A MISSIOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF SOUTHERN

BAPTIST MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES

IN THE UNITED STATES

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APPROVAL SHEET

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This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Martha, whose love, support, and encouragement made it possible for me to complete this endeavor. I further dedicate this work to our three children, Stephen, Caleb, and Moriah, who sacrificed time with Dad so that I could complete this work. Their constant love and encouragement are a source of strength to me. I am also grateful for the heritage of faith that was passed to me through my grandfather, Lonnie Henry Rhodes, and my godly parents, Clair Hurley Crouse, Sr., and Louise Rhodes Crouse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

iv

PREFACE

Although this dissertation marks the conclusion of an academic journey for me, I am reminded that my whole life has prepared me for this task. I am grateful for the Christian heritage that has been passed on to me by my grandparents and parents and the nurture of Glen Hope Baptist Church in Burlington, North Carolina, where I grew up. Through the ministry of this church I grew to know, study, and love the Bible. It is the authority through which everything else must be evaluated. It is truthful and reliable.

The teachers and coaches who worked with me at Graham High School in Graham, North Carolina, continued to nurture my faith. The professors who challenged and encouraged me at Gardner-Webb College, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary had a profound impact on my spiritual and academic growth. Charles Lawless, former Dean of the Billy Graham School for Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth challenged me to think critically and reflectively about theology and practice. He also opened my eyes to the reality of spiritual warfare and the evangelistic needs of metropolitan areas. Tim Beougher's grasp of the academic arena in theology coupled with his heart for evangelism and appreciation for the work of evangelists served as a model for me in working out the union of these areas. J. D. Payne opened my eyes to the need for strategic. reproducible church plants that are committed to the authority of Scripture while maintaining cultural relevance for an ever-changing world. I am deeply appreciative of the current Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Ministry, Adam Greenway, who was willing to chair my dissertation committee after J. D. Payne left the seminary to serve as

sacrifice on my behalf so that I could be better equipped for the ministry to which God has called me. Her love, undying devotion, and belief in me have spurred me on in every endeavor of my life. I pray that God will honor all that she has given and repay her with his grace and blessings.

Lastly, I thank my gracious, loving, heavenly father for his mercy and grace out of which he saved and called me to join him in the disciple-making process. I continue to be amazed that God would use someone like me to help accomplish his mission. May all the glory go to him.

<div align="right">Stephen G. Crouse</div>

Tigerville, South Carolina

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

**The Ethnic Segregation of Southern Baptist
Churches in the United States**

In a nation that has made many strides toward ethnic and racial reconciliation and the integration of most public and private institutions, it is surprising that Christian churches, with their emphases on love, unity, and reconciliation, continue to be among the most segregated institutions in the United States. The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) are no exception. In the last 150 years, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Union victory at the conclusion of the Civil War assuring the abolition of slavery, the desegregation of public schools, the Civil Rights Movement, the election of many ethnicities to political offices, and the election of the first African-American President of the United States point toward an increasingly diverse nation. How will Southern Baptist churches meet the challenge of reaching this growing diversity?

The founding of the Southern Baptist Convention positively was rooted in a commitment to missions. However, there was also a negative side to the formation of this new convention of Baptists. As the zeal for missions among Baptists in the United States in the early 1800s served as a source of unity, the national debate over the abolition of slavery surfaced as a source of division. The issues of race, the right to own slaves, and the related economic and moral questions also contributed to the formation of the Convention. Nancy Ammerman argues that most of the Baptists in the North were convinced that God would never condone treating any race of people created in the image of God as less than fully human, many Southerners were convinced that it was God's intention for the races to be segregated, following what they perceived as God's created

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order whereby whites were the masters and blacks were the slaves. Ammerman states that the majority of Baptists from the North embraced the abolition of slavery by the 1830s while most Baptists in the South defended slavery. Both sides were convinced that God supported their position.[1]

There were ethnically diverse churches among Baptists when the Southern Baptist Convention was founded in 1845. Blacks were allowed to attend worship gatherings with their white slave owners and even enjoy a measure of membership, but they were relegated to sit in designated areas such as church balconies or to listen to the worship service from outside through open windows. While the blacks were allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper, they could not do so until all the whites had finished. This separate and unequal ecclesiology pushed slaves to meet secretly in places that were out of the view of their masters, forming their own religious communities.[2]

Following the so-called discovery of the New World at the end of the fifteenth century, the Spanish subjugated the people, considering their territories as the property of Spain. Queen Isabella of Spain allowed the people to be used for manual labor in return for remuneration, instruction in the Christian faith, and fair treatment. Raymond Rosales notes, "However, large-scale abuse of this *encomienda* (grant) system soon surfaced and prevailed, the natives becoming virtual slaves."[3] Spanish Conquistadors conquered the indigenous peoples of Latin America, Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas, California, and other regions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a conquered people, these Hispanics experienced oppression and disenfranchisement.[4] With the signing of the

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[1]Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 31-32.

[2]Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 48-49.

[3]Raymond S. Rosales, "The Experience of the Hispanic Church in the Americas," *Word and World* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 130.

[4]Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 18.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo just three years after the formation of the SBC at the conclusion of the Mexican American War, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, as well as portions of other states formerly claimed by Mexico became a part of the United States. Joshua Grijalva states, "Overnight, they [the Mexicans native to the borderland territory] became strangers and 'foreigners' in the land of their birth. Because they spoke Spanish and not English, they were viewed with suspicion."[5]

The distrust and suspicion bred between ethnic groups due to slavery, racism, imperialism, conquest, and oppression led to the establishment of predominantly homogeneous congregations. The compassion and missionary zeal of Baptists led them to reach out to their Hispanic neighbors in the Southwest.[6] Grijalva cites that the birth of the Baptist church at Independence, Texas, in 1839 initiated Baptist evangelistic and missionary work that led to an expansion in the number of Mexican believers and the establishment of Mexican Baptist congregations.[7] Soon after the conclusion of the Civil War, the biracial congregations of the South separated into homogenous bodies. Due to the language barrier, conquest, and oppression, Hispanics also migrated to homogeneous worship centers. While the primary leadership for the Civil Rights Movement came from the church, most of the leaders were black and led black congregations. Hispanics were also involved in the push for Civil Rights, focusing on political organization and coordinating voter drives to win local elections. However, many Hispanics felt their path to civil rights differed from that of African Americans. When some Mexican Americans who were involved in the League of United Latin American Citizens proposed joining with the efforts of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the battle for civil rights, their president, Felix Tijerina, strongly opposed such action, stating

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[5]Joshua Grijalva, "The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists," *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983): 40.

[6]Rosales, "The Experience of the Hispanic Church in the Americas." 131.

[7]Ibid.

that the problems of the two groups differed significantly. He held that each group should

fight their battles separately.[8] Most Anglo churches opposed the Civil Rights Movement,

favoring segregation instead of integration. This ethnic and racial distrust continues to

dwell in the lives of many, playing a part in the choice of at least some believers to

worship in predominantly homogenous groups.[9]

Martin Luther King, Jr., observed in his "Paul's Letter to American Christians"

in 1956,

> There is another thing that disturbs me to no end about the American church. You
> have a white church and you have a Negro church. You have allowed segregation to
> creep into the doors of the church. How can such a division exist in the true Body of
> Christ? You must face the tragic fact that when you stand at 11:00 on Sunday
> morning to sing "All Hail the Power of Jesus [*sic*] Name" and "Dear Lord and
> Father of all Mankind," you stand in the most segregated hour of Christian America.
> They tell me that there is more integration in the entertaining world and other
> secular agencies than there is in the Christian church. How appalling that is.[10]

King's observation continues to be the case in the contemporary culture of the United

States. Scott Thumma reveals that multiethnic churches comprise 13.8 percent of the

congregations in the United States, an increase of 6 percent in the last decade.[11] While

this increase in the number of multiethnic congregations is significant, such

congregations remain a minority in a nation that is becoming increasingly diverse. Why is

it that ethnic groups continue to worship in homogeneous bodies for the most part in a

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[8]Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011), 1. Behnken focuses on the struggle for civil rights in Texas where there are significant populations and involvement of African Americans and Mexican Americans. Their journeys followed differing paths due to cultural and ethnic differences, class issues, and preferences in regard to organization and strategies. Behnken points to the racial animosities of both groups toward each other as the primary factor for their inability to unite for the common cause of civil rights.

[9]Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11-17.

[10]Martin Luther King, Jr., "Paul's Letter to American Christians," http://www.mlkonline.net/christians.html (accessed October 28, 2010).

[11]Scott Thumma, "Religious Diversity Increasing in US Congregations," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/scott-thumma-phd/racial-diversity-increasing-in-us-congregations_b_2944470.html?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pulsenews (accessed May 6, 2013).

society that has made so many strides toward diversity, integrating different ethnic and racial groups?

The segregation of the church continues in North American Christianity and among Southern Baptists. In 2013, the Southern Baptist Convention reported a total of 50,474 congregations. Of this number 10,103, or 20 percent, are classified as non-Anglo. Yet the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention identified only 230 congregations or .45 percent as multiethnic.[12] The North American Mission Board, however, only considers churches that have no ethnic majority as multiethnic.[13] Tracking of statistical data on multiethnic churches has not been a priority of the North American Mission Board. Their knowledge of multiethnic churches is limited to the scope of the Board's focus. Also, data on Southern Baptist churches is largely self-reported, which can skew accuracy. While the data is inconclusive, it seems likely that only a small percentage of Southern Baptist churches are multiethnic.

Against this backdrop of predominantly homogeneous congregations in the United States, social researchers Curtiss DeYoung, Michael Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim observe, "Every piece of demographic evidence and every demographic projection suggest that the United States is more racially diverse than it has ever been but not as racially diverse as it will be in the coming years."[14] According to projections of the U.S. Census Bureau the non-Hispanic, single-race white population will only comprise 46 percent of the total population of the United States in 2050. In 2008, this group represented 66 percent of the country's residents. During the same

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[12]Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, November 17, 2014. This unpublished report was compiled by the Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, GA.

[13]Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, January 20, 2012. The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention defines a multiethnic church as a congregation that does not have a majority ethnicity. Therefore, if a congregation is 51 percent Caucasian, it is considered to be a Caucasian church rather than a multiethnic church. Richie Stanley is Team Leader for the Center for Missional Research at the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

[14]DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 5.

period the Hispanic population is projected to triple, growing to 30 percent of the nation's population as compared to 15 percent in 2008. The black population is estimated to grow to 15 percent of the total population, up by one percent. The number of Asians is projected to grow to 9.2 percent of the United States population by 2050, up from 5.1 percent.[15] How should Southern Baptists respond to the growing ethnic and racial diversity in the United States?

A Missiological Foundation
for Ethnic Inclusiveness

Most Southern Baptist churches practice ethnic segregation in their fellowships while they send and support missionaries to many different people groups all over the world. This segregation may be unintentional. Many churches express their desire to welcome all people, regardless of ethnicity or race. However, their history, staff, and organizational structure lack the intentionality to attract people from other ethnic groups. In recent years there has been an emphasis through the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to focus mission efforts on unreached people groups, those who have no witness of the gospel. Rodney Woo states, "International missions served as the basis and heartbeat of Baptists from our inception, but it is inconsistent to reach across racial and ethnic barriers for Christ on the international soil but not in our own backyard."[16]

God cares for all of his creation and his mission field has always been global in nature. In the creation account in the book of beginnings in the Old Testament, God fashioned human beings as his crowning act of creative work. The biblical creation

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[15]This data was collected from a press release from the U.S. Census Bureau, "An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury," http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/ archives/ population/cb08-123.html (accessed January 12, 2012).

[16]Rodney M. Woo, *The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 39.

account clearly delineates that God formed humanity, all of humanity, male and female, in his image (Gen 1:26-28). James Montgomery Boice points to the formation of humans as the pinnacle of creation. The account comes to a climax with the creation of humanity.[17] All people are called to bear the image of the Creator.

God created his image bearers to join him in his mission to the world. The purpose and the privilege of living as one who bears the image of the creator is to bless others and to bring glory to God. When Abram was called and commissioned in Genesis 12, he was told that the reason for the blessings that God would pour out on him and his descendants was for the purpose of blessing others.[18] It seems clear that "whatever else the call of Abram might entail, at the very least one can see that it is designed to reach to 'all' the peoples."[19]

Even when Israel found herself in exile because of her rebellion and sinfulness, the Lord declared that Israel would be a light to the nations. In Isaiah 49:6, the prophet writes, "He [the Lord] says, 'It is not enough for you to be My Servant raising up the tribes of Jacob and restoring the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations, to be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'"[20] The Lord reveals his plans for Israel to be a light to the nations and the vehicle through which salvation will be taken to the ends of the earth.

The New Testament bears witness of ethnic inclusivism in the ministry of Jesus as he encountered the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:3-42). It would have been expected in the Jewish culture of the first century for any messianic leader to avoid

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[17]James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 87.

[18]Walter Bruggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 119-20.

[19]M. Daniel Carroll R., "Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10, no. 1 (2000): 20.

[20]All biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

association with Samaritans. The Jews of Jesus' day looked down on Samaritans because they forsook their unique heritage as the people of God by intermarrying with the conquering Assyrians and establishing their own religious practices.[21] The Jews held Samaritans in contempt because they were despised half-breeds. Their ethnicity played a role in the way the Jews treated them. Jesus crossed ethnic barriers that were prevalent in his day to show grace to this Samaritan woman.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) also demonstrates Jesus' desire to reach across ethnic barriers. James Brooks argues that one of the most significant teachings of Jesus in this text is how he redefined "neighbor" in a way that comprised everyone, including the hated Samaritans.[22] Jesus used the Parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate how people should demonstrate love for their neighbors.

God's concern for the spiritual welfare of all ethnicities is reflected in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) where Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples of all people groups. The words *ta ethne* found in the Great Commission are often translated as "the nations" (Matt 28:18-20).[23] However, Donald McGavran points out that this Greek phrase means "the peoples, the tribes, casts, segments of society, urbanites and rurals."[24] Jerry Rankin, former President of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, affirms that *ethne* refers to "those distinct cultural and racial characteristics that distinguish some people from others."[25] God's plan for the redemption of humanity has always included all people groups.

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[21]George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 60.

[22]James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 198.

[23]Variations of Christ's Commission also appears in Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21, and Acts 1:8.

[24]Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988), 14.

[25]Jerry Rankin, *To the Ends of the Earth* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 17.

Acts' version of Christ's commission (Acts 1:8) commands the disciples to provide a witness to the world, beginning where they were and going to the ends of the earth. In this passage the risen Lord lays out his plan of how to make disciples of all people groups. This strategy also serves as an outline for the book of Acts. Luke makes it clear that the Holy Spirit provides the power for disciple making. The Spirit empowers believers to witness to unbelievers. In Acts 1:8, the disciples are told that they will receive the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to build the church of Jesus Christ and to conquer the strongholds of the enemy as they witness for Christ.[26] God's plan for carrying out this witnessing task involves his followers in his worldwide mission. The disciples, who were in Jerusalem, were instructed to inaugurate their mission there. Then they were commanded to move on to Judea, the surrounding area, followed by Samaria, an adjacent province, and then to the whole world. John Polhill argues that "the geographic scope of Acts 1:8 provides a rough outline of the entire book: Jerusalem (1-7), Judea and Samaria (8-12), the ends of the earth (13-28). As such it can well be considered the 'theme' verse of Acts."[27] It has always been God's plan to take the gospel to the entire world. It is appropriate for any mission agency to desire to reach the world with the gospel of Christ, but churches must not fail to reach the people in their neighborhoods, regardless of their ethnicity. The changing ethnic landscape of the United States is reflective of the global economy, international marketing, technology, travel access, and immigration. These changes are bringing the world to local neighborhoods and communities in the United States. Local churches that desire to follow Christ's commission must reach people with the gospel, regardless of their ethnicity.[28]

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[26]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 55.

[27]John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 86.

[28]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 39.

Paul's missionary method included establishing churches in diverse

metropolitan areas, reaching across ethnic and cultural barriers, and building bridges

between the Jews and the Gentiles. Eckhard Schnabel states,

> Paul certainly focused on cities rather than on villages. Reading the gospels, this
> may come indeed as a surprise: Jesus visited the small towns and villages of Galilee,
> a focus that would naturally have served as a model for the apostles. On the other
> hand, Jesus is portrayed as preaching in front of audiences that numbered in the
> thousands. The conclusion seems obvious: Jesus sought to reach people wherever
> they lived, he preached before as many people as possible. This was Paul's burden
> as well: to reach as many Jews and Gentiles as possible with the message of
> salvation in Jesus Christ, wherever they lived.[29]

Both Jews and Gentiles lived in these metropolitan areas where Paul preached the gospel.

While it was his normal practice to preach first to the Jews in the synagogues where they

worshiped in the cities, it is clear that Paul's ministry reached out to the Gentiles as well,

crossing the ethnic barriers of his day.

Paul also wrote of the need for unity in diversity among believers as he

addressed the issue of the church as the body of Christ. While the church is made up of

many diverse parts, the body works together to accomplish its God-given purpose (1 Cor

12:12-27). Paul's focus here shifts from the one body of Christ to the many who make up

that body. Paul reminds both Jews and Gentiles that they are part of one body, "whether

Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free" (1 Cor 12:13). Fee writes, "These terms express

the two basic distinctions that separated people in that culture—race/religion and social

status."[30] These old distinctions had become obsolete to these diverse believers. While

they never divorced themselves from their ethnicity, they now valued unity in Christ

above their ethnic heritage.

This unity in Christ supersedes all other relationships for believers. In Paul's

letter to the church at Ephesus where Jews and Gentiles worshiped together, he boldly

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[29]Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 282.

[30]Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 606.

declared that Christ has torn down the wall of separation and hostility between these two groups, making them into one united body in Christ (Eph 2:14). Andrew Lincoln points out that this unity is more than a mutual relationship. The Jews and Gentiles were no longer separated ethnically as they had been. Because of the reconciling work of Christ, Jews and Gentiles were joined together in Christian unity. Jesus Christ transcended the ethnic division that had previously divided the world of the first century.[31]

In his seminal work, *The Bridges of God*, Donald McGavran examined how people come to faith in Christ.[32] Based on his research, he developed what is known as the homogeneous unit principle. This principle is founded on McGavran's observation that most people "like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."[33] This statement focuses primarily on the issue of evangelism. It is descriptive, but was never intended to be prescriptive. Paul's method of mission work transcended the ethnic barriers of his day. How can Southern Baptists reach across the walls that separate ethnic groups in the United States to impact the culture and reflect the unity of Christ?[34] How should a multiethnic congregation be defined? Can multiethnic Southern Baptist churches contribute to the missiological challenge of carrying out the mission of the church by taking the gospel to all people groups? Are Southern Baptist multiethnic churches an effective way to penetrate a world that is lost in spiritual darkness? How do the heritage of the Southern Baptists and the history of ethnic relationships in the Convention impact Southern Baptist multiethnic churches? In what ways do Donald

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[31]Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 140-46.

[32]Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York: Friendship, 1955), 1-4.

[33]Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 163.

[34]Biblical unity certainly entails more than reconciliation among ethnic groups. It involves a unity of purpose, having the same mind, and sharing the same love (Phil 2:1-4). Ethnic reconciliation, however, is a part of this unity (Eph 2:14).

McGavran's observation of the homogeneous unit principle and the related issues of cross-cultural evangelism influence this discussion? What critical issues must Southern Baptist multiethnic churches address to grow healthy multiethnic congregations?

Thesis

Southern Baptist multiethnic churches exemplify the mission of the church as revealed in the Scriptures and offer a valuable strategy for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the United States. This investigation will include a missiological evaluation of twenty-six Southern Baptist multiethnic churches and an inquiry as to how these churches are doing as well as how they can strengthen their effectiveness. The research focuses on the multiethnic nature of the mission of the church, a historical evaluation of Southern Baptists' response to multiethnic opportunities and challenges in the church, the impact of the homogeneous unit principle on multiethnic churches, and the critical issue of worship in contemporary Southern Baptist multiethnic churches and its role in the mission of the church. Contemporary churches should reflect the multiethnic nature of the church in carrying out its mission as much as possible, especially in an increasingly multiethnic world. DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Kim go so far as to contend that every church that can be multiethnic should be multiethnic.[35] There are some churches that are located in largely homogeneous communities. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to become multiethnic congregations. Artie Davis, the pastor of a SBC multiethnic church, argued that churches should at least reflect the ethnic diversity of the neighborhoods and surrounding areas that they serve.[36]

Southern Baptists have made significant strides toward reaching out to various ethnicities and including a variety of ethnic groups in the convention over the last forty years. Some significant highlights include the appointment of Oscar I. Romo, a Hispanic,

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[35]DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 2.

[36]Artie Davis, interview by author, Orangeburg, SC, October 3, 2013.

to lead the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board of the SBC from 1971-1994. Romo was the first Hispanic to serve in a national position among Southern Baptists.[37] He was widely recognized for his work in language and ethnic missions.[38] In 1975, Emmanuel L. McCall became the first African American to serve the SBC at the director level as the Director of the Department of Cooperative Ministries with National Baptists. At the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, in June 2012, Fred Luter was elected as the first African American president of the SBC. Kenneth Weathersby became the first African American to serve the SBC as a Vice President. He was appointed as the Vice President for Convention Advancement, SBC Executive Committee, in 2013.[39]

In 1995, the Convention made a public apology for its historic support of slavery. Minority involvement continues to grow among the SBC leadership. According to 2009 statistics of the Southern Baptist Convention, African Americans comprised 6.5 percent of the sixteen million members while 12.5 percent were from other ethnicities.[40] In 2013, ethnic churches comprised 20 percent of the congregations in the SBC. Among SBC churches, African American congregations represent 6.9 percent of the total number of churches and Hispanic churches comprise 6.4 percent.[41] Yet most of these ethnic groups worship in homogeneous congregations consisting of non-Anglo ethnicities.

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[37]Gustavo Vicente Suárez, "A Critical Analysis of Southern Baptist Hispanic Church Planting Strategies in North America, 1970-1994," Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013, 2-9. Also see Daniel R. Sanchez's Foreward in Oscar I. Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 12.

[38]Mickey Noah, "Oscar Romo, Ethnic Ministry Pioneer, Dies," http://www.bpnews. net/29692/oscar-romo-ethnic-ministry-pioneer-dies, (accessed November 9, 2014).

[39]"African American Council Report," June 12, 2014, http://www.sbc.net/cp/ministryreports/ pdf/sbcec/AA-AdvisoryCouncilSBCReport.pdf (accessed November 9, 2014).

[40]Diane Chandler, "Luter Election Reflects SBC's Growing Diversity, New Orleans Pastors Say," http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=35974 (accessed September 15, 2012).

[41] Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, November 17, 2014. This unpublished report was compiled by the Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, GA.

While the growth of ethnic churches is commendable, the focus of this investigation is on Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations, about which little is known.

There is no doubt, based on the Scriptures discussed above, that it has been God's intention from the beginning to reach all the people groups of the world with the good news of the gospel. But is it his intention for multiethnic churches to worship together and work to fulfill the Great Commission? Donald McGavran's homogeneous unit principle has dominated the Church Growth Movement for more than fifty years. While his observation led to the development of a helpful missiological strategy, an ecclesiological tension arises in light of the ethnic diversity of at least some of the New Testament churches. Should McGavran's observation of how people receive Christ be the guiding factor as to the make-up of the local church?

Background

As a product of the South growing up during the Civil Rights Movement, I have had an interest in the issues of ethnicity and race since the first black student enrolled in my third grade elementary school class. That student became a good friend and a teammate on many athletic teams. We coached Little League baseball together as high school students and played beside each other in the defensive line on our school football team. The issue of worship came to our attention when I was serving as the youth week pastor at my home church in 1971. I invited my African American friend to come to the church where I was a member in Alamance County, North Carolina, on Sunday morning to hear my first sermon. He wisely advised me to seek the counsel of my pastor about his visit before he would agree to attend the service. My pastor told me that while he did not have a problem personally with an African American attending the service, he was concerned about how some members in the congregation might respond. Sadly, my friend was not in attendance for the service on that Sunday. However, two years later with the same pastor and at the same church, I was allowed to bring my entire high

school football team, which included several black players as well as a Korean, to a revival service on a Sunday morning. I struggled with the question of why it was an issue for other ethnicities, created in the image of God, and white people to worship the God of the universe together.

As a college student, I attended a church in Shelby, North Carolina. One Sunday, several friends from my college and I invited a black international student to attend church with us. He had received Christ through the witness of a Southern Baptist missionary in his homeland of Bermuda prior to enrolling at our college. When we attempted to enter the church building, two ushers told us that our friend was not welcomed. While my friend was a product of missions and the church contributed generously to this cause, they would not allow a product of those mission dollars to attend a worship service with their church.

Since 1991, I have served as campus minister at North Greenville University (NGU) in South Carolina. My responsibilities include planning chapel services that meet every Monday and Wednesday throughout the academic year for a time of community worship. It has always been a struggle to meet the needs of our minority students and to maintain an atmosphere where they felt included in all phases of campus ministries. Minority speakers are invited every semester, but I struggle with finding minority preachers who agree with NGU's conservative, evangelical theological position, affirm biblical inerrancy, communicate effectively with college students, and who are available and affordable. I bear the responsibility for not knowing more non-Anglo speakers who affirm the mission of our school. While there are some minority pastors affiliated with the South Carolina and Southern Baptist Conventions, the overwhelming majority of our pastors are Caucasian. I have attempted to be more intentional in developing relationships with minority pastors. We also struggle to develop student minority leadership on our ministry teams and among our chaplain ministry. My staff and I are intentionally working to develop minority leadership and have experienced some success in the process.

15

Through this academic pursuit, I have become more sensitive to the needs of our ethnically diverse student population and more engaged in efforts to include all ethnicities in our worship, evangelism, and discipleship programs. I have also developed relationships with multiethnic pastors, churches, and ministries.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* had a profound effect on me as I read it during high school. In reading two biographies on Bonhoeffer's life, one by Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's personal friend entrusted with most of his works after his death, and the other by Eric Metaxas, I noted Bonhoeffer's concern about the race problem in the United States. After experiencing firsthand the theological liberalism of Union Seminary, Bonhoeffer observed the theological bankruptcy of the churches of New York. He wrote,

> Things are not much different in the church. The sermon has been reduced to parenthetical church remarks about newspaper events. As long as I've been here, I have heard only one sermon in which you could hear something like a genuine proclamation, and that was delivered by a negro (indeed, in general I'm increasingly discovering greater religious power and originality in Negroes). . . . In New York they preach about virtually everything; only one thing is not addressed, or is addressed so rarely that I have as yet been unable to hear it, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ, the cross, sin and forgiveness, death and life.[42]

Bonhoeffer was concerned about the racism he encountered during his visits to the United States. Blacks were often treated like second-class citizens by the majority ethnicity. In the 1930s, Jews in Germany enjoyed economic parity and held some of the top positions in German society, a privilege that was far different than the plight of African Americans in the United States. Bonhoeffer considered the Jewish situation in Germany to be minor when juxtaposed with American racism. His view was tragically reversed, however, as he witnessed firsthand the Third Reich's horrific treatment of German Jews in the days that followed in his homeland under the direction of Adolf Hitler. Metaxas notes that no one in the early 1930s could have imagined the degree to

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[42]Eric Metasas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 106.

which the situation in Germany, in regard to the treatment of the Jews, would deteriorate in the next few years.[43]

While studying at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Bonhoeffer was exposed to many books written by African Americans.[44] While living in New York, he regularly attended the Abyssinian Baptist Church, a black church in Harlem, where he taught Sunday School and worked in various church clubs. Bonhoeffer noted that the integration of the white churches into the life of the community usually served as an obstacle rather than a helpful response in dealing with the racial problem. American history bears witness that the church has often been a barrier rather than a catalyst for change in regard to ethnic and racial reconciliation. This is a sad commentary on American Christianity.

As a participant in the Promise Keepers movement during the 1990s, I was challenged to work toward ethnic reconciliation. Through these conferences for men, I became acquainted with prominent non-Anglo preachers such as Tony Evans, E. V. Hill, Luis Palau, Billy Kim, and Wellington Boone. The Promise Keepers movement sought to build unity among diverse believers, crossing ethnic, denominational, and theological barriers.[45] Reflecting on my ministry at North Greenville University, I began to ask how I could encourage ethnic reconciliation and inclusion on our campus.[46]

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[43]Ibid., 110.

[44]Eberhard Bethge, *Deitrich Bonhoeffer*, rev. and ed. Victoria J. Barnett, trans. Eric Mosbacher et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 150.

[45]Randy Phillips, "Seize the Moment," in *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1994), 8.

[46]Theology is essential and addresses issues that at times can be divisive or defining in appropriate ways. A case in point would be the battle about the place and authority of the Bible among Southern Baptists. Through the defining process that came to be known as the conservative resurgence, Southern Baptists affirmed the inerrancy and infallibility of God's Word. While this was divisive among some who professed to be Southern Baptist, this fundamental theological issue could not be compromised. These first order theological issues cannot be compromised if orthodoxy is to be maintained. Unity in the body of Christ must be a priority, but not at the expense of theological orthodoxy. A primary weakness of the Promise Keepers movement was its attempt to minimize theological differences to the point that orthodoxy was watered down. In spite of this weakness, the movement helped to open the eyes of many on issues of ethnic and racial reconciliation, which is consistently affirmed in the Scriptures.

Several of the classes in my doctoral studies addressed my academic interest in Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. A class on urban ministry opened my eyes to the diversity and explosive growth of major metropolitan areas in the world, including the United States. Churches appear to be fleeing from cities while the population in general is flocking to them. It is impossible to conceive how the church can reach the world for Christ while ignoring the bulging population growth of metropolitan areas. This study of urban ministry addressed the issues of the city including ethnicity, race, and multiethnic interaction. The emphasis on indigenous pastors/leaders, however, tended to support the idea of homogeneous congregations.[47] Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz in their book, *Urban Ministry*, affirm that the biblical strategy for leadership is transcultural in nature. Yet at the same time they argue that leadership must be applied practically in a way that varies from culture to culture.[48] Leadership in multiethnic churches should reflect the diversity of the congregation as much as is possible.

Contextualization is an issue that all missionaries must address in any cross-cultural environment. Tension exists in any setting where the gospel must be applied in other languages and to other cultures. Yet biblical truth always trumps cultural contextualization. These issues were explored in the mission seminars that I attended.

During a course on church growth, I did my research on Donald McGavran. Through this study, I began to examine the homogeneous unit principle. McGavran noted that because of the intense battle to overcome racial prejudice, many have dismissed the importance of the separation of races. In India, he noted that tribes and castes value their separateness as a race and are quite content to marry within their people group, maintaining an intense awareness of ethnic and racial distinctions. McGavran states,

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[47]An example would be the premise that an African American pastor who lived in the area where an African American church existed would be best suited to lead this particular congregation.

[48]Harvey M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 378-79.

> To ignore the significance of race hinders Christianization. It makes an enemy of race consciousness, instead of an ally. It does no good to say that tribal peoples ought not to have race prejudice. They do have it and are proud of it. It can be understood and should be made an aid to Christianization.[49]

The implications of McGavran's observation in the light of the Word of God must be explored to build a missiological understanding of multiethnic churches.

A seminar on the methods and influence of American evangelists addressed the issue of racial and ethnic reconciliation, primarily through the two biographies that were required reading for the course. One was a biography on the life of Dwight L. Moody, a famous evangelist who had a great impact on the city of Chicago and many other regions of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Moody's approach to evangelism targeted all who were lost, regardless of color, background, or socioeconomic status. Following the Civil War, Moody sought to reach the quickly growing black population of Chicago.[50] The other biography was on the life of evangelist Billy Graham. During his ministry, even before the Civil Rights Movement, Graham struggled with the issue of how African Americans were relegated to a special section of the congregation during his crusades in the United States. He met with Martin Luther King, Jr., on several occasions, supporting King and the Civil Rights Movement. There were some, however, who felt that Graham's efforts related to ethnic reconciliation did not go far enough. While he spoke against segregation, he also wanted to appeal to as many people as possible.[51] The evangelical emphasis on evangelism and discipleship has led to tension in regard to the minimization of social impact. Evangelicals tend to avoid challenging societal structures for fear of prohibiting the expansion of the gospel. Invariably, these two convictions are in conflict with each other at times.[52]

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[49]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 10.

[50]Lyle Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 126.

[51]William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: Quill/William Marrow, 1991), 167-72.

[52]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 25-27.

The battle over the authority, reliability, and truthfulness of the Scriptures is critical for every church, but especially for the diverse make-up of multiethnic congregations. These issues were addressed in a course on revelation, scripture, and authority. Because of the plethora of perspectives present from people of different ethnic backgrounds and experiences, the enemy has more avenues by which he can attack multiethnic settings. In Genesis 3, the serpent's first words questioned God's Word, a tactic the enemy has never forsaken. Multiethnic churches, like all churches, need a predetermined standard by which faith and practice must be judged. However, the necessity for such a standard in multiethnic congregations is exacerbated by the greater diversity of needs, personal preferences, and traditions present in such contexts.

There are at least two reasons why Southern Baptist multiethnic churches have been largely ignored in scholarly research. The predominant reason is the lack of available data on multiethnic churches within the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC has failed to track data on multiethnic churches with the exception of the limited information available through the North American Mission Board cited previously. Their definition of multiethnic congregations as those with no majority ethnic group ignores churches that have reached a critical mass of minority ethnic involvement. A second factor is the pervasive influence of Donald McGavran's homogeneous unit principle as it relates to missions and church growth over the last fifty-five years. The impact of McGavran's work on church growth theories and practice is substantial. The propensity to "target" a homogeneous segment of society in growing a church is a direct result of how this principle has been interpreted and applied.

Definitions

The terms "race," "ethnic," and "culture" are closely related to each other and are sometimes used interchangeably. Race is an allusive term. It is defined by Kenneth Mathews as "inherited physical traits that characterize peoples, such as facial features and

20

skin color."[53] Eugene Nida states, "Race is a very valid biological concept, but it is not a valid sociocultural concept. There are biologically different specimens of humanity, and part of the task of anthropology is to describe and classify these types."[54] W. E. B. Du Bois challenged such views in the early twentieth century, dismissing such notions of race as unsatisfactory. He states, "Unfortunately for scientists, however, these criteria of race are most exasperatingly intermingled."[55] Du Bois goes on to define race as "a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life."

Race is often characterized as a social construct based chiefly on observable, inherited descriptions of a group of people.[56] Nida acknowledges a number of procedures that are used in classifying various races, but admits that none are completely satisfactory. The problem with the classification of race is the complexity of the issues involved. Nida states,

> Anthropologists employ numerous characteristics in determining race, including relative length of different parts of the body, size and shape of the head, amount of body hair, texture of body hair, blood types, shape of fleshy portions (nose, lips epicanthic fold of the eye, etc.), and color of skin. By giving greater or less priority to various features one comes out with a somewhat different classification.[57]

The idea of race implies a distinctive people group whose biological heritage is rooted in the same source. Mathews dismisses the term as unhelpful because people do not descend from a pure lineage. He cites biblical passages that support a blended

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[53]Kenneth A. Mathews and M. Sydney Park. *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 30.

[54]Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1986), 57.

[55]W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races" in *Writings*, 815-26. New York: The Library of America, 1986.

[56]Tyrone C. Howard, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2010), 53.

[57]Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, 58.

ancestral heritage, such as King David who descended from both Hebrews (through

Boaz) and Moabites (through Ruth).[58]

Rick Kittles and Kenneth Weiss also address the ambiguity of the term. They

state,

> Race is a concept that is intuitively biologically based and perhaps ideal for the purpose, but there are a host of nearly intractable problems with the concept. Race has the desired meaning only to the extent that its members really do share common ancestry relative to other groups. Races also share many things besides genes, to the extent that the concept is inextricably cultural in nature. Even geneticists routinely use the term in a colloquial way, which does not provide a rigorous criterion for designing the sampling scheme on which the entire mapping approach rests. But efforts to abandon the term altogether almost invariably substitute equivalent synonyms or euphemisms that do not provide escape from vagueness or inconsistency.[59]

The mixing of the races through adoption and intermarriage, along with the resulting

children, further blur racial distinctions.

"Ethnic" refers to "an affiliated 'people group' who share history, traditions,

and culture, such as familial descent, language, and religious and social customs."[60] This

term is more specific in its application than race, since there may be various ethnic

constituents within a single race. Ethnicity, like race, is tied to a group's ancestral origin

according to Tyrone Howard.[61] The use of the term "ethnicity" arose in the 1940s in the

United States. Sylvester Johnson states, "The academic, theoretical study of ethnicity was

derived largely through interpreting race and culture, most notably among social

scientists who understood their work to bear immediate implications for resolving racial

disparity and conflict."[62] Ethnocentrism, a belief that other ethnicities are judged solely

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[58]Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 30-31.

[59]Rick A. Kittles and Kenneth M. Weiss, "Race, Ancestry, and Gemes: Implications for Defining Disease Risk," *Annual Review of Genomics and Human Genetic* 4: (September 2003): 34.

[60]Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 30.

[61]Howard, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools*, 53.

[62]Sylvester A. Johnson, "The Rise of Black Ethnics: The Ethnic Turn in African American Religions, 1916-1954," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 20, no. 2 (2010): 128.

by the mores and standards of one's own ethnic group, is a primary issue in understanding how ethnicities relate to each other. Ethnocentrism involves an attitude of superiority, thereby declaring that other ethnic groups are inferior. This perspective generally leads to false assumptions about life, values, beliefs, and behaviors of other ethnic groups. Such beliefs can lead to violent oppression. Cornél du Torr points out that extreme ethnocentrism "manifests xenophobic attitudes, aggression toward other groups, discrimination, extreme nationalism and patriotism, and ethnic fundamentalism issuing in aggression and war."[63]

Culture is the most complex of the three terms. While culture is not bound by ethnicity and race, it is certainly influenced by them and a plethora of other factors. Nida defines culture as "all learned behavior which is socially acquired, that is, the material and nonmaterial traits which are passed on from one generation to another."[64] Paul Hiebert describes culture as "the more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do."[65] Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers define culture as "the sum of distinctive characteristics of a people's way of life."[66] Hiebert argues that cultural knowledge "includes the assumptions and beliefs we make about reality, the nature of the world, and how it works."[67] Culture is the sum of all learned human behavior that is shared with others in the group. These learned behavioral traits are passed on to future generations. They are environmental by nature rather than inherited genetic traits. There is a synergetic aspect of culture where the

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[63]Cornél W. du Torr, "Diversity in a Multicultural and Poly-Ethnic World: Challenges and Responses," *Religion & Theology* 11, nos. 3 and 4 (2004): 243.

[64]Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, 28.

[65]Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 30.

[66]Sherwood G. Lingerfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1986] 2003), 17.

[67]Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 31.

23

whole is greater than the total of its parts.[68] Nida notes, "Culture is not a mere accumulation of traits, but an arrangement of parts in such a way that there is a systematic functioning of the society."[69]

In this study of Southern Baptist churches that are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, I chose to use the term "multiethnic" rather than "multiracial" or "multicultural." While the delineation of these terms may be somewhat arbitrary in nature, multiethnic is more closely related to a biblical understanding of *ethne* found in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).[70] While race was the terminology employed by McGavran in his research,[71] this term does not address the nuances of ethnicity, people groups, and other segments of society. The Bible speaks of only one race, the human race, and all of humanity descended from Adam. The human race, however, is composed of many ethnicities. Acts 17:26 affirms that God made from one man the nations (or people groups) of the earth.[72]

Michael Emerson and Christian Smith argue that the United States is a racialized society. They describe such a society as one where

> "intermarriage rates are low, residential separation and socioeconomic inequality are the norm, our definitions of personal identity and our choices of intimate associations reveal racial distinctiveness and where "we are never unaware of the race of a person with whom we interact."[73]

In the United States, race impacts social relationships as well as the opportunities and experiences of life. A racialized society is socially constructed to offer economic,

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[68]Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, 29-32.

[69]Ibid., 45.

[70]Variations of Christ's Commission also appears in Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21, and Acts 1:8.

[71]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 8-10. Also see McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 163.

[72]Mark Deymaz and Harry Li, *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity with Your Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 39.

[73]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 7.

24

political, and social rewards based on the concept of race. Kenneth Mathews and Sydney Park use the terms "race" and "ethnic" interchangeably. They note that ethnicity cannot be regulated to classic black and white relationships in the United States. The immigration of the peoples of the world to the United States has generated growing ethnic tensions that transcend black and white relationships. However, they acknowledge that the tension between blacks and whites is deeply woven into the fabric of American society due to the horrific impact of the slavery era and the subsequent struggle for full integration into the culture.[74]

The use of the term "multicultural" in the United States has morphed to an expression that broadly includes shifting trends and attitudes influenced by globalization and politically correct thinking. To many, multicultural may imply the embracing of views that are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible such as homosexuality, same sex marriages, and moral relativism. Multiethnic more clearly delineates the term "*ethne*" and the biblical perspective of people groups and diversity in the New Testament.

There is a sense that any church with more than one ethnic group in its fellowship, no matter the size of the minority ethnicity, is multiethnic. According to social researchers Thomas Pettigrew and Joanne Martin, however, the incorporation of people from minority backgrounds into any institution presents challenges for minorities to feel included in the organization. Pettigrew and Martin argue that a critical mass is reached when minorities make up 20 percent or more of the population of the total organization.[75] Their conclusions were built upon two different lines of earlier research. One of these was a study by Rosabeth Moss Kanter that focused on the acceptance of women in places of employment that had previously hired only male employees. The other study by Pettigrew focused on the racial integration of public schools in the United

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[74]Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 18-19.

[75]Thomas F. Pettigrew and Joanne Martin, "Shaping the Organizational Context for Black Inclusion," *Journal of Social Issues* 43 (1987): 41.

States. Each of these studies led to similar definitions of "a critical mass" consisting of at least 20 percent of the group that was necessary to change the dynamic of tokenism.[76] If a person in an organization randomly meets twenty other members, that person has a 99 percent chance of meeting someone of a different ethnicity.[77]

Pettigrew and Martin point to the Supreme Court's decision against racial segregation in the public schools in 1954 and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s as the first stage of eradicating ethnic discrimination in the United States. These events abolished the formal structures that prevented ethnic inclusivism. The removal of these structures, however, did not ensure the entrance of minorities into what had been all white institutions. Barriers of a more subtle nature developed as "a direct legacy of the nation's three centuries of slavery, legalized segregation, and other forms of legitimized and institutionalized racism."[78] They further state that the only conclusive way to eliminate the challenges of being the lone minority in a group or a "token" mentality is to obtain a critical mass of minority representation in the organization. Pettigrew and Martin concluded that a minority that composes at least 20 percent of the organization is that critical mass.[79] Other researchers have adopted Pettigrew and Martin's definition of a critical mass.

DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Kim define a multiracial church as one

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[76]Kanter's research differs in several aspects from Pettigrew's. Her study of male/female ratios in the work place focused on small groups in terms of raw numbers. She does not address the idea of critical mass in her study. Still the Kanter article adds some support to Pettigrew's contentions that the 80:20 ratio is important in understanding group dynamics. Pettigrew argues that when minority percentages in a school reach 20 to 25 percent, the minority experiences significant involvement in the school. Kanter notes a change in how female minorities relate to the male dominated group when the ratio reaches 85:15. Since Pettigrew's research focused on the issue of race, it has greater significance for the consideration of multiethnic churches. See Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women," *The American Journal of Sociology* 82 (March 1977): 965-90, and Thomas F. Pettigrew, "The Racial Integration of Schools," in *Racial Discrimination in the United States*, ed. Thomas F. Pettigrew (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 224-39.

[77]DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 76.

[78]Pettigrew and Martin, "Shaping the Organizational Context for Black Inclusion," 42.

[79]Ibid., 71.

where "no one racial group is 80 percent or more of the congregation."[80] Rodney Woo acknowledges that such a definition of a multiracial congregation is somewhat arbitrary, but affirms that the studies previously cited give evidence that "the dynamics of the entire group change when there is a presence of 20 percent or more of a minority group."[81] Based on this social research, a multiethnic church is defined as a local fellowship where no more than 80 percent of the people are from the majority ethnic group represented.[82] Using the data that was available when he published *The Color of Church*, Woo reported that only 8 percent of the churches in the United States are multiethnic by this definition; the number is even less among evangelical churches, where less than 6 percent are multiethnic.[83] More recent data reported by Scott Thumma reveals that the number of multiethnic churches has increased in the last decade from 8 percent to 13.7 percent. This growth rate is significant and will impact the makeup of SBC churches in the future.[84]

The term "diversity" is used when a degree of diversity is clear, but it is unknown if the church has less than 80 percent of the majority ethnic group. A case in point would be the church at Ephesus. Paul addresses both Jews and Gentiles in the epistle, but there is no way of knowing the percentage breakdown of these ethnic groups.

<center>**Limitations and Delimitations**</center>

Limitations and delimitations to the scope of this dissertation must be noted. First, while the need for all churches to consider multiethnic growth as the population of the United States becomes more diverse, the focus of this research is restricted to

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[80]DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 2.

[81]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 13.

