (Participant 1), the added safety and
ensuing awareness and growth experienced in the group were universally set by all
participants in contrast to the situation in the church outside of the group. Was a finding
matching the finding presented in the above partial conclusion also demonstrated in the
participants’ responses? Let us now see what was perceived by the participants as
enabling the practice of dangerous behaviors in the church and what the results might be.

**Danger in the church—Concept (Q).** “[When] … someone tells you ‘I smelled
… [smoke] on that person’…, it is [not] for their best interest. To hold it and … let it slip
out later on, [is not] right. I am very upset…. It doesn’t matter if it is according to the
rules. It makes people very unsafe and doesn’t contribute to growth” (Participant 1).

“This church is pretty screwed up, with the type of … judgmental people [in it that] …
you don’t feel safe around” (Participant 3). “It does … [people] major damage because
once that information is known, it can’t be recalled and taken out of people’s mind …
and you can’t reverse that…. [So] one solution that people take is to run, to quit … move
away or something like that” (Participant 9). Participants identified two sources
producing a lack of safety in the church, indeed mirroring in reverse the sources of safety
in the group: non administrative sources (Concept T) and administrative sources (Concept S), which I will now present.

**Non-administrative sources of danger in the church—Concept (T).** The fear of gossip, judgment, criticism, rejection and being shunned, socially damaged, and violated are admittedly not only experienced in the church, but everywhere. But a sense of danger in the church was nevertheless acknowledged by all participants in the project and described with the feeling of fear: fear of gossip, judgment, rejection, and damage.

Fear of gossip: a participant described lack of safety in or outside the church as “people talking behind my back about things that I’d done or … hadn’t done” (Participant 6). “The not-feeling-safe is … talking to … members … in the church … and their tongue starts wagging … to tell everybody to bring you down…. Look at this person, look at this, look at this” (Participant 10). “Did you hear what happened with that … what they did?” (Participant 9). “[The church] wasn’t … safe … because … it was a big rumor mill…. [If] something got out there … it was going to go [from one person to the next]…. Instead of guarding [this piece of dirt on somebody] … they would … use it to disassemble this person … or take a … piece of them away” (Participant 4).

Fear of judgment: “Fear that they think that I wasn’t a Christian, the other’s eye on me…. Fear of being looked down upon as not being up to standards” (Participant 1). “Fear of what this person is going to think about me, the fear of where is it going, confidential, social reprisal” (Participant 2).

Fear of rejection: “[Lack of safety] in … the church is, not feeling loved and accepted in an environment where those things are supposed to be paramount—love and acceptance. There’s a fear [and consequences] of not living up to all those expectations:
gossip, rejection…. There are … upstanding people in the church … passing by in the store or something, [who] won’t even make eye-contact with me” (Participant 5).

And fear of damage: “I hope that whatever we did share … doesn’t share with inappropriate people, and … doesn’t come back … because I know there’s a lot of vicious people out there… If they know anything about … your weaknesses or … struggles … they will use it against you…. They are not there to help, [but] to judge…. I know how much, how many times I’ve been torn down by these same people…. What they’re doing … isn’t right…. They … think they’re doing something good or right, and … it’s having the opposite effect…. You feel beat up, judged, ostracized…. They’re using stuff against you …” (Participant 3). “I don’t think there’s something necessarily wrong with what we believe but … people tend to judge each other…. [But people] don’t need to be beaten over the head with it” (Participant 8).

Fear of being violated: Refraining from giving unsolicited advice was acknowledged as source of added safety (Concept L above), but the flip side is that what creates safety when present can often create danger when absent, and vice-versa.

“They're telling you what to do, all the things that you don’t need, [when in fact] you come in here for a different reason, and you can get that without coming to church. I don’t need people coming to me and telling me I got to do this … [or] that…. That’s taking away from why I am coming in. Their voice is louder than the voice of God and obscuring it” (Participant 3).

Administrative sources of danger in the church—Concept (S). All participants made some allusions to informal sources of danger and fear in the church (Concept T, in Appendix D). They also all made some reference to formal, institutionalized sources of
church dangers and fears that enable and amplify what can be informally done to people in the church, instead of reducing and putting a check to such damage. “If someone had been involved in … something …, broadcasting within the church could cause all kind of problems…. That person could be brought to task for whatever it was said that they had done” (Participant 6). As quoted above, one participant new to the church mistakenly used a wrong word in describing how church people … gossip. I found the use of this word enlightening in connection to formal dangers of church life. “Instead of guarding it … they would … use it to disassemble this person … or take a…piece of them away” (Participant 4).

What I find most painful is the indirect and understated manner in which the participants referred to formal administrative sources of danger caused by ecclesiastical court procedures still in effect in the church. Most participants alluded to these dangers through euphemisms such as being “brought to task,” with nervous laughter and repeated denials that they could ever be personally affected by fear of them. This indicates to me how deep the pain and shame such use of force in the church inflicts on people, no matter the new semantics or how far removed in time since the use of stakes, racks, pincers, dismemberments, and disembowelments.

One of the comments volunteered by participants on one of the feedback forms highlighted the impact of shame on the spiritual growth of the victims and of all involved. “This [feeling of shame] is probably the most significant in holding back personal growth” (Feelings: Guilt/Shame, Appendix E: Feedback Form with Cumulative Results).

Naming just a few of these shame-and-pain-inflicting institutionally-sanctioned forms of violence would include: withholding fellowship, withholding status and
participation, withholding privileges, and temporary or permanent severance/removal from fellowship/membership.

**Withholding fellowship** (baptism). Participant 4 remembered an individual who “had been in tons of Bible studies, and … he was saying he might come into the church, but he couldn’t [be baptized and accepted as member], because he smoked.”

**Withholding full status and participation** (nominations). “People could lose … a job in the church … [if … [their] issues … got known in the church….] I can see the fear” (Participant 1). “It could keep a person out of positions of service. It could cause them to be outcasts in the church, so to speak, because … they’ve done things that … aren’t by the book” (Participant 9).

**Withholding privileges.** These often have to do with very private, sensitive, and painful aspects of people’s lives about which the regular people in the church have no knowledge, taboos or circumstances of which they are afraid, such as marriage, divorce, remarriage, and baby issues. The privileges referred to include the use of facilities for certain wedding ceremonies, baby showers for non-married parents, or even funerals and memorial services for heretics. Participant 5 recalled, with nervous laughter and oft repeated denials of being personally affected by it, how a certain member “wanted to get married in the church, and … wasn’t able [i.e., allowed by the church] to do that…. But that’s the kind of thing … it doesn’t feel good, [laughter] you know” (Participant 5). The pain and shaming are intensified when preferential favoritism or nepotism is extended to other persons with similar issue. “Unearned privilege” is seldom recognized by the privileged.
Temporary or permanent severance from fellowship (“church discipline”).

