

REVELATION: THE  
DREAM OF  
MINISTRY IN THE  
AI ERA

THE SECOND  
EDITION



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## DEDICATION

To Jane who is the best thing to have ever happened to me,  
thank you.

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## PROLOGUE

What is ministry?

Ministry is a technology.

Yes, many of us cringe when we read this. But, while it may not sound pleasant, it is, nonetheless, true.

Worship services, small groups, liturgies, dinner gatherings, outreach efforts, and social justice advocacy - these are all not ends in-and-of themselves, but the means towards accessing divinity.

Many years ago, in some of my most difficult, yet exciting, times of local church ministry, I watched a video of Rev. Reggie McNeal, a Baptist clergyperson and author of “The Present Future,” in which he said:

“The Church will need to develop different technologies to reach the pockets of un-churched people out there.”

Sure, it made sense, then.

But, it has never made more sense than ever before.

This booklet does not include much in the way of due diligence when it comes to the ethics of AI. That work is critical and I will await others to lead that area of focus.

My intent is in interpreting what the ushering of the AI era means for ministry - namely, that Christian ministry is quite possible, if not required, in the world of today and tomorrow.

So, if we have not already done so, let us now get started in the dream of ministry in the AI-era.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **What “Digital Ministry” is**

Digital ministry, in a formal sense, is the building of virtual environments in which spiritual practices can be invented, legitimized, and shared amongst a group of people.

Yes, such environments can vary widely from a Youtube livestream all the way to a virtual reality (VR) space such as on the Spatial platform.

But, the key distinction here is that, “digital ministry,” is not necessarily limited to digital facsimiles of analog spiritual practices.

For example, holy communion as we have it today - as in, the giving and taking of bread and grape juice, in between a whole lot of religious sentences - is an analog spiritual practice.

It happens in-person and (usually) in a building with “physical” objects.

Now, “digital holy communion,” might be, let’s say, when a priest who “blesses” someone’s bread and juice over Zoom, while being geographically located far away from each other.

In addition, however, to fully realize the breadth of the idea of, “digital ministry,” is to leave the act of the giving and taking of bread and grape juice in the analog space.

Instead, one would, first, take a step back and consider the value or meaning of holy communion. Let’s say that such meaning is determined to be that it, communally, reminds all who participate in it of the roots of their spiritual identity.

Then, “digital ministry,” might be some act undertaken digitally that is equivalent in meaning. For example, it might be an emoji of a bread that the designated priest posts to the feed or platform to which, then, all who are participating “Like,” or post their own emoji of, let’s say, eating.

In the digital world, that “bread” has been consumed. Or, at least, some equivalence of meaning has been conveyed.

Does actual, physical bread need to go down someone’s throat in order for it to be a legitimate act of holy communion?

I suppose that the arbiters of theology will one day come to some kind of conclusion about that.

But, whatever they decide, it will have no bearing on the fact that every spiritual practice, no matter how ancient, is a human creation born within the environment of meaning of a particular era of human history.



Much of what we have in the Church, today, comes from an environment of meaning where divinity is thought of in terms of gods as super-people who live on a mountain, who sometimes impregnate humans, and who demand celebration of their existence in particular formats.

Fast forward a little bit and we, then, get the idea of interacting with such divinity through singing, conversing, and thinking. We have the so-called European Renaissance of academic intellectuality and the Western democratic practice of “free speech” to thank for that.

These are secular acts of interfacing / interacting with ideas that, ultimately, came to be adopted and legitimized as spiritual practices.

We now live in the AI era.

As such, the next set of spiritual practices will begin to emerge.

Correction, they have already begun to emerge.

So, it is now worth projecting what these might be like, given our responsibility as leaders of the Church.

The way to do that is to, again, take a step back to consider the value or meaning of ministry itself. Then, we can see how the role of AI re-arranges the big picture of ministry in this era.

## EPILOGUE

Who are the ministers of today and tomorrow, then?

They are those who visit the island of Patmos to receive the dream of ministry in the AI era so that they can leave to carry it with them wherever they go and share it with whomever they meet.

I believe that I am such a minister; I believe that my life is such a ministry.

My prayer is that you and your life are as such as well.



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