[82]This definition is based on research by Pettigrew and other sociologists. See Thomas F. Pettigrew and Joanne Martin, "Shaping the Organizational Context for Black American Inclusion," *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, no. 1 (1987): 71; Yancey and Kim, "Racial Diversity, Gender Equality, and SES Diversity," 109; DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 2; and George Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 14-16.

[83]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 14.

[84]Scott Thumma, "Religious Diversity Increasing in US Congregations."

Southern Baptists multiethnic churches that are represented by no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnicity. Southern Baptist researchers Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer wrote, "There is no ignoring the facts. Conversion growth is declining. The cultural influence of local churches is waning . . . The evangelistic efforts of the church at large and the leadership of the church are below minimal."[85] If churches are unwilling or unable to change their methods in order to reach a changing culture, they will likely find themselves in decline and perhaps on the road to closure. Yet the primary focus of the church should always remain on the gospel rather than ethnic and racial reconciliation. The homogeneous unit principle has been effective as an evangelistic and missiological strategy, but an ecclesiological tension exists. Jesus' mission was to reconcile fallen humanity with the God of the universe. As people respond to the gospel of Christ and join him in this reconciling ministry (2 Cor 5:16-21), true reconciliation among all peoples can be a reality in Christ.[86] If Southern Baptists are to continue their historic role of reaching the lost in the United States with the gospel of Christ, attention must be given to reaching people from every ethnicity in the neighborhood.

Second, the historical research (Chapter 3) will be limited to African American and Hispanic groups. African Americans were involved in the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention when it was founded in 1845. Hispanics are currently the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority in the United States. While many other ethnic groups exist in the country, these two groups will be the focus of the historical research.

Third, while it is my intention to identify as many Southern Baptist multiethnic churches as possible, I will limit the qualitative research to twenty-six Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. Narrowing the number of churches for the qualitative social research will allow the opportunity to interview pastors and survey the leadership. These

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[85]Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 7-8.

[86]Deymaz and Li, *Ethnic Blends*, 20.

churches will be selected based on their status as a multiethnic church for a period of at least one year, the rate of their conversion growth, and will include a variety of geographical settings.

Fourth, while there are a number of important issues facing Southern Baptist multiethnic churches, I will limit my focus to the critical issue of worship in chapter 5. From my preliminary research, it is clear that multiethnic churches must grapple with this matter. Some of the issues that will be addressed are the standard by which worship practices are selected and measured, how various styles and traditions impact the makeup of the worship gatherings, and how to draw the various constituents together into a unified worship practice.

My research is delimited by the small amount of available data on Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. The groundbreaking research required to address this restriction is delimited by my ability as a single researcher. My research is also delimited by the fact that I am a member of the current majority ethnic group in the United States. Therefore, I enjoy the privileges and opportunities afforded me as such. I am aware that my understanding of the issues of ethnicity is from the perspective of the majority ethnic group and, therefore, is limited. In my research, I am consciously seeking to guard against this delimitation in order to reach the highest level of objectivity possible.

Research Methodology

The research methodology proceeded with an examination of primary resources related to the mission of the church, the history of the Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations, a missiological evaluation of the homogeneous unit principle and its implications for Southern Baptist multiethnic churches, and the critical issue of worship. In my research thus far, I have encountered several helpful primary resources through the library at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition, the libraries at North Greenville University, Furman University, and Bob Jones University

have provided other useful resources. Many commentaries and reference works related to biblical studies from these libraries have enhanced my research. North Greenville University also has partnerships with the University of South Carolina and several other colleges and universities in the state of South Carolina. Through these resources, I also had access to many periodicals and electronic databases to assist my research.

The social research employed in this dissertation is multifaceted. Since there is no data collection on Southern Baptist multiethnic churches as defined in this dissertation, I am collecting quantitative data by employing the process of snowball sampling. Working through denominational agencies, state conventions, and multiethnic churches, I am discovering the identity of Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. Through the snowball sampling I will discover how long these churches have been multiethnic. I will also employ qualitative research including surveys of the leadership and interviews with the pastors of twenty-six of the churches identified through the snowball sampling. The criterion for selecting these twenty-six churches will be based on their status as a multiethnic church for a period of at least one year, their rate of conversion growth, and include geographically diverse locations. If multiethnic churches focus on the gospel and carry out their mission to evangelize the lost and make disciples, conversion growth must be a priority for them. These churches must have a baptismal ratio (average worship attendance: number of baptisms) of at least 25 to 1. I also hope to find how these churches are addressing the critical issue of worship in their multiethnic contexts in carrying out the mission of the church.

Conclusion

As a result of my preliminary research with the limitations and delimitations cited previously, I will determine if Southern Baptist multiethnic churches exemplify the mission of the church as revealed in the Scriptures and offer a valuable strategy for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the United States. This inquiry will

investigate how the twenty-six Southern Baptist multiethnic churches used in the social

research are doing as well as offer suggestions for strengthening their effectiveness. My

personal interest, academic studies, and my experience as a campus minister at an

evangelical university have led me to pursue a greater understanding of the issues of

ethnicity and faith as well as unity through diversity in multiethnic churches, including

the following:

1. Since believers of all ethnicities are united in the body of Christ, why do Southern
   Baptist churches in the United States meet in predominantly homogenous groups
   rather than in multiethnic groups? How have the issues of ethnicity in a racialized
   society influenced this ethnic divide in the church?

2. Do multiethnic churches exemplify the mission of the church? What role did
   ethnicity play in the churches of the New Testament? Can multiethnic churches
   remain true to the mission of the church and bridge the ethnic divide?

3. What role has ethnicity played historically in Southern Baptist churches? How did
   ethnic groups relate to each other in Southern Baptist churches prior to the Civil
   War? How did the end of slavery and the Civil Rights Movement impact Southern
   Baptists' ethnic relationships?

4. Is the homogeneous unit principle consistent with the Scriptures and God's plan for
   his church? Should McGavran's observation be prescriptive? What impact does this
   principle have on cross-cultural evangelism?

5. How does the critical issue of worship, encompassing various styles and traditions,
   impact Southern Baptist multiethnic churches? How can the effectiveness of
   Southern Baptist multiethnic churches be strengthened?

In answering these questions, I will address these specific issues within the framework of

answering the overarching question, "Are Southern Baptist multiethnic churches a

valuable strategy for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the United States?"

CHAPTER 2

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND SOUTHERN
BAPTIST MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES

Introduction

The mission of the church should be the driving force of every Christian
fellowship. In the creation narrative, God revealed that humans are uniquely created in
his image. Every human being has the capacity to reflect what God is like to others.
When God called Abram, he promised to bless his descendants for the purpose of
blessing others. Isaiah reveals that the Israelites are called to be a light to the nations.
God's mission for the church has always been global in nature. Jesus stated his mission
succinctly in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."
The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15 also emphasize
this mission. In the Great Commission, Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all
people groups. The Scriptures offer clear instruction on God's purpose for his church, to
reach people for Christ through evangelism and to make disciples by teaching believers
to obey all of Christ's teaching. A missiological evaluation of Southern Baptist
multiethnic churches must begin by asking if such congregations exemplify the mission
of the church as demonstrated in the Scriptures.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the mission of the church and its
application to all peoples. Jesus crossed ethnic barriers and addressed the issues of
prejudice particularly concerning the Samaritans in his ministry. The expansion of the
early church beyond the Jews to include Samaritans and Gentiles laid the foundation for
multiethnic churches. The chapter will conclude with a treatise of how ethnic barriers
were broken down as the church expanded, an examination of ethnically diverse

fellowships in the New Testament, and the implications for Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations.

The Mission of the Church

God cares for all of his creation. The world has always been his mission field. When God created humanity, he created them, male and female, in his image. Though the human creations rebelled against God and through sin tarnished their ability to clearly reflect the image of the Creator, the global scope of the mission of God's people continued. Abraham was chosen by God for a special relationship, however the purpose of this blessing was to bless others. Abraham and his descendants were commissioned to be a light to the nations. Jesus affirmed this global charge by emphasizing that his mission was to seek and to save the lost, not just the descendants of Abraham. When Jesus commissioned his disciples for service, he called them to go to all people groups and make disciples of all nations. God's global mandate to make disciples of all nations is the heart of the mission of his church.

Image Bearers of the Creator

When Moses encountered God at the burning bush in Exodus 3-4, he asked God what he should say to the Israelites if they asked him the name of the God who sent him. God responded, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you'" (Exod 3:14). Douglas Stuart in his commentary on Exodus states that I am means "I cause to be." God is the first cause; he created all things. He is both the creator and sustainer of all that is. God is active and present in his creation, and he is the Lord of history. Stuart translates the name God gives to Moses in this passage as "I cause to be because I cause to be."[1]

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[1]Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 120-21.

The God who causes to be spoke the world into existence as recorded in the

first chapter of the Bible. He simply made a declaration and it was done. Throughout the

creation narrative, God consistently judges the results of his creative work as "good." The

climax of his creative activity is the making of human beings. Genesis 1:26-27 states,

> Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." So God created man in His own image, He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

All people, regardless of their ethnic heritage, socioeconomic background, nationality, or

gender are created in the image of God. Since all people are equally created in the image

of God, any notion that one ethnic group is superior to another is clearly outside of the

scope of biblical truth.[2]

Gordon Wenham notes that the creation narrative seems to slow down when it

comes to the creation of humans, indicating that this is the climatic event of the

narrative.[3] The creation of human life is the last and most important aspect of the creation

account. James Montgomery Boice points to the creation of humans as the pinnacle of

creation. From this point forward, the story of Genesis focuses on people who not only

live in rebellion against God, but are also the recipients of God's special love and

redemption.[4] Adam and Eve were set apart from all of creation to bear the image of the

creator and were commissioned to rule over the rest of the created order.[5] As creatures

fashioned in the image of God, men and women of all ethnicities reflect what God is like

and serve as his representatives in the world. Humans are like God in some moral

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[2]Rodney M. Woo, *The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 10.

[3]Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX; Word, 1987), 27.

[4]James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 87.

[5]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 160.

aspects, having a sense of right and wrong and the ability to make moral (or immoral) choices. People reflect God's likeness when they are obedient to God's Word, holy, and righteous. On the other hand, they are unlike God when they sin against the holy character and nature of God. Bearing God's image brings both great privilege and great responsibility to humanity.[6] Being created in the image of God means that humans are his representatives on earth and are held accountable as such. People of all ethnic distinctions have the ability to enter into personal relationships with God, speaking with him and enjoying fellowship with him.[7] As image bearers of the creator, humans have the unique ability to reflect who he is and what he is like to the rest of humanity. At the conclusion of his creative activity, God is both satisfied and delighted in his creative work. He pronounces the whole of creation as "very good" (Gen 1:31). The creation narrative celebrates the splendid activity of God's work and the provision of God for his creatures.

Walter Bruggemann argues that Genesis 2 should not be viewed as a separate, parallel account of creation, but rather as a more in depth reflection on Genesis 1.[8] Boice agrees, citing Matthew 19:4-5 as evidence that Jesus affirmed the unity of the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2. Jesus quotes from both Genesis 1 and 2 in this passage,

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[6]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 442-50.

[7]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29-33. Wenham refers to five primary ways of understanding the meaning of the terms image and likeness in this passage. (1) Image and likeness are distinct from each other with image representing the human ability of reason and human personality, each reflective of the Creator, while likeness refers to ethics and morality. Wenham rejects this notion because the terms are used without distinction as synonyms in Genesis. (2) Image reflects the mental and spiritual facilities humans share with God. Wenham warns that such a view is difficult to pin down opening the possibility of commentators gravitating toward imposing their own values on the text. (3) Image refers to a physical resemblance between humans and God. This definition of image is consistent with how the term is used in Genesis and in other places. Wenham, however, points to other passages that express that God does not have a material existence and his invisibility in dismissing this interpretation. (4) The concept of being created in the image of God makes humans God's representatives on earth. More than the idea that kings and leaders function as representatives of God, this interpretation affirms that every man and woman is a representative of God. (5) Being created in the image of God gives people the capacity to relate to God. Therefore, a human is able to have personal relationship with God. Wenham admits the difficulty of determining what being created in the image of God means in Genesis.

[8]Walter Bruggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 37. Richard Hess agrees that the account in Gen 2 does not contradict the preceding account but focuses on a different emphasis. For more on this discussion, see Richard S. Hess, "Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3," in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 82.

regarding the two chapters as a harmonious unit.[9] In Genesis 2, God demonstrates great care in creating Adam. God meticulously formed Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and Adam became a living being. Each human being, regardless of race or culture, is created in the image of God with the same care taken as when Adam was fashioned. The man is placed in the garden where God gives him the liberty of eating from any tree in Eden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This prohibition is for the good of the man. God wants to protect the man, his image bearer, for anyone who eats of the forbidden tree will die. Freedom has no meaning without boundaries. Of all the created order, man alone possesses the potential for making moral decisions, with the potential to reflect the character and likeness of the creator.[10] God desires for his human creatures to live in a love relationship with him and with one another.[11]

Blest to Bless Others

God created his image bearers to join him in his mission to the world. The purpose and the privilege of living as one who bears the image of the creator is to bless others and to bring glory to God. All people, regardless of ethnicity, culture, or socioeconomic status, are created in the image of the Creator. The purpose for their creation is to join God in his mission to the world. This commission is evident in God's covenant promise to Abram. Through God's covenant with Abram and his subsequent call, the creator reveals that the purpose of his blessing of Abram is so others will be blest through him. Genesis 12:1-3 states,

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[9]Some liberal scholars have argued that Genesis 1 and 2 represent two dissimilar and even contradictory accounts. Boice traces this view to Jean Astruc's work on literary sources in Genesis. Astruc argues that the use of *Elohim* in Gen 1 and Jehovah in Gen 2 demonstrates that the accounts have different origins and should be viewed as separate accounts. Such a view is the fertile soil out of which the *JEPD* theory of literary sources of the Pentateuch grew. See Boice, *Genesis*, 107-10.

[10]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 40.

[11]Mark J. Boda, "Old Testament Foundations of Christian Spirituality," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 41.

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

The promise to Abram includes God's commission for his chosen people. God blessed Abram with the God-given purpose to bless others.[12] God's covenant with Abram and by extension to Israel is fundamentally missional.[13] The noun and verb derived from the root ברך meaning "bless" is used five times in Genesis 11:27-12:9. In fact this root occurs more in Genesis than anywhere else in the Old Testament.[14] John Piper argues that God's purpose for blessing Abram is so that salvation through Christ may reach to all ethnic groups in the world. Because Abram has been blessed, he will be the source of blessing to others.[15] The Hebrews were commissioned to be a redemptive community.

The message of the Old Testament is global in its scope, for all people of all nations. Daniel Carroll notes that arguments for mission in the Old Testament commonly begin with an appeal to Genesis 12:1-3. In contrast to the rebellion and prideful aspirations of the account of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:4), Abram and the nation to be built through his descendants will experience greatness not through their own efforts, but

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[12]Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 119-20.

[13]Jeannine K. Brown, "New Testament Foundations of Christian Spirituality," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 46.

[14]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275-76. There is some debate regarding the best rendering of the niphal verb ברך. If the verb is passive it means "be blessed." If it is used in the middle voice, it means "find blessing." The reflexive translation is "bless themselves." The niphal form is rarely used in the Old Testament. Some argue that hithpael has a reflexive meaning and since there appears to be no difference in Gen 22:18 (hithpael) and Gen 18:18 (niphal), then the niphal must be translated in the reflexive form. Wenham notes that a reflexive translation is possible, but to argue that it is required is another matter. He concludes that if the niphal and the hithpael are interchangeable in Genesis, then it is conceivable the hithpael may have the sense of the niphal, The niphal verb may be translated as either passive or middle. Mathews also argues that traditionally the verb was understood to be passive in nature. See Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 117. Walter Kaiser points out that the Septuagint translates the Hebrew ברך in its passive form. He further argues that Paul in Galatians 3:8 understood the passive meaning of the Genesis text, that in Abraham all the nations will be blessed. Moreover, he states that the intertestamental and apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (44:21) interpreted the promise as passive, not reflexive. See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13, no. 1 (January-March 1996): 4.

[15]John Piper, "The Supremacy of God Among 'All the Nations,'" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13, no. 1 (January-March 1996): 19.

by the grace of God.[16] Walter Kaiser, Jr., argues that when God called Abram as his chosen instrument, he gave the first rendering of the Great Commission to him. God's blessing to Abraham, the new name that God gave to Abram, was designed to bless others. It was never God's intention for Abraham or his descendants to live in a vacuum. Rather, it is God's desire for his people to live in the context of community with other nations. Through the Israelites all the peoples of the earth will be blessed.[17] Carroll states, "Whatever else the call of Abram might entail, at the very least one can see that it is designed to reach to 'all' the peoples."[18] Kaiser cites Gentiles named in the Old Testament, such as Melchizedek, Jethro, Rahab, Ruth, and the widow at Zarephath, who responded to God and his servants as corroboration of God's mission to the nations. He argues that up until the twentieth century, Old Testament scholars broadly accepted "the proposition that Israel was called to respond to an active mission mandate to the peoples of the world."[19] Old Testament scholars in the twentieth century, with relatively few exceptions, tended to minimize the focus on missions, opting to reject previous scholarship. In light of the teachings of the whole Word of God it seems clear that God chose Israel, not for privilege, but for the purpose of reaching the nations. Kaiser states,

> Clearly God intended to use Abraham in such a way that he would be a means of blessing to all the nations of the world. Clearly, he was to be the instrument in the redemption of the world. This would be God's solution to the curse that had been imparted as a result of the fall, (Gen. 3) and the curse imposed at the dispersion of the human race at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:7ff).[20]

In Genesis 12:3 the author identifies God as the one who will bless other people through the descendants of Abram. Kenneth Mathews states, "The verse in

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[16]M. Daniel Carroll R., "Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10, no. 1 (2000): 21.

[17]Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 116.

[18]Carroll, "Blessing the Nations," 20.

[19]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13, no. 1 (January-March 1996): 3.

[20]Ibid., 4.

context indicates that the Lord, not Abram, is the dispenser of blessing for the nations. Abram has no exclusive claim on God's blessing; rather, God has exclusive claim on Abram and on all those who submit to his God."[21] God is sovereign and the source of all blessings. This blessing is not based on Abraham's accomplishments, but is a gift from God.[22] Mathews traces the thread of blessing to the nation of Israel (Exod 6:2-8; 19:6) through King David's descendants (Ps 72:17; Isa 11:10-12) and ultimately to the work of Christ who offers blessing through salvation and deliverance. Peter urges the Jews to repent and receive the fulfillment of the blessing of Abraham in Christ (Acts 2). Paul also understands the promise to be ultimately fulfilled through Christ, but expands the boundaries of the blessing to include all ethnicities and people groups (Gal 3:28). The old distinctions and inequalities of ethnicities have come to an end by the means of the new relationships established through Christ. All believers are united as equals in Christ.[23] It seems clear that God's mission always included the nations.[24]

Ralph Winter argues, "God changed Abram's name to Abraham, father of peoples, in order to emphasize what was meant in Genesis 12 by his being the one through whom all peoples on earth would be brought into that same amazing blessing of sonship and inheritance."[25] God's blessing from the beginning was intended for all peoples, to call them to obedience and faith. God blessed Abraham for his name's sake. God's covenant with Abraham was for the purpose of opening the way of salvation for all who will believe.[26] All those who receive the blessing of salvation through Christ are

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[21]Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 115.

[22] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 118.

[23]Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 151-58.

[24]Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 118.

[25]Ralph D. Winter, "Seeing the Big Picture," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13, no. 1 (January-March 1996): 42.

[26]Boda, "Old Testament Foundations of Christian Spirituality," 43.

saved to serve others. Jesus died for all who receive him, so that they join the household of God, not as servants, but as a part of his family. It is the mission of the church for God's people who have received the blessing of salvation to bless all the peoples of the world by sharing the gospel and carrying out his disciple-making task.

A Light to the Nations

David Hagner acknowledges, "Light is a very important metaphor in the Bible."[27] Light represents God's work in the world while darkness is a metaphor for the work of the enemy. In Isaiah 49:6, the Lord declares that his servant will raise up the tribes of Jacob, restoring the remnant of Israel, and he will make them a light for the nations so that his salvation may extend to all people. The global scope of the mission of God's people is clear. In the context of this passage, the people of Israel are living under judgment in exile. They are anticipating deliverance from God, but it has been delayed due to their rebellion and sinfulness.[28] Israel, God's chosen nation, went through exile in Babylon as judgment for their unfaithfulness and their transgressions. The promise of restoration is personified through the suffering and subsequent exaltations of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah. The work of the servant is to bring deliverance and restoration for Israel, but he will also serve as a light for all the nations. He will bring salvation to the all the peoples of the earth.[29] Palmer Robertson states, "The sufferings and exaltations of the servant find their ultimate significance in their vicarious, substitutionary nature in behalf of the elect nation."[30] The suffering servant passages in Isaiah point toward the person and work of the Messiah with all of its implications. The Messiah offers salvation to all

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[27]Donald A Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 99.

[28]Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 3: 274-76.

[29]J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 388-89.

[30]O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 479.

the people groups of the world and calls his followers to make disciples among all nations.[31]

The New Testament identifies Christ with the role of the servant. He is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. In one of the "I am" sayings in John's Gospel, Christ identifies himself as the light of the world and the light of life (John 8:12).[32] He is the source of illumination for all people. John often contrasts light and darkness in his writings.[33] As the light of the world, Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 49:6. He is the light of the world; salvation is offered to people of every race, tribe, and nation through Christ.

In Matthew 5:14, Jesus declares that his disciples are the light of the world. There is no contradiction here. Followers of Christ, who possess no light of their own, are called to reflect the light of the image of the creator to the world. As they reflect his light to others, they are the light of the world, pointing people to the savior, the source of their light, who is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham who was blest to bless others. The Messiah's offer of salvation and forgiveness is open to all who will believe, regardless of ethnicity.

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[31]Biblical scholars have long debated the identification of the suffering servant. Robertson argues that these texts about the suffering servant refer to Jesus, citing the question of the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40. The Ethiopian, who was reading Isa 53, asked Philip if the prophet was speaking of himself or of someone else (Acts 8:34). Philip understood the passage to be about Jesus as he proceeded to tell the Ethiopian about Jesus beginning from the Isa 53 text. In writing about the servant songs, Hill and Walton note that Israel is at times referred to as God's servant in Isaiah and that King Cyrus is used by God to bring deliverance for Israel, but acknowledges that the servant's role in Isaiah far exceeds the contributions of both Israel and Cyrus. The servant most resembles the ideal king from the line of David according to Hill and Walton. They argue that the New Testament prefers the messianic interpretation of the servant passages in Isaiah. Even though Isaiah does not refer to the servant as the messiah, the servant's role and his accomplishments lead many to that conclusion. See Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 324-25. Some critics argue that the parallels between the servant of the Lord in Isaiah and Jesus are mere fabrications of the early Christian church. Muilenburg argues that the no single person could possibly bear the burden of fulfilling the role of the servant in the Isaiah (see James Muilenburg, "Introduction to The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66," in *The Interpreter's Bible* [New York: Abingdon Press, 1956], 5: 406-14). Geisler, on the other hand, argues that the Messiah is the deliverer from God in chapters 49-57. See Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 247.

[32]George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 126-27.

[33]See John 1:4-9; 3:19-20; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46; 1 John 1:5-7; 2:8-9.

To Seek and Save the Lost

In his encounter with a wealthy tax collector named Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10),

Jesus offered a clear declaration of his mission. His purpose in coming to the world was

"to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Howard Marshall argues that the central

theme in the writings of Luke is Christ's offer of salvation.[34] Darrell Bock states,

"Zacchaeus was chief tax collector at what apparently was a Roman regional tax center.

Zacchaeus was an administrator who bid for and organized the collection and took a cut

from the labor of his underlings."[35] Joel Green notes, "Within the Greco-Roman world,

he would have belonged to a circle of persons almost universally despised."[36] As a tax

collector, Zacchaeus was hated by many and considered to be a traitor to the Jews

because of his relationship with the Roman government. John Nolland notes, "If tax

collectors were considered to be unsavory characters, then Zacchaeus as a *chief* tax

collector can only be considered to be that much worse."[37] It is reasonable to assume that

Zacchaeus amassed his wealth from the taxes that were collected. He was most likely a

Jew since his name has a Jewish background and Jesus referred to him as a son of

Abraham (Luke 19:9). Jesus had already stated that it is humanly impossible for a rich

man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Luke 18:25). Yet what is impossible for a human is

possible with God; for all things are possible with God (Luke 18:27).[38]

The story of Zacchaeus illustrates that a rich man can be saved. This story

recorded only in Luke, along with the healing accounts of the blind and lepers, describes

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[34]I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 116.

[35]Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1516.

[36]Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 669.

[37]John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35C (Dallas: Word, 1993), 907.

[38]John Nolland, *Luke 9:24-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35B (Dallas: Word, 1993), 890-91.

the positive response of social outcasts to the gospel. Despite the protests of the Pharisees and like-minded Jews (see Luke 5:30, 7:39, 18:9-14, and Luke 19:7), salvation is available to all who respond in repentance and faith. While Zacchaeus' response to Christ does not explicitly mention repentance and faith, his actions give testimony to a changed life. His actions are fruits in keeping with faith and repentance.[39]

Zacchaeus was small in stature, but had a deep desire to see Jesus. He faced two obstacles to accomplish his goal of seeing Jesus, the crowd was large and he was short. He had to use his resourcefulness if he was to have a chance to see Jesus. So Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to gain a vantage point where he could observe Jesus as he passed through the crowd. Upon finding Zacchaeus in the tree, Jesus initiates the extension of God's grace to this social outcast. It is clear that Jesus is in control of the situation. He declared that it was necessary for him to accompany Zacchaeus to his home. Bock suggests that the purpose of this visit was to emphasize the nature of his mission, to seek and save the lost.[40]

The crowd was offended by Jesus' association with this tax collector, a known sinner, echoing the complaint of the Pharisees in Luke 15:2 charging that Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. Their grumbling stands in stark contrast to the joy that Zacchaeus expressed in his response to the Lord. Not only does the crowd label Zacchaeus a sinner, by extension they are questioning the integrity of Jesus because of his fellowship with Zacchaeus.[41] His designation as a sinner marginalizes Zacchaeus' status in the community. Such a response from the crowd indicates their evaluation of tax collectors as unsavory characters who take unfair advantage of those from whom they solicit taxes. Because of the transformation in Zacchaeus' life through his encounter with

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[39]Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 469.

[40]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1518.

[41]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 670.

Christ, he pledges to give half of his possessions to the poor and to repay any that he has

defrauded by fourfold. The law required in certain cases that one fifth of the overcharged

amount had to be added when making restitution (Lev 6:1-5; Num 5:7). In other instances

the restitution was be paid by doubling the original amount (Exod 22:4, 7, 9). Zacchaeus,

however, chose to pay back any overcharge by fourfold.[42] Such a response gives

evidence of a changed life.[43] In light of Zacchaeus' response, Jesus declares that salvation

has come to the house of this tax collector. This pericope begins with Zacchaeus' quest to

see Jesus, but it ends as a demonstration of the Messiah's divine mission. It is Jesus who

takes the initiative to reach out to Zacchaeus and bring him to salvation.[44]

Jesus clearly summarized his mission as coming to seek and save the lost in

this passage.[45] While Zacchaeus was most likely a Jew, Christ's mission to seek and to

save the lost included not only the house of Israel, but also those found among every tribe

and nation. Jesus explicitly stated in the Great Commission that his followers are to make

disciples of every people group (Matt 28:18-20). In the Acts version of the Christ's

Commission, he told his disciples that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit to

witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Christ's

mission to bring salvation to the lost certainly moves beyond Jewish ethnicity.

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[42]William Hendriksen, *Luke*, New Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 856.

[43]The Greek verbs *didomi* (I give away) and *apodidomi* (I give or pay back) being in the present tense has generated some debate among biblical scholars as to how they should be translated. Fitzmyer, as well as Green, argues for a customary present translation where Zacchaeus is describing his current practice. If that is the case, Jesus encounter with Zacchaeus would be vindication for his current practice rather than a salvific change. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1220-21, and Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 671-73. Stein argues for a futuristic present translation because it best fits the context and because of Jesus' salvific announcement due to the conversion of the tax collector. The idea is that as a result of Zacchaeus coming to faith, he will now give half of his possessions to the poor and repay anyone he has extorted from by fourfold. See Stein, *Luke*, 466. Bock also argues that the verbs should be understood "in the sense of a present resolve, as a reflection of Zacchaeus' repentance and faith as a result of meeting Jesus. See Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53, 1519-20.*

[44]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 667.

[45]Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 466.

The Gospel Is for All Ethnicities

Just prior to Jesus' ascension, he met with his disciples one last time, commissioning them with a prime directive that would characterize their ministries in the world. He left his followers with the mission of making disciples of all ethnicities. Matthew 28:18-20 declares,

> Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

If Jesus was not God, he could never have made such a claim. As the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the risen Christ holds all authority. The task of making disciples rests on the authority of Christ, and as the disciples go about the mission of reproducing themselves, they are assured of the Lord's continual presence. Robert Coleman points out, "Jesus specifies the end result of the activity—going out, preaching, baptizing, teaching, witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit—is to 'make disciples', not converts."[46] Jesus' plan for bringing salvation to the world is built on the solid foundation of making disciples. New believers must continue to grow in their faith, following Jesus, becoming more like him, and reproducing themselves in others. In his earthly ministry, Jesus made disciples; he expects no less from his followers.

The primary command of Christ's commission is to make disciples. The verb translated as "make disciples" is *mathēteusate*. William Hendriksen points out that this verb must be interpreted as an imperative. As such, it should be understood as an order.[47] According to Craig Blomberg, this verb denotes a kind of evangelism that does not end with conversion. The two subordinate participles in verse 19 further clarify the disciple-making task. "Baptizing" them obviously includes the task of evangelism leading people

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[46]Robert Coleman, "The Jesus Way to Win the World," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, no. 1 (January 2005): 77.

[47]William Hendriksen, *Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 999.

to profess faith in Christ. The parallel task of "teaching" believers to obey all of Christ's commands is the focus of discipleship. These two work hand in hand. One is always incomplete without the other.[48] Many in the contemporary church segregate the two in a way that Scripture never intended. Hendriksen points out that making disciples is qualitatively different than making converts, though making converts is certainly a part of the disciple making process. He states, "The term 'make disciples' places somewhat more stress on the fact that the mind, as well as the heart and the will, must be won for God."[49]

While making disciples is the primary command in the passage, Blomberg argues that both too much and too little have been made of this directive. On the one hand, if the disciple making process is accentuated to the point of ignoring the global nature of Christ's command, then the church limits its outreach to one local area. On the other hand, if international missions are stressed to the point of ignoring opportunities to make disciples locally, the intention of Christ's command is unduly limited. Blomberg argues:

> If non-Christians are not hearing the gospel and not being challenged to make a decision for Christ, then the church has disobeyed one part of Jesus' commission. If new converts are not faithfully and lovingly nurtured in the whole of God's revelation, then the church has disobeyed the other part . . . There must be a balance between evangelistic proclamation and relevant exposition of all parts of God's Word.[50]

It is true that God calls many to leave their homes to take the gospel to the unreached people groups of the world, but the main focus of the command remains on the task for all believers to reproduce themselves in others wherever they are.[51]

The ultimate authority, Jesus Christ himself, commissions his followers to this worldwide disciple-making task. Hendriksen cites the story of the non-Jewish wise men

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[48]Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

[49]Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 999.

[50]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.

[51]Ibid., 431.

in the birth narrative in Matthew's Gospel as compelling evidence that God's intention from the beginning was the evangelization of all the peoples of the world.[52] The global scope of Christ's mission is confirmed through his call to the Apostle Paul to share the gospel with all the nations (*pas ho ethnos*), calling them to obedience and faith in Christ (Rom 1:5). Mounce states,

> The promised Messiah did not come for the benefit of the Jewish nation alone. The gospel is good news for all who will respond in faith. . . . Paul's desire was to take the gospel to the entire world and see the nations turn to God in a faith that changes conduct.[53]

Donald McGavran points out that the Greek phrase *ta ethne* means "the peoples, the tribes, casts, segments of society, urbanites and rurals."[54] Blomberg translates *panta ta ethne* in Matthew 28:19 as all nations, citing the two primary options for translating *ethne* as Gentiles or peoples, a term that is closely akin to ethnic groups.[55] Because the verb is in the imperative, this command is not only for the disciples, but also for all believers. Robert Plummer presents a compelling argument that all believers are called to missions and evangelism. God expects those who follow Christ to carryout his work to the ends of the earth.[56]

An outline of the book of Acts is presented by words of Christ in Acts 1:8. This text contains the promise of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the mandate to carry the gospel as Christ's witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. In this verse, Jesus assured his followers that they would be empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit to take the message of the gospel to the entire world.

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[52]Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 999.

[53]Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: B & H, 1995), 62-63.

[54]Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), 14.

[55]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431-32.

[56]Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Blechley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 71-105.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is empowered to perform mighty works, influencing many for the kingdom of God. The power for witnessing, preaching, missions, and ministry is rooted in the work of the Holy Spirit. This holy comforter anoints the followers of Christ, enabling them to carry out the mission that Christ entrusted to the church. Through the power of the Spirit, believers herald the message of the gospel as a light to all people groups. The end result of these Spirit empowered witnesses is to share the message of God's salvation to the ends of the earth.[57] The power for any movement of God is centered in the work of the Holy Spirit.[58]

The power to witness is a direct command of the Lord in this passage. These are the last words of Jesus prior to his ascension and they are final and conclusive according to Longenecker.[59] He states,

> The commission lays an obligation on all Christians and comes to us as a gift with a promise. It concerns a person, a power, and a program—the person of Jesus, on whose authority the church acts and who is the object of its witness; the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the *sine qua non* for the mission; and a program that begins at Jerusalem, moves out to "all Judea and Samaria," and extends "to the ends of the earth." The Christian church, according to Acts, is a missionary church that responds obediently to Jesus' commission, acts on Jesus' behalf in extension of his ministry, focuses its proclamation of the kingdom of God in its witness to Jesus, is guided and empowered by the self-same Spirit that directed and supported Jesus' ministry, and follows a program whose guidelines for outreach have been set by Jesus himself.[60]

The power for witnessing comes from the Holy Spirit. The ethnic integration of the local church reflects the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Believers must be willing to move beyond the comfort of mono-ethnic fellowships in order to make disciples of all people groups.[61]

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[57]F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 36-37.

[58]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 54.

[59]Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 9: 256.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Mark Deymaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 11.

Ethnic Inclusiveness in the Ministry of Jesus

While the majority of Jesus' ministry recorded in the Gospels focuses on the Jews, some narratives record encounters with other ethnicities. In John 4, Jesus breaks the cultural patterns of his day by leaving Jerusalem with his disciples and heading north. This journey took them to Samaria where Jesus encountered the woman at the well. In this passage, Jesus offers an example of reaching across cultural, ethnic, and gender barriers to extend the transforming truth of the gospel to a broken woman. In Luke 10 as Jesus addresses a Jewish audience, he relates the parable of the Good Samaritan to demonstrate what it means to be a neighbor to others.

Jesus' Encounter at the Well in Samaria

Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well gives further insight into his mission and the subsequent mission of the church. George Beasley-Murray states that the issues addressed in this passage are threefold: 1) the life-giving water of salvation, 2) the nature of true worship, and 3) the broadening of Christ's mission beyond the Jews to the hated Samaritans.[62] G. Campbell Morgan notes that taking the route through Samaria addressed the prejudice and pride of his Jewish followers and demonstrated the inclusive nature of the gospel for all people.[63] The idea that he had to pass through Samaria suggests the divine intent of Jesus' obedience to the Father and his encounter with the woman at the well in Sychar. Beasley-Murray points out that this concept of necessity laid on Jesus is normally understood as a response to divine leadership and obedience.[64] Borchert writes,

> The territory of Samaria was on the main ridge road between Judea and Galilee known as the ancient way of the patriarchs, which Josephus (Josephus Vita 52, 269) said took about three days. Some Jews of this time probably preferred to avoid this

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[62]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 65-66.

[63]G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 71.

[64]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 59.

route and travel the longer way from Jerusalem down to the Jordan Valley, along the river, and enter Galilee via crossing at Beth Shan/Beit Shean (Scythopolis).[65]

Jesus kept his focus on his mission. Rather than succumbing to the Jewish pressure to avoid Samaria, Jesus was intent on following the Father's direction. The journey from Jerusalem to Judea would expose Jews to people that they considered unclean. The rivalries and prejudices of the culture were not able to squelch the commitment of the Lord to be obedient to the Father by sharing in his global mission.[66] Traveling from Jerusalem to the region of Galilee presented some challenges to Jews. By taking the longer route through the Jordan Valley, they would likely encounter Gentiles. If they took the more direct route that Jesus chose in this narrative, they would likely encounter the hated Samaritans who were the product of the resettlement strategies of the conquering Assyrians after they overthrew the kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. This policy resulted in the intermarriage of the remaining inhabitants of the region with other ethnicities whereby their former identities as Israelites were absorbed into a new religious syncretism. The Samaritans were not only regarded as political agitators but also as half-breeds whose religion was diluted by questionable practices.[67]

When the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile, they were led by Ezra to seek a loyal people who were committed to God, thus rejecting the Samaritans. In response to this rejection, the Samaritans segregated themselves from the Jews holding to their own version of the Torah and setting aside Mount Gerizim as their place of worship.

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[65]Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 199. There is scholarly debate concerning the normal route that a Jew would travel from Jerusalem to Samaria. Borchert suggests that many Jews would avert the direct route in order to avoid contact with the Samaritans. Carson notes, "The route normally followed by Jewish travellers heading north from Judea to Galilee passed through Samaria." See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 215. Some commentators insist that the longer Transjordan route was customary while others disagree. The route through Samaria is shorter and more direct. However, it is likely that some preferred to take a longer journey in order to avoid contact with the hated Samaritans. While Carson supports the notion that Jesus had a divine appointment with the Samaritan woman, he concludes that the fact that Jesus traveled through Samaria is not enough in and of itself to submit as evidence of divine compulsion. See Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 215-16.

[66]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), 254.

[67]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 216.

Philip Esler points to evidence that the Samaritans returned the same contempt that the Jews held for them.[68] Josephus described them as evil and envious of the Jews, opposing the rebuilding of the Jewish temple by Nehemiah and Ezra.[69] The Samaritans constructed a rival temple as a place of worship at Mount Gerizim. Carson concludes,

> This combination of events fuelled religious and theological animosities. Certainly by the first century the Samaritans had developed their own religious heritage based on the Pentateuch (they did not accept the other books of the Hebrew Bible as canonical), continuing to focus their worship not on Jerusalem and its temple but on Mount Gerizim.[70]

Having grown weary from the journey and feeling hunger as lunchtime approached, Jesus arrived at the site of Jacob's well around the sixth hour, likely around noon.[71] There is reasonable certainty about the location of the well. It is approximately one hundred feet deep.[72] The well was dug out of limestone, but it is fed by an underground spring that continues to produce water.[73] Bultmann concludes, "The old distinction between Jews and Samaritans had lost its force in the light of the revelation

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[68]Philip F. Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict: The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Light of Social Identity Theory," *Biblical Interpretation* 8 (2000): 329-30.

[69]Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities IX*, 4.9, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1981), 234.

[70]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 216.

[71]There is some debate about the time of Jesus' arrival at Jacob's well. If the sixth hour was calculated according to Roman time which starts at midnight or noon, the encounter would have occurred at either 6:00 a.m. or 6:00 p.m. If that were the case, Jesus' encounter with the woman must have occurred at 6:00 in the evening. Jesus would hardly have been weary from his journey at sunrise. See B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: James Clarke, 1958), 68. However, many scholars take the position that the sixth hour was according to the Jewish accounting of time that begins at sunrise. If that were the case, this encounter with the woman at the well was at noon in the heat of the day. Noon would be consistent with Jesus' being tired and thirsty from his journey. While noon appears to be an odd time for a woman to be drawing water from a well (the evening avoiding the heat of the sun seems more reasonable), a woman of questionable character with several failed marriages might prefer to go to the well in the heat of the day to avoid facing the judgment of others who might be at the well drawing water. See Borchert, *John 1-11*, 201; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 217; John Gill, *An Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, Newport Commentary (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2003), 114 (originally published in vols 1 and 2 in *An Exposition of the New Testament*); Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," *John-Acts*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 9, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 9: 54; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 258; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 147; and John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospels: John* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989), 85.

[72]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 147.

[73]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 217.

which confronts man in Jesus."[74] Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well was in opposition to the culturally correct thinking prevalent among the Jews of his time.[75]

Not only did the Jews avoid dealing with the Samaritans, they also refrained from speaking with women in public. The Jews considered Samaritan women to be in a perpetual state of being ceremonially unclean. Borchert points out that Jewish men were prohibited from speaking to their own wives in public. Yet Jesus crossed these ethnic and gender barriers by asking the woman for a drink of water. It appears that the woman came to the well by herself. Women generally came to the well in groups to draw water either earlier or later in the day to avoid the heat of the sun. Not only did they enjoy the social aspects of carrying out this necessary task together, traveling as a group provided better security. Carson suggests that perhaps the woman's shame related to her failed marriages and her current immoral relationship (John 4:16-18) might have created her desire to be alone.

Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman covers two major topics: the living water of eternal life that Jesus is offering to her and the kind of worship sought by the Father.[76] Both of these topics are germane to the scope of Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. The conversation begins with Jesus' request of the woman for a drink of water from the well. If it is assumed that the sixth hour means that the time of the encounter was noon, it is understandable that Jesus would be weary from the long

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[74]Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 179. Bultmann redacts the passage under consideration by dividing it into sections that were in fact a part of the dialogue with the woman and those that were inserted by the evangelist for his purposes. On the other hand, Carson points to the unity of the passage stating that the entire narrative hangs cohesively together. See Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 214-33.

[75]Borchert, *John 1-11*, 198-200. The evangelist may have intended an intentional contrast between the respected Jewish leader, Nicodemus, in John 3 with this Samaritan woman in John 4. Nicodemus was an educated man who was well connected, powerful, and respected. He had been trained in orthodox Judaism and as a religious leader. By contrast, the Samaritan woman was uneducated, without influence, and a moral outcast. The contrast could have hardly been greater between the two. Yet both of them needed Jesus and he extended grace to each of them. See Phillips, *Exploring the Gospels: John*, 83, and Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 216.

[76]Köstenberger, *John*, 148.

journey that he likely began around daybreak and thirsty due to traveling in the heat of the day.

The Samaritan woman was startled that this Jewish man would speak to her. The woman was cognizant of the chasm that separated her people from the Jews. In asking for a drink of water, he gave no regard for the notion that touching a vessel that had been handled by the Samaritan woman would bring defilement. Rather than being sullied by an unclean instrument, Jesus had the power to sanctify whatever he touched. Carson notes that while the verb *sunchrasthai* can mean "to associate with," it is, however, more commonly translated as "to use together with."[77]

Jesus told the woman that he could provide living water for her, a phrase with a double meaning. It could be interpreted as a reference to moving water such as water that comes from a spring. The woman apparently assumed that Jesus had a spring in mind. Morris points out that living water flows. This is a metaphor of the new life that Christ gives to all who believe. This Jewish stranger did not have a bucket or a rope. How could he provide any water from the well, much less water from a spring or other flowing sources? The region of Samaria was prone to prolonged periods of drought. Having a source of water in that area of the world was a life or death issue. The living water that Jesus offers is a well of water that springs from within him providing eternal life (John 4:14).[78] Bultmann argues that "life-giving water" is the best translation here.[79] An obvious Old Testament reference that uses the same metaphors is Jeremiah 1:13, "For My people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water." In reflecting on this text, Carson states,

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[77]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 218.

[78]Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 254.

[79]Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 186.

They have rejected the fresh, 'running' supply of God and his faithful goodness, choosing instead the stagnant waters of cisterns they themselves have prepared, discovering even then that their cisterns were cracked, and leaving them with nothing to sustain life and blessing. . . . In this chapter, the water is the satisfying eternal life mediated by the Spirit that only Jesus, the Messiah and the Saviour [sic] of the world can provide.[80]

Beasley-Murray states that the meaning of this water that Christ offers is the eternal life given through the work of the Holy Spirit provided by the finished work of Christ.[81]

The woman asked Jesus about the source of this living water. During this discussion, the woman asked Jesus a rhetorical question. She asked, "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" The use of the particle *mē* implies that she expected a negative response from Jesus.[82] Tenney suggests that the woman's reference to Jacob as "our father" was an attempt to underscore the importance of her race to this Jewish man.[83] The woman thought that surely this Jewish man did not consider himself to be greater than Jacob. Borchert notes,

The woman's question, therefore of whether Jesus was greater than their ancestor Jacob, who provided the historic well, raised the issue of the common ancestry of Jew and Samaritan. The Greek ironically expects a negative answer. But the question provided the perfect opening for Jesus to press his evangelistic message to the woman.[84]

Morris points out that an underlying aspect of this narrative is the way the Samaritan woman persistently attempts to deflect and evade the issues raised by Jesus in their conversation.[85] Jesus told her that he could give her the living water of eternal life. The woman again attempts to change the focus of their discussion. Jesus refused to be drawn into a fruitless conversation about their common ancestor, but rather drew the dialogue back to the primary issue of finding fulfillment and satisfaction in Christ. While

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[80]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 219.