The same participant, still claiming not “one to be worried” and “that this stuff doesn’t bother” him, still mentioned how “somebody might want to discipline me or something … that possibility of ‘discipline’ whatever that may be, church discipline” (Participant 5).

“Disfellowship … church discipline … kick me out! Kick me out?” Participant 3 exclaimed. “Yea,” said Participant 4, “it just seems like a big witch-hunt. I mean … what is this thing called? [The Church Manual] Oh my goodness!” So, through the victimization of persons who can easily be visibly designated as scapegoats, what was intended to be good (i.e., the teaching and upholding of good standards) seems in the end to create evil without apparently causing any reduction in the number of “drinks people have had during the weekend” (Participant 9) or heightening the quality of life or the level of spirituality in the church.

Added danger in the church—Concept (R). Some of the participants unknowingly confirmed Greenleaf (1978, p. 182) when they linked added danger in the church with what some see as the very trademark message of the denomination—a high number of rules and heightened “idealistic” expectations in it. “When you are a member, you are obligated to do certain things, not only scriptural things, keeping the Ten Commandments or whatever, but … also other obligations” (Participant 3). “The coffee that … [I’m] having now …. I just know that it’s considered like a taboo…. [Or] something like smoking … you’d be kind of ostracized a little bit” (Participant 4). “Because we have high standards of moral code here, there’s just more rules to break … and unfortunately we have … people … that are more than happy to let you know you’ve overstepped” (Participant 8). “That stuff comes out in greater force in the church …
because it is ... an environment where we’re supposed to be ‘good.’ As soon as we find out somebody is … doing something that’s not [‘good’] … it’s that much more magnified” (Participant 9). Once again, only Greenleaf (1977, p. 182) and Jung (as cited in Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 16) said that better.

To previously quoted comments mostly pointing to the forceful upholding of certain behavioral standards in the church, Participant 4 also added that the rightness of the church’s beliefs precludes tolerance to personal theological exploration in it.

Negatively mirroring Concept (M) in the above presentation of outcome concepts related to safety, a cause of church danger mentioned by authors in previous chapters (especially Blue, 1993; Gritsch, 2009; Seamands, 2004; Winter, 2005) was perceptively identified by one of the participants: theological sources of added danger in the church. “I came from a … background [where] you’re saved by grace through faith…. Here it’s different. You’re saved by grace, but you got to tow the line” (Participant 3). Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the participants’ responses in regards to danger in the Church.

Coping with perceived dangers in the church—Concepts (U), (V), and (W).

Table 5 provides an overview of comments made on coping with dangers in the church.

Guardedness—Concept (U). The word “guarded” was independently used 15 times in the interviews by three of the participants (1, 2, and 10) to describe how they relate to people where danger exists, including in the church: “I am very guarded in the church” (Participant 1). Right after a question on the church, Participant 2 answered: “I’m very guarded about what I share personally, very, very guarded.” Again, “I’m very guarded” (Participant 10). But being guarded and cautious in the church was admitted to
in different words by eight out of the ten. For example, Participant 3 said that at first, he didn’t want “to open up” for fear of a couple of people he wasn’t sure of in the group, Participant 4 likewise “didn’t tell anything personal” at first for fear that someone would violate the confidentiality agreement. And being guarded in the church, even if not admitted in any of the words of a couple interviews, was done by all. “Fundamentally, all these guys are just acquaintances to me” (Participant 5). Participant 6 said at first, “There was a high degree of discomfort in the group, because what we were doing was outside our comfort zones. We are not used to sharing information like we did in the group with

Table 4

*Perceptions of (Added) Danger and Sources of (Added) Danger in the Church in Exit Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger in the Church in General (Q)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater in Church than Outside (R)</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Administrative Sources (S)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Non-Administrative Sources (T)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
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Table 5

*Some Mechanisms for Coping with Perceived Dangers in the Church*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardedness (U)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Involvement (V)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Attendance (W)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
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other people. We’re used to keeping it in the inside…. The thing that I brought up in the first meeting that I attended, that’s something that I have not talked about with anyone since it happened … years ago.”

Non-participation—Concept (V). The participants linked involvement in church life to feeling safe in it. They listed the following as church activities that one could decline to be involved in or not depending on one’s sense of safety: attending Sabbath School and potluck, staying before or after worship, engaging in conversations, in outside projects, or in small groups, being willing to teach or lead out, and volunteering thoughts and ideas.

“If you are safe, you are more likely to become involved” (Participant 1). “Not feeling safe, I’d probably not want to get too involved” (Participant 4). “You’d be less likely to be involved if you don’t feel safe … because no one likes retaliation, being singled out … criticized” (Participant 5). “Not feeling safe is making people not wanting to put any effort in anything because they just don’t feel it’s going to turn out well enough” (Participant 8).

The reason one would prefer to avoid involvement because of lack of safety is fear “that somebody is going to judge your answers … hiding, [feeling] I’m not good enough” (Participant 1). “I am afraid of what people are going to think about me. [So] … why am I going up there to embarrass myself?” (Participant 2). Even Participant 10 admitted, “Sometimes I just feel vulnerable if someone … scolds me for whatever it is. I really feel bad about it and I pull into my corner, my shell” (Participant 10).

“They don’t want to come … [or] get involved because … you’re scared… fearful…. It’s like, ‘Don’t speak, don’t tell’ in a bad relationship [or] … in families with
alcoholic parents…. The church [is] … like a dysfunctional relationship … [where] you’re on tip toes all day, trying to avoid anything to upset a person, and … [can’t] just … even breathe…. So, [lack of] safety doesn’t allow us to … share what we would want to share…. When there’s no safety, we’re not involved in the church … [and] it stifles the whole church…. So creating a safe place is crucial, crucial. And … that’s why this church is so … screwed up…. [Lack of] safety! … Doesn’t get people involved, they won’t share. They won’t even come…. [Lack of] safety stifles your growth. It stifles your relationship with God, with one another.” These were the last words of Participant 3’s interview.

Participant 9 both vividly described the “limiting” quality of fear in relation to involvement when you feel “in a tank of piranhas” and play defensive politics, and painted a bright picture of what the church and the people in it could be if their potential was freed by getting rid of those fears: “You could see the roof blowing off the place with light, in a positive way!” (Participant 9).

Non-attendance/presence—Concept (W). One participant expressed better than others why people in the church find it even difficult to attend. His first sentence in responding to question 4 was: “Lack of safety? People don’t even want to come church! … Why should I even stay? … I hate to even come a lot of time, because [judgmental] … people … are going to be here… So fear, I don’t want to be here. It’s a shame but that’s where … all should be able to come and feel safe in the environment of our churches but it seems typically our churches are the opposite” (Participant 3). Witnessing one person not welcomed in the church, Participant 4 said, “That’s what kept me from wanting to be baptized.” He admits, “Something like that [i.e., the mention of church discipline] would
probably affect me wanting to even be in the church … if somebody was like, ‘You don’t belong here!’… I’d probably tend to be: ‘Okay.’”

Some participants had close acquaintances not attending church because of not feeling safe in church. All participants in the group were aware of a number of people not attending church for the same reason. With great perceptiveness, Participant 8 noted: “We all try to escape because there’s no safety. With safety we wouldn’t be so hard on ourselves and be more free to take responsibility for what you did without fear of punishment, judgment, or circumstances.”

**Consequences of perceived danger in the church to the church as an organization—Concepts (X), (Y), and (Z).** Danger (Concept Q) in the church from non-administrative (Concept T) as well as administrative sources (Concept S) was recognized by all participants, as graphically evident in Table 4. The three ways (Concepts U, V, and W) people cope with danger in the church (Table 5) are matched with three very consequent effects on the church as an organization (Concepts X, Y, and Z, Tables 6 and 7). The church is not perceived as being successful as it should be in its business of helping people in their growth (Concept X), it suffers from lack of effectiveness (Concept Y), and eventually, from the loss of valuable resources (Concept Z).

**Non-growth—Concept (X).** The “guardedness” of fearful individuals in the church (Concept U) produces a lack of growth (Concept X). “In the church, they’re fearful, and I think that’s really stunting personal growth there” (Participant 8). Under an appearance of having it together with neat ties and adherence to a few rules of acceptable behavior in the church, their growth remains stunted in conformity. “When you feel
unsafe … it’s hard to want to step out and do anything, or experience feelings or even ask questions so you could get answers to develop yourself…. It is limiting because … you’re afraid of being who you really are…. It shuts all that down. You may have

Table 6

*Some Consequences to the Church as an Organization of a Perception of Danger in It*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Growth (X)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Effectiveness (Y)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of Resources(Z)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X</td>
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</table>

increased difficulty dealing with problems because you’re afraid…. So, safety is huge. You know, when you lack that feeling of being safe, you have that fear, [and] it’s very limiting. [But] an increased sense of safety [leads you] … to realize your full potential” (Participant 9).

Contrasting fear with love: [When there is fear], “there is no growth…. Fear … is not a good motivational tool….: [It] will [only] work for a short period of time until … [it] wears off and you go back to … behavior … you had in the first place. But love … you want to … you are not forced…. It’s a difference. Fear? You’re doing [it] because you’re scared of the consequences …. even though you don’t want to…. But love is the opposite. You’re doing it because you want to do it. You’re not doing it out of … fear” (Participant 3).

**Non-effectiveness—Concept (Y).** The consequence to the church as an organization of people not feeling safe or “good enough” to be involved (Concept V
above) is that it slowly becomes ineffective (Concept Y). My sad observation is that it often takes years of holding on to power before well-intended, but abusing, church leadership realizes its need for “new workers.” But by then, it is usually too late.

**Loss of resources—Concept (Z).** “There are a lot of talents. There’s many talented people within every church that can help the church grow spiritually, financially, [and that] can help the church grow and individuals grow, but tapping into that … getting them to contribute … to open up and share is … difficult” (Participant 2). The obvious consequence of people not attending church (Concept W above) as a result of not feeling safe in it, is a loss of human talent and financial resources (Concept Z) to the church as an organization. Table 7 summarizes visually the correlations affecting the church when danger in it is maintained.

Table 7

**Links between Coping Mechanisms and Consequences to the Church as an Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members’ Coping Mechanism</th>
<th>Consequence to Church as Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guardedness (U)←→Non-Growth (X)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Involvement (V)←→Non-Effectiveness (Y)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Attendance (W)←→Loss of Resources (Z)</td>
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**Summary**

The questions asked in the introduction to chapter four at the beginning of my intervention have been answered. In the responses presented above, all participants
recognized added safety in the group (Table 1) and saw links between safety, awareness and growth (Tables 2 and 3). Conversely, they also recognized danger in the church (Table 4), and saw links between danger, unawareness, and non-growth (Table 5) (and organizational ineffectiveness—Tables 6 and 7). Their responses identified two sources of objective safety in the group (Table 1) that match two sources of objective danger in the church (Table 4): administrative (or structural or formal) sources, and non-administrative (or practiced, or informal) sources.

**Conclusion**

I originally designed (September to December 2010) this project’s intervention as a practical group amplification (Whitworth et al., 1998, p. 174) of McBride’s (2009) advocacy of the coaching relationship as a tool, *Helping People Develop and Implement Their Own Spiritual Strategies*. I believed that it was what I called in my proposal “practiced [rather than merely taught] emotional safety” which was foundational to spiritual growth and church effectiveness. It will certainly be a great day when such safety is practiced in the church.

However, I discovered (January to March 2011) in this intervention that an even more foundational layer needed for safety to begin to be practiced is what I call structural safety (Chapters 2, 4, and 5). As inadequate as it was on its own, it was the formal agreement outlawing administrative and non-administrative dangers which created the context needed for practicing safety leading to growth. This was confirmed by my study (Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. xvii-xx).

Furthermore, my study (April to November 2011) not only confirmed the importance of structural safety for practiced safety; it also pointed out that it is not even
safety in structures which truly is foundational to growth and effective church life. Theological safety seems foundational for the formation of structural safety and the practice of emotional safety within the church (Blue, 1993; Enroth, 1992; Gritsch, 2009; Orlowski, 2010; Seamands, 2004; Winter, 2005).

I was pleased to note improvement in all the factors of a Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey taken at the Fox Valley Church in May 2011 (Appendix F), no doubt to be credited to this intervention as well as to many others’ efforts. (NCD Surveys are administered in Adventist churches through the North American Division Evangelism Institute—NADEI). However, the Loving Relationships factor (closely corresponding to emotional safety in the church) was still lowest. Perhaps because the Survey questionnaire was administered only two months after the intervention, not enough time had elapsed for its effects to impact the entire church. The Loving Relationships factor average, however, is currently the third lowest (47/100) in Adventist congregations, preceded by Wholistic Small Groups (46/100) which is also closely related to emotional safety in the church, as the lowest factor (Andrea Pusey, NADEI, personal phone communication, November 31, 2011).