[81]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 60.

[82]Köstenberger, *John*, 151.

[83]Merrill C. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 55.

[84]Borchert, *John 1-11*, 204.

[85]Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 254.

the woman's attention was on the water that came from the well, Jesus was interested in spiritual water that gives eternal life. Borchert points out that Jesus demonstrates how this living water is not only for the Jews, but also for the Samaritans.

The woman was caught off guard when Jesus related her need for this spiritual water to her sinfulness. He instructed her to find her husband and then come back to him. According to the customs of the day, a man would not speak with a woman in public unless her husband was present. The question pushed the woman to exam her spiritual needs.[86] She attempted to deflect this question by giving a response that was only partially true. She apparently intended to end this conversation that addressed a sensitive and private area of her life with her declaration that she has no husband, yet Jesus was unwilling to allow her to avoid the issue of her sinful behavior, knowing it was necessary for her to confront her sin if she was to receive this living water that Jesus was offering. Her life was marked by a succession of failed beginnings and shattered hopes. After being involved in five unsuccessful marriages, she had rejected the ritual in favor of living with yet another man, this time outside of the marriage commitment. Köstenberger suggests that the text could be translated as five men rather than five husbands since *anēr* may be translated as either man or husband. If that is the case, Jesus is telling the woman that she has been with five men and the one she is now with is not her husband. Such a rendering clearly points to the immoral sexual behavior of the woman.[87]

The Samaritan woman apparently recognized the supernatural aspect of Jesus' knowledge as she referred to him as a prophet. The woman acknowledged the revelation of Jesus in their conversation surpassed human understanding. Carson argues, "The word 'prophet' was used to refer to a wide range of 'gifted' people, and at this point may not, in the woman's mind, denote a full-orbed Old Testament prophet, let alone a messianic

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[86]Tenney, *The Gospel of John*, 55.

[87]Köstenberger, *John*, 152-53.

figure."[88] But at the very least, the woman understood that Jesus possessed supernatural knowledge of secret things hidden from others.[89]

Confronted with her sin and Jesus' probing question, the woman makes yet another attempt to steer the conversation in a different direction. She brought up the long-standing theological debate between the Jews and Samaritans concerning temple worship in an effort to steer Jesus away from the sin question that embarrassed her. Carson points out that it is always easier to discuss theology than it is to deal with personal conviction.[90] If this deflection had been successful, the woman would have avoided facing her sin. Believers should avoid falling into arguments about where to worship and other second order issues when sharing the gospel. The point is never to win an argument, but rather to direct people to the transforming power of the gospel in Christ. This is the mission of the church that Christ entrusted to his followers. Jesus turned the conversation from a discussion about the place of worship to the nature of true worship. The issue was not a question of which ethnic group had an inside track on the proper relationship with God, but rather an understanding that the Messiah offers the life-giving water of eternal life to all who receive him. Jesus defined authentic worship as worshiping in spirit and truth. Honest worshipers must be willing to deal openly and honestly with God and their sins in worship. God is spirit; he does not have a material existence limited to human flesh. Those who worship God must worship him in spirit and truth. Borchert states,

> No one genuinely knows God except through some form of revelatory encounter, but such encounters should be enlightened through written or oral articulations in order that such encounters become defined to humans and not remain subjective experiences. It is in the combination of those two elements that one can sense the point being made here, namely, that acceptable worship involves both spirit and truth(fullness).[91]

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[88]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 221.

[89]Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 187-88.

[90]Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 221.

[91]Borchert, *John 1-11*, 208.

Köstenberger states, "No matter how ceremonially elaborate, emotionally rousing, or sermonically eloquent, worship that is not offered from a proper understanding of who God is falls short."[92] The woman admits her lack of understanding as well as her longing to understand. She acknowledges that the Messiah is coming and that he will lead earnest seekers into the truth (John 4:26), but the nature of her question reveals that she has not yet understood that the one with whom she speaks is the Messiah. At this point in the dialogue, Jesus openly reveals to the woman that he is the Messiah. By showing the woman the truth of her own situation, she comes to understand that he is the anointed one who reveals the truth about God.

In the midst of this ethnic controversy about worship, Jesus states clearly that salvation is from the Jews. God blessed Abraham and his descendants so that they would be a blessing to all people groups (Gen 12:3). Isaiah wrote that Israel would be a light to the nations (Is 49:6). In Jesus, the Messiah, these prophecies were fulfilled. Salvation is from the Jews, but was never intended to be only for the Jews. Köstenberger notes, "It was precisely the fact that the Jews wanted to keep God's gifts to themselves that drew God's judgment."[93] The reach of God's salvation was always global in nature.

After her conversation with Jesus, the woman left her water pot at the well and went back to town telling the people about Jesus and her dialogue with him. The Samaritans from the village returned with the woman to meet Jesus. Many of the Samaritans believed in this Jewish man because of the testimony of the woman. She offered a living witness to her neighbors about the transforming power of Christ (John 4:40). However, hearing a testimony of one's encounter with Christ is always secondary to a direct, personal encounter with Jesus. The people of the village were drawn to Jesus by the testimony of the woman, but when they heard Jesus for themselves they drew their

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[92]Köstenberger, *John*, 156.

[93]Ibid.

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own conclusions.[94] Jesus spent two more days with the Samaritans. The ensuing result

was that they believed no longer because of the testimony of the woman, but because

they heard Jesus and came to understand that he really is the Savior of the world. Jesus

fulfilled the prophesy of Isaiah 49:6, proving to be a light to the nations. Tenney notes,

> These few verses [39-42] indicate two necessary and interrelated bases for belief:
> (1) the testimony of others and (2) personal contact with Jesus. The woman's
> witness opened the way to him for the villagers. If he could penetrate the shell of
> her materialism and present a message that would transform her, the Samaritans also
> could believe that he might be the Messiah.[95]

By acknowledging Jesus as the Savior of the world, the Samaritans affirmed the truth that

salvation comes from the Jews, but they also demonstrated by their faith the global scope

of God's plan for salvation through Jesus. It appears that Jesus' mission to the Samaritans

recorded in this text set the stage for the mission of the early church to this ethnic group.

The Samaritan mission of the early church built on the encounter that Jesus had with the

Samaritan woman.[96]

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus encounters a teacher of the law, which leads to a

soteriological discussion. The lawyer asks Jesus what action is necessary for a person to

inherit eternal life. Darrell Bock argues that eternal life is an eschatological reward for

the righteous rather than the rejection of the unholy.[97] According to the traditions of New

Testament period, teachers sat and students stood as an act of courtesy and respect for the

teacher. The lawyer stood respectfully to address Jesus, but Luke tells the reader that the

lawyer's intent was less than honorable. The central focus of the question is on the

practice of God's Word. The lawyer asked what action was required to inherit eternal

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[94]Köstenberger, *John*, 164.

[95]Tenney, *The Gospel of John*, 58.

[96]Köstenberger, *John*, 164-65.

[97]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1023.

life.[98] The purpose for the question was to put Jesus to the test in an attempt to entrap

him. David Garland writes, "The Pharisees, lawyers, and rulers as a class are portrayed as

having a proclivity to put Jesus on trial and to justify themselves (16:15) rather than God

(7:29)."[99] His intent is not to follow Jesus, but rather to discredit him. The lawyer's aim

was to win the approval of the crowd while discrediting Jesus at the same time. Jesus'

response to the question with a question about the law distinguishes him as a teacher who

values his Jewish heritage rather than a radical who is intent on denying the religious

traditions of his day.[100] Jesus engaged in a pattern of a challenge followed by a response,

a method he used often in disputes with those who opposed him in the Gospels. He

answered the lawyer's question with a counter question. In this case, as Esler notes, the

tenor of Jesus' response to the questioner is "sharp and dismissive."[101] Jesus effectively

turned the tables on the one seeking to trap him, turning the interrogator into the one who

was being questioned. Jesus responds by pointing the lawyer to what the law says. The

purpose of the law is to reveal one's sinfulness and to point to the need for a savior.

The lawyer answered by quoting the first part of the *Shema*. "He answered:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and

with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). The lawyer's response

is a quote from Deuteronomy. It states, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with

all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5). In his commentary on this text,

Christensen argues that in some respects the entire book of Deuteronomy is built on the

foundation of loving God in this way.[102] Living a life of obedience to God involves

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[98]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 425.

[99]David E. Garland, *Luke*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 437.

[100]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1024.

[101]Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict," 333.

[102]Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word, 1991), 143.

loving him with every aspect of one's being. In Old Testament thought, the heart is viewed as the rational part of humanity rather than an organ of the body. The soul involves the will and includes mental and emotional abilities. Loving God with all of one's might requires self-discipline and commitment. Loving God involves one's entire being, devoting everything to God alone to the exclusion of any rival.[103] Loving God in this way is the only adequate human response to God.[104] The designations of heart, soul, and strength were never meant to be compartmentalized as distinct acts. Rather, the focus is on complete solitary devotion to God.[105] Jesus is reinforcing the truth expressed in Deuteronomy that loving God requires a full response of the whole person.

Luke 10:27, along with the parallel texts in Matthew 22:37-39 and Mark 12:29-31,[106] merged Deuteronomy 6:5 with a portion of Leviticus 19:18, which states, "Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." Mark Rooker points out that the command to love your neighbor as yourself is central to understanding the law.[107] The logical connection between these two passages is that loving God is demonstrated in loving others.[108] It is impossible to conceive how people can truly love God apart from also

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[103]Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 351.

[104]Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 63.

[105]S. Dean McBride, "The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5," *Interpretation* (1973): 304.

[106]In the Lucan text the lawyer is the one who combines Deut 6:5 with Lev 19:18 while Matt 22:37-39 and Mark 12:29-31 quote Jesus as the source of these words. It is likely that Jesus taught similar lessons to different audiences during his public ministry. Perhaps the lawyer had heard of Jesus speak these words or had heard accounts of this message from others. Brooks notes that while there is some debate as to whether Jesus was the first to link these two commands. He writes, "Even if a few others before or during the time of Jesus saw the interrelationship of the commands to love God and love others, no one else put such great emphasis on the combination and made it essential." James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 198.

[107]Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 3A (Nashville: B & H, 2000), 258-59.

[108]Garland, *Luke*, 438.

loving their neighbors. James Brooks states, "Love for God is expressed by loving others."[109] That includes those from every people group on the earth. The lawyer, however, appears intent on limiting the scope of the notion of loving his neighbor. Garland notes,

> One detects, it seems, a desire to limit the scope of this command, who might qualify as neighbor, to validate the human proclivity to dislike the "other" in such statements as these. . . Jesus response in this parable challenges the assumption that the pious, observant, full-pedigree Jew gets to determine who falls into the category of enemy or those who oppose God and need not be loved.[110]

Jesus commended the lawyer for his answer, telling him if he did these things he would live. Having knowledge of the truth about God and what he requires is inadequate if it is not obediently and consistently put into practice. Jesus challenged the lawyer to not only know the truth, but to also do the truth.[111] Jesus is more interested in what people actually do than what they understand they must do. Esler states, "This is a closure with a sting, since it suggests that the lawyer may not yet be fulfilling these commandments and may not have life."[112] Knowing the Scriptures and what they teach is not necessarily evidence that a person genuinely knows God.

Since his initial encounter with Jesus did not go well from his point of view, the teacher of the law posed a second question of Jesus in an effort to vindicate himself. He asked Jesus in Luke 10:29, "Who is my neighbor?" Not only does the lawyer hope to overcome the embarrassment of the previous dialogue, but he also wants to present himself as a righteous man. His expectation is that Jesus' response will include his relatives and friends. Like most people, he has been faithful in loving such people. Apparently the teacher of the law is attempting to determine the minimum standard of

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[109]James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 198.

[110]Garland, *Luke*, 438.

[111]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1027.

[112]Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict," 333.

compliance to the commands. Jesus, however, recognizing that partial obedience is disobedience, requires complete obedience.[113] The lawyer, desiring to know the limits of this command, wants to be justified in withholding love from those who do not qualify as his neighbor.[114]

Jesus answers the question by telling a story about a man who traveled down from Jerusalem on his way to Jericho and encountered a band of robbers who beat him, stole his clothing and belongings, and left him for dead. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends 3,600 feet in a stretch of just seventeen miles. Josephus points out the dangers of robbers along the roads leading to and from Jerusalem.[115] The road was rocky, surrounded by the desert and caves that served as effective hiding places for robbers as they waited for their prey.[116] The setting of this story and its dangers was familiar to the crowd with whom Jesus spoke.

In Luke 10:31, Jesus states, "A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side." Apparently the priest had been in Jerusalem, perhaps having concluded a period of service in the temple. He may have been returning to his home. Jericho was home to the second largest population of priests in the region. When he saw the man, he deliberately passed by on the other side of the road, avoiding the victim of the beating, choosing not to get involved. The crowd likely considered this priest to be a man of faith that should be revered. The priest may have feared that the man was already dead. According to Jewish law, if a person came into contact with a dead man, he would be ceremonially unclean for seven days. Whatever his

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[113]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1028.

[114]There is some debate as to the definition of neighbor. In Lev 19:17-18 refers to a neighbor as a brother or members of the Israelite community. This definition places limits on the scope of what it means to love your neighbor. Lev 19:33-34, however expands this definition to include people from other ethnic groups who lived among the Israelites, reminding the Hebrews that they were once foreigners living in Egypt.

[115]Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.12.2, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 481.

[116]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1029.

reasons were, the point of the story is that he callously left the man who needed help by the side of the road showing no love for him.

Next, a Levite came upon the man who had been beaten, robbed, stripped, and left for dead by the side of the road. Like the priest before him, the Levite was considered to be a respected religious leader in the Jewish community. Levites assisted the priests in the temple rituals, doing the less important tasks.[117] He, too, passed by on the other side of the road, presumably for the same reasons as the priest. The story points out the disappointment in these religious leaders who failed to practice the prescriptions of the Scriptures, bringing dishonor on their religious institution and the people that they were supposed to serve.

As the story moves toward its climatic conclusion, the Jewish audience is stunned by the arrival of the compassionate Samaritan who made every effort to help the victim without hesitation (Luke 10:33-35). To grasp the full impact of the Samaritan's insertion into the parable, it is helpful to interpret it in the context of the hostile ethnic conflicts between the Jews and Samaritans. These groups hated each other. The Jews identified Samaritans as outsiders who were unworthy to enjoy the blessings of being their neighbors. The Samaritan man cleaned and bandaged the wounded man's injuries, put the man on his animal, and carried him to shelter where he could recover from the beating. Furthermore, the Samaritan paid for the wounded man's care and promised that he would reimburse any additional charges. The Samaritan placed no restrictions on the amount of money to be used in providing for the wounded man. Being a neighbor to the injured party was risky for the Samaritan. Attending to the needs of this victim of violence required time, effort, and money. Being a neighbor involves both risk and cost.[118]

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[117]Ibid., 1031.

[118]Garland, *Luke*, 444-45.

Jesus looked at the teacher of the law and asked him of the three men which one proved to be a neighbor? The lawyer's question focused on what was required of others to qualify as a neighbor. Jesus' response focused on what was required of the lawyer to be a neighbor to others. The love for neighbors from Jesus' perspective transcends all boundaries and has no limits.[119]

The lawyer in the narrative refuses to acknowledge the hero of the story as a Samaritan, but rather refers to him as "the one who showed mercy to him" (Luke 10:37). His deep-rooted pride and prejudice will not allow him to acknowledge that the Samaritan proved himself to be the neighbor. Garland states, "A neighbor is someone who acts with compassion and mercy to assist someone in need."[120] The central truth of this passage is that it is impossible to fully love God while placing limits on loving neighbors. The scope of Jesus' definition of neighbor extends to all human beings, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, nationality, or socioeconomic status. Jesus concludes by telling the lawyer to go and act as the Samaritan did.

Loving God and loving one's neighbor are expressions of the same divine compulsion. Love for God always transforms believers' relationships with others.[121] It is impossible to love God fully without loving other humans without restrictions. By selecting the Samaritan to demonstrate what it means to be a neighbor, Jesus demonstrated that the command to love neighbors extends to any ethnic group. This definition of being a neighbor required a paradigm shift in the thinking of the Jewish establishment. They were challenged to accept a new worldview that Jesus embraced.[122]

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[119]Stephen Gary Crouse, "Nurturing Christians through Discipleship Groups at North Greenville College, Tigerville, South Carolina" (D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 20.

[120]Garland, *Luke*, 446.

[121]Glen G. Scorgie, "Overview of Christian Spirituality" in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 30.

[122]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 427.

The Ethnic Diversity of Churches in the New Testament

The New Testament bears witness of ethnic diversity among some of the local churches that were established as a result of the preaching of the apostles and other leaders in the early church. When persecution of those who followed Christ broke out following the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), many believers were driven from Jerusalem. Philip, one of the seven men set apart by the apostles to attend to the needs of widows (Acts 6:5), headed to Samaria where he preached the gospel resulting in a mighty awakening. Peter's encounter with the Gentiles at Cornelius' home presents evidence of further ethnic expansion of the gospel of Christ (Acts 10:1-11:18). A group of ethnically diverse leaders established the church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-20), offering verification of the expanding nature of multiethnic development among the early churches. In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, he clearly states that Christ has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles (Eph 2:14). These four events had a profound impact on the early church and the expansion of the gospel.

The Samaritan Revival

The region of Samaria was avoided by devout Jews of the first century due to their distaste for the Samaritans. As discussed previously the Samaritans developed a competing worship tradition, focusing on their own version of the Pentateuch and worshiped at a temple they constructed on Mount Gerizim to rival the Jerusalem temple. They rejected the prophets and the writings of the Jewish Scriptures. The Jews harbored contempt for the Samaritans, considering them to be half-breeds and religious heretics. Jesus crossed these cultural distinctions by traveling through Samaria where he encountered the woman at the well near Sychar and revealed himself as the Messiah. His ministry among the Samaritans laid the foundation for the spiritual awakening that occurred following the persecution of the church and the scattering of Jewish believers that ensued.

Philip was the human instrument used by the Holy Spirit to share the gospel among the Samaritans. Philip is first mentioned in the New Testament in Acts 6:5 where he is listed among the seven men who were set apart by the apostles to attend to the needs of the widows of both Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews, insuring they all received the appropriate distribution of food and supplies.[123] John Stott refers to this issue as a satanic attack. The devil's attempts to silence Christianity through persecution (Acts 3:1-4:31) and internal corruption (Acts 5:1-11) had already failed. His new strategy was to attempt to distract the apostles from their primary tasks of the ministry of the Word and prayer by forcing them to focus on administrative matters.[124]

As the disciples of the Lord were increasing in number, some of the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews that several of their widows were being neglected in regard to the daily distribution of food. This oversight was likely unintentional. The rapid growth of the church in Jerusalem created some administrative struggles. Apparently the Hebraic Jews were in charge of the distribution. Due to language and cultural issues, they could have missed some of the Hellenist widows, not knowing their needs.[125] While the church consisted exclusively of Jews at this point, it contained some elements of diversity. The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews who likely returned to Jerusalem following the diaspora. Naturally they incorporated not only the Greek language but many Greek customs as well.[126] The number of Hellenist widows could have been substantial. They may have been attracted to the church because of its benevolent practices.[127]

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[123]Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), 144-45.

[124]John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 120.

[125]Polhill, *Acts*, 179.

[126]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 120-21.

[127]Polhill, *Acts*, 179.

The apostles received this criticism with grace and Christian concern, but they did not want to neglect their devotion to prayer and the preaching of God's Word. The apostles demonstrated wise leadership by appointing Hellenistic Jews to address the food distribution issue.[128] Therefore, they chose seven reputable men who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to insure that all the widows received the food they needed. Since the seven were called by Greek names, it is most likely that all seven were Hellenists.

Following Stephen's martyrdom recorded in Acts 7, a severe persecution broke out against the Jerusalem church, resulting in a scattering of believers across Judea and Samaria. The enemies of the gospel sought to silence those who followed Christ, but the persecution, however, launched an unprecedented expansion of the gospel. All, with the exception of the apostles, were scattered across Judea and Samaria. Those who were scattered by the persecution preached the gospel wherever they went.[129] Philip took the gospel to a city in Samaria. Stott notes,

> It is hard for us to conceive the boldness of the step Philip took in preaching the gospel to Samaritans. For the hostility between the Jews and Samaritans had lasted a thousand years. It began with the breakup of the monarchy in the tenth century BC when ten tribes defected, making Samaria their capital, and two tribes remained loyal to Jerusalem. It became steadily worse when Samaria was captured by Assyria in 722 BC, thousands of its inhabitants were deported, and the country was re-populated by foreigners. In the sixth century BC, when the Jews returned to their land, they refused the help of the Samaritans in rebuilding their temple. Not until the fourth century BC, however, did the Samaritan schism harden, with the building of their rival temple on Mount Gerizim and their repudiation of all Old Testament Scriptures except the Pentateuch. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews as hybrids in both race and religion, as both heretics and schismatics.[130]

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[128]Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 312. Since these seven men had Greek names, Bock assumes they were all Hellenist Jews, members of the same group that lodged the complaint. Stott acknowledges this point but notes that such a conclusion is speculative. He argues that it would have been best to appoint both Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews for the task of distributing the food insuring that the issue would be handled in a fair way to everyone's satisfaction. See Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 122. Polhill supports Bock's position due to the nature of the complaint and the fact that all seven men are called by Greek names. See Polhill, *Acts*, 181.

[129]Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 282.

[130]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 147.

The Lord himself likely planted the seeds of this spiritual awakening in Samaria as a result of his visit to Sychar (John 4:1-42). As Philip proclaimed the message of the Messiah, the people paid close attention to his words. Signs and wonders including casting out demons and healing the sick marked Philip's ministry among the Samaritans. While the signs and wonders pointed to the power of God and the legitimacy of Philip's message, it was the transforming power of the gospel that changed lives. The gospel overcame human prejudices and ethnic differences. Polhill states, "The gospel is the great equalizer."[131] The city was filled with joy as people responded to Philip's preaching of the gospel. The Holy Spirit's presence demonstrated that the gospel is for all ethnicities, not just the Jews.[132]

When the apostles heard of the Samaritan's response to the gospel, they sent Peter and John to Samaria to investigate. The Scriptures do not reveal the motives of the apostles in sending Peter and John on this journey. Jesus told his followers that they would be witnesses in Samaria prior to his ascension (Acts 1:8), yet the Samaritans' response to the gospel was still likely a surprise to the Jews. Howard Marshall notes that the apostles in Acts carefully examined new advances of the gospel.[133] Stott states, "It was particularly appropriate that one of them was John, since Luke describes him in his gospel as wanting on one occasion to call fire down from heaven to consume a Samaritan city." Regardless of the motives in sending Peter and John, they quickly endorsed the missionary activity among the Samaritans on behalf of the apostles.[134] These two apostles prayed for the Samaritan believers, laying their hands on them as they interceded on the

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[131]Polhill, *Acts*, 215.

[132]Deymaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 17.

[133]Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 150.

[134]Witherington assumes Peter and John were sent to check out the report that the Samaritans had received the gospel. See Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 285. Polhill, on the other hand, argues that the text indicates that Peter and John endorsed the activity of the Holy Spirit among the Samaritans on behalf of the apostles. See Polhill, *Acts*, 217. In any case, Peter and John built upon the foundation established by Philip, validating Philip's work among the Samaritans.

new converts' behalf that they might receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit fell on the Samaritan believers just as he did on Jewish believers at Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter and John worked in cooperation with Philip in the mission to the Samaritans.[135] Peter and John continued in the mission of sharing the gospel with the Samaritans for an unspecified period of time, preaching the good news in many of the Samaritan villages (Acts 8:25).

The significance of the gospel's expansion to the Samaritans is underscored by the way that they received the Holy Spirit. Marshall notes the extraordinary nature of Acts 8:16 where it is stated that while the Samaritans had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, they had not yet received the Holy Spirit.[136] In an earlier sermon, Peter proclaimed that those who repent and are baptized in Jesus' name for the forgiveness of sin would receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). How could it be that the Samaritans had received Christ and been baptized without having received the Holy Spirit? Stott argues that the New Testament teaches that people receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when they receive Christ and are baptized. The delayed gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 8 magnifies the importance of the Samaritans' conversion. For the first time the gospel was being openly proclaimed in Samaria. These Samaritans were the first converts to Christianity outside of Judaism. The schism that had separated the Jews and the Samaritans for hundreds of years was coming to an end. This significant advancement of the gospel sparked a one-time event. The delay of the Spirit's coming to the Samaritans was temporary. As Peter and John prayed laying their hands on the Samaritans, the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he had on the Jewish believers. The wall of separation that had divided the Jews and Samaritans was abolished. Both Jews and Samaritans were among the redeemed community that comprised the people of God without distinction. The

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[135]Whitherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 287.

[136]Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 157.

unprecedented nature of this event required the unique process by which the narrative unfolded.[137]

Philip's faithful obedience to the Lord continued as he was led by the Spirit to leave the awakening taking place among the Samaritans in order to share the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch who was returning to Africa after traveling to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. Kush was the Old Testament name given to the region south of Egypt that also stretched to the Red Sea, including Ethiopia. This territory was often referred to as the ends of the earth.[138] Daniel Hayes argues that the Greeks referred to all black people south of Egypt as Ethiopian.[139] Ben Witherington states, "It is perhaps crucial at this point to note that in ancient Greek historiographical works there was considerable interest in Ethiopia and Ethiopians precisely because of their ethnic and racially distinctive features."[140] The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53 when Philip approached his chariot. Philip shared the gospel from the Scriptures leading the eunuch to faith in Christ. The gospel had expanded not only to the Samaritans, but also to the continent of Africa, crossing ethnic and racial barriers.

Peter and Cornelius

Peter's encounter with Cornelius in Acts 10:1-11:18 delineates the further expansion of the gospel. Cornelius is the first Gentile, neither Jew nor Samaritan, convert to Christianity recorded in the book of Acts. Stott notes that Peter played a major role in

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[137]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 150-59. Stott also addresses the various theories of a two-stage initiation into the Christian faith held by Catholics and Pentecostals versus a one-stage initiation held by other Protestants. Catholics believe that baptism is the first stage of initiation into the Christian faith and that confirmation is the second stage while Pentecostals hold that conversion and regeneration is the first stage and baptism in or of the Spirit is the second stage. Stott argues that the New Testament teaches a one-stage initiation that includes repentance, belief, baptism, and the receiving of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. See Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 151-59.

[138]David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2003), 17-18.

[139]J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 35.

[140]Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 290.

the gospel's expansion beyond the confines of Judaism.[141] Through this event Peter becomes convinced of God's intention to reach all people groups with the message of the gospel. Embracing the mission to the Gentiles was a difficult task for Jewish believers. This story is the longest narrative contained in the book of Acts signifying its importance to the expanding mission of the church.[142]

Cornelius was a centurion in what was known as the Italian regiment of the Roman army. He had 100 soldiers under his command as a military leader. The fact that centurions are presented auspiciously in the New Testament may be indicative of some success of the mission of the church among military men in the first century.[143] Cornelius lived in Caesarea, a Hellenistic city inhabited primarily by Gentiles. The city was named for Caesar Augustus and served as the Roman capital of the Judean province. The Jews respected Cornelius. He is described as a devout man who feared God and had led his family to be religious. He gave generously to help meet the needs of the poor and he was devoted to prayer (Acts 10:2). While respected by the Jews, he remained an outsider because he was a Gentile, excluded from God's covenant with Israel.[144] Even though Gentiles were the primary inhabitants of the city, a substantial minority Jewish population also dwelt there. Polhill points out that there was significant ethnical tension between the two groups in the city. He states, "It was fitting that it should be the place where Peter came to terms with his own prejudices and realized that human barriers have no place with the God who 'does not show favoritism.'"[145]

God's reason for blessing Abraham and his descendants was so that they would in turn bless others. Stott notes,

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[141]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 181.

[142]Polhill, *Acts*, 249-50.

[143]Ibid., 251.

[144]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 185.

[145]Polhill, *Acts*, 252.

The tragedy was that Israel twisted the doctrine of election into one of favouritism [sic], became filled with racial pride and hatred, despised Gentiles as "dogs", [sic] and developed traditions which kept them apart. No orthodox Jew would ever enter the home of a Gentile, even a God-fearer, or invite such into his home (see verse 28).[146]

This deep-rooted prejudice had to be addressed by Jewish Christians prior to the admission of Gentiles into the Christian church if the Gentiles were to be accepted on equal terms. An angel of the Lord appeared to Cornelius in a vision and told him to send some of his servants to find Peter and bring him to Cornelius. While Cornelius' men were in route, Peter went up on the flat roof of Simon the tanner's home to pray. Peter was hungry and wanted something to eat. As a meal was being prepared, Peter had a vision from the Lord. In the vision a sheet fell from heaven. On the sheet were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds. Some were clean according to Jewish dietary laws while others were unclean. Peter was told by a voice to kill and eat. He responded that he had never eaten anything that was ritually unclean. Acts 10:15 states, "Again, a second time, a voice said to him, 'What God has made clean, you must not call common.'" The experience happened a third time to Peter in the vision. Then the sheet and everything on it returned to heaven. The vision confused Peter and as he pondered what it might mean, Cornelius' men arrived. When Peter went to meet the delegation, they told him about Cornelius' vision. The Lord was already at work in Peter's life, breaking down the barriers of his prejudice. He offered lodging and hospitality to these uncircumcised Gentiles before departing with them to meet Cornelius.

The next day Peter left with Cornelius' delegation for Caesarea, arriving the following day. Cornelius was expecting them. He had called not only his household, but also his relatives and close friends along with their families. Peter broke the ceremonial law by entering the home of a Gentile. Stott points out, "But now Peter felt at liberty to break this traditional taboo and enter Cornelius' house, because God had shown him that

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[146]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 185.

no human being was unclean in his sight."[147] Cornelius shared his vision with Peter. He thanked Peter for coming, acknowledging that they were all in the presence of God. He told Peter that everyone in attendance was eager to hear everything the Lord had commanded Peter to say.

Peter began by sharing all that he had learned through his experiences over the last few days. He admitted that he had learned that God shows no preferentialism. In his divine judgment there is no injustice or favoritism. Everyone who believes in Christ receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43). This "everyone" includes people of every ethnic group. Since God had accepted the Gentile believers, the church must also accept them. As Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit descended to all who heard Peter's message. The Jewish believers who accompanied Peter from Joppa were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on these uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter asked if anyone had the right to withhold baptism from these Gentiles who had received the Holy Spirit just as the Jewish believers had. He commanded the new believers to be baptized in the name of Jesus.

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, he was met with criticism from those who emphasized the importance of circumcision because of his visit to Cornelius' home, charging that he visited the Gentiles and ate with them. Peter squelched their criticism by telling them about Cornelius' vision as well as his own vision. He shared how the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as the Jewish believers had. For Peter, to reject the legitimacy of the Gentiles conversion was paramount to rejecting the work of God. Peter's argument silenced the critics. Through this experience, Peter became convinced that the gospel was for all people. Stott states, "The principle subject of this chapter is not so much the conversion of Cornelius as the conversion of Peter."[148]

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[147]Ibid., 189.

[148]Ibid., 186.

The Church at Antioch

The believers who were scattered because of the persecution after Stephen's martyrdom traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. These believers preached the gospel of Christ everywhere they went, but their close association with the Jews limited the gospel's expansion to their own ethnic group (Acts 11:19). The gospel was likely planted in North Africa and Cyprus many years before Barnabas and Saul helped to establish the church at Antioch. Men from Cyrene in Africa and Cyprus traveled to Antioch sharing the gospel, not only with the Jews, but also with the Gentiles.[149] Frank Stagg points out that Luke is concerned not only with the expansion of the gospel geographically, but also the extension of the gospel across ethnic and national barriers.[150] Antioch was a city of prominence in the Roman Empire. Since 64 BC, it had served as the capital of the Roman province of Syria. With an approximate population of 250,000 residents, it was the third largest city in the Empire exceeded only by Rome and Alexandria.[151] David Hesselgrave notes that the world that Paul encountered in the first century was much like the world of today. He states,

> There were considerable intercultural flow of peoples of different races and backgrounds. There was widespread bankruptcy of ideas and ideals. And there was a group of people scattered throughout the Roman Empire who, by virtue of their contact with or commitment to Jewish monotheistic and ethical ideas, constituted a prepared audience for the gospel.[152]

Unnamed evangelists planted the church in Antioch. Luke simply referred to them as men of Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). They were most likely Hellenist

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[149]There is some debate among scholars as whether the word "Gentiles" should be used or "Hellenists" in this passage. Kistemaker notes, "The problem stems from a variant in the text: the word for "Greeks" is *Hellēnas* and that for "Hellenists" is *Hellēnistas*, The problem of the variant texts is reflected in translations, which try to convey the significance of the underlying Greek word." See Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 418.

[150]Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman, 1955), 124-25.

[151]Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 71.

[152]David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 45.

Jews.[153] A great number of Gentiles responded to the gospel message through the work of the church at Antioch. While it is impossible to determine the exact ethnic breakdown of the Antioch church, it is clear in Acts that both Jews and Gentiles were represented. When the Jerusalem church heard that Gentiles had received the gospel in Antioch, the leaders sent Barnabas to investigate this phenomenon. Barnabas was well suited for the task entrusted to him. He was a Greek-speaking Jew who was indigenous to Cyprus. He enthusiastically endorsed the efforts of the church at Antioch among the Gentiles, seeing the hand of God at work. Moreover, Barnabas joined with the church in their evangelism and disciple making efforts.

Kistemaker notes, "He [Barnabas] is amazed at the grace of God when he observes the harmony that exists between Jew and Gentile in the Antiochean church."[154] True to his nickname, Son of Encouragement, Barnabas gladly begins the task of encouraging these new believers by teaching them to follow Jesus and to remain faithful to him. Luke describes Barnabas as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24). He reports that many people were added to the church at Antioch. It became the sending church for Paul's missionary journeys. Antioch was the first city where Gentiles converted to the Christian faith in large numbers.[155]

Barnabas traveled to Tarsus looking for Saul, the former persecutor of the church, to help establish the church at Antioch. Saul was his Hebrew name, but he is most often referred to by his Greek name, Paul, in the Scriptures. Barnabas' focus was on the extension of Christ's kingdom. He willingly stepped into the background allowing Paul to become the leader of the missionary expansion of the gospel to the ends of the

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[153]Kistemaker, *Acts*, 419. Kistemaker suggest that Luke may have been one of these early Gentile converts to Christianity.

[154]Ibid., 421.

[155]Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 72. While some have referred to Antioch as the mother church of Gentile Christianity, Schnabel argues that Jerusalem is the mother church of the mission to the Gentiles.

earth.[156] Barnabas encouraged Paul to fulfill the calling on his life to be a missionary to the Gentiles. For an entire year, Paul and Barnabas met with the church and taught many people. It was in the multiethnic city of Antioch that the followers of Christ were first called Christians, reflecting their complete identification with Christ. The church was witnessing the fulfillment of Christ's Commission stated in Acts 1:8. The church had expanded from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria, and now to the Gentiles in Antioch.

The formation of the church at Antioch played a major role in the expanding mission of the church to reach Gentiles with the gospel. Marshall notes that it is appropriate to assume that the Gentile converts at Antioch remained uncircumcised. The population of Gentiles in the church was sizable.[157]

The Church at Ephesus

Multiethnic involvement is evident in many of the churches that Paul established on his missionary journeys. Paul's normal approach for evangelism upon entering a city was to preach at the synagogue where the Jewish population of the city congregated. Paul's missionary method, however, was not limited to the synagogues. Both Jews and Gentiles needed to be exposed to the gospel through personal conversations, corporate worship, and teaching settings. Schnabel states, "The oral proclamation of the gospel was a fundamental element of the missionary work of the early church."[158] Paul proclaimed the gospel wherever he had the opportunity to engage people through teaching, conversation, and discussion. It was Paul's desire to reach Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, and the educated and the uneducated. Therefore, he refused to allow issues of ethnicity, social class, culture, and gender to limit his evangelistic efforts.

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[156]Stagg, *The Book of Acts*, 126.

[157]Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 199.

[158]Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 34.

76

Ephesus was portrayed as the greatest city in Asia in the first century. It was a port city located at the mouth of the Cayster River in western Asia Minor. It was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire.[159] Because of the diversity of this port city and Paul's declared demolition of the wall that had divided Gentiles and Jews addressed in his letter to the Ephesians, the multiethnic aspect of this church fellowship cannot be denied.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul addresses the important issue of Christian unity. William Hendriksen states, "The apostle [Paul] knew by personal experience how difficult it was to weld Jew and Gentile into an organic unity, a unity of perfect equality."[160] Because of Christ's atoning work, sinners were drawn to God through the shed blood of the Messiah (Eph 2:13). Woo states,

> Through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the outsider (the Gentile) now experiences a transformation of spiritual status and identity. The vivid image of the Gentile brought near to God was completely foreign to Jewish thinking. It was already difficult enough for a Gentile to be brought into the covenant community of Israel.[161]

Paul maintained that the previous ethnic and religious distinctions that divided Jews from Gentiles were irrevocably demolished by the work of Christ on the cross. All people without any distinction to nationality or race who receive Christ are co-heirs with him and equal members of the body of Christ. Paul called the Gentile believers to remember that they were once without the Messiah, without hope, and without God (Eph 2:12). But because of the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Christ, those who were repentant, even though they had been dead in their sins, regardless of their ethnicity, now received eternal life in Christ. Ephesians 2:14 states, "For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility."

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[159]Charles H. Miller, "Ephesus," in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier et al. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 270.

[160]William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 127.

[161]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 16.

Christ not only reconciles sinners to God, he also reconciles believers to one another. Hendriksen suggests that Paul likely had the barrier in mind that separated the court of the Gentiles from the temple proper. An inscription was posted on this barrier declaring death to any non-Jew who entered past the barrier.[162] This dividing wall in the temple was firmly embedded in the hearts of both Jews and Gentiles. When the Messiah died, the Scriptures report that the veil in the Holy of Holies, which separated all worshipers from the holy area where the high priest could enter but one time a year, was torn from the top to the bottom (Matt 27:51). The symbolism of this event is clear. Through Jesus' sacrificial death, all who place their trust in Christ have direct access to God. The former barriers have been destroyed. Through Christ's atoning work, Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God and one another, making them into a unified body, putting the former hostility to death (Eph 2:16). They are fellow citizens and members of God's household (Eph 2:19). Schnabel notes,

> Paul would not permit that uncircumcised followers of Jesus, Gentiles who had come to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, would become second-class Christians. And Paul was convinced that any differentiation between or separation of Jewish believers and Gentile Christians contradicted the logic of the gospel and denies the efficacy of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross.[163]

Conclusion

Southern Baptist multiethnic churches exemplify the mission of the church as demonstrated in the Scriptures. The global scope of the mission of the church is evident from the beginning of the Old Testament. God created men and women in his image; therefore, all ethnicities are equally created in the image of God. In the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-3), God promised to bless Abraham and his descendants so they could in turn bless others. In Isaiah 49:6, the Lord declared that his servant would be a light to the nations extending the Lord's salvation to all people groups. Jesus faithfully

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[162]Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 132.

[163]Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 52.

fulfilled the role of God's servant. He stated in Luke 19:10 that his mission was to seek and to save the lost. His salvation extends not only to the lost sheep of Israel, but also to all ethnicities. When the Messiah gave the Great Commission to his disciples, he told them they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to make disciples of all people groups through evangelism and obedience to Christ's teachings (Matt 28:18-20). In Acts 1:8, the Lord told his disciples they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Jesus reached across the ethnic barriers that separated the Jews from the Samaritans when he encountered the woman at the well near Sychar. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus defined a neighbor as every person that one encounters.

All people need the salvation that God offers through Christ. After Stephen's martyrdom, persecution broke out against followers of Christ in Jerusalem resulting in a dispersion of believers throughout the region. These believers shared the gospel with everyone they encountered. At first, they confined their witness to fellow Jews. Philip however, shared the gospel openly with the Samaritans (Acts 8). A great number of the Samaritans received Christ and were given the gift of the Holy Spirit just like the Jewish believers. Philip also shared the gospel with an Ethiopian who carried his faith in Christ to his home in Africa. Peter shared the gospel with the Gentile Cornelius, a Roman centurion (Acts 10:1-11:18). Many Gentiles received Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Caesarea. Diverse believers from Cyprus in the Mediterranean and Cyrene in Africa established the church at Antioch. They preached the gospel not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. Many Gentiles responded to the gospel. Ephesus was another church with a diverse membership. In Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers, he clearly expressed that the Lord had demolished the wall of hostility that had existed between Jews and Gentiles, making the two into one family, the household of God. Multiethnic churches embody the mission of the church demonstrated in the Scriptures and reflect the unity in diversity that marked many of the New Testament churches.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORY OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY
AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

Introduction

The United States is a nation of immigrants. Globally, only a few territories are controlled by the descendants of those who originally inhabited the land. Elmer Clark distinguishes economic necessity, political oppression and conquest, and religious persecution as the driving historical forces behind migration.[1] As discussed previously, religious persecution drove early believers to migrate to new lands taking the gospel of Christ and the mission of the church with them. Ethnically diverse churches were a part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at its inception. The culture and religious structure of the South in the early 1800s laid the framework out of which the SBC was born. At the time of the formation of the Convention, Baptists in the United States were unified by a passion for the mission of the church to make disciples of all people groups. They were divided, however, over the national issue of slavery. Most people in the North desired to abolish slavery while the majority of southerners approved of the practice. When the SBC was established in May of 1845, the founders were committed to advance the cause of global missions. However, the Convention was also formed to provide an avenue for slaveholders to be appointed as missionaries. Issues of ethnicity, economics, and the morality of slavery also contributed to the founding of the fledgling Convention.

Baptists in the South established work among Mexicans in the southwestern portion of the United States in 1839 with the formation of the Baptist Church at Independence, Texas. Through this church, the vision was born to reach Mexicans with the gospel of Christ producing

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[1]Elmer T. Clark, *The Latin Immigrant in the South* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1924), 7.

80

Mexican believers and Baptists congregations. Baptists demonstrated a passion for the evangelization of Hispanics since the early days of the colonization in Texas. Just three years after the establishment of the SBC, the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo required Mexico to give control of the disputed territories of the Southwest to the United States. These former Mexican territories became the southern portions of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California as well as portions of other states. The United States paid Mexico fifteen million dollars for these borderland territories. The vast majority of Mexicans living in the region chose to stay in the only homes they had ever known rather than move south to Mexico. Joshua Grijalva states, "Overnight, they became strangers and 'foreigners' in the land of their birth. Because they spoke Spanish and not English, they were viewed with suspicion."[2]

The ethnic diversity of Southern Baptist churches was evident when the Convention was established. While a variety of ethnicities are currently a part of the SBC family, this chapter is limited to African Americans and Hispanics, the largest ethnic minorities in the United States. The cultural setting of the antebellum South had a significant impact on ethnic relationships. Churches were ethnically diverse, but with an unequal ecclesiology as whites dominated the church with minority members playing a subordinate role. Baptists' commitment to the mission of the church to evangelize the lost and to make disciples offered purpose with a passion for Southern Baptists. The abolition of slavery imposed a surfeit of changes to the culture of the nation, particularly in the South where slaves were most prevalent and the economy was most affected. The end of slavery had a profound impact on the ethnic diversity of SBC churches. Court ordered desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s created another paradigm shift in the United States. The response of Southern Baptists to these issues laid the backdrop out of which contemporary Southern Baptist multiethnic churches have spawned. A response of repentance and hope paved the way for the Southern Baptist Convention to grow in diversity and multiethnic ministries.

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[2]Joshua Grijalva, "The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists," *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983): 40.

The Founding of the Southern Baptist Convention

The founding of the Southern Baptist Convention was rooted in the historical circumstances of the old South. The early part of the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of African slaves. Southerners were convinced that slaves were necessary for the economic success of the farms and plantations in the region. Larry James argues that some white believers introduced Christianity to the African slaves driven by their commitment to Christ's Commission. Others used Christianity to keep slaves in line, diminishing the possibility of rebellion. There is ample evidence that whites and blacks worshiped together in the antebellum South including church records and histories, minutes from associational meetings, ministerial diaries, and church cemetery records.[3] As the number of slaves increased, the number of Africans in white churches swelled as well.

The desire to fulfill the Great Commission was at the heart of the birth of the SBC. Recognizing that the scope of the mission entrusted to the church by the Messiah, the founders of the SBC demonstrated a strong commitment to global missions. However, there was also a more ominous side to the establishment of the SBC. The founders of the Convention disagreed with their northern neighbors on a central issue of missionary appointment. Mark Noll points out revivalism's impact on the abolitionists of the North who worked to bring an end to slavery. He states, "Not all abolitionists were revivalist Protestants by any means, but many of them were."[4] Baptists in the North held that slavery was unjust and God would never tolerate treating any ethnic group as less than fully human. On the other hand, the majority of Baptists in the South justified slavery considering this unequal segregation to be God's created order. These twin themes were interwoven into the fabric out of which the SBC was fashioned.[5]

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[3]Larry M. James, "Biracial Fellowships in Antebellum Baptist Churches," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*: *Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1988), 37.

[4]Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 314.