The above findings and my pilot project observations provide at least some indication that practiced safety is hampered by a lack of structural safety, and that structural safety is difficult to achieve when a lack of theological safety remains present in the ministry context—as it may be in some Adventist churches. Confirmed by this project’s research and intervention, and each being important, theological concepts promoting structural safety that enables practiced safety, are foundational to effective church life and spiritual growth, in this order.
CHAPTER 6

SAFETY, AWARENESS, AND GROWTH FOR CONGREGATIONAL
AND DENOMINATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND SURVIVAL

Project Summary

This project started with the assumption that often people do not feel safe in the church and this lack of safety negatively affects personal growth and church effectiveness (Chapter 1). It involved study of the issue in relevant non-biblical (Chapter 2) and biblical literature (Chapter 3) that formed the basis for the development and implementation of a suitable intervention (Chapter 4) designed to increase safety for awareness towards growth and effectiveness in the Fox Valley Church in Wisconsin. Results of the intervention (Chapter 5) formed a basis for outcomes relevant to congregational and denominational entities to address the issue of the need for safety in churches and church entities (Chapter 6).

Project Conclusions

Churches *preach* about the need for safety but in practice, safety is often a missing factor. Chapter one stated the problem of the lack of safety and the need to make it a reality in *practice*. The original title of the project was, therefore, “Practiced Emotional Safety as Foundational Pre-requisite to Spiritual Growth and Effective Church Life.”
Study of the subject in non-biblical literature related to spiritual development, church leadership and church life (Chapter 2) revealed that spiritual growth is the personal task of developing greater integrity with one’s true self. The essential tool for this growth is increased awareness of reality in self and the world, especially awareness of the parts of oneself that are hidden, repressed, and denied. Increase in such awareness best takes place through the help of others in a safe social environment—what I call practiced safety. Since this process involves trial-and-error and requires forbearance, faith community safety is needed. So, structural safety to facilitate practiced safety toward growing self awareness must be intentionally created. The practice of safety for awareness leading to growth is greatly impaired when organizational structures make the church environment unsafe. Structural safety is, therefore, even more foundational than practiced safety.

In Chapter 3 I established, particularly from Romans 12:1-3, an equivalency between “spiritual growth” as previously defined (in Chapter 2) and biblical “sanctification.” I compared and contrasted the implications of this equivalency with more traditional understandings. Sanctification understood this way consists of stewarding all parts of creation. It is the integration—not the repression—of matured opposites towards wholeness. Biblical literature confirmed the central role of awareness. Starting with an individual’s initial conversion and through every step of sanctification, spiritual growth starts and culminates with higher stages of awareness. The biblical material also emphasized how the safety, which humans have with God in the gospel, is the God-created context for the trials-and-errors involved, and that this safety was intended by God to be mirrored in the communal relationships that are to exist in the
church environment. The shortcomings of the community of faith in this regard were acknowledged by Jesus and others. The biblical material pointed to theological lack of clarity (Gen 3:10; 1 John 4:18) as cause of the church community’s failure to exemplify this safety as could be desired.

Not structural safety, but theological clarity, or theological safety, is therefore most foundational to growth and effectiveness. Theological safety, what one believes about God, is the foundational element needed for structural safety to be created and for safety to be practiced.

I, therefore, developed an intervention for this project in which safety could be practiced in a context structurally safe because of my increasing theological clarity pertaining to the issue of safety (Chapter 4). My project intervention involved creating a church group in which safety would be intentionally created and then practiced, leading to greater awareness and personal growth. The perception of a link between safety, awareness, and growth was evaluated among participants through informal interviews conducted at the end of the 10-week project intervention, and through other materials.

Results of a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with participants (Chapter 5) revealed their grasp of the link between safety, awareness, and growth—a perception of added safety toward awareness leading to growth in the group, and a perception of danger in the general church context. Added safety in the group and added danger in the church perceived by the participants both included non-administrative aspects (that could be improved with teaching and practice) as well as administrative (or structural) aspects.
As administrator of the group, I created the structural safety that enabled greater practiced safety, undergirded by my clear understanding of theological safety. Participants distinctly identified personal and organizational consequences for creating or not creating safety: being and feeling safe, members tend to stay to grow and be involved; but neglecting to create and protect members’ safety, the church as an organization seems to fail in its task of fostering spiritual growth and suffers the loss of effectiveness and resources as members withhold participation and eventually leave.

The results and evaluation of the intervention from participants’ interviews, feedback forms, and Natural Church Development Surveys seem to confirm the presuppositions drawn from the conclusions of my previous studies of the subject in non-biblical (Chapter 2) and biblical literature (Chapter 3): (a) theological clarity is foundational to structural safety and (b) structural safety is foundational to (c) practiced safety. All three are needed. I, therefore, amend the title of this project to: “Safety as a Foundational Pre-requisite to Spiritual Growth and Effective Church Life.”

Chapter Plan

Four outcomes reflect the results of this study. Outcome 1 reasserts my initial assumption that shadow unawareness is a root cause for any lack of safety (theological, structural, and practiced). The over-arching importance of this concept shines through the remaining outcomes, which are grouped in three categories relating to practiced, structural, and theological safety. They take into consideration the sphere of influence of the reader.

Involving paradigm shifts, these outcomes are not the only answer to all questions. Participants’ responses to semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a
Hilda Taba exercise to identify emerging themes by formulating data into conceptual patterns and searching for connections between them while making inferences and testing generalizations. The findings will not save the world (Gen 11:4; Rost, 1993, p. 182) but could facilitate change. Since the lack of safety has been a sad fact of church history for thousands of years, decried in journals, papers, texts, and dissertations, the time may be right for this old issue to be addressed in the church and its daughter entities.

**Outcomes**

The four subheadings which follow present the practical outcomes.

1: Willingness to Recognize Personal and Organizational Shadow

Danger is often found not in what we say we believe, but in what we do not know about ourselves: our shadow. Therefore, my first outcome is the importance of developing an awareness of that shadow in all areas of life because solutions thought of while under self-deception often actually make matters worse (Arbinger, 2002, p. viii).

Developing shadow awareness involves examining our emotions, formative experiences, ancestry, history, etc., as well as those of the individuals who influenced us—living “psychologically” (Hollis, 2005, pp. 176-179). Though dismissed in the West in favor of light seeking (Bly, 1988; Steindl-Rast, 1991), shadow work is an eminently Christian work to be done in conjunction with light seeking. Not just a luxury for some, shadow work can be done by all Christians (Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 3). The eating of the shadow (Bly, 1988, p. 42) may at first be as bitter as the eating of the “little book” of Revelation 10:8-11 turned out to be, while ending up being as sweet and beneficial (Jer 15:16) as the words Jeremiah once ate.
This starts in dealing with the potential of evil in me rather than in others. Before pointing to others as exemplifying an evil mix of spirituality and secular coercive power, it is important for any religious institution to “acknowledge the potentiality of evil” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 182) in its own midst rather than projecting it outwards.

The recognition of the shadow is the foundational work against which the greatest resistance may be expected in the church (Ulanov, 2008a, pp. 31-50). The church has a poor record of dealing with its shadow (Gritsch, 2009, pp. 6, 7), requiring great effort to develop an initial willingness to unearth it, and then, constant vigilance. Hiding is pointless, as the postmodern exodus from the church witnesses to: spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:14), space is not empty but constantly relays everything in interrelated relationships, fields, influences, and forces affecting and perceivable by all (O’Murchu, as cited in Rediger, 2007, p. 118; Wheatley, 1999, pp. 40, 41, 45, 49-55, 64-66).

Refusing to develop shadow awareness is dangerous. If we don’t manage our shadow, it manages us (Sellon & Smith, 2005, p. 19). The higher the level of responsibility or of coercive power potential a person, leader (or organization) has, the more unawareness of the need for personal awareness is dangerous to self and others. One may speak or quote from all the right books of inspired revelation, inspiration and imagination. But leading while maintaining unawareness of, or resistance to addressing, a personal need for awareness through an escapist focus on intoxicating idealistic imagination may be as dangerous as conducting a full train while under the influence. This is true to leading in religious organizations, and unfortunately, such situation may not be as uncommon as one might wish.
Considering human nature and an observation of its level of success towards race improvement even in the most basic and loving task of parenting in every generation all the way from the time of Adam and Eve till now, it is difficult to overestimate the odds of any conscious intention, teaching, program, book, or leadership skill not being sabotaged by what is not known.

Being unaware, or making errors, is not evil; whereas, willingly persisting in this to the potential harm of others is (Schapiro, 2007). Peck (1991, pp. 178-180) sees evil in people and organizations as a persistent inward resistance to see and acknowledge evil within oneself, coupled with persistence in duplicity—maintaining an appearance of righteousness at all costs (even through a professed admission of some deficiency), to the harm of others.

2: Practical Education on Safety

Six participants recommended that shadow work similar to what was done in this project’s intervention should be continued in the church for the benefit of all attenders (Concept AA). Three identified specific benefits of men’s groups (Concept YY) and three perceived specific liabilities in neglecting to sensitize women (Concept XX) regarding the issues presented in the intervention (Table 8 and Appendices C, D, and E). Others may have expressed similar recommendations if their responses had been elicited or probed. Some elaborated on the potential for added safety (“I just wished I would’ve [been less apprehensive]; I … would’ve grown more”, Participant 10), increased individual growth (“I hoped the group would continue … because [this is] … very helpful,” Participant 2), and increased church effectiveness through added safety.
Table 8

*Participants’ Recommendations Regarding Continuing This Work for All Men and Women in the Church*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>For All (AA)</td>
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<td>Men (YY)</td>
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<td>Women (XX)</td>
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in the larger implementation of such group for practiced safety in the larger church (Table 6) (“[It would be good] if you could do it group by group [in the whole church],” Participant 9; and “I could see it repeated … [with] more people”, Participant 1), as exemplified in these comments.

The safety practiced in this group dealt with non-administrative sources of danger identified by participants’ responses (i.e., gossip, judgmentalism, critical spirit, rejection, damage, and violation) better than the pulpit or other programs do alone. Among other benefits, they provided a safe container for individuals to become more aware and accepting of their shadow content, to experience emotional healing through other’s attention to their suffering (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 29), to practice productive confrontations, and to develop foundational trust that will enable team effectiveness (Anderson, 2001, p. 306; Lencioni, 2002, pp. 44, 88, 63, 76, 97, 169; see Figure 1).

3: Review All Church *Structures* Regarding Safety

The structural safety desired is an expansion of the safety that I as administrator created in the pilot group through an official document that became law. The Agreement set safety as law instead of a favor done from the kindness of the participants’ hearts. The
legal burden of proof usually laid on those who make visible mistakes to be excused for their behavior was shifted to those around them being responsible for not harming them further.

**Watch for coercive power.** “Where power is, love is not” (Jung, in Hollis, 1994, p. 10). Because the church is powerless to influence when it uses coercive power and only powerful when it relinquishes it (Nouwen, 2000, pp. 55-60), structural safety has most to do with removing coercive power present in its modus operandi. This ensures the church is safe for people to feel safe in it and that it is indeed Christlike. Removing added negative consequences to people’s necessary mistakes (J. Collins, 2001, p. 114) heightens safety though it requires the church to trust in God and not in laws to accomplish good (Buechner, 1992, p. 331).

**Eliminate coercive power from legal structures.** Since Anderson (2001) deplores, “The sources to which most pastors refer in seeking wisdom are … policy
manuals … [often] out of concern for … theological integrity” (p. 35), we need to review all aspects of the church structures for a fit with either the church’s “golden mission” or with a negative shadow mission. This includes official documents, related procedures, pronouncements on official websites, literature, and policies, as they impact inclusion into membership, nominations, privileges in the church, and assistance to members in difficulty. Awareness of the special vulnerability of the church to scapegoating (Lyon, 2010, pp. 152, 154, 155) and duplicitous superficiality (because of the very rightness, standards, and pretensions of the church and its entities; Greenleaf, 1977, p. 182; Lencioni, 2002, p. 201; Lyon, p. 149; Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2011, p. 36) should characterize the review to provide additional protection against such developments.

How does the church deal with addictions used to mask pain (McNeal, 2000, p. 119)? “All … limp” (p. 117) and yet church laws give the impression that coffee drinkers or smokers limp more than workaholics or cocoa aficionados. How will the church deal with its “isms”? Will there be a willingness to acknowledge “unearned privilege” without enforcing egalitarianism? How will the church deal with non-functioning families? How will the church do its fundraising and ensure confidentiality of donors? Freedom, non-coercion, safety, and personal mission are needed for a holistic perspective on kingdom work (Jeavons & Basinger, 2000, pp. 87-98) and caring for the donor (pp. 114-130). How will the church deal with employees (Scazzero, 2003, p. 86)? Employee relations impact an organization’s flavor (Kotter, 1996, p. 111). What will be rewarded in ministry? “The key to making a 360-degree program work, in my opinion, is divorcing it entirely from compensation and formal performance evaluation” (Lencioni,
2002, p. 200). How will success be measured? “The most significant contributions leaders make are not to today’s bottom line; they are the long-term development of people and institutions who adapt, prosper, and grow” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. xxv). Let the church not be as guilty as the world in erecting cities at the price of souls (de Souzenelle, 2008, pp. 35-37).