[5]Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1990), 31-32.

Slavery

Ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender were the primary characteristics that determined roles in the antebellum South and in the churches of the region.[6] The Christian faith of the first white southerners was essential to their identity. The church provided a process that transformed the farms and plantations scattered across the region into communities. An awareness of mutual caring and belonging fosters the development of community. The churches embodied both of these needs in the communities of the South.[7] Community is at the center of Christian spirituality; the Christian faith is essentially relational. The vertical aspect of spirituality focuses on one's relationship with God while the horizontal dimension focuses on one's relationship to others. As God's image bearers, humans were created to live in relationship with their creator and their fellow creatures. The love for God and love for others are inseparably linked to one another, playing a significant role in community development (Mark 12:30-31).[8]

As the slave industry took root in the South providing a labor force that led to economic success, John Boles notes that many of the slaves found community in the churches. Whites and blacks participated in worship together. They sang the same songs, heard the same sermons, and partook of the church ordinances together. Boles states that many African slaves joined with their owners in Christian worship and church fellowship. He states, "A misguided sense of Christian responsibility led well-meaning, decent whites to justify slavery as the white man's duty to Africans, for it was, they argued, through the order and disciplined bondage provided that slaves learned—sampled?—Christianity and Western civilization."[9] Because

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[6]Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 50.

[7]Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1977), 4.

[8]Glen G. Scorgie and Kevin S. Reimer, "Spirituality in Community," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 41.

[9]John B. Boles, "Introduction," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*: *Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1988), 11. In the early years of the slave trade in the United States, most slave owners discouraged their slaves from participating in religious activity outside of the Christian church for fear that such behavior would encourage potential instability and revolt. Other slaveholders were reluctant to evangelize their slaves at all out of fear that the conversion of those who lived in bondage might weaken the slaveholders' perceived rightful position in society.

slaves were largely non-Christians when they arrived in the colonies, their unbelief was used as grounds to justify their slavery in hopes that they might be converted. However, if African unbelief was used as a justification for slavery, the conversion of slaves called into question the reason for keeping believing slaves in bondage.

The South witnessed a soaring population of slaves after 1700 resulting in the blacks outnumbering the whites in many areas. This influx of Africans led whites to seek ways to control the slave population in order to support the economy and to protect their way of life. Boles states that some evangelicals felt sympathy for the slaves and fought against the practice.[10] Colonists considered the oppression exerted by England prior to the American Revolution as a form of unjust bondage. Should the American ideal of equality extend to the African slaves? This question together with emerging theological perspectives on the morality of slavery challenged the practice. Yet the mission of the church to evangelize and disciple the lost took priority over the question of the morality of slavery.[11]

Evangelist Charles Finney contributed to the theological framework of the antislavery movement by stressing the need for social reform. The abolition of slavery was a hallmark of Finney's desire for social justice. He held that slavery must be eliminated from American culture.[12] Finney not only addressed the evils of holding slaves in his sermons, he was also among the first to withhold the Lord's Supper from slaveholders. However, Finney's views on the priority of evangelism moderated his message for social action. He was convinced that nothing should deter this primary work and was concerned that the antislavery crusade was supplanting the rightful place of evangelism.[13]

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[10]Ibid., 1-4.

[11]Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 28-29.

[12]Lewis A. Drummond, *The Life and Ministry of Charles G. Finney* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1983), 196-205.

[13]Charles C. Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists 1826-1860* (New York: Octagon, 1954), 204-11. Also see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 142, and Drummond, *The Life and Ministry of Charles G. Finney*, 202-05.

Evangelicalism created a structure of morality that elevated the esteem of the slaves who received Christ. While some evangelicals, like Finney, condemned the practice of slavery outright, southern evangelicals also desired influence and power using the economic tools at their disposal. Unfortunately, slavery was a powerful tool that drove economic growth, leading them to compromise their convictions against the slave trade and to assimilate the values of the dominant culture.[14] Further, whites held to the myth that African slaves and were inferior to them. Moises Sandoval points out that the inferiority myth was also extended to Hispanics. The Europeans who migrated to America believed they were superior culturally and educationally to the indigenous people and slaves. Because many Europeans could read and write, they branded the African slaves and indigenous people who did not possess these skills as inferior.[15] However, approximately two-thirds of the people of the world are oral communicators, some by choice, others by necessity.[16] To base a claim of superiority upon the acquisition of reading and writing skills is a faulty, precarious, and prejudicial approach to assess intellect.

Churches in the South had a substantial number of members from the slave community. It is difficult, however, to ascertain the exact ethnic breakdown of these churches with any degree of certainty. The data on membership, baptisms, and Sunday School enrollment has many statistical problems. This information was largely self-reported and inconsistent. Some churches failed to make reports for several years or were so late in reporting the data that it was not included in annual reports. Baptist records were sparse and difficult to gauge accurately.[17]

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[14]Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, xvii.

[15]Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 15-16.

[16]David Claydon, ed. *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (Bangalore, India: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and International Orality Network, 2005), 3. Moreover, 48-51 percent of adults in the United States have a limited range of literacy skills, living primarily by oral communication skills. Studies of Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom rendered similar results. See Claydon, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 20-21, and Irwin S. Kirsh, et al., *Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Findings of the National Adult Literacy Survey*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2002), xvi.

[17]Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1978), 131.

John Blassingame concludes,

> Although tabular reports began appearing in many convention proceedings in the 1850s, the figures in them do not always add up to the same totals represented in the reports of specific churches. . . . Sometimes the inconsistencies in reporting procedures are so great that no meaningful statistic can be compiled from the journals of the proceedings of the annual conventions.[18]

Blassingame argues that Baptists rarely provided any ethnic distinctions in their reporting process. Baptists, with their various associations and state conventions, rarely kept statistics in any uniform way and seldom published information on their non-Anglo members.[19]

Prior to the Revolutionary War, Baptists were few and disseminated in the United States.[20] They were among the smallest religious factions in America prior to the Great Awakening and were considered to be one of the more dangerous groups. There were only twenty-one Baptist churches in the colonies in 1740. Baptists were often considered to be religious extremists who were enemies of the prevailing political, social, and religious order. The insistence of Baptists on the autonomy of the local church placed them in conflict with the hierarchical structures of the churches endorsed by the government. Therefore, Baptists became strong advocates of religious liberty and the separation of church and state, placing them at odds with other religious groups. William Sweet notes that Baptists continued their strong lobby for religious freedom throughout the American Revolution.[21]

The first Baptist church in the South was established in Charleston, South Carolina, under William Screven's leadership. A native Englishman, Screven moved to New England in 1668, likely to avoid religious persecution due to his Baptist views. He was baptized at the First

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[18]John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University, 1979), 337.

[19]Ibid., 338. Randy Sparks agrees that the number of slaves attending worship in white dominated churches was likely higher than church rolls indicated for the same reasons cited by Blassingame. See Randy Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 1800-1861," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1988), 63.

[20]H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 123.

[21]William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1931), 15. Also see John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1972), 8.

Baptist Church of Boston in 1681 and was subsequently ordained to the ministry. He planted the first Baptist church in Maine in the town of Kittery in 1682, serving as their pastor. Screven moved with several of his congregants from Maine to establish the Charleston church in 1696.[22]

Due to their strong support for the American Revolution, Baptists enjoyed a broader acceptance in the colonies after the war. The Constitutional Convention of the new nation avoided the issue of slavery when it met in Philadelphia in 1787. Lester Scherer states, "The question of slavery was never debated in the Convention; everyone understood that silence on that issue was an absolute precondition for union."[23] The founding fathers understood the schism of slavery and its potential to divide the nation. After the colonies won their independence from England, President George Washington and later President Thomas Jefferson wrote letters to the Baptists expressing appreciation for their support during the war and in establishing a new nation.[24] The Anglicans lost much of the prestige they enjoyed prior to the Revolutionary War while the Baptists enjoyed a much-improved public image. Baptists also experienced a rapid expansion in the number of churches in the new nation. By the end of eighteenth century, Baptists became the largest denomination in the United States.[25]

As early as 1710, Baptists in South Carolina raised questions about the morality of slavery.[26] Baptists debated the institution of slavery at the annual meetings of the Mississippi Baptist Association. While they did not call for an end of the practice, these Baptists demanded punitive action against slaveholders who treated their slaves in a manner that was inconsistent

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[22]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 143-44, and Robert A. Baker, *A Baptist Source Book: With Particular Reference to Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman, 1966), 1-4.

[23]Lester B. Scherer, *Slavery and the Churches in Early America 1619-1819* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 112.

[24]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 343.

[25]Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 115.

[26]William G. McLoughlin and Winthrop D. Jordan, "Baptists Face the Barbarities of Slavery in 1710," *The Journal of Southern History* 29, no. 4 (November 1963): 495-96. This article contains correspondence between the Baptist Association in South Moulton, Devon, and William Fry and William Sadler in Charleston, South Carolina. It is clear that the Baptists in South Carolina sought to obey the laws of the land unless they were in conflict with God's Word. The tension in regard to South Carolina law and the teachings of the Bible were addressed in these letters.

with the teachings of the Scriptures. While Baptists in the South condoned the practice of slavery, they did not tolerate abuses by slaveholders.[27]

Seeking to develop a greater sense of community, slaves worshiped independently away from their owners with and without Anglo supervision. Especially in situations where slave owners rejected the Christian faith, slaves would steal away to worship in secret places.[28] Randy Sparks states,

> During the first three decades of the [nineteenth] century independent black churches, camp meetings, and relatively open unrestricted biracial churches helped blacks acquire a sense of community. After 1830, however, the black churches closed, the biracial churches became increasingly proslavery, and the churches placed more restrictions on their black members.[29]

Amidst the growing proslavery sentiments of the whites, the role of the worship gatherings in the slave quarters became more crucial in developing the black community.

After 1830, the number of Baptists holding slaves grew dramatically. As the number of slaves grew among Baptists, so did their involvement in local Baptist churches. Sparks writes that preachers would sometimes share a message at the end of their sermons for the slaves in attendance, usually encouraging them to obey their masters by diligently performing their assigned duties.[30] The slaves normally sat at the back or in balconies, separated from the white congregants. While the slaves endured the self-serving nature of these comments directed toward them, many still found hope and freedom in Christ that transcended their lives as slaves in these ethnically diverse gatherings.[31]

Why did black slaves attend white churches? They enjoyed a type of equality that attracted them to the ethnically diverse churches. They were addressed as brothers and sisters,

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[27]Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 1800-1861," 63-64.

[28]Boles, "Introduction," 10.

[29]Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 1800-1861," 67.

[30]Ibid., 63-64. Blassingame, however, notes that only 15 percent of the slaves in Georgia reported ever hearing white ministers preach to them on the topic of obeying their masters. See, Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 89.

[31]Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 89.

just as the white church members were. From God's point of view, all people were equally a part of the body of Christ. James argues that slaves discovered that Baptist churches provided a spiritual refuge from their lives in bondage. In the context of slavery with its inequality, Baptist churches afforded a biblical fellowship with temporary periods of equality expressed in the community of the local church body.[32] Boles states, "Without claiming too much or failing to recognize the multitude of ways slaves were not accorded genuine equality in these biracial churches, it is still fair to say that nowhere else in southern society were they treated so nearly as equals."[33]

Gregory Wills writes that many Baptist churches allowed slaves to vote on issues related to church discipline. He states,

> Churches sometimes appointed blacks to serve on a committee to investigate other blacks or asked black and white members to serve together. Black members sometimes comprised the entire committee and were assigned the responsibility of dealing with the discipline of other slave members.[34]

Participation in the discipline process is further evidence of opportunities for slaves to share in church leadership. Boles declares,

> Slaves apparently had their image of being creatures of God strengthened by the sermons they heard—even when that was not the intention of the ministers—and the discipline they accepted. Their evident pleasure in occasionally hearing black preachers speak to biracial congregations no doubt augmented their sense of racial pride. Taking communion together with whites, serving as deacons or Sunday school teachers, being baptized or confirmed in the same ceremonies, even contributing their mite to the temporal upkeep of the church, could surely have been seen as symbolic ways of emphasizing their self-respect and equality before God. . . . In a society that offered few opportunities for blacks to practice organizational and leadership skills or hear themselves addressed and see themselves evaluated morally on an equal basis with whites, small matters could have large meanings. Blacks did not discover in the biracial churches an equality of treatment that spiritually transported them out of bondage, but they found in them a theology of hope and a recognition of self-worth that fared them well in their struggle to endure slavery.[35]

As tensions over the question of slavery grew, however, the bond of fellowship

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[32]James, "Biracial Fellowships in Antebellum Baptist Churches," 37-38.

[33]Boles, "Introduction," 9.

[34]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 53-54.

[35]Boles, "Introduction," 14.

89

enjoyed by white and black church members dissipated. Whereas the entire church family once welcomed blacks as members, some churches appointed special committees to examine black candidates for membership, asking them or their pastor to welcome them by "extending the right hand of fellowship" on behalf of the church, a practice that did not apply to whites. This ritual symbolized the acceptance of the new member into the church family, but was a strong symbol of the slaves' inferior position.[36] Such practices demonstrated the deteriorating fellowship among ethnic groups in the churches as the Civil War approached.

The Mission of the Church

The mission of the church to make disciples of all people groups led southerners to view slavery as an opportunity to expose blacks to the gospel and to teach them the Scriptures.[37] Early attempts to evangelize slaves had some success but were quantitatively discouraging due to the barriers of language, unconverted slaveholders who viewed the evangelization of slaves as a waste of time and money, fear that converted slaves might become rebellious, and fear that conversion could place the slave owners' property rights in danger. Boles notes that the majority of slaves in the United States had become Christians by 1850.[38] While many slaveholders sought to use the Christian faith to control the slave population, some Baptists had sympathy for the plight of slaves and questioned the morality of slavery. Baptists conceded, however, that slavery was necessary to support the southern economy making it difficult to oppose the institution. Baptists in the South were united on the need to evangelize slaves and offer religious instruction for them. James states, "Many whites believed they had a religious duty to bring the Christian message to slaves as a way of furthering God's kingdom. One justification for slavery was that it was a providentially designed institution Christianizing and civilizing the 'heathen' of Africa."[39]

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[36]Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 100-1861," 70-71.

[37]Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 315.

[38]Boles, "Introduction," 4-5.

[39]James, "Biracial Fellowships in Antebellum Baptist Churches," 37.

When the Great Awakening swept the nation beginning in the 1730s, rapid changes modified the religious climate of the United States. There was an outpouring of people who responded to the gospel and were transformed by its power. William Sweet argues that Baptists profited more than any other religious group as a result of these changes.[40] Eighmy states,

> The doctrine of salvation as a personal experience found an ideal setting in the highly emotional revival gatherings. As a consequence of their rejection of infant baptism in favor of baptism by immersion after a conversion experience, the Baptists came to rely upon the revival meetings for recruiting new members. Their emphasis on personal conversion also explains why they became champions of religious liberty. The doctrine of soul competency, or the priesthood of the believer, made salvation an experience between God and man entered into as an act of individual free will without benefit of an ecclesiastical intermediary. For Baptists the use of state authority to promote religion violated freedom of conscience.[41]

Baptists in the South had few educated clergy and were predominantly poor. Albert Raboteau states, "A converted heart and a gifted tongue were more important than the amount of theological training received."[42] During the Great Awakening as revival spread among the people of New England, Shubal Stearns, a native of Boston, received Christ under the influence of the preaching of evangelist George Whitefield in 1745. Whitefield was a powerful and gifted orator with the ability to hold the attention even of skeptics.[43] After a thorough study of God's Word in 1751, Stearns became a Baptist, convinced that only believers who professed faith in Christ should be baptized into the Christian community.[44] While Stearns had very little formal education, Morgan Edwards notes he was "pretty well acquainted with books."[45] Stearns was passionate about spreading the gospel to other regions of the fledgling nation. He was a powerful

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[40]William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists 1783-1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1931), 3-4.

[41]John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1972), 9.

[42]Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 133.

[43]Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Church of America 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1972), 49.

[44]B. L. Shelley, "Stearns, Shubal (1706-1771)," in *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, ed. Bill J. Leonard (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 259.

[45]Morgan Edwards, *Materials Towards a History of the Baptists*, vol. 2, comp. Eve B. Weeks and Mary B. Warren (Danielsville, GA: Heritage Papers, 1984), 93.

preacher who spoke with passion. He was often moved to tears as he reflected on the salvation that God had graciously brought into his life.

Following a brief time of ministry in Virginia, Stearns settled at Sandy Creek in Guilford County, North Carolina.[46] The pioneering spirit of Stearns, along with his brother-in-law, Daniel Marshall, engineered the expansion of the Baptist faith in North Carolina and surrounding areas.[47] His quest to spread the gospel led him to establish the Sandy Creek Church with a charter membership of sixteen people in 1755.[48] The Sandy Creek Church became the center of an expansive movement of Baptists that stretched in every direction.[49] In a period spanning only seventeen years, the church branched out to establish congregations as far as the Mississippi River to the west, deep into Georgia in the south, east to the Atlantic Ocean, and as far as the Potomac River to the north. During these years, Sandy Creek's influence spawned 42 churches out of which 125 ministers responded to God's call to preach the gospel.[50] As Baptists moved into the frontier regions to the west, they began to acquire more wealth primarily through the acquisition of land.[51] In 1881, William Cathcart wrote, "There are to-day [sic] probably thousands of churches that arose from the efforts of Shubal Stearns and the church of Sandy Creek."[52] David Garrison referred to this rapid expansion of Baptists out of the Sandy Creek Church as a church planting movement. He states, "Passion, evangelism, Biblicism [sic], local church autonomy, uneducated lay leaders, missionary zeal, rapid multiplication of converts, and

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[46]Stephen G. Crouse, "A History of Baptist Frontier Church Planting," 9, http://northamericanmissions.org/files/History%20of%20US%20Frontier%20Baptist%20Church%20Planting.pdf (accessed April 30, 2013).

[47]Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 5.

[48]William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist History in the South: Tracing through the Separate Baptists the Influence of the Great Awakening, 1754-1787* (St. John, IN: Larry Harrison, 1995), 38.

[49]William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1969), 357.

[50]Edwards, *Materials Toward A History of the Baptists*, 2: 92.

[51]Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 6.

[52]William Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 3: 1099.

new churches, fearless advance through persecution—all these were characteristics of the Sandy Creek tradition."[53] Leon McBeth cites the Awakening as the fertile ground out of which Baptist churches multiplied in great numbers.[54] The rapid multiplication of Baptist churches and their rise in public approval strengthened the churches and their roles in their communities. Wills notes that there were 67,000 Baptists in the United States by 1790 with 61 percent active in the South.[55] Virginia had the largest population of Baptists at that time with 210 churches that boasted 20,861 members.[56]

When Whitefield first traveled from Philadelphia to Savannah, he was deeply troubled by the treatment of slaves in the South. Believing that such abuses were unknown by most Americans, he wrote a letter to those who dwelt in Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina pointing out the cruel treatment the slaves endured. Ben Franklin published the letter and it appeared in many newspapers throughout the colonies.[57] Whitefield argued that slaves should be permitted to be evangelized, receive education, and be treated magnanimously. His religious reforms were met with powerful opposition from many slaveholders, perceiving his ideas as a threat to their livelihood. While Whitefield did not condemn the practice of holding slaves, he clearly denounced the mistreatment of slaves as sinful.[58]

Richard Furman, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, was a slaveholder. Nevertheless he pleaded with the governor of his state to reject any laws that would prohibit the religious instruction of slaves. Furman firmly argued that slavery is consistent

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[53]David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake, 2004), 159.

[54]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 222.

[55]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 8.

[56]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 222.

[57]Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 1: 495-97.

[58]Alan Gallay, "Planters and Slaves in the Great Awakening," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1988), 24-25.

with the teachings of the Scriptures, citing many examples of those who held slaves in the Bible; therefore, he concluded, Christians were free to own slaves. Nevertheless, he believed that masters were morally obligated to provide religious training for their slaves.[59] In 1785, Furman reported that many Negroes were responsive to the gospel.[60] By 1796, the church at Charleston under Furman's leadership reported a membership of 248 members, most of whom were black.[61]

Baptists in the South strongly believed it was their responsibility to evangelize the lost and provide Christian instruction for those living in their communities and around the world through missions.[62] While northern abolitionists claimed the churches of the South ignored their responsibility to evangelize slaves, the evidence demonstrates the deep commitment of Baptists in the South to reach the lost for Christ. Their commitment to the mission of the church played a prominent role in leading to the birth of a new Convention of Baptists.

The Birth of the Convention

Baptists were historically suspicious of any authority and any attempt at centralization making cooperation beyond the authority of the local church a challenge. The first association, a regional grouping of Baptists, was established in Philadelphia in 1707, but it was fifty years before another association was formed. However, Baptists' reluctance to cooperate beyond the local church was overcome by their evangelistic zeal and their response to mission involvement.[63] Early in the nineteenth century, Richard Furman of Charleston, Thomas Baldwin of Boston, and John Gano of New York began to discuss a national organization of Baptists. Their idea was to form a national union comprised of associations and state conventions.

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[59]Richard Furman, "Exposition of the Views of the Baptists, Relative to the Coloured Population in the United States in a Communication to the Governor of South Carolina," May 28, 1863, http://eweb. furman.edu/~benson/docs/rcd-fmn1.htm (accessed June 6, 2013).

[60]Leah Townsend, *South Carolina Baptists, 1670-1805* (Baltimore: Genealogical, 1974), 27.

[61]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 217.

[62]Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 6.

[63]Ellen Rosenburg, *The Southern Baptists: A Subculture in Transition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1989), 28.

Missionaries Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson embraced this idea and sought a unified approach to supporting global mission efforts. Opposition was rooted in anti-mission sentiments and a fear of possible hierarchical ecclesiology that would hinder the autonomy of local churches, associations, and state conventions. They questioned the need for a national organization when a variety of local Baptist societies were already working to support missions.

In May of 1814, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions was established at Philadelphia.[64] This Convention met every three years and was normally called the General Convention or the Triennial Convention. Richard Furman was elected as its first president.[65] In 1817, the Convention limited its focus to foreign missions, leaving the work of home missions, publications, education, and other causes to societies that were separate from the Convention. Baptists in the North and the South supported missions through the Triennial Convention. However, some northern Baptists in New England and New York embraced the abolition of slavery and sought to influence the Foreign Mission Board to prohibit the appointment of slave owners as missionaries.[66] As early as 1835, Baptists in the South complained that the American Baptist Home Mission Society did not allocate a fair share of their funds for mission causes in the South.[67] In 1840, Baptist abolitionists formed the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention in New York so they would be free from working with Baptists who supported slavery.[68] Missionaries serving in India formed a separate mission society to assure that their efforts would not be associated with advocates of slavery in any way. At the same time, Baptists in Alabama were threatening to withhold their mission dollars unless the Foreign Mission Board guaranteed

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[64]Willliam Wright Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953* (Nashville: Broadman, 1954), 3-11.

[65]H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Respresentative Documents* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 2: 182-83.

[66]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 384.

[67]Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 31.

[68]McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 384.

that it operated outside of the influence of abolitionists. Even though Baptists attempted to avoid the controversy by having an official position of neutrality on the slavery issue, tensions between the two factions continued to grow. Baptists in the South, influenced by the southern culture and economy, grew stronger in their support of slavery.[69] These southern Baptists feared that the mission societies would fall under the control of abolitionists, even though the majority of the 571,291 Baptists in the United States dwelt in the South in 1840.[70]

Baptists in the North exerted greater influence over the mission societies than did their neighbors to the South.[71] Abolitionists attempted to gain control of the Triennial Convention, but were unsuccessful. Some of the more radical members withdrew from the Convention and launched two rival mission societies, the American Baptist Free Missionary Society and the American and Foreign Baptist Missionary Society. Other abolitionists, nonetheless, remained in the Triennial Convention and continued to seek control of the body. In 1844, they succeeded and declared their intention to withhold missionary appointments from slave owners. Baptists in the South strongly opposed this decision.[72] The Georgia Baptist Convention sent James Reeve, a known slaveholder, to the Home Mission Society in view of a missionary appointment to work with the Cherokee Indians, knowing this action would serve as a test case.[73] By a vote of seven to five, his candidacy was rejected. The Alabama Baptist Convention asked the Foreign Mission Board if they would appoint a slaveholder as a missionary. The response was they could not appoint a person who insisted on maintaining ownership of slaves.[74]

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[69]Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 31.

[70]William Cathcart, ed., *The Baptist Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of the Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith, Sufferings, Labors and Successes, and the General History of the Baptist Denominations in All Lands with Numerous Biographical Sketches of Distinguished American and Foreign Baptists, and a Supplement*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 1324. Of the 571,291 Baptists in the United States in 1840, 312,027 were located in the South.

[71]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 12.

[72]Rufus B. Spain, *At Ease in Zion: A Sociological History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1967), 5

[73]Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University, 2005), 29.

[74]Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 31-32.

A call went out to Baptists in the South to meet in Augusta, Georgia, to discuss forming a new convention. A total of 328 messengers from nine states representing 4,000 Baptist churches with 350,000 members convened in Augusta.[75] Southern Baptists refer to voting members at Convention meetings as messengers rather than delegates because they bring messages from their local churches and associations.[76] The messengers expressed outrage over the actions of the Triennial Convention and their decision to withhold missionary appointment from slave owners. They voted to establish the Southern Baptist Convention and adopted its constitution on May 10, 1845. William B. Johnson of South Carolina was elected as the first president.[77] Instead of organizing separate societies for benevolent causes, the SBC was designed as a single denomination that appointed its own boards carrying out their mission endeavors. The fledgling denomination was limited to the autonomous church bodies, associations, and state conventions that demonstrated their cooperation by making donations to the denomination. While Baptists had demonstrated differing convictions about the issue of slavery in the past, Eighmy points out the solidarity of the antislavery position of the new Convention.[78] With the formation of the SBC, Baptists were divided in the United States along regional lines.

The founders of the SBC recognized the need for establishing a global missions strategy that included reaching the homeland as well as people who lived in other countries across the world. They established a structure whereby the churches of the new denomination could provide a witness for Christ both at home and abroad. The convention created two boards, the Board of Foreign Missions (later renamed the International Mission Board) and the Board for Domestic Missions (subsequently named the Home Mission Board and later the North American Mission Board). Of the 350,000 members of the SBC at its inception, 125,000 were Negro

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[75]Ibid., 32.

[76]Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 7.

[77]Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953*, 30.

[78]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 3.

slaves.[79] The focus of the Board of Foreign Missions was the propagation of the gospel to people groups living outside of the homeland.[80] The Board of Domestic Missions was commissioned to provide religious education for Negros from its inception and to assist the effort to establish Baptist work in the city of New Orleans.[81]

Mission to Hispanics

When Columbus discovered the New World in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella were defeating the Moors and expelling all Jews on the home front. Pope Alexander VI granted the rulers of Spain the title of "Catholic Monarchs" as a reward for their work.[82] However, Spain was still a long way from being completely united under Christianity. Jews and Muslims were required to confess faith in Christ or face deportation. While many made public professions, questions remained concerning the sincerity of those coerced confessions.[83] Further, the Pope assigned the New World to Spain and Portugal. On his return to the New World the following year, Columbus assumed that all of its territories and peoples belonged rightly to Spain.[84] He brought more than three hundred volunteers to establish and rule the New World.[85] Isabella decreed that the indigenous peoples should provide labor for work projects, but in return they should receive wages, instruction in the Catholic faith, and fair treatment. Columbus established the *encomiendas*, a system where groups of Indians were entrusted to Spaniards who instructed them in the Christian faith. In return for this service, the Indians worked for those who taught

[79]J. B. Lawrence, *History of the Home Mission Board* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 16-17.

[80]William R. Estep, *Whole Gospel Whole World: The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1995* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 49-50.

[81]Lawrence, *History of the Home Mission Board*, 29.

[82]Robert F. Heizer and Alan F. Almquist, *The Other Californians: Prejudice and Discrimination under Spain, Mexico, and the United States to 1920* (Berkley: University of California, 1971), 195.

[83]Justo L. González, *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1969), 11-12.

[84]Heizer and Almquist, *The Other Californians*, 195.

[85]Mario A. Rodríguez León, "Invasion and Evangelization in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*, ed. Enrique Dussel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 43-44.

them. Justo González charges that the *encomiendas* system was in reality a thinly veiled form of slavery.[86] The Catholic Church and the imperialist power of the Spanish crown intentionally exerted their combined strength in an effort to unify the New World.

Sandoval points out that the indigenous people of the New World faced conquest on three fronts. Not only were these indigenous Americans overpowered by the imperialist military might of Spain and the religious fervor of the Catholic Church, they also encountered an unintended greater enemy. The Europeans carried a biological assault in their bodies when they arrived in the New World. The population of the indigenous Indians decreased from 54 million to 10 million in a single century. Sandoval states,

> In their bodies Europeans brought the germs of the major diseases of humans: smallpox, flu, tuberculosis, typhus, malaria, plague, measles, and cholera. Having no immunity, the Indians became ill and began to die from the first encounters with the invaders. Smallpox killed nearly half of the Aztecs, including Emperor Cuitláhuac, after the first Spanish attack in 1520. By the time Francisco Pizarro and the Incas faced each other in the field of battle, smallpox had already killed the emperor and most of his court. The indigenous people had no comparable diseases to decimate the Europeans.[87]

When Fernando de Soto traveled through the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana in 1538, he discovered several sites where towns had once existed abandoned because the inhabitants fell victim to the diseases that arrived earlier with the Spaniards.[88]

Spanish Conquistadors conquered the indigenous peoples of Latin America, Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas, California, and other regions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their advanced weaponry including steel swords, lances, and daggers as well as their firearms and artillery overmatched the bows, arrows, clubs, and axes made of stone used by the Native Americans. The military superiority of the Spaniards led to a decisive defeat of Latin Americans. Mario A. Rodríguez León points out that while there was a sincere interest in evangelizing the

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[86]González, *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean*, 20.

[87]Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 13-14.

[88]Ibid., 14. Sandoval goes on to cite statistical documentation of the decimation of the indigenous people of the region.

Amerindians, the conquest of America was also fueled by economic expansion.[89] Sandoval notes that political concerns rather than evangelization led to the colonization of the Americas.[90] The conquest had an impact on the entire way of life for the indigenous peoples including social structure, political government, religious allegiance, and economic opportunity. As a conquered people, these Hispanics experienced oppression and disenfranchisement. They were perceived as inferior by the Europeans because of their lack of weaponry development, the inability of most of the population to read and write, and the perceived simplicity of lifestyle. The invaders had thousands of years of written history, including the history of warfare, which provided them with a powerful advantage in the military conquest. It was their knowledge and advanced weaponry which let to their conquest rather than their intellectual superiority.[91]

Exploration, colonization, and evangelization were woven together in the fabric of the Spanish Conquest. Catholic missionaries always accompanied the Conquistadors seeking to evangelize the indigenous peoples, but the colonies established north of Mexico were created for political reasons. It was not the mission strategy of the Catholic Church that drove the methods of the conquest, but the methods of the conquest that drove the mission strategy. While Isabella and Ferdinand were sincere in their mission enterprise, most of the Spanish invaders were primarily interested in conquest, fame, and the acquisition of wealth. González states,

> Given the enormous distance and the tardiness of communications between these two poles of Spanish interest, it was to be expected that the net result would be that the Spaniards in the New World would have their way, and the crown would only be able to mitigate in a small measure the evils thus brought upon the Indian population.[92]

One of the greatest obstacles to mission efforts in the New World was the Spaniards mistreatment of the Indians. The distrust bred by these actions lasted for many years to come.[93]

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[89]León, "Invasion and Evangelization in the Sixteenth Century," 43-52.

[90]Moises Sandoval, "The Church among the Hispanics in the United States," in *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*, ed. Enrique Dussel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 232.

[91]Sandoval, *On the Move*, 14-18.

[92]González, *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean*, 19.

[93]Ibid., 20.

There were Spaniards who opposed this oppression of the indigenous peoples. For example, Bartolomé de Las Casas participated in the *encomiendas* system in Hispaniola and Cuba initially. As he observed the widespread abuses, he sold his property in the New World and returned to Spain to fight for new, just laws to protect the rights of the Amerindians. He spent the rest of his life seeking justice for the Indians, crossing the Atlantic on numerous occasions, yet the abuses still continued.[94]

When Pedro Menéndez de Aviles established St. Augustine as the first permanent Spanish colony in the United States in 1565, Spain was attempting to keep the French out of the region. The Spaniards believed the means of violent conquest was justified, just as the religious warfare was in Spain during its eight hundred year battle to expel the Moors. Because of the pervasiveness of this religious expansion, the influence of Roman Catholicism continues to be widespread in Latin America.[95]

The viewpoint of the victors always differs from the viewpoint of those who were conquered. This truth is reflected in the various histories of the Spanish conquest. The Amerindians enjoyed a rich religious heritage prior to the invasion. Juan Schobinger writes,

> In general terms, pre-Columbian religious ideas and practices can be said to closely connect a cosmovision diametrically opposed to our own: intuitive, open to nature and the cosmos rather than shut up in the ego, communitarian rather than individualistic, seeing everything visible as a symbol of something greater, on which they depended. . . . So the collision that occurred in the sixteenth century was not just between opposing cultures, or betwen [sic] races, or between different historical projects; it was not between "more advanced" and "backward" cultures, or "civilized" people and "barbarians." It was, essentially, between two states of consciousness, and this is perhaps why it was so painful.[96]

North American trappers, traders, and settlers began to move into the Southwest territories early in the nineteenth century. Under the closed border policy of the Spanish, these

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[94]Ibid., 22.

[95]Enrique Dussel, "The Church and Emergent Nation States (1830-80)," in *The Church in Latin American 1492-1992*, ed. Enrique Dussel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 105-15. Also see Sandoval, *On the Move*, 18-24.

[96]Juan Schobinger, "The Amerindian Religions," in *The Church in Latin American 1492-1992*, ed. Enrique Dussel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 23. Schobinger offers an excellent survey of the religions of Latin America prior to the Spanish invasion and conquest in the early sixteenth century.

new arrivals were intercepted and deported. The Creoles, Spaniards born in the New World, resented Spain's control of their government. In 1810, the Creoles with the support of the indigenous Indians and mestizos (people who shared Indian and Spanish blood) revolted against Spanish control.[97] Following the conclusion of Mexico's successful war for independence in 1821, the North Americans were welcomed to Mexico. In 1836, Texas declared their independence from Mexico. There was a move among Anglos in the United States to confiscate the Southwest territories leading the United States President John A. Polk to attempt unsuccessfully to acquire them. He subsequently declared war on Mexico, invading the disputed lands in an effort to gain control over the region. In addition to seizing the land, the Anglo invaders from the North oppressed the indigenous peoples. Rodolfo Acuña states,

> The violence was not limited to taking of the land; Mexico's territory was invaded, her people murdered, her land raped, and her possessions plundered. The memory of this destruction generated a distrust and dislike that is still vivid in the minds of many Mexicans, for the violence of the United States left deep scars.[98]

Churches were desecrated and money was taken from Mexican citizens by force. When the North Americans annexed half of Mexico's territory, there were approximately 200,000 Indians and an additional 75,000 people with partial Hispanic heritage living in the disputed lands.[99] John C. Calhoun, a United States Senator from South Carolina with great influence, opposed the war with Mexico, the acquisition of the Southwest territories, and the subjugation of the Mexican people because he wanted to preserve the "free white race." He stated,

> I know further, sir [addressing the President of the United States], that we have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race—the free white race. To incorporate Mexico, would be the very first instance of the kind of incorporating an Indian race; for more than half of the Mexicans are Indians, and the other is composed chiefly of mixed tribes. I protest against such a union as that! Ours, sir, is the Government of a white race. The greatest misfortunes of Spanish America are to be traced to the fatal error of

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[97]"Mexican Independence from Spain," http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/timeline/ 3.html (accessed June 7, 2014).

[98]Rodolpo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield, 1972), 9.

[99]Sandoval, *On the Move*, 37-38.

placing these colored races on an equality with the white race. That error destroyed the social arrangement which formed the basis of society.[100]

Many Anglos residing in the United States agreed with Calhoun that only the "free white race" should be admitted into the union. Non-Anglos were allowed to live in California, but with few human rights and an inferior status to whites. Carey McWilliams states, "In many respects, the social structure of Spanish California resembled that of the Deep South: the *gente de razón* were the plantation-owners; the Indians were the slaves; and the Mexicans were the California equivalent of 'poor white trash.'"[101] Robert Heizer and Alan Almquist note the racist attitudes of white Californians. While the first state legislature of California prohibited slavery in 1850, they granted few or no human rights to non-Anglos. Heizer and Almquist state, "California politicians have always held the state up as a model, and as one occupied by an industrious and enlightened people. But history tells us that no more sorry record exists in the Union of inhuman and uncivil treatment toward minority groups than in California."[102] Further, they state,

> Within the larger, national framework of nineteenth-century racism and slavery, the California attitudes toward nonwhites—regardless whether they were blacks, Indians, Mexicans, Chileans, Polynesians, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, or of some other race or ethnic group—were consistent with those generally observed in the United States.[103]

Moquin and Van Doren state that more Mexicans were killed in the Southwest than the number of blacks in the Old South between 1850 and 1930.[104]

Mexican Americans were often robbed, swindled, and offered little or no property rights. When Anglo Texans brought their herds to the market, beef packing plants often overlooked the Mexican Americans' brands on some of the cattle. Large sections of land of great value were taken from Mexicans for almost nothing, both legally and illegally. Mexicans were

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[100]John C. Calhoun, "Conquest of Mexico," 1848, http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/conquest-of-mexico/ (accessed June 18, 2014).

[101]Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1949), 90.

[102]Heizer and Almquist, *The Other Californians*, 202.

[103]Ibid., 199-200.

[104]Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren, eds. *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans* (New York: Bantam, 1972), 253. Also see Sandoval, *On the Move*, 39.

exploited by political factions and victimized by the law. One law applied to Mexican Americans while a less rigorous law was employed for political leaders and other prominent citizens. If a Mexican was killed there was little investigation, but if a white settler was molested in any way, the investigation was very thorough. McWilliams writes of an account where a Mexican was brutally murdered because he refused to play a fiddle for several whites.[105] California passed a land law in 1851 that set in motion a process through which Mexicans could lawfully be stripped of their land. Before 1860, Mexicans that were indigenous to California owned all land tracts valued at more than $10,000. By 1870, these Mexicans owned less than 25 percent of this land. By the 1880s, only a few Mexicans owned land in the state.[106] Acuña concludes,

> Methodically, the Mexican was made more dependent on the colonizer, and he lost whatever control over his life that he may have had. There was little doubt that the conqueror-conquered relationship existed, for by the 1850s, even the elite publicly recognized their subjugated status and economic demise.[107]

With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo just three years after the formation of the SBC at the conclusion of the Mexican American War, portions of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado that were formerly claimed by Mexico became a part of the United States.[108] Article IX of the treaty guaranteed that Mexicans would enjoy "all the rights of citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution; and in the meantime shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction."[109] In spite of the freedoms guaranteed to Hispanics by the treaty, they suffered cultural decimation and numerous violations of their rights. While the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo protected the property rights of Hispanic Americans, they were still victimized by the greatest land grab in

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[105]McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 110.

[106]Ibid., 105-06.

[107]Ibid., 108.

[108]Ibid., 28.

[109]Moquin and Van Doren, *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans*, 247.

history. Moquin and Van Doren state, "But this treaty, like all of the treaties and agreements with the Indians, became mere paper when the matter at issue was land ownership."[110] Consequently, the land of the Southwest for the most part and its accompanying wealth passed from the Hispanics to the conquering Anglos. During the last half of the nineteenth century, Hispanics who had been the masters of their own domain became a second-class minority among the ruling whites who spoke a different language and advocated a different way of life.[111]

While Native Americans, including Mexican and mixed ethnicities, dominated the Hispanic population in the Southwest, other Hispanic groups also migrated to the United States including Cubans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans. Despite the conquest and oppression of the Hispanic peoples and the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church, the door of protestant evangelistic opportunity opened to them.[112] As Anglo Christians settled in the Southwest, eventually there were as many evangelical preachers as there were Catholic priests.[113]

Arthur B. Rutledge writes, "Language missions is one of the oldest and one of the primary concerns of the Home Mission Board."[114] In the first decade of its existence, the Board of Domestic Missions concluded that the United States was properly its mission field. Many areas of the nation included large groups of immigrants from other countries such as the Mexicans in the Southwest territories and the Chinese in California. To reach these people groups, the Domestic Mission Board had to cross language barriers.[115] As early at 1837, the call for missionaries to work with the Hispanic population began. In 1849, Southern Baptist Hispanic mission work began in New Mexico with the arrival of Hiram W. Read in Santa Fe. The first

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[110]Ibid., 252.

[111]Ibid., 253.

[112] Raymond S. Rosales, "The Experience of the Hispanic Church in the Americas," *Word and World* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 130-31.

[113]Joshua Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas 1881-1981* (Dallas: Office of Language Missions, Baptist General Convention of Texas with the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas, 1982), 7.

[114]Arthur B. Rutledge, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 165.

[115]Ibid., 143.

Hispanic Southern Baptist convert in New Mexico was Blas Chavez, a lieutenant in the Union

Army during the Civil War. He was baptized in Albuquerque and subsequently was called to

preach, embarking on a ministry career that lasted for half a century. In 1861, J. W. D. Creath

became the first missionary appointed to work with the Hispanics in Texas.[116]

Ethnic mission work in Florida began with Native Americans. Hubert O. Hurt, who

served as Director of the Language Missions Department for the State Board of Missions of the

Florida Baptist State Convention, writes "About 1907 Creek Indian missionaries from Oklahoma

came seeking to evangelize the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians of Florida. Travel was crude

and difficult and the Indians were hard to locate. Missionaries would stay six months to a year,

then return to Oklahoma."[117] In 1951, Genus and Carolyn Crenshaw were appointed by the

Home Mission Board to work with the Indians in Florida. Hispanic mission work in Florida

began with the establishment of a Good Will Center in Key West by the Home Mission Board.

Several Hispanics received Christ during a revival led by Abdiel Silva from Tampa. These new

converts were baptized at the First Baptist Church. Subsequently, a Hispanic congregation was

planted with Ismael Negrin serving as the first pastor with the financial support of the Home

Mission Board in 1947. Hurt points out that the historic records are incomplete, but Southern

Baptist work began with Cubans around 1945 with the founding of the Hispanic church in Ybor

City, a section in Tampa where a large population of Cubans and Italians dwelt. Due to the

political unrest in Cuba, many of its citizens fled the country. Abdiel Silva served as the first

pastor of the Ybor City church. Hispanic work began in Miami in 1948 through the work of

Central Baptist Church. The church established a department for Hispanic mission work. In

1950, the church ordained Manuel Aquayo who became the first pastor of the Hispanic mission.

The mission church met at Central Baptist Church for ten years before securing financial

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[116]Grijalva, "The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists," 41. Also see Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas*, 12.

[117]Hubert O. Hurt, "The History of Florida Baptist Language Congregations," http://www. floridabaptisthistory.org/docs/monographs/history_of_fl_baptist.pdf (accessed June 30, 2014).

resources and property with the help of the Home Mission Board. On September 19, 1959, the

Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana Central de Miami was born. In addition to Hispanic work, the

Florida Baptist State Convention also developed mission work with Haitians, Chinese, Koreans,

Cambodians, Laotians, Filipinos, Romanians, Hungarians, Rumanians, Vietnamese, Arabs,

Brazilians, Jamaicans, Russians, and Ukrainians.[118] These efforts to reach Hispanics were

consistent with Baptists' commitment to the Great Commission. Most of these efforts, however,

established primarily mono-ethnic congregations rather than multiethnic churches.

The Abolition of Slavery

With the ratification of the Emancipation Proclamation and passage of the Thirteen

Amendment, the slave industry came to an end. Although slaves were freed by the war, the

culture's concept of them remained largely unchanged.[119] Jim Crow laws were adopted in the

South to maintain segregation. In the North, freedmen were oppressed and treated as second-

class citizens.[120] The myth of the curse of Ham (Gen 9:18-28) continued after the war.[121] Since

blacks were perceived as inferior, white believers considered it their Christian duty to care for

and protect blacks. Wills states, "Their [the slaves'] status as servants determined their moral

duties, but the link between servility and race meant that emancipated blacks found themselves

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[118]Ibid.

[119]W. Harrison Daniel, "Virginia Baptists and the Negro, 1865-1902," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 76, no. 3 (July 1968): 340

[120]Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 323-24. Jim Crow laws refer to legislation that institutionalized racial discrimination requiring segregation in housing, work sites, public transportation, church attendance, cemeteries, entertainment centers, restaurants, public transportation, mortuaries, schools, hospitals, etc. The term can be traced to a song about a happy slave, Jim Crow, performed by Thomas D. Rice, a white singer in a blackface in the 1830s. See Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 183 n. 11.