**Remove structures that create danger-against-growth.** “Team leaders must create an environment that does not punish vulnerability” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 201). The church should be safer than the outside world (Num 35; Deut 4, 19; and Josh 20). Let its level of safety not fall below that of the outside world. Let the church attend to its specific task by deferring the amateurish enforcement it often gives to appointed and better equipped secular authorities (Rom 13:1-7).

**Be sensitive for more subtle uses of coercive force.** Well-intended teaching and advice on behavior, dress, diet, parenting, and similar issues may exert subtle coercion and guilt. So, relying on “the world” holding Cardiovascular Health Improvement Programs (CHIP) or smoke cessation plans may be advantageous for the church’s focus on its assigned task. And when counseling or advising are considered, it is good to remember that “we begin to trust only a person who can share our pain” (Anderson, 2001, p. 306, emphasis added).

Applying the previous recommendations would create a structure where safety permits all to share more transparently and honestly (Scazzero, 2003, p. 106) and grow without the official culture giving weapons to some so they can harm others. The church does need mentoring programs (Stanley & Clinton, 1992, pp. 122-123, 159), but how can this be encouraged when structures make honesty dangerous? Is it ethical to encourage
spiritual disciplines that involve vulnerability (such as confession) when structures governing the church environment make it unsafe to be genuinely authentic by maintaining punishing capabilities? In a dangerous atmosphere and with lack of emotional safety, how can spiritual seekers dare—as Cauley (2010) states is essential (p. 78)—to be vulnerable and seek the support of a Christian community to assist them towards greater awareness and freedom from what trips them up? They might as well turn somewhere else safer. Cauley (2010, pp. 69-70) sees brokenness as foundational to relevant ministry. But as long as structures make it dangerous to be vulnerable, we prefer someone else do it first. So, accountability for growth will not take place in the church until the church makes it safe to be accountable by relinquishing all use of coercive power to enforce morality.

**Intentional inclusivity.** After removing negatives from the structure, the more advanced step to create structural safety is to replace them with positives: to institutionalize positives by openly welcoming all to the table (Hillman, 1991, p. 242; Ulanov, 2008c, p. 77) and by being overt about a desire to help and support people as they develop and implement their own spiritual strategies (McBride, 2009; Whitworth et al., 1998, pp. 1-5). “Hesitation” and a more “cautious” ministry increase effectiveness (Davis, 2010, pp. 30, 31; Hunter, 2010, pp. 3-15), what I called “leading from behind.” While this may be a challenge for some who value the denominational mission as mostly kerygmatic (Dulles, 1987, 1992), harm often occurs by speaking too soon or too much (Winnicott, as cited in Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 43).

The recommendation is to not restrict the good feelings to books and “cool” articles in magazines by departmental directors or retired administrators, but to do what
one can while one is able in order to put them into the new law instead of the old discriminatory law—it is through their legislation that organizations speak, shifting inclusivity and acceptance to being the “enforceable” norm rather than something that comes out of the goodness of an occasional pastor or administrator’s heart. Despite the risks one may fear seeing the short-term consequences other denominations have recently weathered when addressing such issues with Christian integrity, changes could be considered. To maintain danger to certain people because of their gender or similar reasons simply because it makes others feel good will not produce optimum long-term results.

Interaction with others—community—is needed at the organizational and the individual level. Instead of isolationism, truthful engagement with others contributes to an open and safe environment where one’s perception of truth grows in contact with them (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 45). Instead of a structure perpetuating dysfunction through isolationism and the use of addictive anesthetics—the church can use them; their dangers are irrespectively the same to all, (church and individuals), who use them,— a structure favoring the confrontation of truth, real facts, and honest feedback is needed (J. Collins, 2001, pp. 74-80; Kotter, 1996, p. 162-163). Greenleaf (1977) and Rediger (2007, p. 128) describe the elected board as “soul-keeper of the congregation.” Consideration could be given to invite kind, mature, perceptive, independent, impartial and educated individuals with the specific request that they sit as “shadow chair,” watching ethics in decision-making (Anderson, 2001, pp. 205-232; Rost, 1993, pp. 154-177), unspoken agendas, and speaking to bring the hidden from under the table in a good spirit (Stanley & Clinton, 1992, p. 127).
4: Give Attention to *Theological* Safety Shadows

Do unacknowledged shadows in our theological constructs contribute to safety and growth, or to fear and non-growth? The following paragraphs will briefly relate this question to a few such theological constructs. Although my positions on God and salvation are explicit (Chapter 3) and no one should legislate belief, I encourage readers to diligently examine their faith (Gritsch, 2000, pp. 1-2; Kelcourse, 2004, p. 8; Parks 1986, pp. 15, 21) and what’s really behind it.

**Salvation.** Who is the real God that a view of conditional salvation portray? How different is he from the Moloch god many quote in Edwards’ sermon on hell fire?

**Second Coming.** What part does fear (1 John 4:18) have in warnings given in relation to the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:14)? What is the relationship between a future hope of “heaven” and presently living a useful life on earth, living “a life that is really real because it is lived out of a sense of eternity, not just urgency?” (McNeal, 2000, p. 140).

**Sabbath.** Many authors I quoted wrote about the Sabbath (Anderson, 2001, pp. 288-290; Capon, 1988, pp. 104-106; McNeal, 2000, pp. 141-149; Swenson, 1992, pp. 232-233). First, the Sabbath/Sunday issue is the tip of a greater and more fundamental question: What God do you really trust (Wheatley, 1999, p. 23)? And then, how does one really live the Sabbath concept? Is it undiluted “rest” or can it also be a social “burden”?

**Sanctification.** Can one’s faith and religion be so over-intellectualized or over-spiritualized (Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 25) that they become smokescreens for true growth? Ulanov (1975, p. 8), Ulanov and Dueck (2008, p. 25), Parks (1986, p. 3), and Kelcourse (2004, p. 27) propose the same cure. But for here and now, a simple concept
close to my heart will suffice to answer the question just posed. Since some church terms have become negative, irrelevant (Rediger, 2007, p. 9), or lack credibility (Lefebvre & Ross, 2007, pp. 8-9), common words used by authors to refer to this concept include: “right” (Sellon & Smith, 2005, p. 7), “goodness” (Rediger, 2007, p. 8); “in a good way” (Michael C. Giese, personal communication, January 23, 2011), and “human” (Anderson, 2001, pp. 134, 164, 179, 203, 252). I prefer “decent.” In answer to Cauley’s anguished, “Where have my peers gone?” (2010, p. 53), my pastoral sense tells me that what the world would look for in the church is for it to perhaps be a little less “spiritual” but a little more “decent” (and, therefore, real and relevant).

**Mission and safety.** And finally we need to ask ourselves: What is the real mission of the church? Is it really to proclaim “Jesus”? What Jesus? At the risk of someone replying with 1 Thessalonians 5:3, the answer to this question *foundationally* determines whether safety or danger will be promoted.

**Appeal**

I cannot omit an appeal. The current plight of public “evangelism” and denominational publishing houses may not simply be circumstantial or to be blamed on anyone in particular. As useful as certain pieces of literature may (or may not) be when distributed “like the leaves of autumn” (White, 2007, p. 72), mailmen, books, or stones (Luke 19:40) are not to replace humans as co-workers with him. God wants naked earth (Gen 2: 7; 2 Cor 4:7; Lapsley, Childs, & Waanders, 1994) through which his glory may be seen. Nouwen (2000, p. 23) enjoins, “Look at Jesus,” he was irrelevant and useless, with nothing to offer but His own vulnerable self. It’s the *heart* of God, *practiced* in people, as enabled by church *structures* that attracts people to him (pp. 23-24).
Greenleaf (1977, pp. 304-319) ends with a beautiful challenge to do what one can in a bureaucratic society. Whether you are someone with influence or consider yourself “just a regular member,” these recommendations are for you because only you can start changing the world where you are. Don’t wait for someone else to start. Do what you can now where you are, while you are able. It’s not a question of ecclesiological effectiveness; it’s a question of the church’s survival (Lefebvre & Ross, 2007, pp. 8-9, Ulanov & Dueck, 2008, p. 32).
APPENDIX A
HELPFUL TEXTBOOKS ON RELEVANT TOPICS

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<td></td>
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<td>Tips for increased attendance</td>
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AGREEMENTS AND GUIDELINES

1. **Responsibility**
   1. I am responsible to myself to make sure I get what I want, and I am responsible for what I do and say both within and outside this circle.
   2. I may pass on participating in any process or activity.
   3. I will speak my truth.
   4. I will speak directly, using "I" statements.
   5. I will own my judgments.
   6. I will be aware of my feelings.
   7. I will be conscious, present, and aware while I am here, leaving behind what occurred before the meeting and not considering what will occur after the meeting. If I have some energy about a man that will interfere with my being fully present with that man, I will clear with that man.
   8. I will come prepared to participate in each meeting.

2. **Confidentiality**
   1. I will hold all work done in this group and all things shared here as absolutely confidential
   2. I may speak outside of the group about my own work and issues if I choose.

3. **Commitments**
   1. I commit to attend all the meetings to the best of my ability
   2. I commit to letting the group know in advance if I cannot attend a meeting
   3. I commit to being on time to the meetings
   4. I will not leave the group temporarily or permanently without checking out face-to-face.

4. **Order of this Portion of the Meeting**
   1. One man may facilitate the group each night. The facilitator is responsible for the flow and the timing of the meeting.
   2. I recognize that the man "holding the stick") holds the floor. I will not interrupt or engage in cross-talk.
   3. When "the stick" comes to me, I may speak or pass at my discretion. I am not obligated to work.
   4. When a man chooses to do work, he will choose what he wants from the work. He may accept or decline feedback. He may accept or decline suggestions for a process. He is in charge of his own work at all times.

I agree to adhere to the preceding guidelines. Date __________ Signature of all group members:
APPENDIX C

LIST OF KEY CONCEPTS AND CONCEPT-IDENTIFYING LETTERS

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<th>Table</th>
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<td>(E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Safety and Disclosure</td>
<td>(F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Disclosure and Awareness</td>
<td>(G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Awareness and Growth</td>
<td>(H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Safety and Awareness</td>
<td>(I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Disclosure and Growth</td>
<td>(J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of the Importance and Benefits of Shadow Awareness</td>
<td>(K)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of the Link Between Safety and Unsolicited Advice-Giving</td>
<td>(L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of the Link Between Safety and Theological Orientation</td>
<td>(M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>(N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>(P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Perception of Danger in the Church</td>
<td>(Q)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Added Danger in the Church</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Danger from Administrative Sources</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Danger from Non-Administrative Sources</td>
<td>(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Danger Perception and Guardedness</td>
<td>(U)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Danger Perception and Non-Involvement</td>
<td>(V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Danger Perception and Non-Attendance</td>
<td>(W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Danger Perception and Non-Growth</td>
<td>(X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Danger Perception and Church Non-Effectiveness</td>
<td>(Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Link Between Danger Perception and Loss of Church Resources</td>
<td>(Z)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Perception of Potential Usefulness of Intervention to All in the Church</td>
<td>(AA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Potential Usefulness of Intervention for Men in the Church</td>
<td>(YY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Potential Usefulness of Intervention for Women in the Church</td>
<td>(XX)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

TABLES

Note: In all tables, an X indicates the presence of the participant’s perception of the concept, and a blank instead of an X absence of an indicator of it.

Table 1

*Perceptions of (Added) Safety and Sources of (Added) Safety in Exit Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety in Group in General (A)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater in Group than in Church (B)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Administrative Sources (C)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Non-Administrative Sources (D)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: There is a reason for participant 2 being the only one to not recognize some measure of added safety in the group as compared to the church, but stating the reason for this would be identifying, which I, therefore, must withhold to protect confidentiality.*

Table 2

*Perceptions of Linkages between Safety, Awareness, and Growth in Exit Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General link Safety and Growth (E)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Disclosure (F)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosure and Awareness (G)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness and Growth (H)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Awareness (I)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosure and Growth (J)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance/Benefits of Shadow Awareness (K)</td>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

150
Table 3

*Perceptions of the Importance and Benefits of Safety, Growth, and Awareness and Their Linkages in Exit Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety (N)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness (O)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth (P)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

*Perceptions of (Added) Danger and Sources of (Added) Danger in the Church in Exit Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Danger in the Church in General (Q)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater in Church than Outside (R)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Administrative Sources (S)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Non-Administrative Sources (T)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

*Some Mechanisms for Coping with Perceived Dangers in the Church*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guardedness (U)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Involvement (V)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Attendance (W)</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Some Consequences to the Church as an Organization of a Perception of Danger in It

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Growth (X)</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Effectiveness (Y)</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Resources(Z)</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

Links between Coping Mechanisms and Consequences to the Church as an Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members’ Coping Mechanism</th>
<th>Consequence to Church as Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guardedness (U)</td>
<td>←→ Non-Growth (X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Involvement (V)</td>
<td>←→ Non-Effectiveness (Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Attendance (W)</td>
<td>←→ Loss of Resources (Z)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

Participants’ Recommendations Regarding Continuing This Work for All Men and Women in the Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For All (AA)</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (YY)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (XX)</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

FEEDBACK FORM

FEEDBACK FORM WITH CUMULATIVE RESULTS

Note 1: Information gathered from the feedback form can helpfully complement the interview material, but should be remembered that the form was not intended as an evaluation tool for the project, only for me to improve the intervention, should it be repeated.