[121] After the account of the flood (Gen 6-8), Noah planted a vineyard and became drunk from the wine it produced. Ham, one of Noah's sons, saw his father drunk and naked. Ham's sin was that he dishonored his father. Noah pronounced a curse on Ham's son, Canaan, declaring that he will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers. While this text was used to justify African slavery by painting the Africans as descendants of Ham, James Montgomery Boice points out that such a view was never considered prior to the middle of the nineteenth century when the slave trade was at its height. The curse of Ham is a myth as far as its application to the black race. See James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1: 394-400. Bruggemann argues that Canaan is not to be seen as an ethnic group but as a characterization of all who disobey the sovereign and gracious Creator. See Walter Bruggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 88-91. Edwin M. Yamauchi argues that no other text in the Bible has been so distorted or misused. The curse was not upon Ham, but his son, Canaan. See Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), 19.

after the war still assigned to the inferior position they had as slaves."[122] In addition, these views of the inferiority of non-Anglos affected relationships with Hispanics as well.[123]

Albert Hart notes that some blacks continued their relationships with ethnically diverse Southern Baptist congregations as late as 1910.[124] Using the color of a person's skin as a criterion for church membership was an affront to the principles of Christianity. Acts 10:34 states that God does not show favoritism. Further, Galatians 3:28, declares, "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." God's grace is available to all peoples; therefore, ethnicity should not divide the body of Christ. White Baptists were concerned that there would not be enough qualified clergy to lead black congregations. Whites also feared the social integration of free blacks with whites in ethnically diverse churches.[125]

In 1866, the Virginia Baptist paper categorically declared that there cannot be social and political equality between the blacks and whites. People should not attempt to bring together what they believed God had supremely separated.[126] The freedmen soon abandoned ethnically diverse churches in droves resulting in the formation of many all-black churches. Blacks were not driven from the ethnically diverse congregations, but they chose to leave by their own volition because of growing segregationist tendencies in the postwar culture of the South. They also rejected the second-class status afforded them by whites.[127] Although the whites did not initiate this ethnic departure, they quickly embraced it. Kenneth Bailey notes,

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[122]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 60.

[123]Jessica Vasquez argues that Hispanics face discrimination on the basis of name, skin color, and physical appearance. They learn at an early age that lighter skin color is better. Many use facial medications to lighten their skin color. Vasquez writes, "The advantage of being light-skinned lies in being the beneficiary of 'white privilege,' or at the very least obviating negative stereotypes to which darker-skinned individuals are more quickly and often subjected." See Jessica M. Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations: Immigrant Families, Racial Realities* (New York: New York University, 2011), 129. See also Grijalva, "The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists," 40 and Acuña, *Occupied America*, 108.

[124]Albert Bushnell Hart, *The Southern South* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), 167. Also see Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line* (New York: Doubleday, 1908), 35.

[125]Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 36.

[126]*Religious Herald* (Richmond, VA, April 19, 1866), 1, quoted in Spain, *At Ease in Zion*, 99.

[127]Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University, 2005), 27.

Baptist congregations frequently validated the withdrawal of virtually their entire black membership at one sitting; typically, the white deacons then assisted in organizing a new black church, including the drafting and ratification of a covenant and articles of faith, and the election, ordination, and installment of officers. [128]

The separation was amiable with whites assisting in the formation of black congregations, even erecting buildings for them.[129]

Christian organizations from the North gave generously to provide schools and teachers for the former slaves. The Home Mission Board of the North started the school that became Morehouse College as the Augusta Theological Seminary in 1867. Some Georgia Baptists supported the institution and the SBC funded scholarships for students who studied there. Wills writes,

The Southern Baptist Convention heard annual reports on the condition of the black population, sought help from northern Baptists, and appointed a number of missionaries, some of them black, to preach among them, build churches, provide basic education, and establish Sunday schools.[130]

The SBC supported the education of black ministers, but had limited funds to assist the work.[131]

The desire to prepare ethnic pastors through education subsequently expanded beyond African Americans. In 1899, C. D. Daniel was appointed as the Home Mission Board's superintendent of Mexican missions in Texas. He held a Bible institute in San Antonio. In 1911, Mary Gambrell wrote an impassioned plea for the support of mission work among Hispanics in Texas. Her husband, James B. Gambrell, was a pastor and denominational leader, serving as the Corresponding Secretary for Texas from 1896 until 1910, editor of the *Baptist Standard*, and as President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Mrs. Gambrell served alongside her husband. She was a staunch advocate of Bible institutes that were working to improve educational opportunities for Hispanics, especially for those called to the ministry. Her letter pointed out that

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[128]Kenneth K. Bailey, "Post-Civil War Racial Separations in Southern Protestantism: Another Look," *Church History* 46, no. 4 (December 1, 1977): 456-57.

[129]Ibid., 457.

[130]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 73.

[131]Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South,1863-1877* (New York: Oxford Universtiy, 1998), 93.

approximately 400,000 Spanish-speaking people were in Texas at the time. She called on

Baptists to share the gospel with their Spanish-speaking neighbors, assist with their educational

needs and opportunities, build needed church buildings, and provide financial resources to

support the work.[132] The need to provide education for Hispanic pastors led to the establishment

of the Mexican Bible Institute in 1947. In 1981, the Institute merged with Southwestern Baptist

Theological Seminary, continuing to educate Hispanic ministers.[133]

White controlled Baptist associations continued the prewar practice of enrolling black

churches in their fellowship. A substantial number of Southern Baptists did not consider

ethnicity to be grounds for exclusion from their associations. Messengers to the Texas

Convention meeting in 1865 expressed their desire to maintain their mixed ethnic heritage.

However, in the following year the South Carolina Baptist Convention acknowledged that blacks

preferred separate churches. The editor of the *Christian Index*, the Georgia Baptist paper, argued

that the former slaves' separation from white churches was only a matter of time.[134] The

associations comprised of white and black homogenous churches faced the difficult task of

finding amiable ways to satisfactorily accommodate the different ethnic groups. Bailey states,

"Freedmen would not happily submit to being treated like slaves, even at occasional meetings,

and whites were not disposed to accept them as equals."[135]

The Baptist denomination ordained many more Black clergy than any other

denomination due to the long held Baptist tenet of the autonomy of the local church. With the

absence of a hierarchical control of the churches, it was easier for African American candidates

to be ordained as Baptists.[136] Officiating white ministers routinely examined candidates for

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[132]Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas*, 23-28. Also see George W. Truett, "James Burton Gambrell," http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/gambrell.j.b.by.truett.html (accessed June 30, 2014).

[133]Grijalva, The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists," 41-42.

[134]*Christian Index* (Atlanta, February 24, 1866), 35, quoted in Rufus B. Spain, *At Ease in Zion: A Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1961), 49.

[135]Bailey, "Post-Civil War Racial Separations in Southern Protestantism: Another Look," 459.

[136]Ibid., 460-61.

ordination, even when the sponsoring church was black.[137]

African American Baptists endured segregation policies at ethnically diverse Baptist gatherings. David Goldenberg argues that the connotations of white as a symbol of good and black as a symbol of evil while metaphorical in nature were also applied to human reality by people of all colors.[138] The Ebenezer Association in Georgia required black churches to enlist white members from the nearest white church to represent them at associational meetings. If they failed to do so, their connection with the association was dissolved. A black church in Houston, Texas, was advised to enlist whites to serve in the positions of moderator and church clerk. Whites governed the Strong River Association in Mississippi, declaring that the "sons of Ham" were forever excluded from serving as messengers at their meetings. Such treatment led to the inevitable complete separation of the ecclesiological bodies.[139]

Nevertheless, increasing numbers of freedmen received the gospel, adopted the Christian faith, and founded their own churches and denominations. The establishment of these churches delivered a clear statement to the dominant culture that Christianity was neither originated nor controlled by Anglo Christians.[140] The autonomous denominations established by emancipated slaves offer evidence that contradicted the myth of inferiority and demonstrated their commitment to evangelical Christianity.[141] Hispanics also established their own conventions, but they remained under the SBC umbrella. The *Convención Bautista Mexicana de Texas* was born on May 25, 1910, with the blessing of The Baptist General Convention of Texas. The body was formed for the purpose of strengthening Mexican Baptist churches, providing

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[137]W. Harrison Daniel, "Virginia Baptists and the Negro, 1865-1902," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 76, no. 3 (July 1968): 354.

[138]David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2003), 3.

[139]Bailey, "Post-Civil War Racial Separations in Southern Protestantism," 462-63.

[140]Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 199. Also see Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 36, and Spain, *At Ease in Zion*, 115-16.

[141]Boles, "Introduction," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*, 17.

more practical and effective preaching of the gospel to Hispanics.[142]

A vigorous debate over the issue of the relationship between white and black Baptists occurred at the 1869 meeting of the SBC. Richard Fuller presented a report from the committee on German, Indian, and Colored Missions conducted by the Home Mission Board. Fuller pointed to the spiritual needs of the former slaves and the SBC's responsibility to address those needs and to provide theological training for black ministers.[143] Fuller stated that Baptists would never overcome their racial prejudice until the two groups worked together as brothers and sisters in Christ. A committee of five was appointed to explore the issues that were raised on the Convention floor with Fuller chairing the committee. The committee recommended that the Home Mission Board establish a Freedmen's Board Department and an uncompromised commitment to their African American brothers. The Convention, however, dismissed the collegial language of the committee in favor of referring to blacks simply as the colored population and refused to authorize the establishment of the Freedman's Board Department.[144]

Following the Civil War, the SBC contended that God's plan for society was to keep ethnic groups separate, avoiding any social interaction between them. Civil rights legislation introduced in Congress in 1874 included a provision that called for the integration of public schools. This proposal met vigorous opposition from Southern Baptists. Daniel states, "The desire for separate schools, it was contended, was a divinely implanted instinct designed to keep apart races widely different in color, social qualities, and moral tendencies."[145] Congress passed the Civil Rights Act in 1875 promising equality to all people under the law and equal access to all public facilities including transportation, entertainment centers, and restaurants.[146] The Civil

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[142]Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas*, 23-27

[143]*Biblical Recorder*, June 2, 1869, 1, http://recorder.zsr.wfu.edu/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin. asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=WakeforestA&BaseHref=BCR/1869/06/02&PageLabelPrint=1&EntityId =Ar00100&ViewMode=GIF (assessed May 10, 2013).

[144]Ibid.

[145]Daniel, "Virginia Baptists and the Negro," 342.

[146]"The 1875 Civil Rights Act," http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/activism/ps_1875.html (accessed June 21, 2013).

Rights Act, however, was not enforced and was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1883.[147]

Harvey notes that white Baptists in the South considered the race issue as merely a Negro problem that could be successfully managed by whites.[148] As a result of the Convention's actions and the cultural climate of the day, there were only a few black congregations numbered among Southern Baptists after 1872. That year, the Georgia State Baptist Convention reported 4,661 blacks among their total membership of 53,475. That number dwindled to 1,051 in 1879 and to thirteen in 1894. Bailey notes, "Outside of Maryland, the entire Southern Baptist denomination included only a few thousand blacks at the end of the 1870s and not more than two or three thousand at the end of the 1880s."[149] Both the white and black Baptist denominations grew rapidly in the South. Harvey states,

> By 1910, about 40 percent of white churchgoers and 60 percent of black churchgoers in the South were Baptists. Most of these nearly five million southern Baptists worshiped in churches associated with the Southern Baptist Convention (white) or the National Baptist Convention (black).[150]

The abolition of slavery created a cultural paradigm shift in the South. Black Baptists had much in common with their white brothers, yet they were convinced that Christianity taught social equality for all people, an opinion that was widely rejected by Southern Baptists in the nineteenth century. Black Baptists held divergent views as to the degree of cooperation and separation from white Baptists, but because whites were unwilling to offer equal standing to minorities in the church in the nineteenth century, separate churches were essential to the advancement of the status of minorities.[151]

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[147]"Civil Rights Act of 1875 Declared Unconstitutional," http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_uncivil.html (accessed June 21, 2013).

[148]Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 229-30.

[149]Bailey, "Post-Civil War Racial Separations in Southern Protestantism," 470.

[150]Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 3.

[151]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 69.

The Civil Rights Movement and Beyond

Years before the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, Southern Baptists recognized the conflicts of the ethics demanded by Christianity and the ethnic practices of the South and Southwest. Nevertheless, Southern Baptists experienced a period of rapid expansion and growth in the South following Reconstruction. The Convention continued its strong emphasis on the evangelizing of the lost, biblical preaching, and mission support and involvement. In addition, the SBC established schools and hospitals to address educational and physical needs. There were preachers serving in rural areas that took up the cause of economic reform in their farming communities. Urban pastors, however, protested such action, holding to the view that the church should stay out of politics. Wayne Flynt points out that as the mill industry came to dominate small towns in the South, a few pastors spoke out against the injustices and abuses of the mill system, but most Baptist churches served the needs of the owners.[152]

The majority of Southern Baptists refrained from social action believing it hindered their evangelistic efforts. Nevertheless, Southern Baptists rallied with solidarity to the call for social action in support for Prohibition, convinced the banishment of alcohol was necessary in order for the culture to experience redemption. While Southern Baptists were generally wary of ecumenical action, in this instance they united with other religious groups against the sale and consumption of alcohol. Concern over Prohibition led to the formation of the Social Service Commission in 1913. This commission was the SBC's first organized effort to tackle social concerns outside of the church and denomination.[153] Such action raised the social consciousness of the SBC and laid the groundwork for greater sensitivity and involvement in social issues.

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the United States. The organization was founded to secure for all people the rights guaranteed in the Constitution, which promised an

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[152]Wayne Flynt, "One in the Spirit, Many in the Flesh: Southern Evangelicals," in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, ed. David Edwin Harrell, Jr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1981), 36-44. Also see Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 38.

[153]Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 38, and Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 77.

end to slavery, equal protection under the law, and the rights of all American citizens to vote. The organization played a major role in the Brown versus the Board of Education Supreme Court case that outlawed segregation in public schools in 1954. Other major accomplishments include the integration of the armed services in 1948, the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1964, and 1968, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.[154]

The oldest Hispanic civil rights organization in the United States is the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) founded in 1929 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The Hispanics were a conquered and marginalized people who had been denied their civil and human rights.[155] Hispanics had been plagued by prejudice and discrimination. The LULAC was organized to fight for the rights of Hispanics that had been so often abused by the majority ethnic group.[156] The 1930s brought an increase in Christian ministries that focused on local communities and the whole person. The success of these ministries due to social activism met sharp opposition from the Anglo churches that originally supported their establishment and by many Hispanic congregations as well. Through the community center ministries, awareness of the systemic problems of social injustice grew. The Hispanic community desired reciprocity where Hispanic residents could participate in developing and implementing policy decisions that affected the community.[157]

While approaching the issues of civil rights from different perspectives, both the NAACP and the LULAC played significant roles in improving the status and opportunities for minorities in the United States. These Civil Rights organizations focused on social, legal, legislative, and political means to accomplish their goals. Through the election process, they

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[154]"NAACP: 100 Years of History," http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history (accessed July 17, 2014). Initially, the NAACP sought the universal male suffrage. The right for women to vote came later.

[155]Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas, 2009), 1.

[156]League of United Latin Citizens, "LULAC History—All for One and One for All," http://lulac.org/about/history (accessed July 10, 2014).

[157]Sylvest, "Hispanic American Protestantism in the United States," 153-54.

endorsed minority candidates giving voice to the issues of social justice and minority representation.

The Struggle for Integration

Southern Baptists experienced another period of rapid growth and expansion during World War II that extended into the 1960s. From 1941 to 1961, Southern Baptists grew from a membership of five million members in twenty-five thousand churches to ten million members in over thirty-two thousand churches. While the number of rural churches remained the same as the Convention reported in 1922, the number of urban churches quadrupled. More Baptists were attending college, graduate schools, and seminaries. As the level of income rose among Southern Baptists, social issues and ways of addressing them were also undergoing significant alterations.[158]

Following the conclusion of World War II, the cry for an end to discrimination and the perceived superiority of the Anglos cultivated the soil out of which the civil rights movement grew. Blacks and Hispanics sacrificed equally with Anglos to preserve the freedom and sovereignty of the United States during the war. A growing number of Americans believed that they should be treated with dignity and equality under the law. The issue of the desegregation of the nation grew among many ethnic groups, but particularly among blacks and Hispanics.[159]

The Social Service Commission continued to address social issues on behalf of Southern Baptists. The Commission led the SBC to appoint a special committee on race relations in 1946 annual meeting in Miami. In 1947, the SBC made the Commission a full-time entity and for the first time allocated Cooperative Program funds to finance their work.[160] The Charter of Principles of Race Relations, adopted by the SBC in 1947, supported the desegregation of colleges, professional organizations, and labor unions. The Commission opposed discriminatory

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[158]Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 52-57.

[159]Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*, 65.

[160]Jerry Sutton, *A Matter of Conviction: A History of Southern Baptist Engagement with Culture* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 123-24.

voting, education, and employment practices.[161] The Committee on Race Relations made several recommendations at the 1947 Convention meeting calling on Southern Baptists to promote goodwill in race relations, following the teachings of Scripture on Christian truth and love. The Commission recommended the development of a comprehensive educational program to increase racial understanding and called for partnerships with African American denominations to provide ministerial education for blacks. The committee's recommendations were adopted by the Convention.[162]

During the early days of his ministry, Southern Baptist Evangelist Billy Graham struggled with the race issue. As a product of the South, he inherited the view that African Americans were qualitatively different and inferior to whites. Graham's father held to this position that was common in the South, but he also hired an educated black man, Reese Brown, who was a veteran of World War I to serve as the foreman on his dairy farm. The younger Graham admired Brown as he worked alongside him and shared meals with him. Graham's relationship with this black man made it difficult to sustain what he had been taught about black inferiority.

After Graham received Christ he was unable to reconcile his racist heritage with the biblical truth that there is no favoritism with God (Rom 2:11). Still, like most evangelicals even in the North, Graham did not consider it his duty to oppose segregation. Rather, he considered it enough if he personally treated the blacks he knew with civility and equality.[163] During the 1952 meeting of the SBC, Graham spoke at the youth night program on Saturday, May 17, in Miami, Florida.[164] Graham created a stir by calling on every Baptist college to practice their Christian

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[161]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 189.

[162]*Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1947* (Nashville: The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1947), 47-48, 340-43.

[163]William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: Quill/William Marrow, 1991), 167-68.

[164]*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1952* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention), 58.

duty by welcoming academically qualified Negro students. Graham felt compelled to speak against desegregation, but he felt his first priority was to appeal to as many people as possible so that he would have more open doors whereby he could preach the gospel. These two convictions were often at odds with each other. Graham was troubled that blacks were relegated to special seating areas at many of his crusades. He took corrective action at many of his meetings to remove the barriers that placed whites in one section and blacks in another. In 1956, Graham moved his crusade in Columbia, South Carolina, from the statehouse grounds to the federal military base at Fort Jackson because Governor Timmerman refused to grant permission for the integrated meeting on state property.[165]

On several occasions Graham met with civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., extending his support for the Civil Rights Movement. Some criticized Graham for taking a position in support of desegregation while others expressed frustration because his support did not go far enough. He spoke against segregation, but he also wanted to appeal to as many people as possible.[166] The evangelical emphasis on personal evangelism and discipleship has led to tension in regard to the minimization of social impact because evangelicals tend to avoid conflicts that would hamper the advance of the gospel.[167]

At the 1954 Convention, in response to the Supreme Court's ruling against segregation in public schools, the Christian Life Commission's report stated, "We recognize the fact that this Supreme Court decision is in harmony with the constitutional guarantee of equal freedom to all citizens, and with the Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men."[168] Surprisingly, the report was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the nine thousand messengers in

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[165]Newman, *Getting Right with God*, 67-70.

[166]Martin, *A Prophet with Honor*, 167-72.

[167]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 21-27.

[168]*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1954* (Nashville: The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1954), 56. The quote above is from recommendation three. There was a motion to amend the Christian Life Commission's report and recommendations by striking recommendation three, but the amendment failed.

attendance. Southern Baptists generally acknowledged their belief in the equality of all people, but most remained segregationists. They apparently did not recognize the discontinuity in their beliefs and their practice.[169] While the SBC affirmed the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision, they did not condemn the practice of segregation nor overtly urge the integration of its churches and institutions.[170] The Brown vs. the Board of Education decision is usually framed as a black and white ruling; nevertheless, it also affected Hispanics. Sandoval states,

> In less publicized cases the League of United Latin American Citizens had won important state victories that had set the stage for the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. In 1945, In *Mendez vs. Orange County* (California), a federal court in San Francisco banned segregation of children of Mexican or Latin descent "for reasons of race, color or national origin." Then, in 1948, a court in Texas ruled for the first time that it was unlawful and unconstitutional to segregate Mexican children in the public schools of Texas.[171]

As a result of these decisions, integration began to impact not only public schools, but other public arenas as well prior to the Supreme Court judgment.

One of the SBC's most influential pastors, W. A. Criswell, openly criticized the court's ruling. Criswell served as the pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, the largest church in the SBC. He preached a blistering message on racial segregation at the South Carolina Baptist Evangelism Conference held in Columbia on February 21, 1956. He called on Southern Baptists to ardently oppose mandatory desegregation, denouncing it as an attack against Baptists' beliefs. South Carolina Governor, George Bell Timmerman, Jr., asked Criswell to address the legislature the following day with the same message. Timmerman was a zealous supporter of segregation and a member of the First Baptist Church of Batesburg, South Carolina. He was ecstatic to have the prominent pastor from Dallas verbalize his segregationist views before the legislature. Criswell's address in South Carolina left a mark on the SBC and race relations.[172]

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[169]David Christopher Roach, "The Southern Baptist Convention and Civil Rights, 1954-1995" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 5-6.

[170]Mark Newman, *Getting Right with God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama, 2001), 174.

[171]Sandoval, *On the Move*, 79.

[172]Curtis W. Freeman, "'Never Had I Been So Blind': W. A. Criswell's 'Change' on Racial Segregation," *Journal of Southern Religion* 10 (2007): 2-3.

Another prominent SBC pastor, Douglas Hudgins, who served First Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi, proclaimed at the height of the Civil Rights Movement that the cross of Christ has nothing to do with social movements, but rather points to the need for individual salvation.[173] Hudgins expressed that personal salvation is the primary issue rather than the transformation of culture. He believed that as people received Christ and followed him, the problems of culture would be conquered.

Some Southern Baptist pastors who supported integration were forced to resign from their churches because of their views. Fortune Baptist Church in Parkin, Arkansas, dismissed their pastor, E. Jones, for his opposition to Jim Crow laws in 1955 after he declared them to be unchristian in a sermon.[174] Other churches denounced the Christian Life Commission's report and threatened to withdraw financial support from the Convention. At the annual meeting in 1958, the President of the SBC and the heads of both the Foreign and Home Mission Boards endorsed the court's desegregation decision. When segregationists began to organize to fight the court order, twenty-eight officials representing every denominational agency of the SBC published a document urging Southern Baptists to comply with federal authorities.[175] While the Commission and denominational leaders enjoyed some success in encouraging Southern Baptists to support integration, many in the Convention staunchly opposed such action.[176]

The desegregation order was the fertile soil out of which the Civil Rights Movement grew. When the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin was outlawed.[177] Eighmy notes,

> By the mid-sixties, however, the inherent justice of the movement and the violence of the resistance moved the commission to action. Executive Secretary [Foy] Valentine conducted

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[173]Leonard, *Baptists in America*, 191.

[174]Newman, *Getting Right with God*, 159.

[175]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 190-92.

[176]Sutton, *A Matter of Conviction*, 153.

[177]"The Civil Rights Act of 1964," http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/about/history/CivilRightsAct.cfm (accessed June 25, 2013).

a Christian citizenship seminar for denominational leaders in Washington in the spring of 1964. President [Lyndon B.] Johnson entertained the delegation at the White House and made a plea for Baptist support of the civil rights bill then being considered in Congress. The next month, Valentine asked the Southern Baptist Convention to endorse a statement backing civil rights laws.[178]

In 1964, the Christian Life Commission's recommendation on race relations stated,

(1) That we commend those Southern Baptist institutions which have extended their Christian ministries to people of all races; (2) That we approve the positive action taken by hundreds of Southern Baptist churches in affirming an open-door policy for all people regardless of racial origin; (3) That we express gratitude for those individual Christians and churches who are involving themselves redemptively in community race relations; (4) That we pledge to support the laws designed to guarantee the legal rights of Negroes in our democracy and to go beyond these laws by practicing Christian love and reconciliation in all human relationships; and (5) That through legislation and through love, through work and through witness, through open doors and through open hearts, through repentance and through renewal, Southern Baptists give themselves to the decisive defeat of racism, and that it be done for the glory of God.[179]

A vigorous and extended debate ensued on the recommendation demonstrating the Southern Baptist divide on the civil rights issue. Ultimately, a substitute motion passed by a narrow margin leaving the race problem for churches to decide at the local level.[180] While the final recommendation was consistent with the tenacity of Southern Baptists to honor the autonomy of the local church, it was considerably less aggressive in its approach to the race issue.

In regard to the Christian Life Commission and its influence, Eighmy notes,

The civil rights movement [sic] offered the first real test of the commission's ability to enter a serious controversy and supply relevant guidance that Southern Baptists would accept. The commission's ultimate success was an important measure of the denomination's gains toward greater social responsibility.[181]

Even with the victories that the Commission gained, Southern Baptists offered little assistance to the Civil Rights Movement. The denomination's colleges and universities were integrated, but they did not lead the way. They merely followed suit after the integration of other schools.[182]

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[178]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 193.

[179]*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1964* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1964), 73.

[180]Ibid., 72-74.

[181]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 194.

[182]Newman, *Getting Right with God*, 178.

At the 1965 annual meeting of the SBC in Dallas, Texas, the denomination affirmed

its passive support for civil rights legislation. The Christian Life Commission's report charged

that the race issue is fundamentally a spiritual problem. The report states,

> While we thank God for legal, sociological, and economic progress which has been made in race relations during the past year, we reassert our deep conviction that the ultimate solution of the racial problem lies on distinctively spiritual grounds. A [sic] citizens we are grateful for legal progress, but as Christians we long for far greater spiritual progress. The law can desegregate the public schools, extend public accommodations, and guarantee voting rights; but only the gospel can transform human lives.[183]

While Southern Baptists held strong and differing opinions regarding desegregation, they were

united in their belief that only the gospel can transform lives and ultimately impact the culture.

Several prominent Southern Baptist churches continued to prohibit African Americans

from worshiping with them, reflecting the feelings of many white Baptists about integration. The

First Baptist Churches in Atlanta, Houston, Oklahoma City, and Montgomery were among those

who received media coverage for their rejection of blacks who wanted to attend worship services

with their congregations. Many more Southern Baptist churches, however, welcomed blacks. In

1968, Criswell publicly changed his position on desegregation, declaring in a sermon that anyone

from any background was welcomed at First Baptist in Dallas.[184] He reversed his opinion after

studying and reflecting on the Scriptures, concluding that segregation could not be supported by

the text.[185] The First Baptist Church in Atlanta also changed its policy and was numbered among

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[183]*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1965* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1965), 246.

[184]Some questioned the sincerity of Criswell's acceptance of desegregation characterizing it as disingenuous. His successor at First Baptist Church in Dallas also viewed Criswell's turnaround on the race issue as a political calculation that he deemed necessary if he was to be elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Criswell was indeed elected as the president of the SBC in 1968 in Houston. See Freeman, "'Never Had I Been So Blind'," 9, and Joel Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church* (Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994), 47-48. These remarks by Freeman and Gregory ignore the work of God in leading his followers to grow in grace (2 Pet 3:18). While a variety of factors were doubtlessly at work in leading Criswell to renounce his segregationist views, his theology was certainly at the heart of his decision. The changing culture of the United States, pushed Criswell and many others to deal with the inconsistencies in their theological understanding of salvation as it relates to segregation. Through the mission endeavors of the SBC, Criswell actively participated in sharing the gospel with all people groups. Criswell's shift on desegregation was consistent with his biblical theology and had a great influence on many others. See, Roach, "The Southern Baptist Convention and Civil Rights, 1954-1995," 37, W. A. Criswell, *Standing on the Promises: The Autobiography of W. A. Criswell* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 201-04, and Billy Keith, *W. A. Criswell: The Story of a Courageous and Uncompromising Christian Leader* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1973), 177-78.

[185]Newman, *Getting Right with God*, 63.

SBC congregations who adopted policies that welcomed minorities. Southern Baptist denounced Civil Rights demonstrations, but they opposed the violence whites inflicted on demonstrators.[186]

John Perkins, a black evangelical, relates a story of a black soldier who served as a sergeant in the army during World War II. Upon his return to his hometown of New Hebron, Mississippi, at the conclusion of the war, he was beaten almost to death with an ax handle by a group of white men simply because they thought he had too many big ideas.[187] Perkins' brother, Clyde, was shot and killed by a police officer for apparently asking a question and then defending himself against a beating. There was no official inquiry into the incident. It appeared the ruling philosophy of the area was that the actions of whites in authority were always justified. Incidents like these were all too common in the South during the years leading to the Civil Rights Movement. Blacks felt like second-class citizens with limited opportunities for gainful employment and financial advancement.[188] Blacks found empowerment through community as they worked together in numbers to accomplish their goals, realizing the synergy they experienced by working together was stronger than any action they could have taken alone.[189]

Southern Baptists were deeply moved by the violence of the late sixties with the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. King, the unchallenged leader of the Civil Rights Movement, was assassinated by a sniper's bullet on April 4, 1968 at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.[190] Presidential candidate Robert Kennedy, an architect of Civil Rights legislation, was shot shortly after midnight on June 5, 1968, at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California, dying three days later.[191] The Southern Baptist Convention was

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[186]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Crisis*, 195.

[187]John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1976), 16.

[188]Ibid., 21-23.

[189]Ibid., 131-43.

[190]Jennifer Rosenberg, "Martin Luther King Jr. Assassinated," http://history1900s.about.com/cs/martinlutherking/a/mlkassass.htm (accessed June 27, 2013).

[191]Jennifer Rosenberg, "Robert Kennedy Assassination," http://history1900s.about.com/od/1960s/a/Robert-Kennedy-Assassination.htm (accessed June 27, 2013).

in session in Houston, Texas, at the time of the Kennedy shooting. On Wednesday morning, June 5, a telegram was sent from the Convention to Mrs. Robert Kennedy expressing the sympathy of the fourteen thousand messengers attending the Convention to the Kennedy family and pledging their prayers for Senator Kennedy's recovery.[192] The Convention discussed the Executive Committee's Recommendation No. 24, "A Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation" prepared by SBC officers and denominational executives that confessed their responsibility for the social climate that led to the violence of the urban riots. The Convention's messengers committed themselves to address the public issues of racism, injustice, and violence. They also pledged to seek equality in job opportunities, education, and public services. The final version of the statement was weakened before its adoption. The pressing plea for action resulted in a request for Convention agencies to deal with the crisis through existing programs. Even this toned down version of the original statement represented the SBC's strongest support for racial justice in the denomination's history. Baptist publications played a significant role in educating Southern Baptists on the social issues the nation faced, encouraging responsible social action. They affirmed the Civil Rights statutes and called on Southern Baptists to obey the legislation.[193]

Eighmy charges that the SBC clergy failed to provide moral leadership in matters of race for more than one hundred years. There were, however, extenuating circumstances that limited what they could do. Since Baptist polity is built upon the autonomy of the local church and democratic rule, SBC pastors lacked the protection that presbyteries and hierarchy provided for other denominations. A Southern Baptist pastor with a normal family and church obligations found it difficult to lead the way on controversial social issues that could face strong opposition in the church and community and possibly cause him to be fired. Eighmy concludes,

> If Southern Baptists have made advances, they have done so within an institutional and ideological framework that remains unchanged. Their conservative theology, religious individualism, and congregational government continue to restrict progressive social

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[192]*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1968* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1968), 63.

[193]Ibid., 67-69, 81.

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expression. The main source of hope is the ever-growing number of enlightened leaders who are vocal, influential, and strategically located in pastorates, schools, and denominational positions. For the character of Southern Baptist influence in the secular world will be determined largely by the extent to which leaders of this sort are allowed to shape denominational social attitudes and action.[194]

For Eighmy, conservative theology, religious individualism, and a church polity built on congregational rule are aspects of Southern Baptist life that discourages involvement in social causes. Conservative theology and a commitment to biblical inerrancy, however, place Southern Baptists in the best position to influence the culture to reflect God's plan for his creation. There is, nevertheless, a polarity that exists between religious individualism and the community of faith.[195] Due to their adherence to soul competency and personal evangelism, Southern Baptists experience a tension between reaching as many individuals as possible with the gospel and being a cultural change agent through social action. Too often Baptists have avoided challenging societal structures for fear of prohibiting the expansion of the gospel. Invariably, these two emphases are in conflict with each other at times.[196]

A Racialized Society

The segregation of Southern Baptist churches continues in the United States even as the nation becomes increasingly diverse. Southern Baptists lag behind public and private institutions and most businesses in regard to ethnic diversity. Southern Baptists worship each week in predominantly homogeneous fellowships, practicing ethnic segregation, intentionally or unintentionally, while sending and supporting missionaries to people groups all over the world to spread the gospel of Christ. Although churches often advertise their desire to welcome all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, their organizational structure, church polity, history, and staff lack the intentionality to attract and hold people from other ethnicities. Rodney Woo notes that there is an inconsistency in seeking to reach all the people groups of the

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[194]Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 199.

[195]John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 57-58. Macquarrie addressed human existence and its polarities, one of which is the tension that exists between individuality and community.

[196]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 25-27.

world for Christ through global missions while ignoring the ethnic barriers on the local church level.[197]

The ethnic problem in the United States is not restricted to unfair treatment or personal prejudice, but it is rather more systemic in nature. The Brown versus the Board of Education decision and the 1960s Civil Rights legislation represented the first stage of eliminating racial discrimination. While these events removed the legal structures that led to discrimination, they did not insure equal opportunities for minorities in formerly all white institutions. Systemic barriers of a more subtle nature continue to restrict opportunities for ethnic groups.[198] Emerson and Smith state, "A racialized society is a society where race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships."[199] Characteristics of a racialized society are a low rate of multiethnic marriages, residential segregation, and social and economic inequality. Race and ethnicity function as social constructs. Eugene Nida argues that while race is an acceptable biological concept, it is invalid from a sociocultural perspective.[200] Race is primarily based on observable traits that a group of people have in common.[201] Emerson and Smith point out that race is a social construct for at least two reasons. While race is based on physical traits, it is only based on selected physical qualities, not all of them. Since these physical traits have social meaning, race is therefore a social construct.[202] The biblical record bears witness that ancient peoples were from blended ethnic groups. In the lineage of King David both a Moabite woman (Ruth) and Hebrews are listed. The Bible traces the human race back to a

[197]Rodney M. Woo, *The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 39.

[198]Thomas F. Pettigrew and Joanne Martin, "Shaping the Organizational Context for Black Inclusion," *Journal of Social Issues* 43 (1987): 42.

[199]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 7.

[200]Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1986), 57.

[201]Tyrone C. Howard, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2010), 53.

[202]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 7.

common ancestor, Adam, the father of all humanity (Acts 17:26). Ethnicity is a narrower term than race in that several ethnic groups may be identified in a single race. Ethnicity refers to a people group who share a history, language, social mores, and religion.[203]

The idea of ethnicity as a social construct sheds light on the tensions experienced in the South during the slavery era. Forced servitude was justified because Africans were considered to be inferior to whites intellectually, socially, and religiously. The outward manifestations of ethnic prejudice have waned with the abolition of slavery, the overthrow of Jim Crow laws, integration, civil rights legislation, etc. One might conclude that the minority problem has been declining and practically eliminated. But Emerson and Smith argue that ethnic prejudice is alive and well in contemporary American society. They identify four characteristics of such practices that cause division in the United States: 1) they are increasingly covert, 2) they are embedded in the routine operational practices of institutions, 3) they avoid direct ethnic terminology, and 4) they are unknown and unseen by most whites.[204]

While doing research on the race issue in the United States in the 1940s, Gunnar Myrdal interviewed many people who told him that the United States once had a race problem during the slavery era, but it no longer existed. These whites did not see the ethnic inequalities of segregation, believing that the separate but equal policy was just. When challenged, most whites defended their practices as fair and attempted to justify their social system. On the other hand, blacks had a very different view. Myrdal writes,

> The difference between the two groups, with respect to the recognition of the Negro problem, corresponds, of course to the fundamental fact that the white group is above and the Negro group is below, that the one is intent upon preserving the *status quo*, while the other wants change and relief from the pressure of the dominant group. The one group is tempted to convince itself and others that there is "no problem." The other group has a contrary interest to see clearly and even make visible to others the existence of a real problem.[205]

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[203]Kenneth A. Mathews and M. Sydney Park, *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 30-31.

[204]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 9.

[205]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 32.

Due to slavery, white and black concerns have deeper roots, but other races and ethnicities experience similar issues, even though their histories are not as long in the United States. To overcome the segregation problem that confronts the church, especially in regard to multiethnic churches, Americans must address both attitudes and practices in regard to multiethnic families, economic inequalities, language, housing patterns, access to health care, entertainment habits, and where and with whom people worship and have fellowship. The Christian faith is a powerful force to address these problems. However, religion has often been an obstacle rather than a productive force to overcome these issues, creating barriers rather than tearing them down.[206] Southern Baptists have rightly emphasized personal conversion and discipleship, but in an increasingly diverse culture, they must find ways to intentionally address these systemic issues and impact the culture for social change that both glorifies God and opens doors for the advancement of the gospel. Multiethnic churches where people from various ethnicities, backgrounds, cultures, and socioeconomic standing unite around the gospel worshiping and serving God together provide a viable platform to accomplish these purposes.

Immigration

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants. Many ethnic groups migrated to the United States to escape persecution, political unrest, and to seek freedom. The decades of the 1960s and 1970s found more people from around the world moving to the United States. The prospects of security, freedom, and prosperity drew people from many nations to America.[207] Cuban Dictator Fidel Castro embraced Marxist-Communism in 1959, which led to a series of political migrations of Cubans to the United States.[208] The first wave of refuges from Cuba came soon after the triumph of the Cuban revolution over the tyrannical leadership of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. The majority of Cubans enjoyed the elation of the successful

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[206]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 11-19.

[207]Gustavo Vicente Suárez, "A Critical Analysis of Southern Baptist Hispanic Church Planting Strategies in North America, 1970-1994," Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013, 1.

[208]Ibid., 8.

revolution, but when Castro declared himself to be a Marxist-Communist, he pushed the government into a more radical phase that initiated the migration of political immigrants in earnest. The United States ordered economic and diplomatic sanctions aganist the communist regime that was a blow to the Cuban economy and contributed to the exodus of Cubans to America.[209]

In 1965, the United States Congress passed the Hart-Celler Immigration Bill just one year after voting civil rights legislation into law. The Immigration Bill brought an end to the national origins quota system that had been the law of the land since 1921. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the bill, he argued that it was not a revolutionary law and that it would not restructure the daily lives of Americans. Contrary to the President's assertion, the law initiated a new age of massive immigration that impacted millions of Americans. Fundamental to the bill was the reunification of families and employment opportunities for the newcomers. At the time of the passage of the bill, most people viewed it largely as a symbolic act extending the sentiments of civil rights to those who lived outside the borders of the nation. In the thirty years following the signing of the bill into law, more than eighteen million documented immigrants have made the United States their home, tripling the number of immigrants during the previous thirty years.[210] Additional waves of Cuban immigrants came to the United States to escape Castro's communist policies. Global events such as the Vietnam War, famines and other natural disasters, political unrest, and unstable governments chased people from Latin America, Canada, Western Europe, and Asia to the states. The landscape of the nation was rapidly transformed from a primarily homogeneous culture to a more pluralistic, multiethnic civilization. Gustavo Suárez points out that neighborhoods where first generation immigrants once lived speaking in their native languages are now increasingly bilingual, speaking English as well as their

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[209]Silvia Pedraza, "Cuba's Refuges: Manifold Migrations," (Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 1995), 311-12, http://www.ascecuba.org/c/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/v05-FILE26.pdf (accessed November 25, 2014).

[210]"Three Decades of Mass Immigration: The Legacy of the 1965 Immigration Act" (Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies, 1995), http://www.cis.org/articles/1995/back395.html (accessed November 25, 2014).

indigenous language. In addition to documented immigrants, an increasing number of undocumented immigrants entered the United States during this time period as well.[211]

These waves of immigration opened doors for evangelism and church planting for Southern Baptists. Through language missions, many of first generation immigrants and their families were reached with the gospel. Rejecting the melting pot metaphor, Oscar Romo, a Hispanic Southern Baptist leader, preferred the idea of a mosaic of diverse peoples who spoke languages other than English and lived in a divergent culture. Romo argued that the only Americans that spoke English were first generation immigrants from England. He stated, "Most of America's people speak a form of new English we more properly might call 'Americanism.' It is a blend of a variety of languages, influenced in numerous ways by immigrants who come to our shores."[212] Further, Romo argued that Southern Baptists should honor the needs of diverse ethnic groups, allowing them to be themselves so that they may express their indigenous languages and cultures. During his 23-year tenure leading the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board, Romo led Southern Baptists to adopt this strategy.

Romo's strategy was effective for advancing the gospel to first-generation immigrants, but is this strategy the most effective way to reach second and third generation immigrants in the increasingly multiethnic climate of the United States? The answer to this question is complex, particularly in the Hispanic context. Suárez identifies several important cultural characteristics of Hispanic culture. Hispanics place a strong emphasis on the family that extends beyond the nuclear family to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Many decisions are made after discussion with members of the extended family. Connecting with the oldest, most respected family member opens the door for the gospel witness. Hispanics tend to be more relational than task-oriented. Spending time with family and friends is very important for the

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[211]Suárez, "A Critical Analysis of Southern Baptist Hispanic Church-Planting Strategies in North America, 19970-1994," 1-2, 77.

[212]Oscar I. Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 14.

Hispanic community. A clear understanding of these social relationships serves as a bridge for communicating the gospel. Further, Hispanics are proud people who value their cultural heritage. Because of the discrimination that they have endured, the Hispanic community longs for respect. If treated with respect, they normally respond by respecting others. Hispanics who are not of Mexican heritage may be offended if they are called Mexicans. Referring to undocumented Hispanics as "illegal aliens" is offensive. Using terms such as "undocumented Hispanics" is preferred. Hispanics often reflect a cultural religion where religious practices are influenced more by the culture rather than commitment. This cultural religion often blends aspects of Catholicism with spiritualism, liberation theology, and the social gospel. Understanding these cultural religious roots lays a foundation for intercultural dialog. Spanish is the language that unites Hispanic immigrants from many nations in the United States. Hispanics tend to be more emotional than rational, placing more emphasis on feelings than logical reasoning. In regard to time, because of the way Hispanics value relationships, they tend to be far less concerned about promptness than Anglos. Because of these factors, Hispanics may be more comfortable worshiping in Spanish-speaking services, particularly if they are first generation immigrants.[213]

Understanding these cultural characteristics is essential for multiethnic churches that minister with Hispanics. These cultural characteristics offer valuable insight for Anglos who are seeking to understand and minister to Hispanics. There will always be a place for language missions, particularly for first generation immigrants, but multiethnic churches offer an effective strategy for ministry especially for second and succeeding generations of ethnic immigrants in the increasingly diverse culture of the United States.

Socioeconomic Factors

African Americans and Hispanics have the highest poverty rates in the United States hovering at 30 percent from the 1980s through the mid-1990s before gradually falling to

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[213]Suárez, "A Critical Analysis of Southern Baptist Hispanic Church Planting Strategies in North America, 1970-1994," 70-75.

approximately 22 percent. By 2010, their poverty rates, however, rose to 26 percent. In contrast, the poverty rate among Asians was only 11 percent.[214] Socioeconomic factors may be as divisive in the United States as ethnicity, creating another barrier for multiethnic churches. Michael Allen, pastor of Uptown Church in Chicago, points out that the diversity of his congregation is not only ethnic, but also economic.[215] The majority ethnicity imposed the laws and controlled the government since the United States was founded as a nation causing minority ethnic groups to suffer inequality on many social and economic fronts. This economic oppression impacts social opportunities as well as education, quality housing, and high paying jobs. Economic viability also contributes to the segregation of neighborhoods. Sociologist George Yancey notes that multiethnic churches tend to be located in areas where access to various ethnic groups is easily attainable rather than in lower class segregated neighborhoods or suburban areas populated primarily by whites of European descent. Transitional neighborhoods where whites with higher incomes are exiting and ethnic groups with lower incomes are arriving are fertile ground for multiethnic church development. Stable multiethnic areas of cities also provide rich soil for establishing a multiethnic church. The church is able to draw from the human resources of residents of the various ethnic groups represented in the neighborhood.[216]

Access to quality education has been limited by the earning potential of minorities creating a vicious cycle of poverty, marginalization, and oppression. Victor Pulido, pastor of *Iglesia Bautista del Sur El Calvario* in Turlock, California, stated that some of the greatest challenges facing Hispanic Southern Baptist churches are access to economic opportunities, affordable education, and suitable housing. Hispanics lack access to well paying jobs that would make education and housing more obtainable.[217] Pulido is an insider to the Hispanic community

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[214]Institute for Research on Poverty, "Who Is Poor?" http://www.irp.wisc.edu/faqs/faq3.htm (accessed June 20, 2014).

[215]Michael Allen, telephone interview by author, January 21, 2014.

[216]George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 68-69.

[217]Victor Pulido, interview by author, Baltimore, MD, June 11, 2014.

with a mixed Mexican and Argentine heritage. He also works as a Church Consultant for LifeWay and serves as President of the Hispanic Network in California.

Andrew Hacker, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Queens College in New York, notes that while progress has been made in providing economic opportunities for minority ethnic groups, he decries that minorities are underrepresented in many private professions such as engineering, theology, law, architecture, and journalism. While opportunities have grown in the entertainment industry as well as in the public and service sectors, minorities continue to be underrepresented in the private arena.[218] Pressing his point further, Hacker states,

> But moving beyond the professions, how are we to account for the low percentage of blacks when it comes to waiting on tables and attending bar? These are hardly elite occupations requiring sophisticated training. The suspicion arises that proprietors of restaurants and lounges may feel that their white clienteles do not want their food and drinks handled by black employees. Or it could stem from the belief that if a place has "too many" blacks on its staff, it will drop to a lower status. . . . Perhaps most revealing of all is the small number of black dental hygienists. While white patients seem willing to be cared for by black nurses, they apparently draw the line at having black fingers in their mouths.[219]

While most professions claim they want more minority employees, Hacker questions their motives. Do these employers desire to have people of color to showcase diversity, or are they offering jobs with meaningful responsibilities? On the other hand, Jared Taylor argues blacks and whites that grew up in similar situations and completed similar paths of education show no differences in their earnings. In families where both parents are college graduates and are gainfully employed, black families make more money than their white counterparts. Taylor points to factors beyond economics that create the income differences between whites and minorities including the home environment and educational qualifications.[220]

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[218]Andrew Hacker, "Racial Discrimination Limits Opportunities for Blacks," in *Race Relations: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Paul A. Winters (San Diego: Greenhaven, 1996), 74-77. While Hacker writes primarily about black employment opportunities, similar arguments could also be made for other minority groups.

[219]Ibid., 78. Hacker acknowledged that minorities such as Bill Cosby, Oprah Winfrey, Mike Tyson, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, Janet and Michael Jackson, and others have multiple millions of dollars in annual income. Colin Powell and other minorities have served in the military and government positions. However, most of these jobs are in the public and service arena, not in the corporate sector. See Hacker, "Racial Discrimination Limits Opportunities for Blacks," 75.

[220]Jared Taylor, "Racial Discrimination Does Not Limit Opportunities for Blacks," in *Race Relations: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Paul A. Winters (San Diego: Greenhaven, 1996), 83-85.

On the whole, Hacker charges that the business world has done little to expand employment opportunities for minorities. Anglo executives are concerned about the number of minority employees the business should absorb. If a company does not hire enough minorities, they may be charged with ethnic bias. On the other hand, hiring too many minorities could hurt their business with white customers. Hacker alludes to institutional racism in the business sector. Employers are concerned that if minorities are promoted to supervisor positions, they may not inspire the most productive work from white underlings.[221] Minorities are sometimes labeled by their Anglo employers as being cold, distant, hostile, or working with a chip on their shoulders. Instead of inquiring about these issues to find a solution, more often employers evade the problem by hiring and promoting as few minorities as possible. It is no wonder that many minorities feel they must work harder than their white counterparts to be successful.[222]

Tension also exists between ethnic minorities as they compete for a limited number of jobs. As the number of immigrants increases, they compete with other ethnic groups for jobs and social services. Social programs are limited by the amount of money that local, state, and federal government agencies allocate. With the influx of immigration, especially Hispanics, blacks find themselves in competition with immigrants for jobs, social services, and social change. Rising unemployment, institutionalized ethnic prejudice, and eroding public assistance frustrate minorities. Jack Miles notes that many times blacks end up as losers in the competition for jobs and services leading to their resentment of the rapid rise in the Hispanic community, which is now the largest minority population in the United States.[223] This competition for jobs and services creates tension between these groups that is a challenge for multiethnic churches.

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[221]Taylor and Hacker agree that blacks are underrepresented in management roles. However, Taylor's reasoning is that the pool of qualified whites is larger than that of blacks. He cites two cases where black employers (with H. F. Henderson Industries and the Philadelphia Coca-Cola Bottling Company) hired more whites than blacks for management positions because they hired on the basis of qualifications rather than by racial considerations. Taylor contends that white students are more likely to attend top ranked colleges and thereby secure better job opportunities. See Taylor, "Racial Discrimination Does Not Limit Opportunities for Blacks," 86. Such information points to the need for affordable and accessible quality education opportunities for minorities.

[222]Hacker, "Racial Discrimination Limits Opportunities for Blacks," 79-81.

[223]Jack Miles, "Immigrants Take Jobs Black," in *Race Relations: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Paul A. Winters (San Diego: Greenhaven, 1996), 116-19.

Old Testament prophets condemned the injustice of the people who were in power and championed the needs of the oppressed and poor.[224] Micah 6 sets up a courtroom scene where the Lord presents his case against his chosen people. The people had faithfully offered sacrifices and burnt offerings in worship, but the Lord was not pleased. The sacrifices were not wrong in and of themselves, but without a proper relationship to God and their neighbors, their sacrifices were empty and of no value. Ralph Smith states, "So when we come before God, we must remember that it is not so much what is in our hands but what is in our hearts that finds expression in our conduct that is important."[225] Micah 6:8 states, "Mankind, He has told you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God." The Lord cares about justice and the way people treat each other. The Lord pronounced judgment on Israel through the prophet Amos because they took advantage of the poor and oppressed them for personal gain. They intentionally blocked the path of the poor and needy, keeping them trapped in their poverty (Amos 2:6-7). The people of Israel failed to remember that they were once enslaved and in need before the Lord delivered them.

Don Williford states, "Jesus' message calling for social justice was popular neither in the prophets' days nor in his day. Neither is it in ours. It seems to be far more popular to proclaim either the gospel of cheap grace or the prosperity gospel."[226] Jesus stated, "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). Williford described this passage as presenting the whole gospel as declared by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth.[227]

God has reconciled every believer to himself through Christ's atoning work on the

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[224]Don Williford, "A Word about . . . Social Justice," *Review and Expositor* 9, no.4 (Fall 2012): 516.

[225]Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 32 (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 50-51.

[226]Williford, "A Word about . . . Social Justice," 516.

[227]Ibid., 517.

cross. To be in Christ denotes the intimacy of a believer's relationship with the Lord.[228] Ralph Martin states, "A new eon has been inaugurated by the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and Paul sees the whole of life through fresh eyes because of the new order of creation that has arrived."[229] Through Christ's finished work, God has reconciled believers to himself. In turn, he has given believers the ministry of reconciliation, committing this message of reconciliation and the disciple-making task to them. God uses Christians to share the gospel with those who do not know Christ (2 Cor 5:16-21). Believers should demonstrate a theology of reconciliation built upon the premise that ethnic reconciliation, including socioeconomic factors, is imperative for believers if they are to carryout the God-given task of the ministry of reconciliation. Conversely, ethnic divisions, enmity, prejudice, and inequality are a result of the fall and a consequence of a sinful nature. In order to address ethnic reconciliation believers must recognize that problems related to ethnicity exists. These problems are fundamentally spiritual in nature and thereby find resolution only through repentance, faith, and submission to God. Believers must reach across these ethnic barriers and build loving relationships with people of other ethnicities, working together to further the gospel and overcome divisions and injustice.[230]

Followers of Christ must recognize the social structures that breed inequity in the American culture. Socioeconomic issues are the root cause of ethnic inequalities such as unequal access to quality housing and education. Many of the majority ethnicity are guilty of ignoring economic injustice or even denying the reality of it. Southern Baptist multiethnic churches must address these socioeconomic barriers by offering hope, equality, and social justice to minorities.

Repentance and Hope

The segregation of the church continues among Southern Baptists, but there is hope. In 2013, the Southern Baptist Convention reported a total of 50,474 congregations. Yet the North

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[228]Simon J. Kistemaker, *2 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 191-93.

[229]Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 136.

[230]Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 51-54.

American Mission Board of the SBC identified only 230 multiethnic congregations in the SBC. The North American Mission Board, however, only considers churches that have no ethnic majority as multiethnic.[231]

Southern Baptists have made significant progress with a variety of ethnic groups in the last two decades. At the 1993 annual meeting in Houston, Texas, the SBC passed a resolution on racial and ethnic reconciliation. The resolution denounced the ethnic cleansings that plague the world. The resolution called on the President of the United States and leaders of the international community to seek to end the practice of genocide. The resolution went on to affirm that the central message of the gospel is reconciliation. God reconciled believers to himself through Christ and extended the ministry of reconciliation to all who receive Christ (2 Cor 5:18-21).[232] The resolution also called on federal, state, and local governments to enforce all civil rights laws that are in accordance with the Scriptures. Further, it called on Southern Baptists to intensify their efforts to reach out to every race and ethnicity to establish Christian friendships and to work together for the glory of God.[233]

At the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1995, the messengers adopted a "Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention." The resolution affirms the biblical truth that God has made every nation of people through a common ancestor. Acts 17:26 states, "From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live." In addressing the Athenians, Paul argues that God is the creator of all human beings from every ethnic group. From one man, Adam, he made every

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[231]Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, November 17, 2014. The North American Mission Board of the SBC defines a multiethnic church as a congregation that does not have a majority ethnicity. Therefore, if a congregation is 51 percent Caucasian, it is considered to be a Caucasian church rather than a multiethnic church. Stanley is Team Leader for the Center for Missional Research at the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

[232]Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentaray, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 152-58.

[233]"Resolution on Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation," http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution. asp?ID=898 (accessed June 30, 2013).

ethnicity.[234] The emphasis of this passage is the universal need of all people for a relationship with their creator. God is not a Jewish cult deity; he is not limited to any singular ethnic group. He is the sovereign Lord of the universe and all peoples equally share the need of having a relationship with him.[235] The resolution confessed that Southern Baptists had strained relationships with African Americans throughout their history due to the role that slavery played in founding the Convention. Southern Baptists also admitted that some previous members of the Convention owned slaves and either participated in or allowed the inhumane practices by the slave industry. They further confessed that some had opposed the efforts to secure civil rights for all Americans. The resolution admitted that racism led to injustice, oppression, discrimination, and violence throughout the history of the United States, dividing the body of Christ. Southern Baptists confessed that many churches had excluded African Americans from worship services, church membership, and leadership roles both deliberately in some cases and unintentionally in others. The resolution acknowledges that Jesus accomplished a reconciling ministry by restoring sinners to a right relationship with God, and that he commissioned his followers to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20). God took the initiative to reconcile sinners to himself through the work of Christ on the cross. He has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to believers.[236] Through the resolution, Southern Baptists renounced historic acts of racism, apologized to all African Americans for allowing and extending individual and systemic racism, and repented of these attitudes asking for forgiveness.[237] The approval of this resolution by the messengers at the Convention was carried on national news outlets.

In New Orleans, Louisiana, in 2012, messengers of the SBC elected Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, as the president of the Convention. He is the

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[234]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 634.

[235]John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 374.

[236]Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 152-53.

[237]"Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention," June 1995, http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amresolution.asp?id=899 (accessed June 13, 2013).

first African American to serve in this role. Minority involvement, like that of Luter, has

increased in a variety of leadership roles in the SBC. According to 2013 statistics of the Southern

Baptist Convention, African Americans churches comprise 6.9 percent of the 50,474

congregations while 13.1 percent are from other ethnic groups.[238]

Conclusion

Racism and ethnic conflicts must be assessed in the light of the Scriptures, in the

personal histories of the individuals involved, and in the context of the communities where

people dwell.[239] While recent trends among the SBC in their desire to be more ethnically diverse

are encouraging, most of the ethnic work of the SBC is among homogeneous churches. The SBC

continues to lag behind other evangelical groups in establishing and nurturing intentional

multiethnic churches. Scott Thumma, a sociology of religion professor at Hartford Seminary,

reports that in a study of more than 11,000 congregations by Faith Communities Today, the

number of multiethnic congregations with no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnicity has

almost doubled in the United States between 1998 and 2010, growing from 7.5 percent in 1998

to 13.7 percent in 2010. The majority of these churches are located in the West and in larger

urban areas where the population is more ethnically diverse.[240]

Southern Baptists have reached beyond their original geographical area, but the

overwhelming population center of the Convention remains in the South. It is a challenge to

move established churches from homogeneous congregations to intentional multiethnic churches.

Artie Davis, a SBC multiethnic church pastor, argues that the best way to grow multiethnic

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[238]Diane Chandler, "Luter Election Reflects SBC's Growing Diversity, New Orleans Pastors Say," http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=35974 (accessed September 15, 2012).

[239]Denton Lotz, "Baptists Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict . . . Worldwide!" *Review and Expositor* 109 (Winter 2012): 106.

[240]Scott Thumma, "Racial Diversity Increasing in the U.S. Congregations," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/scott-thumma-phd/racial-diversity-increasing-in-us-congregations_b_2944470.html?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pulsenews (accessed May 6, 2013). Also see David A. Roozen, "A Decade of Change in American Congregations 2000-2010," http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/faithcommunitiestoday.org/files/Decade%20of%20Change%20Final_0.pdf (accessed May 6, 2013), and George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 14-16.

churches is through intentional multiethnic church plants. Established congregations can support and help form multiethnic churches. It is much more difficult for an established homogeneous congregation to become multiethnic.[241] Wilcrest Baptist Church in Alief, Texas, is a notable exception. When Rodney Woo, whose father is half-Chinese and who's wife is Hispanic, became the pastor at Wilcrest in 1992, the congregation was a homogeneous Caucasian church in a predominantly African American community. Under Woo's leadership, the church became a multiethnic congregation comprised of people from forty-four different nations.[242] Southern Baptists have taken several positive steps to become more ethnically diverse, but most of the ethnic work remains homogeneous. Growing more multiethnic congregations will position the denomination for effective ministry in the future as the United States continues to grow more ethnically diverse.

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[241]Artie Davis, interview by author, Orangeburg, SC, October 3, 2013. .

[242]Woo, *The Color of Church*, xvii-28.

CHAPTER 4

SOUTHERN BAPTIST MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES
AND THE HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE

Introduction

In 1955, Donald McGavran published his seminal work, *The Bridges of God*, which launched a movement that challenged missionaries, mission agencies, and all who are involved in evangelism and discipleship to seriously evaluate their methodologies, resources, and strategies. McGavran was not the only missionary to challenge the state of missions in the early twentieth century. He built upon the research of J. Waskom Pickett, John R. Mott, A. L. Warnshuis, Roland Allen, and others involved in the study of mass people movements or group conversions witnessed primarily in Asia.[1] Foreshadowings of the Church Growth Movement were evident in the research of these men, but the publication of *The Bridges of God* unquestionably launched the modern Movement and brought broad reform to mission strategies, evangelistic efforts, and the process of disciple making. Further, it stimulated theological and pragmatic debates about the mission of the church. McGavran's strategy for missions, evangelism, and disciple making grew out of his desire to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ.

This chapter will address the background and the definition of the homogeneous unit principle (HUP). McGavran's observation of the principle occurred during his mission work in India. The descriptive nature of the HUP will be examined in the light of his observation. The HUP will be evaluated from a missiological perspective

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[1]J. Waskom Pickett, "Donald A. McGavran: Missionary, Scholar, Ecumenist, Evangelist," in *God, Man, and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 5-12; A. R. Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by His Colleague," in *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 22-24; J. Waskom Pickett, *Chrisitan Mass Movements in India* (New York: Abingdon, 1933); and Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 28-31.

including biblical challenges, the focus on conversion rather than perfecting, and sociological observations and implications. People movements and cross-cultural evangelism will be defined and explored. The chapter will conclude with an examination of multiethnic churches and the implications of the HUP.

Background of the Homogeneous Unit Principle

Donald McGavran was born in Damoh, India, in 1897, the son of missionary parents. Following in his parents' footsteps, McGavran was a third generation missionary who served in India through the Christian Church for thirty years. He worked as an educator, evangelist, church planter, researcher, and mission executive. In the 1930s, he sought to discover the reasons why some churches grow while others decline. McGavran explored the meaning of being a missionary and the primary function of Christian missions.[2] The prevailing mission strategy placed a strong emphasis on meeting physical, educational, and economic needs on the mission field. Missionaries often responded to these needs by erecting hospitals, schools, and training facilities. Such buildings, while serving a helpful purpose, placed a heavy burden on mission resources.

As an evangelical, McGavran's thought is deeply grounded in the authority of the Scriptures and his view of the practice of making disciples. A. R. Tippet writes, "Most of his arguments begin either with the Great Commission or from Antioch. The precedents of the early Church are his guidelines as he is well-versed in the writings of Paul."[3] McGavran believed that leading unbelievers to faith and conversion in Christ should be the primary focus of mission endeavors. Evangelism was at the heart of McGavran's understanding of missions, but his mission strategy was also centered in the church. McGavran believed that it is the will of God for his church to grow. The gospel

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[2]George G. Hunter III, "Donald A. McGavran 1897-1990: Standing at the Sunrise of Missions," in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 516.

[3]Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by a Colleague," 20.

of Christ is for all of humanity, people from every people group. Those who are converted to Christianity naturally become a part of a local fellowship of believers. The church operates under the authority of the risen Lord and his Commission to make disciples of all people groups. McGavran's high view of scripture required that his mission strategy and principles operated under the authority of God's Word. The church's mission is to make disciples through leading people to saving faith in Christ and teaching them to live their lives in obedience to the Lord. It was McGavran's belief that a church that fails to grow has failed to do the will of God. The mission of the church is grounded in divine origin and entrusted to people who serve as co-laborers with God.[4] McGavran strongly believed in the importance of new believers becoming actively involved in the life and ministry of the local church. Evangelism is an unfinished work apart from the evidence of discipleship through the local church. Mission should be driven by the desire to propagate the gospel of Christ in a way that results in the establishment of indigenous churches where believers are nurtured through discipleship.[5]

McGavran was influenced by the writings of Allen and Pickett while serving as a missionary in India. Allen called into question the missionary methods being employed in the 1920s, declaring that the church had forsaken the mission methods found in the New Testament. People movements, as McGavran called them, are closely associated with Allen's idea of spontaneous church growth. Allen advocated that the first converts on the mission field should be empowered without further assistance from missionaries to lead their families and neighbors to faith in Christ and establish indigenous churches. It was his view that such a process was the only way churches could

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[4]Arthur F. Glasser, "Church Growth and Theology," in *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 52-64.

[5]Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 24; Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 27-28; and Walther A. Olsen, "The Homogeneous Unit Principle Revisited: Part One," *Journal of the American society of Church Growth* 8 (Spring 1997): 11.

grow rapidly and multiply across the region.[6] The mission station method, which

dominated most mission strategies in the early 1900s, focused on building institutions

where missionary activity could take place. These institutions exhausted financial

resources and severely limited the human assets available for the work of evangelism.

Allen's pragmatism made him suspicious of any missionary method that inhibited the

process of growing churches. Pickett's research added fuel to the missionary passion that

was developing within McGavran. He was deeply disturbed that the efforts of missionary

personnel and the financial resources invested in mission stations had produced so few

converts and experienced such anemic growth. Millions of dollars were spent on mission

work each year provided, for the most part, through the sacrificial giving of people who

hoped that as many people as possible would receive Christ through the resources they

have provided.[7]

Christ's Commission, commanding his followers to make disciples of all

people groups, was the biblical mandate that drove McGavran to the priority of

evangelism and church-centered discipleship. Matthew 28:18-20 states,

> Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in
> heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing
> them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them
> to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you
> always, to the end of the age."

The text makes it clear that all authority belongs to the risen Lord, and he empowers his

followers to disciple all people groups. The primary verb in the Commission is

matheteusate, which means to make disciples. McGavran states, "*Matheteusate* is a verb

in the imperative. It means enroll in my school or enlist in my army or incorporate in my

body. *Panta* means all, and *ta ethnē* means the peoples, the tribes, the castes, the

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[6]Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962), 1-3.

[7]Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York: Friendship, 1955), 2, 14.

segments of society everywhere. All are to be discipled."[8] Thus the command of the Lord

is to disciple all peoples, the heart of the mission of the church.

The main verb in the text has two supporting participles that define the disciple

making process. The subordinate participles translated as "baptizing" and "teaching" give

insight into the methods of disciple making to which Jesus commissioned his followers.

Baptism is the process through which believers give testimony of their faith in Christ,

identifying with his death and being raised to life in his likeness, and are initiated into the

fellowship and ministry of the local church. The propagation of the gospel is the process

through which people are converted to Christianity by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9).

For McGavran, the disciple making process begins when new believers receive Christ

and become involved in a local church. Michael Wilkins stresses involvement in a church

fellowship as a primary characteristic of those who follow Jesus. He notes that the

singular form of the term *mathētēs* (disciple) rarely appears in the Synoptic Gospels. The

term is normally found in its plural form, *mathētai*.[9] Wilkins states, "*Individual disciples*

are always seen in conjunction with the community of disciples, whether as Jesus'

intimate companions or as the church."[10] The second participle emphasized the

importance of teaching new believers to obey all that Christ commanded. This is the

process of discipleship; new believers learn of Christ's teachings through biblical

instruction and sharing life together through the fellowship and ministry of the church,

the body of Christ.

The biblical notion of mission for McGavran is rooted in Christ's Commission.

Jack Shepherd states,

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[8]Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), 17.

[9]Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 39-40. The singular form of disciple, *mathētēs*, does not occur at all in Mark and only three times in Matthew and four times in Luke. It does, however, appear frequently in the Gospel of John, always referring to a particular person.

[10]Ibid., 40.

To accept biblical authority in a literal and serious way is to recognize that the profound, dynamic idea of mission which permeates the Bible comes to have specific and explicit form as it progressively unfolds in Scripture and climaxes as the New Testament mandate for the church's mission.[11]

The mission of the church originates with God and expresses his desire to redeem lost humanity. God's will for the people whom he created in his image is authoritatively disclosed in the words of the Scriptures. His desire is for his church to make disciples of all people groups through evangelism and discipleship. The Bible for McGavran is understood as the infallible Word of God that authoritatively reveals everything that is needed for faith and practice in life. He states,

The high view holds that the entire Bible—the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments—is the Word of God. It is authoritative and demands faith and obedience to all its declarations. It is inspired and infallible and contains everything that is necessary to the faith and practice of Christians. Apart from the Scriptures we cannot know about the eternal purposes of God or the hope for immortality, or the victory of good over evil.[12]

This commitment to a high view of Scripture led to McGavran's belief that effective evangelism is dependent upon biblical authority. He believed that Christianity is the only way of salvation and must be proclaimed and expressed in every culture.[13] Christ's Commission certainly includes leading people to saving faith in Christ, but is broader than evangelism alone.

The Apostle Paul was commissioned to call people from among the Gentiles to obedience and faith in Christ (Rom 1:5). James Dunn contends that Paul's mission to the Gentiles was fundamental to his self-understanding. A central precept in Paul's letter to the Romans was that God's saving purpose always had in mind not only the Jews, but

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[11]Jack F. Shepherd, "Continuity and Change in Christian Mission," in *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 73.

[12] Donald McGavran, *The Clash between Christianity and Cultures* (Washington, DC: Canon, 1974), 52.

[13]Ibid., 1, 14-15. McGavran built his argument on the assumptions that (1) the diversity of cultures are rich and have much to contribute to the benefit of others, (2) as Christianity expands, it must adapt to each culture and proclaim the gospel in various contexts, and (3) that the Creator has made all people of one common race through Adam and his will is for people to be redeemed by the gospel as it is authoritatively revealed in the pages of the Scriptures.

146

also the Gentiles.[14] Robert Mounce describes the universal scope of the gospel based on this verse. The good news of the gospel was intended for all who would respond in faith and repentance.[15] Robert Plummer argues persuasively that all believers are commissioned to the work of evangelism. Their goal is to call people to repentance and faith, establish mature believers, and multiply local churches.[16] There is no other way to carryout the Great Commission. Furthermore, McGavran states that Romans 16:25-27 demonstrates that God commands believers to evangelize so that all the peoples of the world will come to faith in Christ Jesus.[17]

The critical question for McGavran about mission was how people become Christians. All believers who are intent on following the Lord's command to make disciples must address this question.[18] Because McGavran tied evangelism to involvement in a local church, he focused on the reasons churches grow, the barriers that hinder growth, and the influences that are foundational to people movements.[19] Out of this biblical and missiological foundation, McGavran developed his concept the HUP.

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[14]James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 18.

[15]Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 62.

[16]Robert Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Bletchley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 47. Although Plummer distinguishes the role of the apostles from others who made up the New Testament church, he believes that all believers are commissioned by Jesus according to the will of God to be involved in missions and evangelism.

[17]McGavran, *Effective Evangelism*, 15.

[18]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 1-7.

[19]Hunter, "Donald A. McGavran 1897-1990." Also see McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 83-86. "People movements" represent how McGavran identified mass movements or group conversions of which Pickett wrote. See Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, 21-22. Pickett was never comfortable with the term. Roland Allen addressed similar issues in *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. Allen argued that missionaries should plant churches rather than establish missions, depending upon indigenous converts to take the gospel to their neighbors and plant churches. He was convinced that this strategy was the only way the church would expand with rapidity. See Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 1-3. Tippett struggled with the terms mass movements, group conversions, and people movements due to the evangelical concept of soul competency and individual conversion. Homer Barnett characterized these people movements as multi-individual, a term preferred and embraced by Tippett. See Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by His Colleague," 22.

Defining the Homogeneous Unit Principle

Defining the homogeneous unit principle is a complex and difficult task. It was built initially upon the observation that people are more open to the gospel when they face the least social dislocation.[20] McGavran states, "The term homogeneous unit is very elastic."[21] It is broadly defined as a subgroup of society in which all the members share some common characteristics.[22] These factors may be political ideology, a common language, living in a specific region, shared values, common religious convictions, etc. The term has been applied in a variety of ways. Sociologist Wayne McClintock bemoans the vagueness of this broad definition and considers it to be a major flaw in McGavran's strategy.[23] Perhaps McGavran's most quoted statement about the HUP is, "People like to become Christian without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."[24] This summation can be misleading. Charles Kraft defines the HUP as a twofold observation. First, people consistently demonstrate an inclination to associate primarily with those who are much like themselves. Second, God allows this process and works within it. People build their deepest relationships with those who share many common interests, values, and beliefs. Kraft argues that homogeneous groups are not bad in and of themselves. Homogeneous groups may serve helpful or hurtful functions, depending upon how they are used.[25] Christians focus too often on what ought to be rather than what is. If believers are to be faithful in fulfilling the mission of the church, they must start with people where they are and by the work of the Spirit move them to where they should be. Discipleship, or

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[20]C. Peter Wagner, "Homogeneous Unit Principle," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 455.

[21]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 165.

[22]Ibid., 67.

[23]Wayne McClintock, "Sociological Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle," *International Review of Mission* 77, no. 305 (January 1988): 109.

[24]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 163.

[25]Charles H. Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic for the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Missiology." *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 2, no. 4 (October 1978): 121-24.

perfecting as McGavran called it, is a process of sanctification. The more shared

characteristics group members have in common, the deeper the relationships that they

share. These shared characteristics are not limited to race, language, or class barriers. In

fact, people from different races, classes, and who speak different languages could be

found in a single homogeneous group. Homogeneous groups consist of people who share

a central cultural context with a common worldview and some shared cultural

characteristics.[26]

C. Peter Wagner admits, "The homogeneous unit principle has become the

most controversial of all church growth principles because some critics have interpreted it

as having racist or classist overtones."[27] Wagner argues that his mentor and colleague,

McGavran, never intended any racial or classist connotations. Rather, it was McGavran's

intent to respect the social groupings of individuals. He held that a response to Christ was

religious rather than social in nature.[28] McGavran states,

> The degree of people consciousness is an aspect of social structure that greatly
> influences when, how, and to what extent the gospel will flow through that segment
> of the social order. Castes or tribes with high people consciousness will resist the
> gospel primarily because to them becoming a Christian means joining another
> people. They refuse Christ not for religious reasons, not because they love their sins,
> but precisely because they love their neighbors.[29]

McGavran defined the homogeneous unit as a segment of people who share some

common features such as language, class, or race.[30] To reach a group of people with the

gospel, it is important to understand the way the culture is structured as well as how to

communicate the gospel so that it can be understood in that culture. If a church is planted

within the structure of the society, it has a greater chance for success in reaching people

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[26]Olsen, "The Homogeneous Unit Principle Revisited," 10.

[27]Wagner, "Homogeneous Unit Principle," 455.

[28]Ibid.

[29]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 155.

[30]Ibid., 69-70.

with the gospel. When people feel compelled to leave family groupings and comfortable cultural surroundings to receive the gospel, their response is hindered. Knowledge of the social structure, the prevailing worldview, how relationships work, and the leadership contribute to the contextualization of the gospel within the framework of the group. The ever-present danger, however, involved in sharing the gospel in the context of a culture is the possibility of syncretism.[31]

Wagner argues that the term "people group" has become the more generally accepted term by missiologists rather than "homogeneous unit in recent years." Wagner states,

> A people group is a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another. From the viewpoint of evangelization, this is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance. The common "affinity" can be based on any combination of culture, language, religion, economics, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class, caste, life situations, or other significant characteristics which provide ties which bind the individuals in the group together.[32]

The interconnectedness of human relationships through family and friends provide the best opportunity for sharing the gospel within the group. As the gospel is communicated through these natural relational groupings, the foundation is laid for a people movement.[33]

For Wagner the application of the homogeneous unit principle is akin to the idea of contextualization. Contextualization is the opportunity and ability to respond to the gospel within the perspective of the cultural environment. The goal of

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[31]Erwin Spruth, "Taking Stock of an Ethnic Unit for Church Planting (New Guinea)," in *God, Man, and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 345-50. Also see Joel Romero, "Symbolism and Syncretism (Argentina)," in *God, Man, and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 371-72.

[32]Wagner, "Homogeneous Unit Principle," 455.

[33]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 10-13. Also see Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 1-3; Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, 21-24; and David B. Barrett, "The Discipling of Africa in this Generation," in *God, Man, and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 398-99.

contextualization is to communicate the truth of the gospel in a way that it can be understood in the cultural environment where it is expressed.[34] The contextualization of the gospel must be handled with care to avoid syncretism, which is blending the truth of the gospel with competing cultural ideas in a way that dilutes or undermines the truth.[35] Wagner observes that the vast majority of Christian churches in the world are homogeneous. In 1978, he estimated that as many as 98 percent of the churches in the world were made up of one kind of people but references no support for his statement.[36] Even if Wagner was correct in 1978, the changing global demographics and especially the expanding ethnic diversity of the United States presents a different picture. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of multiethnic churches having less than 80 percent of the majority ethnicity rose from 8 percent of the churches in the United States to 13.7 percent.[37]

McGavran divides church growth into three classifications. The first, biological growth, is growth that occurs through families that are already connected to a local church. When church members have children who grow up in the church and then receive Christ as their savior, the church experiences a degree of growth, but this growth, however, does not reach unbelievers outside of the church context. The second kind of growth as identified by McGavran is transfer growth. This growth occurs when a believer leaves one church and joins another. It always means an increase for the church they join,

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[34]Dean Gilliland, "Contextualization," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 225. Also see Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 171-92, and Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1991), 81-82.

[35]A. Scott Moreau, "Syncretism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 924. Also see Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, 95-99; Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 184-90; and Eugene A. Nida. *Customs and Cultures* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1954), 173-80.

[36]C. Peter Wagner, "How Ethical Is the Homogeneous Unit Principle?" *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 2, no. 1(January 1978): 12.

[37]Scott Thumma, "Religious Diversity Increasing in US Congregations," http://www. huffingtonpost.com/scott-thumma-phd/racial-diversity-increasing-in-us-congregations_b_2944470. html?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pulsenews (accessed May 6, 2013).

but a decrease for the church they leave. People who leave a church, whether it is due to dissatisfaction or relocation, need to be brought into another church fellowship. McGavran affirms transfer growth, but he recognizes that this kind of church growth will not make disciples of all people groups as the Great Commission demands. Lastly, McGavran addresses conversion growth as the only kind of growth that can fulfill the Great Commission. Conversion growth involves reaching those who do not know Christ and leading them to responsible church membership. It is the only kind of church growth with a view toward reaching the world.[38] Conversion growth through the application of the HUP represents the most effective way to evangelize the peoples of the world for McGavran.

The Principle Observed

The context of McGavran's observation of the homogeneous unit principle was the country of India where he lived as the son of a missionary and later served as missionary for more than thirty years. McGavran's missiological strategy grew out of his experiences on the mission field in India.[39] One of his colleagues wrote, "When his [McGavran's] biography is written the person responsible should be one who knows India well because India still conditions his thinking and behavior, in spite of his world vision."[40] There is no doubt that the majority of McGavran's research is rooted in India, but he moved beyond that nation to apply his mission strategy to other settings. He was interested in discovering principles that were transferable across cultural lines. He demonstrated a great interest in the people movement in New Guinea as many responded to the gospel, particularly because it occurred outside of India. His research also included areas such as the Congo, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Thailand, Formosa, Gold Coast,

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[38]Donald A. McGavran and Winfred C. Arn, *How to Grow a Church* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1973), 57-59.

[39]Philip Lewis, "Caste, Mission and Church Growth," *Themelios* 10, no. 2 (January 1985): 25.

[40]Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by His Colleague,"19.

Mexico, and Jamaica.[41] As can be determined by the countries listed previously, McGavran's research focused primarily on church growth outside of the United States and the Western world as a whole.[42]

Lewis writes,

> McGavran's assumptions are still shaped by his pre-partition experience among Hindus in India and exposes a serious logical flaw in his methodology. To ask historical questions about why a church grew in the past with a view to devising strategies for the present is a precarious enterprise. Any study of history knows how perilous it is to anticipate the future direction of events. . . . One can and should rejoice in the past growth of the church, but to take this movement as in some sense normative for future developments is to forget that it too was a product of a particular set of circumstances, which have now past.[43]

Lewis points out that when McGavran was doing his research in India, the pre-partition British government was supportive of mission work and had the power to limit persecution. Since India is currently an independent, sovereign state, Muslims and Hindus fear cultural retaliation and persecution if they convert to Christianity. An Islamic convert must risk everything to receive the gospel: family, vocation, property, and life.[44]

Closely related to the homogeneous unit principle is McGavran's idea of people movements. He was influenced by the writings of Pickett who introduced the idea of mass movements. McGavran argued that mass movements was an unfortunate term because it could be misunderstood as mindless, unthinking response to the gospel by the masses.[45] Pickett referred to the term "mass movement" which he employed in his writing as an unfortunate choice, stating that group movements might have been a wiser choice. The term is applied in a variety of ways, which adds to the problem. The idea of "mass" in India represents a homogeneous unit that regularly employed a community

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[41]Ibid., 24-27.

[42]Larry L. McSwain, "A Critical Appraisal of the Church Growth Movement," *Review and Expositor* 77, no. 4 (Fall1980): 522.

[43]Lewis, "Caste, Mission and Church Growth," 27.

[44]Ibid.

[45]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 13.

consciousness. Pickett writes,

> In the early reports of these movements there appears surprisingly little recognition of the caste or tribal unity of those who were being converted. The first converts brought relatives and neighbors to profess faith in Christ and to be instructed in the Christian way of life; that seemed a normal thing to do and one for which to rejoice and be thankful.[46]

Favoring the term "people movements," McGavran acknowledged that large numbers of conversions are normally the result of smaller groups of people responding to the gospel after receiving teachings on the Christian faith. The large numbers represent the small groups of people who responded to Christ over several years. People movements occur as Christ engages the group mind of the people. Individuals respond to Christ, but the synergy of the movement of God is greater than these individual parts.[47]

The concept of receptivity refers to people that are most likely to respond to the gospel due to facing a personal crisis, social displacement, political changes, worldview conflict, and the internal activity of the Holy Spirit. While unresponsive people should never be forgotten or ignored, the majority of human resources and financial assets available for use by missionaries should be employed in a way that will reach the people who are most likely to respond to the message of the gospel.[48] McGavran writes,

> In short, those who would proclaim Jesus Christ must not only proclaim but must proclaim intelligently. They must distinguish between fields ripe to harvest and fields that are unplowed. World evangelization or the effective discipling of unreached segments of society must be an intelligent operation, not a blind one. We are to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into ripe fields.[49]

The principle of receptivity focuses on ripe fields that are ready for the harvest (Matt 9:37-38 and Luke 10:2). When Jesus looked at the crowds, he was moved with great

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[46]Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, 21.

[47]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 12-13.

[48] Edgar J. Elliston, "Receptivity," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 809-10. Also see Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 30.

[49]McGavran, *Effective Evangelism*, 40.

compassion for them because of their deep spiritual need; they were like sheep without a

shepherd. In these harvest passages, Jesus paints the mental picture of a massive crop that

is ripe and ready to harvest. The unreached people groups need faithful witnesses who

will share the gospel with them. The need for harvesters is both great and urgent.[50] Jesus

called on his followers to pray that the Lord would send laborers to work the fields and

bring in the harvest. The spiritual need of unbelievers is great and the gospel must be

proclaimed.[51] John Nolland notes that if the crops are not harvested at the proper time,

the opportunity to collect the crop may be lost.[52] The number of people who live outside

of a relationship with Christ is great while the number of harvesters is proportionately

small.[53]

John also employed harvest imagery in the account where Jesus encountered

the woman by the well in Sychar (John 4:1-45). As Jesus walked through the fields of

Samaria with his disciples, he told them to open their eyes and see the harvest that was

ready for reaping (John 4:35-36). George Beasley-Murray interprets this text to mean that

the time for the harvest is now; the time for waiting has past.[54] There is an urgency that is

clearly embedded in the Great Commission. Those who follow Christ must always be

ready, actively sharing the gospel with unbelievers.[55] The spiritual reapers are already in

the field gathering fruit for eternal life. The gospel must be shared regularly with all

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[50]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 166-67. See also Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 304-05.

[51]Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993),

[52]John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35 B (Dallas: Word, 1993), 550-51.

[53]William Hendriksen, *Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 441. Also see Willliam Hendriksen, *Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 572-73.

[54]George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 63.

[55]Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 213.

155

unbelievers.[56] That is why McGavran was so intent on using the available resources to reach the most people for Christ. His principle of receptivity focuses on harvesting the crop while it is ripe.

With McGavran's emphasis on mission work outside of the western world, his theories were immersed in tribal cultures and the caste system of India. Most of the examples cited in McGavran's voluminous written works are from countries like India. These homogeneous groups are so tightly connected with their cultural system that if members were required to leave their tribe or cast to become Christian, then the expected response to the gospel would be small. The people movements that McGavran observed were often from the lower castes and social outcasts who had the least to lose by crossing social barriers to receive Christ. While any believer would rejoice at the movements of God cited in these books, the success of the HUP in such settings cannot imply the same response in other cultures, particularly those dominated by western individualism.

The language barrier presents a formidable challenge to missionaries and pastors. In the United States context, first generation immigrants face unique challenges due to language barriers in a new culture. They naturally prefer to hear the gospel and to attend a church where their native language is spoken. Some multiethnic churches address this challenge by offering language specific services for these immigrants, rather than requiring them to worship where the language spoken is foreign to them. Other churches provide simultaneous translation of the messages and songs using technology that allows the immigrants to wear headphones and hear the songs and sermons in their native tongue. However, it remains difficult due to the language barrier for these immigrants to be fully involved in the life of the church. The HUP is at work in language specific services to a degree. Hispanic churches are drawn together by the use of the Spanish language. However, there are often a variety of ethnic groups meeting under the

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[56]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 63.

156

Spanish umbrella. In writing about the Hispanic church in Texas, Pablo Rivas Perea acknowledges that the majority ethnic group is Mexican Americans. However, Hispanic churches in Texas also include people of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, and Central American descent.[57]

Descriptive or Prescriptive

Through the HUP, McGavran described what he observed as a missionary. The HUP describes the way things are, not the ideal of how things should be. His observation was descriptive in nature and was never intended to be prescriptive. Wagner states, "It is phenomenological, not theological."[58] McGavran described what he observed; never claiming that what is depicts what should be.

Church planter and academician Aubrey Malphurs contends that a local church will not appeal to everyone, but it will draw people who are similar to its membership. Malphurs defends McGavran's HUP stating the principle is rooted in the way unbelievers think and act. Malphurs states,

> He [McGavran] is describing the thinking of the unregenerate mind. He's not saying this is the way things ought to be. . . . McGavran approaches this principle from the perspective of the lost mind-set and the way things are in this world, not from the perspective of the divine viewpoint or what should be.[59]

It is impossible for a church to be culturally neutral. Malphurs argues that culture in and of itself is neutral, but that every church is entrenched in the culture of its members, at least to some degree.[60] The culture of multiethnic churches includes the diversity that is appealing to many people in an increasingly urban and global

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The footnotes

[57]Pablo Rivas Perea. "The Beginnings of the Hispanic Baptists on the Lone Star State." Fall 2011. https://www.academia.edu/1131224/The_Beginnings_of_The_Hispanic_Baptists_on_The_Lone_Star_State (accessed June 30, 2014), 2.

[58]C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 167.

[59]Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 178.

[60]Ibid., 166.

environment. McGavran's observation is descriptive, but the Scriptures must be the authoritative source that prescribes the nature of the church. Jesus eliminated the dividing wall that had formerly separated the Jews from the Gentiles (Eph 2:12-14). Churches should reflect the ethnic diversity of the people in the neighborhood around them.

A Missiological Evaluation of the Principle

The crucial question of whether McGavran's observation is merely descriptive or a principle that should guide evangelistic and mission strategies is foundational when considering the viability of multiethnic congregations. In India, the majority of believers responded to the gospel through people movements among the disenfranchised classes of Hinduism between 1880 and 1930.[61] The large number of group conversions created an array of responses in India and among mission sending agencies around the world. Pickett was commissioned by the National Christian Council of India to investigate the phenomenon and make an extensive study of the movement. To those who held firmly to the individualistic nature of conversion in the Western world, Pickett defended the concept of group conversion in India. The first converts shared their newfound faith with their families and neighbors and many of them also received Christ.[62] Philip Lewis writes, "In India life is lived as part of extended families and castes with important decisions, necessarily and properly, corporate. Moreover, the extended family and kinship network is the source of economic, psychological and emotional security."[63] Such tightly knit factions responded to the gospel corporately through their social group, but each person must profess Christ personally to become a believer. The tension between these two aspects of people movements requires reflection and evaluation from a biblical perspective.

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[61]Lewis, "Caste, Mission and Church Growth," 25.

[62]Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, 21.

[63]Lewis, "Caste, Mission and Church Growth," 25.

Biblical Challenges

There are a variety of biblical challenges to the HUP. McGavran insisted that mission work in India should concentrate on individual castes as homogeneous groups and focus on the primary task of evangelism. He believed as people in the various castes embraced the gospel that the oppressive social structure of the caste system would be overcome through the process of perfecting over time. If the HUP is applied to the contemporary culture of the United States in the same way, it provides a barrier to the development of multiethnic churches. Yet multiethnic churches exemplify the mission of the church as revealed in the Scriptures. It is clear that Paul's missionary activity acknowledged that God had demolished the wall of separation that had previously separated Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14-16). How can this text to be reconciled with the HUP?

Peter Wagner is an ardent supporter of the HUP and a church growth proponent who worked as a student and colleague of McGavran. He argues that the HUP should have been accepted as a basic axiom of church growth and missions, but since it was introduced to a world already divided over issues of race, social disparities, prejudice, and the practice of ethnic cleansing, it has endured many harsh attacks. The HUP has been characterized as akin to the segregation practices of the past in the United States. In 1978, Wagner estimated that at least 95 percent of Christian churches consist of homogeneous units. He claims that the same was true of churches of the first century as described in the New Testament.[64] Any careful reading of the New Testament points out the flaw in Wagner's claim. René Padilla argues that many churches of the New Testament and first century were ethnically diverse.[65] The primary ethnic groups

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[64]Wagner, "How Ethical Is the Homogeneous Unit Principle?" 12. Wagner is following McGavran's position here. McGavran concluded that the churches of the New Testament were mono-ethnic. See McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 17-35, and C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Chruch Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 11-16.

[65]C. René Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6, no. 1 (January 1982): 24-29.

mentioned in the Scriptures are Jews and Gentiles. Clearly there had been a wall of separation dividing these two groups prior to the advent of the church. Many Gentiles had converted to Judaism during the New Testament period. Both Jewish proselytes and God-fearers were represented in the synagogues and churches of the New Testament. The Scriptures bear witness of the ethnic diversity of many of the early churches. The biblical record attests to ethnic diversity particularly at the church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26) and the church at Ephesus (Eph 2:11-22). Wayne McClintock states,

> Nowhere in the New Testament is there any substantial evidence to support McGavran's claim that the congregations of the early church were mono-ethnic in character; one can only conclude that he has fallen victim to the all too common practice of legitimating a theoretical position by a selective reading of the evidence contained in the text.[66]

The Christian church uniquely included Gentiles without requiring them to convert to Judaism. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35) addressed this very issue. Some Jewish believers argued that Gentiles must be required to follow the Jewish law before they could be welcomed into the Christian church, particularly regarding circumcision. Acts begins by reporting the events leading up to Pentecost and the growth of the church among the Jews in Jerusalem. The Christian church then expanded from Jerusalem to Samaria where the Samaritan half-breeds that were commonly despised by the Jews responded to the preaching of Philip. Through the witness of Peter to Cornelius and the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, the gospel expanded to Gentiles who also received the Messiah. Polhill notes,

> All the preliminary steps had been taken for a major effort to reach the Gentile world. The precedents had been established; the first major success among the Gentiles had been witnessed. The stage was set for Paul's mission to the heart of the Greco-Roman world as *the* missionary to the Gentiles. There remained only one final hurdle, and that was the agreement of the whole church on the Gentile mission.[67]

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[66]McClintock, "Sociological Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle," 107.