Note 2: Only 9 of the participants returned their filled feedback form, some of the forms were incompletely filled, and only some of the participants volunteered additional comments.

Note 3: The average of the values given by the participants for each teaching item or process was calculated by dividing the total values for each item by the number of responses given for that item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process (Session)</th>
<th>I connected with this process (1-10)</th>
<th>This process will have value in my life (1-10)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Session 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My story (Short / Long)</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>“I was able to understand the other members better after knowing their background, it was good to share thoughts”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I could feel a bond between the group because we shared common challenges”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“This would be helpful to prepare for witnessing. I need to be more aware of who I am / have been”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Eye opening for me. I knew there were things I shared with close friends but never thought about it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Session 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data/Feelings/Judgments</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>“I learned this before in [identifier], it was a good reminder”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The play acting doesn’t connect with me but the discussion is a good thing for thinking about buried issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“This is key to solving issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shield</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>“Very important to protect yourself from others’ projections”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Good discussion”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning to limit what you let past your shield is a powerful tool”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Sounds good if one can do it. I’m not good at it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>“Most problems between members are misunderstandings of each other intentions”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Gets to the bottom of outstanding issues in a positive way”  
“Sounds good if one can do it. I’m not good at it” (same comment as for “shield”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Session 3)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearing Intention</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/Listening</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Understanding what is behind your feelings always makes things better”
“Sometimes, it is easier to be honest to others than yourself”
“We need to be true to our word”
“Only remember receiving the handout not discussing or practicing it—should get more time”
“Connecting with people breaks down walls”
“Effective communication is rare, but essential”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Session 4)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Exercise</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Stretch</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro to Work Round</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The best, how true. I knew exactly what I was missing. The shadow mission is so true and so easy to accomplish.”
“I think of this frequently”
“This exercise has sparked curiosity in my mind about who I really am and am called to be”
“I need to hold myself accountable and the group helps me initially”
“Good process to connect with people”
“Only did King’s Court. It was helpful both as King and as Counselors”
“Sometimes it is good to talk about things that bother you and other times it is good to just listen to others”
“I don’t have much experience with this type of problem solving, but getting other men’s views and input is very helpful!”
“Need to have people I trust in the group”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Session 5)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell Me Who You Are</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepest Fear</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“It’s good to take a look at yourself”
“I don’t think I got a lot out of this one”
“Good honest look inside”
“Sharing with others helps you understand the similarity between us all.”
“I don’t think I accurately identified my deepest fear, but have perhaps after the fact”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Session 6)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings: Lover/Grief</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings: Guilt/Shame</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I try to let go of anger as quickly as possible”
“Recognizing the signs of hidden anger can make me reflect more deeply to find the things that anger me”
“It takes more trust in the container than I had at that time. Most efficient if done at the end.”
“This is probably the most significant in
holding back personal growth.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Session 7)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust Most/Trust Least</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very good tool to identify my own projection”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The negatives and positives that you see in others usually are reflections of yourself”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t see this being applied in my everyday life”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Projections                                                              | 8.1     | 8.1     |
| “It seems to be easier to see others’ projections rather than my own. But I know I need to keep looking for them.” |         |         |
| “It’s easy to judge from appearance based on past experience instead of present fact” |         |         |
| “Understanding this will help me separate fact from fiction in my forming true impressions about people” |         |         |

| (Session 8)                                                                 |         |         |
| Whip on Safety                                                             | 6.8     | 6.3     |

| Mentored Work Round                                                        | 7       | 7.2     |
| “It’s hard to listen and not add your own experiences.”                    |         |         |

| (Session 9)                                                                 |         |         |
| Whip “Men of My Life” in the Circle                                        | 9.3     | 9.8     |

| Hot Seat                                                                  | 7.7     | 8       |
| “The best friend is one brave enough to show you your shadow. I think I know my shadows. I need someone to tell me what I do not know.” |         |         |
| “An uncomfortable situation, but it is a precious time to hear affirmations from others (good and bad)” |         |         |
| Gold/Shadow                                                               | 9.5     | 9.5     |
| “I could see myself in both the gold and shadow and I could the others as they discussed their gold and shadow.” |         |         |

| (Session 10)                                                                |         |         |
| Archetypes                                                                 | 6.8     | 6.8     |
| Closure                                                                    | 8.2     | 8.2     |
| “Looking at each other in the eyes before leaving would be a good way to end all meetings.” |         |         |
| Feast                                                                      | 9.4     | 10      |
| “Nothing like sharing food to bring people together.”                       |         |         |

Additional Comments:

“I remember parts of the class often—often dialogue with other men (not from group) and use some of the techniques we learned.”

“I really enjoyed going through this training. It was difficult in some way. However, very enlightening to uncover things I’ve tried to forget.”


Schoun, B. D. (1981). A design for a psycho-social support system potentially applicable to the local pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America based upon an evaluation of the needs (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.


Sequeira, J. (n.d.). “God so loved the world” Bible study: Study #1: Why we need a Savior. Retrieved from http://www.jacksequeira.org/bstudy01.htm (last paragraph)


VITA

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2012-Present  Pastor, Southwestern WI
2005-2011  Pastor, Fox Valley Region, Neenah, WI
2001-2005  Pastor, Capital Memorial Church, Washington, DC
1997-2001  Pastor, Harrisburg Church; VNA Hospice Chaplain, Harrisburg, PA
1989-1997  Pastor, Manhattan Church, New York, NY; Eastern Long Island, NY
1988-1989  Student Pastor, New England Youth Ensemble, South Lancaster, MA
1988  Hospital Chaplain CPE, C.H.U.V., Lausanne, Switzerland

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE:
1986-1988  DEGT, OT and NT Professors' Reader, Séminaire du Salève, France
1982-1986  BMus., Violin (with "Excellence"), Rubin Acad. of Music, Jerusalem, Israel
1979-1981  Baccalauréat, Philosophie-lettres, Droit, Université de Paris, Paris, France
1975-1977  Medal (Violin), Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique de Paris, Paris, France

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2010-Present  WI Conf. ExComm
2001-2005  Advent. Home Health Professional Advisory Comm., Silver Spring, MD
2001  Assoc. Ministerial Sec., PA Conference
2000-2001  Trustee, Blue Mountain Acad., Hamburg, PA
1986-1988  Class Pres., Séminaire Adventiste du Salève, France

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