[67]John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman 1992), 320.

Gordon Fee argues that the concept of homogeneous churches was foreign to Paul's understanding of New Testament congregations. Paul affirms the unity and diversity of the church and attributes both to the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12). The church at Ephesus consisted of both Jews and Gentiles who were called to unity in the Spirit. Fee states,

> Unity in the body means that believers "walk by the Spirit" so as not to "eat and devour one another" (Gal 3:15-16); it also requires heterogeneous people to submit their diversity to the unifying work of the Spirit. Homogeneous churches lie totally outside Paul's frame of reference. . . . God by his Spirit has formed into one body a radically new eschatological fellowship that transcends both race (Jew and Gentile) and socioeconomic status (slave and free).[68]

For Fee, diversity is a necessity for a healthy church and is sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit. Diversity not only unifies the people of God, it nurtures and strengthens the body of Christ.[69]

Paul emphasized the importance of unity in the local churches in the New Testament where Jews and Gentiles worshiped together. These churches included indigenous Jews, Jewish proselytes, and God-fearers, who respected the Jewish faith but had not converted to Judaism, in addition to Romans, Greeks, and other nationalities and ethnic groups. Yet representatives from all of these groups had received Christ and worshiped together in local churches scattered across the Middle East and Asia.[70] The unity of believers in the local church regardless of their ethnicity was the context of Christian fellowship. Paul addressed this issue in Galatians where he discloses his confrontation with Peter concerning his hypocrisy at Antioch. Peter had eaten regularly with the uncircumcised Gentile believers in the city, but when certain Jewish Christians from Jerusalem arrived, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles because he was afraid the

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[68]Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 70.

[69]Ibid., 69-72.

[70]Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 406. Also see Ed Vaughan, "The Homogeneous Unit Principle and the Anglican Church," *The Reformed Theological Review* 48, no. 2 (May-August 1989): 42.

Jewish Christians would be offended by his actions. Other Jewish believers at Antioch including Barnabas followed Peter's example, creating a rift in the local church (Gal 2:11-14). Schnabel writes,

> Paul insists that Peter and Barnabas and the other Jewish believers in the church at Antioch must continue to fellowship and worship in the same church as Gentile Christians do, which includes eating meals together. In other words, Paul expects the Jewish believers—whether veteran leaders such as Peter or new Jewish converts—to belong to the same local congregation as the Gentile Christians do.[71]

Paul established unified churches where believers of all ethnic groups worshiped together in the city or region. He intentionally avoided the idea of establishing separate churches for the differing homogeneous units, Jews and Gentiles, though that would have saved him a lot of trouble. The easiest way is not necessarily the best way or God's way. Schnabel points out that it was Paul's desire to preserve unity among Jewish and Gentile believers that led him to solicit the collection from the churches for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. This action ultimately led to his unjust arrest. The churches Paul established were admonished to cross any barriers that divided Christian fellowship for the sake of the gospel.[72]

Some church growth proponents, however, claim that Paul is presenting an ideal church where members relate to each other crossing social barriers that naturally divide people. Wagner argues that the homogeneous approach to mission work and church planting describes the process where unbelievers receive the gospel and become responsible members of the church. The HUP is intended as a tool, not a biblical mandate. It is an observation of how many lost people respond to the gospel; it is not a description of what ought to be, but what is.[73] Wagner thereby distinguishes the ideal church as presented in the Scriptures from the pragmatic impact of the HUP on mission

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[71]Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 407.

[72]Ibid., 408.

[73]Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, 166-68.

work and church planting. He claims that the ministries of Jesus and Paul operated within the HUP. He further declares that the New Testament expansion of the church to the ends of the earth were in compliance with the HUP.[74] However, McSwain counters,

> Wagner's analysis of the homogeneous principle in the New Testament is *eisegesis* in the extreme. He turns to the New Testament after developing his concepts contextually in the light of contemporary American studies on ethnicity. Once there, his method is one of arguing for the acceptance of the sociological concepts unless they can be refuted directly by the New Testament. Restructuring the social environment of a pluralistic society in the first century, Wagner finds, with selected tests [sic], a first-century conglomeration of homogeneous house churches extending the practice of Jesus in selecting a group of disciples who were of one Galilean kind.[75]

However, proponents of the HUP appear to miss the point of the unity of the church in Paul's theology and missiology (Eph 2:11-22). The Gentile believers were a part of the body of Christ, united with all the redeemed. These Gentile Christians were not blended into the grouping of the Jewish believers, but rather the two groups were united to form a single body of believers. Christ established this new creation, constructed of Jews and Gentiles, for people of all ethnicities.[76]

McGavran claims that the Jews of the New Testament preferred to become Christians without crossing ethnic barriers. He posits that as long as Jews could become Christians within the context of Judaism, the Jewish church grew rapidly. When Paul preached in the synagogues of Asia, Jews could receive the Christian faith without renouncing their Judaism. But when Gentiles began to receive Christ in great numbers in the cities of Asia, Jews had to leave their natural social relationships behind and join ethnically diverse churches.[77] Therefore, the Gentiles created a racial barrier that prohibited the Jews from receiving the gospel in great numbers. McGavran states,

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[74]Wagner, *Our Kind of People*, 109-110.

[75]McSwain, "A Critical Appraisal of the Church Growth Movement," 528.

[76]Bruce W. Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 80.

[77]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 169-70.

Indeed, it is a reasonable conjecture that as soon as becoming a Christian meant joining a house church full of Gentiles and sitting down to agape feasts where on occasion pork was served, would-be Jewish converts found the racial and cultural barriers too high and turned sorrowfully away. Jews have been largely resistant to the gospel ever since.[78]

Here McGavran appears to suggest that Paul's missionary activity among the Gentiles repelled the Jews from the Christian faith.

It is germane to note that Paul's church planting practices did not include separate homogeneous congregations for the poor, the prosperous, the variety of ethnicities and nationalities, Gentile slaves, slaveholders, and freedmen. The fact is that Paul established united churches for all people who followed the Messiah regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, culture, generation, or socioeconomic standing. Schnabel writes,

When people become Christians, they not only experience repentance, salvation and transformation on a personal level. They experience repentance, salvation and transformation in all areas of their worldview, their cultural values, their social affiliations and so on.[79]

In focusing on mission work among Hindus and Muslims, Lewis argues that a central element of the gospel is table fellowship that is open to all.[80]

Several years after Peter's encounter with Cornelius in Caesarea, the Holy Spirit was moving powerfully among diverse ethnicities in Asia bringing many to faith in the Messiah. The ethnically diverse church at Antioch had become the sending church for Paul's missionary endeavors. The Gentile mission was growing rapidly and gaining momentum setting the stage for the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15. The Antioch church experienced growth in numbers and influence as many Gentiles and Jews were coming to faith in the city. Some Jewish Christians who traveled from Judea to Antioch, however, disrupted their fellowship. They taught that a person could not experience

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[78]Ibid., 170.

[79]Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 412.

[80]Lewis, "Caste, Mission and Church Growth," 27.

salvation apart from being circumcised and becoming a member of the Jewish faith community. This crisis led to the meeting of the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem.[81]

The primary issue before the Jerusalem Council was how Gentiles were received into the church. The more conservative Jews argued that Gentiles should be accepted into the church in the same way Gentile proselytes were received into the Jewish community. The circumcision party in Jerusalem consisted of believers who were previously connected with the sect of the Pharisees.[82] This initiation rite involved the circumcision of all males and subjugation to the entire law of Moses. John Stott states, "They were entirely biblical to value circumcision and the law as gifts of God to Israel. But they went further and made them obligatory for everyone, including Gentiles."[83] These Jews believed that it was impossible to be a follower of Christ without first joining the Jewish covenant community. In essence they were lobbying that Gentile converts should become Jews in conviction and lifestyle before they could be accepted as part of the Christian church. Their logic was that Christianity was spawned among the Jews, with Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. To them it seemed only reasonable to expect Gentile converts to be circumcised and to follow the teaching of the Mosaic law. There is no record that Peter placed such a requirement on Cornelius or the other Gentile converts nor was it imposed on the church at Antioch or among the churches that Paul and Barnabas established on their missionary journey. A second issue before the Jerusalem Council was the question of establishing and maintaining fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers.[84]

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[81]John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 240-44.

[82]Padilla, *The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle*, 26.

[83]Stott, *The Spirit, The Church, and the World*, 244.

[84]Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman, 1955), 152. Also see Polhill, *Acts*, 321-25.

Peter was the primary spokesperson at the Jerusalem Council. After his

experience with the Gentiles who believed at Cornelius' home, the focus of his testimony

was salvation by God's grace alone rather than requiring converts to submit to the Jewish

law (Acts 15:10-11). Peter also testified of his encounter with Cornelius and the way the

Holy Spirit fell on the Gentile believers just as he had on Jewish believers at Pentecost

(Acts 11:1-18). Peter appropriately attributed the whole encounter to the work of God

through the power of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, Peter did not mean to

communicate that the law was unimportant or that it should not be followed. His point

was that the law is inadequate for salvation. Since God made no distinction between

Jewish and Gentile converts, why should the council impose a burden that was beyond

what God had placed on them?[85] Paul and Barnabas testified of the initiative of God in

taking the message of the gospel to the Gentiles. They pointed to the signs and wonders

that God performed among the Gentiles and their receptivity to the gospel of Christ (Acts

15:12). This mission report was the extent of Paul and Barnabas' involvement in the

discussion.[86]

After Paul and Barnabas concluded their report, James affirmed Peter's

testimony by appealing to the Scriptures referring to the Septuagint text of Amos 9:11-12

where the prophet proclaims that a restored tent of David will include all the nations that

seek the Lord, not Israel alone.[87] Jewish and Gentile believers are united together as the

body of Christ. James referred to the Gentiles by the Greek term *laos*, a word that Polhill

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[85]Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 245-46.

[86]Polhill, *Acts*, 327-28.

[87]Stagg, *The Book of Acts*, 161. Stagg points out the dependency of the Greek translation to make his point. James, a Hebrew, was the leader of the Jerusalem church. No explanation is given why he quoted from the Septuagint, which varies from the Hebrew text in making his point. The Hebrew text presents the remnant of Israel possessing Edom and other nations. The Septuagint, on the other hand, focuses on a restored kingdom of David where Gentile and Jews are united. Stott argues that either translation would be appropriate in the context of the council. James was likely bilingual, speaking Hebrew and Greek, and the Greek language was likely employed at the meeting due to the diversity of those who attended. Perhaps that is why he quoted the Septuagint. See Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 247-248.

points out is generally reserved for the Jews. James' point is that God is leading the Jewish and Gentile believers to become one united people in Christ. The people that God was restoring for himself included both Jews and Gentiles. James agreed with Peter's position that Gentiles should not have to bear the burden of the Mosaic law and circumcision. This led to the second dilemma before the council. If Gentiles were free from observing the rituals of the Jewish law, how could Jewish Christians who followed the law have fellowship with their Gentile brothers who did not without running the risk of becoming ceremonially unclean? James addressed this issue by asking the Gentiles to refrain from eating food that was offered to idols, to avoid sexual immorality, to refuse to eat meat of animals that had been strangled, and to abstain from eating blood. Polhill points out that the purpose of these restrictions was to make fellowship possible between Jews and Gentiles.[88] Padilla writes,

> The "Jerusalem decree" provided the basis for Jewish and Gentile Christians to live in unity, as equal members of the body of Christ. It clearly exemplifies the apostolic practice in the face of problems arising out of racial, cultural, or social differences among Christians.[89]

While Padilla and Wagner argue from opposing perspectives about the homogeneous unit principle, they agree that it is dehumanizing and unethical to hold that Christianity requires a person to withdraw from one homogeneous group to embrace another to be an authentic Christian.[90]

A Guide for Conversion, Not Perfecting

The homogeneous unit principle relates to the issue of conversion, not perfecting. McGavran's observation addressed how people become Christians. It was McGavran's intent to lead as many people as possible to the Christian faith. The HUP is a

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[88]Polhill, *Acts*, 329-31.

[89]Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle," 26.

[90]Wagner, *Our Kind of People*, 99.

tool that addresses this concern. From a pragmatic standpoint, it has been proven to be evangelistically effective. In support of the principle for evangelism, Malphurs points out that believers have practiced this principle for many years for pragmatic reasons. Missionaries desire to relinquish control of missions that have been started to indigenous leaders as soon as feasible. Indigenous leaders understand the needs of the people more clearly than cross-cultural missionaries can. Youth prefer to be with other students their same age because they have similar needs, issues, and aspirations. Ethnic groups tend to be attracted to churches that are established and led by people from their own ethnic group who understand their culture. Malphurs states, "Regardless of whether it is right or wrong it is true."[91]

For McGavran the process of making disciples is twofold. He defines these two stages as discipling and perfecting. Blomberg and others[92] concur that making disciples is a two-stage process that should be kept in equilibrium. However, the terms McGavran employs applies the word "discipling" in a different way than Blomberg. He refers to the first stage as discipling, which focuses on conversion that leads to active involvement in a local church. He calls the second stage perfecting, focusing on the process of sanctification. Blomberg refers to the first stage as evangelism and the second stage as discipleship.[93] The distinction between discipling and perfecting grows out of the Great Commission and is evident in much of McGavran's writing. His definition of discipling focuses on people movements rather than merely individual responses to the gospel. While McGavran recognizes the importance of individual conversions, he argues that the collective spiritual environment of the people group must be transformed by the power of Christ for a people movement to ensue. His mission strategy regarding the

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[91]Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, 179.

[92]See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 886-87, and William Hendriksen, *Matthew*, The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 998-1000.

[93]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431-32.

principle of receptivity emphasized marshaling the available resources to people who are most likely to respond to the gospel.[94] McGavran spoke in terms of the bridges of God, open doors, and fields that are ripe for the harvest to refer to receptive people. The idea is to move a non-Christian segment of society to embrace Christianity by grace through faith in Christ.

Teaching the new converts to obey all that Christ has commanded is central to the perfecting process (Matt 28:19). McGavran's underlying premise is that healthy churches should grow and multiply as believers mature resulting in spontaneous expansion through evangelism and church planting.[95] McGavran wrote,

> This is a bringing about of an ethical change in the discipled group, an increasing achievement of a thoroughly Christian way of life for a community as a whole, and the conversion of the individuals making up each generation as they come to the age of decision.[96]

Perfecting focuses on the entire process of growing in grace as a Christian including ethical development and the evangelization of the people group. McGavran acknowledges that perfecting overlaps discipling to some degree, however, it cannot precede the first stage. He observed that many churches are biased toward this perfecting while often ignoring the priority of discipling.[97] In *Church Growth and Group Conversion*, a book emphasizing the need for evangelism and people movements, McGavran devoted an entire chapter to the perfecting process. He emphasized that this important aspect of church growth has nothing to do with numerical gains. Rather it focuses on the spiritual development of believers.[98] The idea of perfecting is centered in

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[94]McGavran and Arn, *How to Grow a Church*, 56.

[95]Alan Gates, "Perfection Growth," in *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 128.

[96]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 15.

[97]Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by His Colleague," 28-29, and McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123.

[98]D. A. McGavran, "When the Church Grows," in *Church Growth and Group Conversion* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1973), 97-98.

the concept of teaching the content of Christ's life and message, encouraging complete obedience to his teaching.[99]

To disciple is a relatively new verb in the English language. McGavran explains three different meanings of the verb. The first meaning, D-1, involves the process of transforming an unbelieving culture for the first time to a society where many of its members respond to Christ, are baptized, and become involved in faithful church membership. In such a culture, a person did not have to leave their homogeneous unit to become a believer. The second meaning, D-2, depicts the initial evangelization of individuals moving from unbelief to faith in a nominally Christian culture. McGavran defines D-3 as the process of perfecting believers, teaching them the truths of the Bible and nurturing their spiritual development. He argued that without D-1, D-2 and D-3 people movements were not likely to occur.[100] The latter definition is the one that dominates the churches of the United States in McGavran's view. Churches poised at a D-1 opportunity must be obedient to Christ to disciple the unreached group through evangelism. McGavran argues,

> In such a situation, any perfecting done must above all inculcate the mind of Christ which sought—and seeks—the salvation of all. A pre-mature perfecting that lifts educational attainments, increases earning ability, heightens conscience as to social justice, and decreases concern to win kindred to eternal life, betrays the gospel. High secular and social attainments must not be mistaken for dedication to Christ.[101]

While McGavran acknowledges the biblical mandate to perfect believers, he emphatically argues that the unbelieving multitudes must receive Christ before they can be perfected, emphasizing the priority of evangelism. He states, "The church exists not for herself, but for the world."[102] Discipling and perfecting are two sides of the same

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[99]Gates, "Perfection Growth," 136.

[100]Donald A. McGavran, "How about That New Verb 'To Disciple?'" *Church Growth Bulletin* 15, no. 5 (May 1979): 267.

[101]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 123.

[102]Ibid., 124.

coin; the church must be continually involved in both dimensions. The church must also address social issues both locally and nationally. However, these issues must be secondary to Christ's mandate to make disciples of all people groups (Matt 28:18-20).

The desire to see as many people as possible respond to the gospel was the driving passion of McGavran's mission strategy. The HUP grew out of that desire. The HUP is a tool, which has been helpful to many in carrying out the task of sharing the gospel with unbelievers. Wagner states that it is only intended to be a tool, not a commandment.[103] It has been particularly effective in non-western cultures. With the rise of globalization and the growing diversity of the United States, the value of the HUP is diminishing in such a culture.

Sociological Observations

Any strategy for evangelism and missions must fit within the social context. Because the church operates within society as a community, it must engage culture.[104] In McGavran's view, sociological and anthropological tools helped identify homogeneous units that would be most receptive to the gospel. McClintock notes that *Understanding Church Growth* cites only six sources written by sociologists and anthropologists out of more than one hundred references. None of these sources are used extensively in the book. McClintock charges that McGavran relied primarily on insiders at the Fuller School of World Mission to provide the theoretical framework for his mission strategy. McGavran nonetheless builds his missiology from within the social sciences. McClintock writes, "The theoretical stance, while not explicitly articulated in his writings, is implicit in his exposition of the HU [homogeneous unit] concept."[105] McGavran's sociological observation that people tend to cluster with people with whom they have common

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[103]Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, 167.

[104]Vaughan, "The Homogeneous Unit Principle and the Anglican Church," 43.

[105]McClintock, "Sociological Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle," 110.

171

interests is true. It was McGavran's desire to maximize evangelistic efforts by working through these natural social relationships in order to lead as many as possible to faith in Christ. As cited previously, McClintock considers the broad and vague definition of the HUP to be a major flaw in McGavran's strategy.[106] Kraft writes, "Common language, culture, kinship, history, ritual, territory, time, and the like are typical criteria of sociocultural homogeneity."[107] McSwain, however, charges, "Much of the theory of the church growth movement is based more upon sociology than theology."[108] For McGavran, church growth assesses the number of conversions. While it is true that the number of conversions is an easy component to measure, McSwain questions the limited nature of such a measurement. McGavran's church growth and mission theory is built upon both discipling and perfecting. This emphasis on numbers to measure growth led to the charge of some of his critics that his methodology was driven by pragmatism. McGavran's critics charged that his mission strategy was driven by whatever works. His methodology led to targeting a homogeneous group and focusing ministry efforts on that group. Lewis writes, "The rationale for this is a combination of pragmatic, sociological, cultural, and biblical reasons."[109] The HUP focuses on barriers that prevent people from receiving the gospel. McGavran conceded that these barriers were often more sociological than theological. People were hesitant to receive the gospel for fear having to abandon their families and friends, forfeit their identity, and relinquish their culture.

Yet it is impossible to deny that the driving force behind McGavran's pragmatism was his commitment to biblical authority and his desire to fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission of Christ. McGavran used the tools of the social sciences to

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[106]Ibid., 109.

[107]Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic for the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Missiology," 121.

[108]McSwain, "A Critical Appraisal of the Church Growth Movement," 524.

[109]Lewis, "Caste, Mission and Church Growth, 25.

strengthen his pragmatic drive to practice effective evangelism, yet his theological

foundation and commitment to the biblical mandate was the structural foundation on

which the use of these tools rested. Sociological and anthropological tools were always

limited to a position of subordination to his passion to fulfill the Great Commission.

It is clear that McGavran believed that the Christian faith has implications for

society as a whole. He wrote,

> It is an inescapable fact to-day [sic] that if the world is to be unified it will be so on
> one of two bases—universal materialism or the Christian faith. There is no other
> religion or philosophy which by its extension could possibly unify the world. Since
> we Christians cannot look forward with equanimity to a secular world, we must
> believe that the basic religious unification of the countries of the world, with all that
> is implied for their peace and harmony, depends on a further extension and
> deepening of the Christian faith. We believe then that the unification of the
> countries of the world and the future hope of peace depend greatly on our
> understanding of sociological and religious processes by which peoples become
> Christian, and our acting accordingly.[110]

In regard to groupings of people, sociology primarily focuses on socio-

economic characteristics, social background, and social origins. These characteristics

create the soil from which homogeneous groups are nourished and grow. The people

consciousness of the group is a social structure that exerts a strong influence on the

group's openness to the gospel.[111] If a tribe has a high sense of group consciousness, the

group will likely be resistant to the gospel because receiving the gospel would mean

leaving their tribe to join another one.[112]

God created humans as social creatures with a basic need to belong.

Individuals are born into a complex social group called a family. Families are a part of

other social organizations such as a local community. Through the process of

enculturation individuals learn what is acceptable and what is not in the society. Through

enculturation society members acquire the desire to want to act in a socially acceptable

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[110]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 9-10.

[111]David B. Barrett, "The Discipling of Africa in this Generation," in *God, Man, and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 401.

[112]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 155.

173

way. People socialize in groups to meet this basic human need because it is in these groups that they find the approval.[113]

McGavran's observation of the HUP initially took place in India where people live under the caste system. To move from one caste to another involves being cut off from the former people group to which the person belonged. In such a context, his observation is grounded in the cultural setting and has much value in developing a mission strategy in such a situation. The United States, however, is a very different environment. In *The Bridges of God*, McGavran acknowledges the emphasis of the West on individual conversion. He states,

> This is due to various causes. For one thing, Western nations are homogeneous and there are few exclusive sub-societies. Then, too, because freedom of conscience exists, one member of a family can become Christian and live as a Christian without being ostracized by the rest of the family. Furthermore, Christianity is regarded as true, even by many who do not profess it. . . . There have been no serious rivals to the Church. Thus individuals are able to make decisions as individuals without severing social bonds.[114]

The cultural climate of the United States, however, is currently very different from the society that McGavran encountered in the middle of the twentieth century. The most recent United States census information estimates that the white majority will be erased by 2043. When examining the current rate of growth among the United States population in the under-five age grouping, whites are already a minority. According to government projections, minorities will comprise more than fifty percent of the United States population in the under eighteen category by 2018. The number of deaths currently exceeds the number of births among whites, offering further evidence that the nation is becoming increasingly diverse.[115] Due to the individualism so prevalent in the United States and the freedom to move from one people group to another without severing social

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[113]David Reisman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1961), 5.

[114]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 8.

[115]Hope Yen, "Census: White Majority in U.S. Gone by 2043," http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/06/13/18934111-census-white-majority-in-us-gone-by-2043?lite (accessed July 13, 2013).

174

bonds, the application of the McGavran's homogeneous unit principle in such a context is less valid.

McGavran's pragmatism evaluated mission in terms of numerical results. He wanted to know if people were being converted to Christianity and being incorporated into local churches that were committed to reproduce themselves. This goal was both clear and measurable. McGavran's pragmatism brought with it a level of accountability that made many involved in missions and ministry uncomfortable. Rather than usurping the authority and work of the Holy Spirit, Wagner claims that McGavran's pragmatism was empowered, led, and filled by the Holy Spirit.[116]

There are, however, some flaws to McGavran's use of sociological tools. First, McGavran limited his focus to the homogeneous unit neglecting its interaction with society beyond the people group. Homogeneous units intersect with other groupings of society. Second, McGavran did not adequately address the process of social change in his HUP theory. Neither homogeneous groups nor the wider culture are static, but rather are always in the process of change. In an increasingly urban world where cities are neither homogeneous nor static, churches experience immense pressure to adapt in order to survive. In 1800, 97 percent of the world's population dwelt in urban settings.[117] By 2012, more of the global population lived in urban centers than rural settings. The World Health Organization predicts that by 2050, 70 percent of the people on the earth will live in a city.[118] These urban variables include changing populations, ethnic make-up, socioeconomic variables, education, land use, institutional changes, etc.[119] Further, social

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[116]C. Peter Wagner, "Pragmatic Strategy for Tomorrow's Mission," In *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 146-48.

[117]Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.

[118]World Health Organization, "Urban Population Growth," http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en (accessed August 7, 2013)..

[119]Robert Calvert, "Why Become a Rainbow Church?" *Exhange*, 34, no. 3 (2005): 178. Calvert argues that multiethnic churches have a greater potential to adapt and survive in the increasing urban world.

boundaries are not as fixed as McGavran's HUP implies. If an ethnic group develops a high degree of business, social, or religious interaction with another ethnic group, evangelism and church planting could effectively cross the boundaries that separate these groups.[120] McClintock writes, "A missiology that tends to exclude the possibility of movements to Christ across cultural and social boundaries is, therefore, not only theologically incorrect but is also based on a faulty sociological premise."[121]

People Movements and Multiethnic Churches

McGavran had a pragmatic interest in his missionary theory development. He wanted to use the resources available to reach the greatest number of people with the gospel. Allen's idea of the spontaneous expansion of the gospel and Pickett's mass movements or group conversion influenced McGavran in his development of people movements. Each of these terms is problematic, especially for the western mindset, but they represent how other cultures respond to the gospel in a short period of time. McGavran argued that a society develops a people consciousness when the group identities itself as a distinct class, tribe, or caste.[122]

People movements are most prevalent among tribes, castes, or family clans where the group has been sufficiently instructed in the gospel. The larger number of conversions happens over several years. The term people movement is employed because it focuses on how a people become Christian.[123] A. L. Warnshuis distinguishes between

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[120]McClintock, "Sociological Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle," 111-15.

[121]Ibid., 115. Robert Calvert presents an argument for the biblical basis for planting and developing multiethnic and international churches. He cites the church at Antioch in Acts 13 as a case in point where the church leadership had a cosmopolitan make-up. He states, "Barnabas was from Cyprus was an Asian, Simeon, was a black African, Lucius of Cyrene was North African, Manaen, an Asian from Palestine, and Saul, a European Jew . . . these five pastoral leaders were from three continents. The church in Antioch was both multicultural and heterogeneous." See Calvert, "Why Become a Rainbow Church?" 178.

[122]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 155.

[123]Donald A. McGavran, "The People Movement Point of View," in *Church Growth and Group Conversion* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1973), 4.

evangelism in a predominantly Christian environment and taking the gospel to people of another religious tradition on the mission field. With the rise of individualism in the West, the idea of a group consciousness has largely vanished in the United States.[124] McGavran was profoundly aware of the individualism that dominates much of Western Civilization. Missionaries with roots in western society appealed for individual conversions out of the general population.[125] When he wrote *The Bridges of God*, McGavran was aware that western culture, dominated by whites of European descent, was basically a homogeneous society where a person could become a Christian as an individual without having to cross social barriers.[126] While his conclusions were true to some extent, McGavran ignored the struggle for equality by other ethnicities particularly in the United States with its history of slavery and subjugation of perceived inferior minorities. He was correct, however, about the church having no serious rival at that time. Nonetheless, the United States has become much more diverse than it was in the 1950s and religious pluralism is now a major challenge to Christianity.

Cross-Cultural Evangelism

Cross-cultural evangelism has long been an important component of international mission agencies. Communicating the gospel in a different culture is a difficult matter. To communicate the gospel in any society, one must begin with a clear biblical understanding of the gospel and its cultural and historical context. Apart from this understanding, there is no message to share. At the same time, evangelists must have a clear awareness of the way their native culture has influenced them as well as the cultural and historical environment of the people with whom they seek to share. Without

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[124]W. L. Warnshuis, "Group Conversion," in *Church Growth and Group Conversion* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1973), 8-9.

[125]Donald A. McGavran, *How Churches Grow: The New Frontiers of Mission* (New York: Friendship, 1966), 22.

[126]McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 8.

this contextual knowledge, those who share the gospel are in danger of presenting a gospel without meaning and an unconnected message. Both the message of the gospel and the knowledge of the culture are essential to effective cross-cultural evangelism.[127]

In Romans, Paul declares the importance of preaching the gospel, but also notes that the preacher must be heard (Rom 10:13-15). While cross-cultural evangelism is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's Word, the gospel must be clearly proclaimed and understood. Operating within the parameters of effective human communication, the evangelist must efficiently inform the hearer of the gospel message, seeking to convince and persuade the listener under the authority of the Holy Spirit to respond in faith. As Louis Luzbetak states, "The communication of the Gospel [sic], we are saying, although ultimately a divine task, is nevertheless governed by human laws of communication."[128] Every culture and language has its biases and none are theologically neutral making cross-cultural communication of the gospel a daunting task. The message must be presented in forms of communication that will be understood in the cultural context.[129]

With the growing diversity of the United States, local churches must give attention to cross-cultural evangelism in their settings if they are to effectively minister in the changing American ethnic context. Differing ethnicities have more in common as people created in the image of God than what separates them into people groups.[130] Ethnic groups have a shared community identity that governs the way they think and behave. They also have the ability to adapt and change. Timothy Tennent writes,

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[127]Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 14.

[128]Louis J. Luzbetak, "Ethnotheological Sensitivity in Cross-Cultural Evangelism," *Missiology* 4, no. 2 (April 1976): 208.

[129]Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 141.

[130]Eugene Nida and William Reyburn point out that anthropologists have frequently acknowledged that people from varying cultures find a unity in their humanity that transcends the diversity that separates them into distinct groups. See Eugene A. Nida and William D. Reyburn, *Meaning Across Cultures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981), 26-30, quoted in Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 154.

"Although culture is an overall stabilizing force in society, cultures are able to change and to adapt as its members adjust to new or perceived realities."[131] The fields in the ethnically diverse United States are white unto harvest. Multiethnic churches are evidence of God's work to break down the walls that divide people and unite them as the people of God.

Conclusion

McGavran's desire to reach as many people as possible with the gospel as well as his commitment to the authority of the Scriptures is unquestioned. His critics charged that he stressed the quantity of converts over the quality of them. Tippett writes,

> They have accused him of stressing quantity at the expense of quality; of being so concerned with the saving of souls that he neglects the serving of human needs; of pushing for church extension and being blind to the needs for social justice; and of relying on human effort instead of the Holy Spirit.[132]

However, McGavran acknowledged the Holy Spirit's role in drawing people to Christ and empowering believers to witness (Acts 1:8). It is the Holy Spirit who reveals God's truth and gives understanding.[133] He writes,

> The growth of the Church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. As in the New Testament Church, so today, the Holy Spirit leads, convicts of sin, converts, builds up, selects missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened fields. . . . We talk of factors producing readiness to accept the Saviour [sic]—but who produces the factors? It is largely the Holy Spirit of God.[134]

If the homogeneous unit principle is understood in the broad sense discussed previously, it offers support and empowerment for Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. People enjoy being with others who share common interests, values, and beliefs. If homogeneous groups are not static, but rather in a constant process of change, then

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[131]Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 170.

[132]Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by His Colleague," 35.

[133]John T. Seamands, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Church Growth," in *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 105.

[134]McGavran, *How Churches Grow*, 55.

churches can become more ethnically diverse without violating the HUP in a broad sense.[135] However, if the term is defined more narrowly, as is normally the case in regard to avoiding the crossing of social barriers, the practice of the principle will continue to influence churches to be ethnically segregated. Fong notes some critics have argued that the church is more likely to build dividing walls that encourage ethnic separation and cultural conformity than it is to break down the dividing walls, offering a new community that values the equality of all peoples and diversity.[136] In the growing diversity of the culture of the United States, some homogeneous groupings have already broken the ethnic barrier, creating multiethnic homogeneous groups in businesses, social relationships, and educational institutions.[137] Multiethnic churches break down these same barriers among believers.

Because of the development of the homogeneous unit principle, McGavran has been mischaracterized in respect to Christian service and social justice issues. He understood the importance of social action as demonstrated by William Wilberforce and Martin Luther King, Jr. Any person of goodwill can commit their lives to social justice in ways that are consistent with God's kingdom and advance his causes even without being a follower of Christ. However, it is impossible for a non-believer to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples of all people groups. Evangelism and social action are never the same thing. Edwin Orr rightly acknowledges that only believers can carryout the work of evangelism while social action may be employed by unbelievers.[138] McGavran was an ardent supporter of both in the context that neither social justice nor

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[135]Kraft employed the broader definition of the HUP. This broad definition is precisely why McClintock argues that it is a major flaw in McGavran's theory. See Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic for the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Missiology, 121, and McClintock, "Sociological Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle," 109.

[136]Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church*, 72.

[137]Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic for the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Missiology," 126.

[138]J. Edwin Orr, "Evangelical Dynamic and Social Action," in *God, Man and Church Growth*, ed. A. R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 274.

Christian service can replace the priority of people coming to saving faith in Christ. Tippett writes, "McGavran believes that men have to be made new in Christ as a first step and that having accepted Christ they must serve and fight for social justice. Both are the ongoing ministries of the church: one discipling, the other perfecting."[139]

Multiethnic churches have the potential to play a major role in the spiritual development of the United States in the years ahead. McSwain acknowledges that the HUP works and that it is sound as an approach for evangelism. He believes that the best expression of the church is found when multiethnic people worship, share in ministry, and enjoy fellowship together in the unity of Christ while maintaining their personal identities.[140] He states, "The multi-cultural church is a healthier church than the mono-cultural church in the long term."[141] Christ breaks down the walls that separate people. Believers have common roots, despite differing ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds, socio-economic levels, and languages. All believers are a part of the one family of faith.[142] The United States appears to be poised for the growth of multiethnic churches. As diversity continues to grow, Southern Baptists must expand their efforts to promote ethnically diverse local churches and plant more multiethnic churches.

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[139]Tippett, "Portrait of a Missiologist by His Colleague," 37.

[140]McSwain, "A Critical Appraisal of the Church Growth Movement," 529-30.

[141]Ibid.," 530.

[142]Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 52.

CHAPTER 5

THE CRICTICAL ISSUE OF WORSHIP IN SOUTHERN
BAPTIST MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES

Introduction

The United States is an increasingly pluralistic society due to waves of

immigrates who bring their indigenous ideas, cultural practices, and religions with them.[1]

American is often referred to as a "melting pot," blending the diversity of various

ethnicities into the culture of the United States. Oscar Romo, however, rejected the

melting pot analogy in favor of an "American Mosaic." Ethnic groups need not negate

their language and cultural heritage to fit into the mosaic. Romo presented the idea that

the American culture is more like a stew or a bowl of salad with each ingredient adding

its unique flavor without losing its identity.[2] Michael Hawn, professor of Church Music

and Director of the Sacred Music Masters Program at Perkins School of Theology, also

challenges the often-used metaphor that the United States is a melting pot of the various

ethnicities and cultures present in the nation. Like Romo, Hawn favors the idea of a

mosaic of ethnicities. He argues,

> The cultural assimilation suggested by the melting-pot metaphor does not describe
> the experiences of European immigrants arriving in the United States during the 19th
> and 20th centuries. The image may have even less validity for people of color in the
> 21st century. If Europeans found it difficult to conform, or to "melt" in to the

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[1]Jeff Thormodson, "Christian Worship in the Context of Cultures," *Missio Apostolica* 20, no. 2 (November 2012): 126.

[2]Gustavo Vicente Suárez, "A Critical Analysis of Southern Baptist Hispanic Church Planting Strategies in North America, 1970-1994," Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013, 9-10. Suárez and Romo present the case for language missions rather than multiethnic congregations that cross language barriers. Many Hispanic churches are multicultural blending Mexicans, Cuban, Latin Americans, Puerto Ricans, etc. However, their worship is limited to Spanish-speaking services. Romo argues against assimilating or integrating with other cultures. He feels that such strategies desire to Americanize ethnics, robbing the people of their ethnic identity and pride. See Oscar I. Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 14-15.

majority culture, how much more difficult is it for African Americans, Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans to be absorbed into a single deracinated culture?[3]

Hawn presents the notion of a mosaic to replace the melting pot metaphor. He differs from Romo in that he advocates the multiethnic church strategy rather than language specific congregations as the best approach to demonstrate the mosaic metaphor. Hawn states, "A mosaic consists of thousands of tiny pieces, each with its own distinct hue and shape."[4] Each ethnic group reflects the diversity of the creativity of their maker. Each ethnicity plays an important role in the distinctive design of the mosaic.

While there are several critical issues for Southern Baptist multiethnic churches, the issue of worship looms largely. Worship is a primary function of the local church. John MacArthur argues that worship is the ultimate priority for the people of God.[5] Hawn's imagery of a mosaic provides a snapshot of effective multiethnic worship. He emphasizes that churches need a global perspective in local communities, particularly as different ethnicities worship together.[6]

The North American Mission Board provided the names of the 230 Southern Baptist multiethnic churches they identified through their data collection process. Efforts were made to contact these churches through emails, websites, and telephone calls. Some of the churches listed as multiethnic had disbanded. Others did not meet the research requirement of having no more than 80% of the majority ethnicity. Many others failed to respond to multiple attempts to make contact with them. However, twenty-two of these churches responded to the snowball sampling email and provided a starting point for the social research. The majority of these churches operate in isolation, unaware of other

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[3]C. Michael Hawn, *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2003), 4.

[4]Ibid. While Hawn and Romo agree on the mosaic metaphor, they differ greatly on its implications for worship. Hawn is an advocate of blending the unique shapes and hues of each piece of the mosaic into multiethnic worship and churches while Romo argues for worship and churches that are contextualized to a particular language group.

[5]John MacArthur, Jr., *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), vii.

[6]C. Michael Hawn, "A Little Reverse Missions: In Search of a Global Perspective in Worship," *Review and Expositor* 106 (Spring 2009): 207.

Southern Baptists multiethnic churches. Those who connected with other multiethnic churches found these associations outside of the SBC. A few were aware of one or two other churches that might meet the parameters of the research. Snowball sampling emails were sent to these churches as well. Other multiethnic churches were identified through word of mouth, Internet searches, and information gathered from denominational agencies and state conventions. From the quantitative research collected, twenty-six churches were selected for the qualitative study that included pastoral interviews and a survey completed by church leaders. The criterion for selection of the churches used in the qualitative research were a baptismal ratio (average worship attendance: baptisms) of at least 25:1 during the past year and a commitment to being a multiethnic church with no more than 80% of the majority ethnicity. The only data collected prior to the pastoral interviews and leadership surveys was the churches' response to the snowball sampling questions. The selection process included churches from a variety of geographical locations in the United States and included both urban and rural settings.

The ethnic breakdown of twenty-six pastors interviewed included sixteen Caucasians, four African Americans, two Hispanics, two Kenyans, one Korean American, and one Jamaican. It was not surprising that most of the multiethnic pastors identified through the social research were white due to the historic white domination of the SBC. While the selection process did not include the role of worship, all pastors and the vast majority of leaders who participated in the social research acknowledged the vital role of worship and its unique challenges in multiethnic church settings. Further, all the pastors interviewed recognize the need for ethnically diverse leaders in worship; however, some churches lacked the diverse leadership that they desired.[7]

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[7]The social research methodology utilized included interviewing twenty-six Southern Baptist multiethnic pastors. Several of the interviews were conducted in person. These pastors serve in a variety of regions in the United States from New York and Chicago to Florida, Texas, and California. Due to time restraints, cost, and distance, several interviews were conducted through the mediums of FaceTime, Skype, and telephone. In addition, an online leadership survey was conducted involving the leadership of these churches. See Appendix 1 for the full results of this survey.

Corporate worship and the unique challenges of planning worship services for diverse groups are critical for multiethnic churches. Beginning by examining worship in regard to the biblical mission of the church, corporate worship is then defined as it relates to the local church. The priority of worship as a major function of the local church is explored. There is a need for an authoritative standard to serve as a guide for worship particularly in multiethnic contexts where the congregants bring vastly different worship styles, tastes, preferences, expressions, and practices together. The Bible serves as this authoritative guide for Southern Baptist multiethnic churches, a standard that is both trustworthy and reliable. Important aspects of worship include music, prayer, preaching, length of the service, worship behavior, language barriers, and ethnic inclusivism. These issues are addressed from the perspective of Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations. The section concludes by examining the biblical concept of worship in spirit and truth and the implications of this passage for multiethnic churches.

Worship and the Mission of the Church

Worship lies at the heart of the Great Commandment revealed by Jesus Christ in the Gospels (Matt 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28). Believers are called to love God with every aspect of their beings. In Mark's account, the scribe asks Jesus which of the commandments is the first or most important one. Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5. These words were recited in the *Shema*, a prayer that was recounted every morning and evening by devout Jews. Craig Evans notes that the four modifiers—heart, soul, mind, and strength—used to express love for God are to be understood as the necessity of loving God with the totality of one's being and with all of one's resources.[8] Loving God involves every part of a Christian's life, offering everything to God while excluding all rivals. Such devotion expresses the only adequate

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[8]Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 262-64.

185

human response to the God who created human beings in his own image.[9] Worship is an avenue where such devotion to God may be regularly expressed. In arguing that worship is the ultimate priority for believers, MacArthur writes, "The psalmist affirms the ultimate priority for man by echoing God's desire that we 'worship the Lord in majesty of holiness' (Psalm 29:2). Clearly the supreme duty of the creature for time and eternity is to worship the Creator."[10] Psalm 29 calls worshipers to ascribe honor and praise to the creator for who he is. This is a primary act of worship.[11] The foundational purpose of the church is to offer worship to God, the only one worthy of such exultation.[12] The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins by answering the question about the chief end of man. It states, "The chief aim of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."[13]

The biblical witness expresses worship as a time for remembering the acts of God in history and a celebration of his goodness and faithfulness. The psalmist states,

My soul, praise the Lord, and all that is within me, praise His holy name. My soul, praise the Lord, and do not forget all his benefits. He forgives all your sin; He heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the pit; He crowns you with faithful love and compassion. He satisfies you with goodness; your youth is renewed like the eagle (Ps 103:1-5).

This Psalm begins with a section enticing the people of God to praise him. A worshiper expresses his praise to the Lord. On behalf of the congregation gathered for worship, the speaker/singer focuses on the personal blessings of God. Yahweh freely offers his resources to meet the needs of the people. The people of Israel were called to reflect on

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[9]Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 351, and Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 63.

[10]MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, vii.

[11]Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 243.

[12]Todd A. Stepp, "Authentic Christian Worship: Relevance of Wesley's Criteria," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 220.

[13]"The Shorter Catechism" http://opc.org/documents/SCLayout.pdf (accessed December 4, 2013). Also see, Joseph H. Hall, "Catechisms of the Reformed Reformation," *Presbyterion* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1979): 87. Hall notes that this question and answer can be traced to John Calvin's Geneva Catechism using wording that is almost identical. See Hall, "Catechisms of the Reformed Reformation," 95.

God's faithfulness and powerful acts in the past. It is Yahweh who forgives sins, heals diseases, rescues from the pit, and crowns his people with faithful love and compassion. The appropriate response of worshipers to such a gracious God is to praise him and to love him with every fiber of their beings. Through worship God's people glorify him and enjoy his presence.[14]

When King David moved the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, he placed it under the tent that he had prepared for it. The people of Israel joined the king in offering praise to God when the ark was placed in Jerusalem.[15] David declared, "Give thanks to the Lord; call on His name; proclaim His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him; sing praise to Him; tell about all His wonderful works" (1 Chron 16:8-9). These words are recorded again in Psalm 105 where the people are called to praise God, as they are encouraged in their faith to live according to his revealed will.[16] The reoccurring refrain of Psalm 118 reminds the worshipers that God's faithful love is eternal and he is to be praised for his goodness.

Knowing and loving God are twin themes in worship. In fact, it is impossible to love God without knowing him. In Philippians 3, Paul reflects on the intimate privilege and the priority of knowing God. After recounting his impressive personal achievements in Philippians 3:4-6, Paul emphatically proclaims that those things that he once considered as sources of pride and self-reliance are in reality nothing when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ.[17] He concludes that all his personal accomplishments and advantages are unspeakable filth when compared to the glory of

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[14]Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 21 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 19-22.

[15]Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 14 (Waco: TX: Word, 1986), 194.

[16]Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 42.

[17]Ralph P. Martin and Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 183-96.

knowing Christ.[18] Knowing Christ meant identifying with him in a way that shaped his entire life.[19] Paul states that his chief aim in life was to know Christ in the power of his resurrection as well as in the fellowship of his sufferings (Phil 3:10). Paul's desire to know Christ involves much more than a historic understanding of the person and work of the Messiah. He desires to know him intimately and personally as the resurrected, eternal Lord. In fellowship with Christ's sufferings, the apostle's old humanity came to an end as he was raised into the new humanity through the power of the Lord's resurrection. Knowing Christ means to suffer and die in him only to be resurrected to a new and better life.[20] To know Christ initiates an intimacy that is life changing, life shaping, and continuous. Knowing is an important aspect of loving God and worshiping him. The God of the universe revealed himself to humanity; therefore, he cannot be worshiped in ignorance. Knowing and loving God is central to worship. Elmer Towns and Vernon Whaley state, "We enjoy God as we learn more about him, which makes us want to spend time *with* him. The more we understand about God, the more we want to worship him."[21]

Multiethnic churches are challenged to cross ethnic barriers in worship. Mark Bangert, Professor of Pastoral Ministry: Worship and Church Music at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, writes, "The world is shrinking, and single culture enclaves are quickly becoming a rarity."[22] The world reflects the intricacies of the creativity of God. The current culture of the United States offers a climate where people can embrace the individuality of each person and each ethnicity in a greater way than

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[18]Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 386.

[19]Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians/Colossians/Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 135.

[20]Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 196-98. This is a picture of baptism by immersion.

[21]Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 1.

[22]Mark Bangert, "How Does One Go About Multicultural Worship?" in *What Does "Multicultural Worship Look Like?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1996): 26.

what was available in the past. Multiethnic worship enables people to know and

experience God deeply in broader terms than those limited by a single culture or ethnic

group. Bangert notes,

> Behind every cultural pattern of Christian worship there are people, people who have been bathed with baptismal water and who, together with their ways and customs and symbols, have been reconciled to Christ. The real gift in multicultural worship is always a person from another culture whose gifts are shared and who waits to share the love of Christ with us. Falling short of that end only deflates the potential of a possibility provided in our time.[23]

The Southern Baptist multiethnic churches that participated in the qualitative

research consistently demonstrated a high view of the Scriptures and were firmly

committed to reaching people of all ethnic backgrounds with the gospel. Jesus broke

down the dividing wall that separated Jews from Gentiles (Eph 2:14-16). These churches

are devoted to reaching people of all ethnicities who live in their neighborhoods.

Jonathan Williams, the pastor at Wilcrest Baptist Church in Houston, Texas,

where people from 45 different nations gather to worship states, "Multiethnic churches

must be gospel-centered congregations that glorify God."[24] Houston, Texas, has become

one of the most diverse, international cities in the nation. Williams went on to say that the

Great Commission of Christ commands those who follow the Messiah to make disciples

of all nations, which includes the people groups that live in the neighborhood around a

house of worship. God has brought the nations of the world to the United States. For

many contemporary Americans, the nations live next door. When entering the worship

center of Sonpoint Baptist Fellowship in Greenville, South Carolina, attention is

immediately drawn to a large banner hanging above the pulpit that states Christ died for

every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (based on Rev 5:9). Pastor Samuel Kioko believes

Christ compels the church to reach every ethnic group and every language with the

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[23]Ibid., 27.

[24]Jonathan Williams, telephone interview by author, December 19, 2013.

gospel.[25] Dax Urbina, pastor of *Iglesia Bautista Reformado de Lehigh*, stated that the church he serves is multiethnic because it exemplifies the biblical mission of the church. To fail to share the gospel and make disciples of the people groups next door is to refuse to obey Christ's command.[26] Bill Johnson, pastor of Reach the Nations Church in Atlanta, Georgia, also expressed that the growing diversity of the United States increases the need for more multiethnic churches. Reach the Nations Church is located less than five miles from the largest population of refugees in the United States according to Johnson. The nearby community of Clarkston, Georgia, is one of the most ethnically diverse areas of the nation.[27] Williams, Kioko, Urbina, and Johnson each referred to the mandate of the Great Commission as the biblical foundation for the existence of their multiethnic congregations, affirming that the mission of the church is to make disciples of all people groups through evangelism and discipleship. If the church is to accomplish its mission in the world, both evangelism and nurturing believers in the faith are twin tasks that must be a priority in worship.[28] Christ's command applies to the ministry of the local church just as it does to international mission strategies. Believers worshiping together in ethnic diversity united as the body of Christ present a formidable witness to the power of the gospel to transform lives in the context of the ethnic diversity of the United States. Intentional multiethnic churches exemplify the biblical mission of the church.

Worship Defined

Worship is the appropriate response of believers to the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God.[29] Worship can rightly be applied to the whole of the

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[25]Samuel Kioko, interview by author, Greenville, SC, December 18, 2013.

[26]Dax Urbina, telephone interview by author, May 28, 2014.

[27]Bill Johnson, interview by author, Stone Mountain, GA, November 21, 2013.

[28]John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 20-21.

[29]Towns and Whaley, *Worship through the Ages*, 2-3.

Christian life. Wayne Grudem notes that everything in the life of the believer should ultimately be an act of worship, glorifying God.[30] Timothy George states, "Worship that pleases God is worship that glorifies God, that extols the greatness of his name and that celebrates his presence and victory."[31] Worship is the activity of believers, which is broader than weekly gatherings for corporate worship.[32] For the purposes of this inquiry, however, the focus will be on the corporate nature of worship within Southern Baptist multiethnic churches.

Grudem states, "Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts."[33] Worship is the appropriate response of created beings to the self-revelation of the Creator. Edmund Clowney states, "Worship becomes depraved, not first in cult prostitution, or in rituals of blood lust, but at the point where human creatures refuse to acknowledge the only One worthy of utter, absolute, irrevocable devotion (Rom. [sic] 1:21-23)."[34] Genuine worship is never prone to mere entertainment, but rather is God-centered and for his glory.[35] Christian worship must be God-centered. Anything less is a façade that is void of any hope of encountering the living God.

All of life for believers should be an act of glorifying God, but corporate worship is an activity where believers are acutely aware of the presence of God and are intentionally expressing adoration to him. Rodney Woo, former pastor of Wilcrest Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, states, "Worship is our response to God's revelation of

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[30]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 1003.

[31]Timothy George, "The Nature of God: Being, Attributes, and Acts," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 239.

[32]Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 867.

[33]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1003.

[34]Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 118.

[35]George, "The Nature of God," 239.

Himself."[36] Grudem writes, "Worship is therefore a direct expression of our ultimate purpose for living, 'to glorify God and fully enjoy him forever.'"[37] Worship is an active choice and involves a response of obedience to God. In the context of the Genesis account where Abraham is tested by God, the text states, "Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you'" (Gen 22:5). God had revealed to Abraham that he was to offer Isaac, the child of promise, as a burnt offering. Abraham had a deep love for his son and the last thing that he wanted to do was offer him as a sacrifice. Yet his words reveal his conscious choice to worship God and obey him. Gordon Wenham notes that the details of taking the wood from the donkey and placing it on Isaac and the specific mention of the knife and the fire all point to Abraham's determination to obey God. He presses forward on this difficult and emotional journey with the son whom he loves.[38] Abraham's resolve to worship was an active choice of obedience as he responded to God.

God is the object of our worship because he alone is worthy. John Frame states, "We worship God because he supremely deserves it, and because he desires it."[39] Worship involves praising God with hearts and voices, making music and congregational singing an important aspect of it. John was reminded that God is the object of worship in Revelation 22:8-9. When he fell at the feet of the powerful angel who had revealed the heavenly vision to him, the angel immediately corrected John, rejecting his act of worship by telling John that he, too, was a fellow slave. He admonished John to worship God, the only one worthy of worship. The Lord is a jealous God (Exod 20:5) and he will not give his glory to anyone else (Isa 48:11). Believers must be careful to avoid usurping

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[36]Rodney M. Woo, *The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 180.

[37]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1004.

[38]Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol 2 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 107-8.

[39]Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 15.

the glory of God. Since he is the creator of all that exists, he is infinitely more worthy of praise than any of his creations. The twenty-four elders in heaven are overwhelmed with reverence and joy as they worship before the throne of God. The Lord alone is worthy "to receive glory and honor and power" (Rev 4:11). Grudem states,

> Because God is worthy of worship and seeks to be worshiped, everything in our worship services should be designed and carried out not to call attention to ourselves or bring glory to ourselves, but to call attention to God and to cause people to think about him.[40]

In worship, believers should be actively engaged in meeting with God. Far too often worshipers are passive, watching the worship leaders, listening to the music, the prayers, the reading of God's Word, and the sermon. Such passivity may reflect a lack of focus on God, the true object of worship. These passive worshipers through their lack of participation fall short of the goal of active engagement with God. Robert Webber, theologian and worship practitioner, objects to this passive involvement in worship. He argues, "Worship is a verb. It is not something done to us or for us, but by us."[41]

In multiethnic contexts, worship embodies both unity and diversity. Frame points out that Jesus established one church, not many. He prayed for unity, offering a visible witness of the oneness that the Father and the Son shared in John 17:11 and 21-23. Frame states, "The unity of the church is a unity in diversity. Church unity is all the more remarkable and all the more difficult to achieve because it is a unity joining a wide variety of people, differing in ethnic background, language, gender, gifts, and ages."[42]

The Priority of Worship

Worship is the most direct way that believers serve God. In view of God's great mercy, Paul states in Romans 12:1 that the appropriate response to the God who has

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[40]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1005.

[41]Robert E. Webber, *Worship Is a Verb* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 12.

[42]Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 24. Frame also offers supporting texts from the Scriptures including Gal 3:28; Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; and Eph 4:1-6.

193

revealed himself is found in believers presenting their bodies, all that they are, as sacrifices to God, living, holy, and pleasing to him. The sacrifice here includes one's entire being rather than segmented parts of the body.[43] Such response by believers is the spiritual act of worship expected from every follower of Christ. This worship is to be wholehearted in nature encompassing the entirety of the worshiper. It echoes the call of the great commandment to love God with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and to single-minded devotion to God.[44]

Many contemporary worshipers nevertheless seek a church that reflects their cultural and entertainment tastes. Such attitudes move the focus of worship from God to themselves. Constance Cherry, Associate Professor of Worship and Christian Ministries at Indiana Wesleyan University, states that the fundamental issue concerning worship is whether or not it pleases God.[45] Clowney argues that what makes worship effective is not the degree to which it caters to the people, but the degree to which it is pleasing to God.[46] Worship by its nature focuses on God, moving believers beyond themselves. As Christians move their focus from themselves to God, they develop a greater concern for the needs of others and their personal stylistic preferences dissipate. While it is profitable for every church to examine worship in light of the consumer mentality of the culture of the United States, worship that pleases God is especially crucial in multiethnic churches due to the increased diversity of the congregants. Worship is never about entertainment or how to improve one's self-image, but to honor the creator who offers redemption to all who will believe.[47] Multiethnic churches honor God through a variety of voices, cultures,

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[43]James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 709.

[44]William Hendriksen, *Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 401-02.

[45]Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), xii.

[46]Clowney, *The Church*, 117.

[47]Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 15.

and peoples. Acts 2:5-6 records that people from a variety of cultures spoke in their own languages together in worship on Pentecost. Multiethnic churches move believers beyond themselves, taking them past their personal preferences.

Worship possesses a transformational nature that has the potential to serve as a potent force in accomplishing ethnic unity. As people from different ethnicities gather to worship the one creator of the universe in unity, they experience a common encounter with God through worship. The boundaries of ethnicity, race, culture, age, and socioeconomic status that so often divide people are worn down, resulting in reconciliation through the gospel and authentic community. Still, multiethnic church leaders are aware that such an ideal is difficult to experience in the context of ministry in a fallen world. Worship music contributes to the unity in the diversity of multiethnic churches.[48] God is pleased when the boundaries that often separate believers by ethnicity, race, culture, and socioeconomic status are broken down and people are able to worship God in unity.

The Need for an Authoritative
Standard to Guide Worship

The need for an authoritative standard to serve as a guide for worship is essential for all who wish to encounter the living God. Without such a standard, worship practices easily drift into taste preferences focusing on individual desires rather than on God. The Scriptures are superior to any worship leader's creativity. Frame points out that the Bible alone reveals the will of God and therefore must be the standard to guide Christian worship.[49] Any deviant, idolatrous narcissism fails to meet the standard of biblical revelation. Rodney Woo recognizes the need for such a standard and notes it is

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[48]Gerardo Marti, *Worship across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Divide* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 29-30.

[49]Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, 16.

exacerbated in multiethnic contexts due to the greater diversity of practices among the

congregants. He writes,

> If a church proceeds in the incorporation of many nations into a unified
> congregation, there has to be one source of authority that is acceptable and
> immutable across all ethnic, racial, age, political, social, and economic lines: the
> Word of God.[50]

John Wesley held the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice among believers.

He believed God's Word to be the final authority in determining worship practices.[51]

Without such an objective authority to guide worship practices and other matters of faith,

a multiethnic church could easily drift into a mere social experiment rather than a local

body of believers working together to carryout the biblical mission of the church.

God has revealed himself to humanity in a variety of ways. Nothing can be

known about God other than what he has disclosed about himself. David Dockery and

David Nelson state,

> All knowledge of God comes by way of revelation. The knowledge of God is
> revealed knowledge since it is God who gives it. He bridges the gap between
> himself and his creatures and discloses himself and his will to them. God is the
> source of knowledge about himself, his ways, and his truth. By God alone can God
> be known. The knowledge of God is revealed by self-disclosure.[52]

The testimony of all nature reveals the glory of God (Ps 19:1-7). The first section of

Psalm 19 is a hymn about the wonder of creation. The natural world through its very

existence offers a witness to the glory of God. Nature offers no speech or noise, still its

voice reaches to every corner of creation testifying of the glory of God (Ps 19: 4-5).[53] The

New Testament also bears witness of self-revelation through creation. Paul states,

> For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and
> unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since
> what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to

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[50]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 160-61.

[51]Stepp, "Authentic Christian Worship: Relevance of Wesley's Criteria," 224.

[52]David S. Dockery and David P. Nelson, "Special Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 118.

[53]Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 179-81.

them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse (Rom 1:18-20).

It is impossible for a person to know God apart from his self-revelation, but God has revealed himself to humanity through nature itself. James D. G. Dunn points out that the connection between Romans 1 and Psalm 19 could not have been coincidental. He states, "The clause here [God has shown it to them] emphasizes that God's knowability is not merely a 'spin-off' of creation but was willed and effected by God."[54]

Natural (or general) revelation, however, is incomplete and subverted by fallen humanity. Russell Moore points out that two people may look at the same sky or some other natural phenomenon with one offering genuine worship to God while the other commits idolatry worshiping created things rather than the creator. Moore states, "General revelation is the self-disclosure of God to all rational beings, a revelation that comes through the natural creation and through the makeup of the human creature."[55] Millard Erickson states that through general revelation it is possible to gain some knowledge of divine truth, however it is limited. General revelation is the substance out of which the varieties of religious experience transpire across the globe. The knowledge and morality that exists among unbelievers are rooted in general revelation; they are not the accomplishments of humanity apart from God.[56] Natural revelation serves as the foundation out of which the special revelation of God's Word is fashioned.[57]

Special revelation is the self-revelation of God to particular people in history. This self-disclosure by God provided the means through which these people could enter into a redeeming relationship with him.[58] The key effect of special revelation is that it

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[54]James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), 56.

[55]Russell D. Moore, "Natural Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 71.

[56]Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 173-74.

[57]Moore, "Natural Revelation," 114.

[58]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 175.

results in the knowledge of God. Erickson notes, "The Bible is still in its entirety the

Word of God, for God speaks through these witnesses [fallible humans who were

confronted with God's self-disclosure]. Only a fool would listen to the incidental noises

when he can hear the voice of God."[59] Erickson states,

> It is common to point out that general revelation is inferior to special revelation, both in clarity of the treatment and the range of subjects considered. The insufficiency of general revelation therefore required the special revelation. The special revelation, however, requires the general revelation as well. . . . The two mutually require each other. And the two are harmonious. Only if the two are developed in isolation from one another does there seem to be any conflict between them. They have a common subject matter and perspective, yielding a harmonious and complementary understanding.[60]

The value of the Scriptures is found in the truth that God speaks to his people through his

Word. While Jesus Christ is rightly presented as the living Word of God in John 1, the

Bible is the written form of God's Word. God revealed himself most clearly to humanity

through the person and work of the Messiah. Grudem writes, "[The Bible] points us to

the Word of God as a person, namely Jesus Christ."[61]

All revelation from God, both natural and special, is designed to draw

humanity into a relationship with the creator, serving as the foundation of Christian

worship.[62] Multiethnic worship is a bridge that connects the Word of God to the people

groups within the congregation. The goal of Christian worship is to resist the temptation

to blend in with the culture risking being absorbed by it and to critique the culture

challenging its practices that are contrary to God's Word. The liturgy of worship calls

diverse ethnic groups to challenge the secular culture that surrounds them, evaluating it in

light of the revealed Word of God.[63]

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[59]Ibid., 192.

[60]Ibid., 177.

[61]Grudem, *Systemic Theology*, 50.

[62]Moore, "Natural Revelation," 114.

[63]Thormodson, "Christian Worship in the Context of Cultures," 127-30.

The Reliability of the Bible

Biblical reliability is bound to the divine interplay of the work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to revelation, Scripture, and authority. The reliability of the Bible focuses on revelation and authority along with the related issue of inerrancy. Can God's Word be trusted as God's truthful self-disclosure or is there a chance of error? If errors exist in the biblical text, how can one know God? Do humans stand in judgment over the Word of God, deciding what parts are trustworthy, without error, inspired or reliable, or does God's Word stand in judgment over them?

John Frame holds to the supremacy of the canonical scriptures as the authoritative revelation of God.[64] It is the Holy Spirit's role to actively and accurately formulate God's Word in the mental processes of the human biblical authors as well as the actual composition of the text. The Bible is not a text about God; it is the very word of God. The Scriptures teach, "First of all, you should know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). While the context of this passage refers to the Old Testament text, it has application for the whole Word of God as revealed to people through the person of the Holy Spirit.[65] The Holy Spirit of God inspired the people who recorded the Bible as they wrote, protecting them from error. The Holy Spirit is also active in preserving, revealing, and illuminating the Scriptures.

The question of the reliability of the Bible is a spiritual warfare issue. The enemy knows what is at stake. If God's Word can be called into question, then the trustworthiness of God is vulnerable to attack. If only certain portions of the biblical text

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[64]John M. Frame, "A Presuppositionalist's Response," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 74-76.

[65]Richard Bauckham addresses a textual issue in the translation of the passage citing two possible interpretations. The passage either refers to the interpretation of prophecy or the origin of it. See Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 229-35.

are deemed to be trustworthy, the text becomes man-centered rather than God-centered. Man becomes the judge, making subjective decisions about what is authoritative and what is not. This opens the door for man to form God in his human image rather than humbly submitting to the authority of God who created all humans in his divine image. If God's Word is errant, then God cannot be trusted.

The creation account in Genesis emphasizes the goodness of God's creation and the great pleasure he takes in his creative work. Immediately following the narratives of the creation account, however, an unexpected villain, the serpent, enters the garden.[66] The serpent is identified as "the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made" (Gen 3:1). The identification of the serpent's cunning shrewdness reveals that the humans should examine the serpent's remarks carefully and be on their guard against this cunning creature.[67]

The target of the serpent becomes clear through his first words to the woman in Genesis 3:2, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?" The serpent boldly questions and later challenges the Word of God. The enemy's assault on the Word of God is a strategy that he has never abandoned. He consistently twists the truth of God's Word, leading people to question the trustworthiness of the Lord. Having succeeded in capturing the attention of the woman, Satan summarily rejects God's Word and offers his own version of "truth." Once God's Word is questioned, it opens the door for rebellion and the offer of alternative "truths." The serpent openly contradicts God's Word by stating boldly that death will not be the consequence for disobedience.[68] By employing what Carl Trueman accurately refers to as a "hermeneutic of suspicion," the

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[66]The witness of Rev 12:9 identifies the serpent as Satan: "So the great dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to the earth, and his angels with him." God's cosmic enemy is at work through the serpent in the garden.

[67]Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco: TX: Word, 1987), 72.

[68]Ibid., 73.

serpent attempts to separate God's intentions and capabilities from what he actually says. Trueman states, "By severing the words from God's intention, the serpent effectively makes the latter a hidden matter, ripe for cynical speculation, and thereby lays the foundation upon which Eve's disobedience is built."[69]

This spiritual battle over the trustworthiness of God and his Word continues to be fought in contemporary society. Just like the serpent in the Genesis account, opponents of inerrancy are persistent in calling God's trustworthiness into question. They argue that God's Word is truthful to a point, but then allow for errors. Harold Lindsell points out the slippery slope that follows the denial of inerrancy. By declaring parts of Scripture as divine revelation and inerrant while discounting other biblical texts as being outside the realm of revelation and errant, God's trustworthiness is undermined. Lindsell states, "Anyone can prove anything he wants to when the door has been opened to the distinction the Bible itself does not make: that there are revelational and nonrevelational parts of Scripture."[70] Adopting such a position raises a new problem. Who determines which passages are revelational and which are not?

Paul Feinberg bases his definition of inerrancy on the key concept of truthfulness. He states that the Scriptures are wholly true and therefore, they are reliable. Feinberg ties inerrancy and the doctrine of inspiration together, arguing that the two were consistently accepted as identical concepts prior to the twentieth century. He points out that inerrancy applies to the original autographs, admitting that there are minor discrepancies in the large number of available manuscripts of the Scriptures. The overwhelming unity found in the thousands of biblical manuscripts that are available affirms the reliability of the texts based on inerrant original autographs. When Scripture

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[69]Carl R. Trueman, "The God of Unconditional Promise," in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 181.

[70]Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 114.

is properly understood and interpreted, inerrancy extends to doctrine and morality, as well as to history and the sciences. When the text speaks to these topics, it is never in error in what it reveals. The divine work of the Holy Spirit in and through the human authors insures the reliability of the text.[71]

Norman Geisler identifies 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16 as two basic texts on the revelation and inspiration of Scripture that support the trustworthiness of God's Word.[72] These texts have been used throughout the history of the Christian church to support biblical authority and the trustworthiness of God. Thomas R. Schreiner argues convincingly that both the prophecy and its interpretation come from God. It cannot be attributed to human intellect or ingenuity. It does not originate from the will of men; it is a divine work of God through the Holy Spirit. Human beings who were inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit spoke prophetically. Renowned conservative biblical scholar Benjamin B. Warfield argues that the Holy Spirit reveals God's truth to chosen men and uses them as his instruments through which God himself speaks his mind. In his discussion of concursive operation, Warfield states, "No human activity—not even the control of the will—is superseded, but the Holy Spirit works in, with and through them all in such a manner to communicate to the product qualities distinctly superhuman."[73] He further argues that the intellectual and spiritual qualities of revelation are never derived from the human writers, but rather from the Spirit of God at work in and through the human authors. Peter reveals that the Holy Spirit directed the authors of Scripture (the Old Testament) in their writing. Prophecy never originated by the will of man, but rather God is the source of all Scripture and the Holy Spirit communicated his Word to the

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[71]Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 293-95.

[72]Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2002), 229-30.

[73]Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1948), 82-83.

prophets. Geisler supports this line of thought arguing that God is the ultimate cause of the Scriptures and the written Word is the authoritative result. Therefore, what the Bible says, God says.[74]

In 2 Timothy 3:15, Paul refers to the sacred Scriptures "which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." The way of salvation is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. In his discussion of this passage, Grudem correctly concludes that the words of God recorded in the Bible contain all that is needed for salvation and redemption, supporting his argument for the sufficiency of the Scriptures.[75] In his discussion of the exegetical evidence for inerrancy from the Word of God, Feinberg argues that the Scriptures give witness to their inspiration and the reliability of God's messengers as well as the message itself.[76] In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul reminds Timothy that scripture is profitable because of its inspired nature and its divine source; it is the Word of God breathed from the creator himself. Thomas Lea claims that the use of the word "scripture" here refers to the Old Testament as was the case in verse 15. The reference to "all" scripture means either the whole of the Old Testament or is a reference to "every" scripture. While Lea prefers to translate the text as "all" scripture, he concludes that the meaning is similar either way.[77]

William Mounce notes the central role that 2 Timothy 3:16 has played in formulating the doctrine of the inspiration throughout the history of the Christian church.

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[74]Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 229-31.

[75]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

[76]Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," 283. Feinberg acknowledges that the Scriptures accurately record many things that are false, such as lies espoused by Satan and various human beings in the texts. This does not mean that Scripture is in error; it just means that Scripture accurately reports the facts, including falsehoods spoken by the enemy and others. Other misunderstandings addressed by Feinberg include the freedom of the authors to break the rules of strict grammar for the same reasons contemporary scholars do, the legitimate use of figures of speech, and recognizing that Scripture never intended to give comprehensive accounts of the events recorded. See Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," 297-302.

[77]Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 234-37.

Paul exhorts Timothy to be assured that this gospel is the truth because it comes from God, not from humans. Mounce argues that the meaning of "God-breathed" in this passage points to the divine origin of the Scriptures. The point here is that Paul is encouraging Timothy to focus his ministry under the authority of the Scriptures because they are trustworthy as the Word of God and will equip him for his ministry.[78]

Because the Bible is reliable, authoritative, and trustworthy, it serves as a faithful standard for Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations, uniting believers in the midst of their diversity. Having such a standard lifts the worshipers above personal preferences and centers on God as the object of worship. The congregation moves from a man-centered approach focusing on their needs and desires to a God-centered reality nurturing worship that is pleasing to God.

The Standard for Faith and Practice

Without a biblical standard for faith and practice, multiethnic churches may be little more than social experiments lacking the unifying foundation that such a standard provides. Such churches also lack the biblical mandate related to the mission of the church that is essential to offer a clear vision, direction, and purpose for a congregation. Ken Fentress, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Maryland, stressed that the Word of God must be the biblical standard by which everything is measured.[79] The biblical witness is the standard that must guide all practices of the church. Expositional proclamation of the Word of God is central to the ministries of these churches. When asked to respond to the statement "I consider the Bible to be authoritative for all matters of faith and practice," 100 percent of the respondents to the leadership survey agreed with 88.9 percent stating they strongly agree.

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[78]William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 556-67.

[79]Ken Fentress, interview by author, Tigerville, SC, August 21, 2013.

Just as God initiates salvation, he is also the originator of worship. Cherry points out that such action reflects the nature of God's character, one that initiates action. Through the incarnation God acted to intervene in the lives of humanity to save them from self-destruction by their own hands. Biblical worship that is gospel-centered reflects God's saving activity and evokes the response of his creatures. Worship should consistently point to God's act of redemption through Christ.[80] Relying on the truthfulness of the Scriptures builds unity of faith and the transforming power of the gospel among diverse believers that equips them to evangelize the lost and fulfill the disciple-making mandate. Due to the transitional nature of the membership at Valley View Baptist Church in El Paso, Texas, Pastor Ronald Fox pointed to the necessity of focusing on the basics of God's Word in the church's discipleship efforts through small groups. The frequent turnover of those who attend worship requires continual teaching centered in the biblical tenets of the faith. Fox sees his church as equipping transient believers to serve God wherever he leads them.[81] The unifying effect of the standard of the Bible for faith and practice serves as the glue that unites multiethnic congregations.

Aspects of Corporate Worship

Egocentrism, the concept that all things are viewed from a person's own perspective, is a natural reality of human experience. At its worst, people only think of themselves demonstrating a self-centeredness that has no regard for the feelings, desires, and opinions of others. In 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus challenged the prevailing worldview that the earth was the center of the universe. Instead he argued that the earth revolves around the sun. This Copernican discovery led to a paradigm shift that changed the way people perceived the laws of the universe. Hawn states, "It is natural to place oneself at the center of reality. After Copernicus, however, we realized that we are

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[80]Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 5-7.

[81]Ronald Fox, telephone interview by author, December 10, 2013.

205

literally not the center of the universe."[82] Ethnocentrism, a related term, is the practice of

evaluating other ethnicities and cultures by the standards of one's own ethnic perspective.

Such realities create a formidable challenge for multiethnic churches in regard to

worship.

Western Christians are decreasing numerically in regard to the global church,

while Christians in the southern hemisphere, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, are

growing. Philip Jenkins offers evidence that the majority of Christians currently live in

the southern hemisphere.[83] In addition, the major urban centers of the United States are

becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, reflecting a full spectrum of ethnicities and

languages from all over the world. In 1800, 97 percent of the world's population was

rural. By 2000, half of the world's population lived in urban centers.[84] Hawn postulates

that churches need a global perspective in worship because the gospel is for all people

groups; therefore the perspective of Christian worship should include all ethnicities.[85]

In SBC multiethnic churches, several aspects of worship present a challenge

for the diverse congregants. The vast majority of people maintain an ethnic and cultural

bias in regard to worship due at least in part to egocentrism and ethnocentrism. Personal

preference and style must be rejected as central issues for worship. Rather God, the

creator of all ethnicities, is the central focus of worship. Paul encountered ethnic and

cultural bias in the first century among early Christians. He recognized and proclaimed

that God had torn down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles making the two

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[82]Hawn, "A Little Reverse Missions," 208.

[83]See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming Global Christianity*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University, 2007), 93-124 for a detailed discussion of the growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere. A problematic concern with Jenkins research is the manner by which he defines the term "Christian." He employs a broader definition than the way evangelicals define the term, including the growth of Roman Catholicism as well as some groups who could be characterized as cults. See Jenkins' discussion of Mormons, Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 100-01.

[84]Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 64.

[85]Hawn, "A Little Reverse Missions," 208.

groups one, reconciling both groups into one body through Christ's finished work on the cross. These two ethnic groups with their former hostilities and prejudices were no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow members of the household of God (Eph 2:11-22).[86] Multiethnic churches must embody this truth because it is essential in ethnically diverse congregations.

Hawn laments that many not only erect barriers that divide, but even provide ethnic reinforcement for the dividing wall. He writes,

> Dichotomous thinking about the so-called traditional versus contemporary styles of worship perpetuates this heresy. By adopting narrow views on one side or the other, we make ourselves more comfortable in worship at the expense of limiting our ability to see another's perspective.[87]

Multiethnic churches must avoid the temptation to simply maintain what is comfortable, but rather they must intentionally seek to understand the perspective of other ethnicities. Moving beyond what one knows and the comfort of the familiar leads to self-consciousness and vulnerability. Members of the dominant ethnic group must move beyond themselves by addressing their biases and prejudices. Failure to do so leads to an ethnic blindness where the dominant group believes their perspective should be the norm for everyone.[88] Andrew Walls, a former missionary to Sierra Leone and Professor Emeritus of the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburg, offers an analogy that pictures the need to understand the perspective of other ethnicities. He writes about a huge stage that exists in a crowded theater. All attendees can see the stage, but no one can see the whole stage. What people observe is based on the perspective from which they see the stage and is therefore limited. In order to increase awareness, the audience needs a perspective where they can see the entire stage. Through

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[86]Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 159-60.

[87]Hawn, "A Little Reverse Missions," 213.

[88]Bell Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 41-44.

interaction with other ethnicities in worship one's understanding of the big picture is increased.[89]

Music

Timothy George laments the fact that many worship discussions in recent years have placed too much attention on disagreements over musical styles, the worship setting, and the level of formality.[90] While music has the power to draw people together in worship, it often is a divisive force. These contemporary divisions in churches, particularly multiethnic congregations, are more about the way in which believers worship and musical style than about theology. Worship music should proclaim the truth of the gospel with excellence and relevance that inspires worshipers to become more than they are. Michael Reid, pastor of Cornerstone Church in Bamberg, South Carolina, stated that the music chosen for worship must be a clear representation of the biblical witness. While Cornerstone intentionally includes a variety of styles in an effort to be inclusive of the ethnicities represented, inclusiveness never trumps the need to adhere to the Bible.[91]

With the Bible as the clear standard for faith and practice in worship, the lyrical content of the music must be examined in the light of the truth revealed through the Scriptures. This standard of truth must surpass individual preferences and worship practices. Adhering to this agreed upon standard of truth breeds unity among diverse believers. Excellence when separated from relevance has the potential of leading worshipers to an idolatry that is grounded in elitism. When styles and form are employed from diverse ethnic backgrounds, participants need to be educated on the significance of meaning of these varied aspects of worship so they will have an impact on all those who

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[89]Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 43-46.

[90]George, "The Nature of God: Being, Attributes, and Acts," 239.

[91]Michael Reid, interview by author, Tigerville, SC, November 20, 2013.

are present.[92] Bryant Lee, pastor of Higher Expectations Church in Humble, Texas, states that worship style is the biggest challenge for worship planning in multiethnic contexts. Multiethnic churches need a worship leader who can incorporate diverse styles of music in worship while honoring the biblical standard of truth. Lee notes, "It takes time to acclimate the church to diverse worship styles. The priority of the message expressed through music must be the focus rather than the style of music employed."[93]

George rightly argues that worship services should always be centered on the object of worship. He states, "Whatever the style of music and the level of formality, there will be time for reflection and wonder, for repentance and confession, as well as for exuberant praise and joyous fellowship."[94] Through the incarnation Christ demonstrated the principle of relevance to those he encountered. Believers should follow the example of Christ, proclaiming the relevance of the gospel to all who gather for worship. However, if relevance fails to be united with excellence, it can drift into an emphasis on pragmatic results that falls short of the object of worship. Martin Tel states:

> To pursue relevance without a heart for excellence is also problematic. . . . Those who emphasize only relevance will tend to focus on results. After all, if it ministers, if it brings people in, should this not be the criterion for determining the worthiness of songs we sing in worship? No. The end cannot be the sole determining factor for justifying the means. Christian worship must not settle for mediocrity or disobedience simply because it is effective.[95]

Blending various ethnicities through worship music is a difficult task for multiethnic churches. Cornelius Plantinga argues for the importance of community and unity in diversity for believers pointing to the model of community in the trinity. He writes,

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[92]Martin Tel, "Music: The 'Universal Language' That's Dividing the Church," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 161-64.

[93]Bryant Lee, telephone interview by author, January 8, 2014.

[94]George, "The Nature of God," 239.

[95]Tel, "Music," 164-65.

Above all, in the visions of Christians and other theists, God would preside in the unspeakable beauty for which human beings long and in the mystery of holiness that draws human worship like a magnet. In turn, each human being would reflect and color the light of God's presence out of the inimitable resources of his or her own character and essence. Human communities would present their ethnic and regional specialties to another community in the name of God, in glad recognition that God, too, is a radiant and hospitable community, of three persons. In their own accents, communities would express praise, courtesies, and deferences that, when massed together, would keep building like waves of passion that is never spent.[96]

Although the process of joining diverse ethnicities in worship is an arduous task, it is necessary for the sake of unity that Christ desires among believers especially in a multiethnic church. An important aspect of worship is to unite believers, but this unity does not require uniformity. Christ desires unity through diversity. In Philippians 2:1-4, Paul called the church to live in harmony as the body of Christ and to fulfill the mission of the church through cooperation. This unity is foundational for the development of genuine Christian community and the effective witness of believers. Rather than seeking uniformity, Paul calls for unity in Christ, love and fellowship among believers, and a desire to humbly follow Christ as a community of faith.[97] The church is called to turn away from any selfish ambition or conceit because such attitudes are focused on the individual rather than on Christ. Believers are challenged to place the needs of others above their own.[98] In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Paul affirms the unity and diversity of the body of Christ. He uses the metaphor of the body to emphasize the blending of unity and diversity in the church. The body is one entity yet it consists of many parts, recognizing the uniqueness of each part. The distinctions of ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status serve as causes for division in many segments of American society, but the unity of the body of Christ transcends these barriers. Gordon Fee states,

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[96]Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 12.

[97]Stephen G. Crouse, "Nurturing Christians Through Small Groups at North Greenville College, Tigerville, South Carolina" (D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 21-22.

[98]Richard R. Melick, Jr. *Philippians/Colossians/Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 94-95.

Paul's primary concern with this imagery is not that the body is one *even though* it has many members, thus arguing for the need for unity despite diversity. Rather, his concern is expressed in v. 14, that *even though the body is one,* it does not consist of one member but of many, thus arguing for their need for diversity, since they are in fact one body.[99]

Paul states parenthetically that this diversity in unity applies to Jews and Gentiles as well as slaves and those who are free. Fee refers to ethnicity, religion, and social status as issues that divided many in the ancient context. He states, "In Christ these old distinctions have been obliterated, not in the sense that one is on longer Jew or Greek, etc., but in the sense of their having *significance*."[100] Life in the Spirit eradicates the old distinctions rendering them to a secondary role because these diverse believers are called to be one body in Christ.

Music is an important element of worship because it has the potential to weave the lives of diverse worshipers into a united body of believers. It must be noted that music in and of itself lacks the power to produce harmony across ethnic barriers.[101] Marti acknowledges that music alone will not stimulate congregational diversity. The real value of music for drawing people together in unity is through building relationships. Therefore, music serves as a unique bridge for the various ethnic groups in a multiethnic congregation and it can connect believers with each other and deepen relationships.[102] By listening to and eventually singing along with songs rooted in other ethnicities, a new understanding of the unified local body of Christ may arise. Music in multiethnic churches has the ability to mold the identity of diverse believers and provide hope for those who feel like outsiders and aliens, even those who are far from their homeland.[103]

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[99]Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 601.

[100]Ibid., 606.

[101]C. Michael Hawn, Review of *Worship across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation*, by Gerardo Marti, *Worship* 86, no. 3 (May 2012): 286.

[102]Marti, *Worship across the Racial Divide*, 176.

[103]C. Michael Hawn, "Worship That Transforms: A Cross-Cultural Proposal," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 27, nos. 1-2 (Fall-Spring 1999-2000): 116.

Serving and growing a multiethnic church is more difficult than working with a homogeneous congregation due the greater diversity of needs, experiences, and expectations. Yet the pastors interviewed in the qualitative research chose to serve in multiethnic situations because these churches exemplify the mission of the church and are centered in Christ's Commission. Established churches that transitioned from mono-ethnic to multiethnic like Liberty Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia, were driven by the desire to reach their communities for Christ. As the neighborhood around the church became more diverse, these churches prayerfully sought ways to reach the growing diversity. While many established churches in transitioning neighborhoods chose to relocate to a homogeneous environment, churches like Valley View Baptist in El Paso, Texas, made the commitment to stay where they were planted and minister to the changing neighborhood. Valley View was established in 1937 and became multiethnic in the mid-seventies. Pastor Ronald Fox has served the church faithfully for forty years. El Paso is a border town with a large Hispanic population. In addition, Fort Bliss, a large military base, is located in El Paso and adds to the diversity of the city.[104]

Other pastors interviewed planted intentional multiethnic churches that grew out of their biblical convictions about the nature of the gospel. Bill Johnson stated that his theology built on the biblical mandate to reach the nations is the foundational reason that he planted this multiethnic, multinational congregation in the Atlanta area. Citing Ephesians 2:14 as a key reference, Johnson is committed to transcending the barriers of ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, and culture to reach the people groups in his community. He states, "You don't have to give up your culture. You need to find unity in

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[104]Ronald Fox, telephone interview by author, December 10, 2013. David Lix reported a similar transition by Liberty Baptist Church in Columbus, GA. David Lix, telephone interview by author, December 17, 2013. John Thompson is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Lake Park Florida. The church was established as a homogeneous body in 1954. The community around the church was once an affluent suburb of West Palm Beach, FL. As the value of property dropped and the affluent moved out of the area, diverse ethnicities moved into the community. The church continued to minster faithfully to the community. However, the church declined from 450 in attendance to 200.

Christ that transcends culture."[105] It is impossible to obey Christ's command to love others without knowing them. Understanding a person's ethnicity and culture is a significant part of knowing them.

The worship leader and the worship leadership team are critical in multiethnic church environments. In the context of the United States, many musicians who received their training through formal education were taught that music as a formal art form. Sometimes this training leads to an elitist perspective that makes it difficult to relate to music from other cultures and backgrounds. Such musicians find leading multiethnic worship difficult due to the simplicity and repetitive nature of music that is common among many non-western cultures. While the music of western cultures tends to have classical characteristics, the simplicity of folk songs are a starting point in multiethnic worship, at least initially. Worship music should not ignore the rich forms of music art. However, congregational music should include the songs of the people who worship.[106]

Worship leaders in multiethnic settings are challenged to offer concrete reasons why the music they use connects with the ethnic diversity of their congregations. Marti argues that their approaches are based in pragmatism; if their congregations are diverse, then the music must connect with the ethnic groups present. Marti states, "My finding that most leaders lacked a comprehensive articulation for connecting worship and race was both comforting and disorienting. It became one of the key motivations for focusing less on musical style and more on worship practice."[107] Marti notes the irony that even though worship leaders he interviewed in his research were unable to articulate why the music they use unites their congregations; these same churches are full of people who affirm a connection between the worship music and the diversity of the congregants.

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[105]Bill Johnson, interview by author, Stone Mountain, GA, November 21, 2013.

[106]Tel, "The Universal Language That's Dividing the Church, 168.

[107]Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide*, 30.

213

In multiethnic contexts, it is important for the worship leaders to reflect the ethnic diversity of the congregation. Of the twenty-six pastors interviewed, twenty-four emphasized the importance of intentionality in developing multiethnic leadership. Davis stated that if being multiethnic is a core value, then the church needs to "see it, stage it, and staff it."[108] By seeing it, Davis refers to the congregation interacting with each other in ways that makes the multiethnic nature of the church visible and accessible. By staging it, he stressed the significance of the worshipers observing an ethnically diverse worship leadership team, especially in regard to music. He further argued that the church staff must also reflect this diversity. Hawn agrees that it is important to include as much diversity as possible among the worship leadership team. The people who are seen and heard in worship help shape the ethnic identity of the church.[109]

The selection of music in a multiethnic setting is a vital component. Sociologist George Yancey notes the significance of the incorporation of various ethnic cultures in worship for multiethnic churches. He cites an example of a multiethnic church where the majority of the staff and congregation are Hispanic. Nevertheless they secured an African American worship leader. His presence was a strong statement to African Americans that they were welcome at the church. His musical background included elements of gospel music that was combined with contemporary praise and worship songs. The music employed in worship led by this African American created an atmosphere that non-Hispanics were welcome in this congregation.[110]

It is true that while a certain style of music may welcome people that are familiar with that musical style, it may turn away others who are not accustomed or are uncomfortable with the style. It is important for multiethnic churches to develop an

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[108]Artie Davis, interview by author, Orangeburg, South Carolina, October 3, 2013.

[109]Hawn, "A Little Reverse Missions," 216.

[110]George Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 72.

inclusive worship style that welcomes diverse ethnicities to the church. An inclusive

worship style, however, will not satisfy everyone. Nevertheless, it is important to

multiethnic churches because it shows sensitivity to the various ethnic groups making

them feel welcomed at the church.[111] Marti concludes, "It is not about the performance,

but the relationships signified and reinforced in and through the musical performance that

helps sustain the diversity of a multiracial congregation."[112] Through the caring

relationships of brothers and sisters in Christ, worship provides an opportunity to cross

ethnic, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers for the sake of the gospel paving the

way for congregants to experience authentic community.

Evaluation of worship is both essential and challenging for worship leaders. If

the central issue of worship is to honor God and to be pleasing to him, how can the

worship gatherings be assessed? Cherry states,

> Perhaps the evaluative questions might be simply these: (1) Did we prayerfully,
> intentionally, and faithfully seek to employ the aspects of worship found in
> Scripture that seem to be valued and necessary from God's point of view for
> corporate worship? And (2) Are worshipers living in increased obedience as a result
> of having met with God?[113]

The two standards offered by Cherry are helpful guidelines for the evaluation of worship.

In response to the statement "Meeting the diversity of needs among ethnic

groups presents a major challenge for those who plan worship for multiethnic churches,"

57.8 percent of the respondents agreed while 26.6 percent disagreed. An overwhelming

majority of those surveyed expressed satisfaction with the music used in worship at their

churches. When asked to respond to the statement, "It is important to me that the styles of

music used in worship reflect the styles enjoyed by my ethnic group," 40 percent agreed

while 28.9 percent disagreed. Only 13.3 percent expressed a desire for more upbeat music

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[111]Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit*, 75-78.

[112]Marti, *Worship Across the Ethnic Divide*, 196.

[113]Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, xii.

215

in worship while 31.1 percent did not. Only 2.2 percent agreed with the statement "I wish our worship services were more structured," but 22.2 percent agreed with the statement "I wish our worship services allowed for more freedom of expression" while 40 percent disagreed. Respondents have a high degree of satisfaction with the worship practices of their churches.

Prayer

Richard Foster states, "Of all the Spiritual Disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father. . . . Real prayer is life creating and life changing."[114] Prayer is communication with God for the purpose of understanding his heart and obediently doing his will.[115] Dallas Willard stresses the conversational aspect of this central spiritual discipline. Prayer is talking with God whether words are spoken aloud or communicated only within the thoughts of the believer.[116] Erickson points out that prayer is more than creating a positive mental attitude that motivates believers to perform the tasks about which they have prayed. It is a matter of formulating a correct perspective of God's will and committing themselves to obeying it. The purpose of prayer is not to move God to do the will of the people, but rather to move believers to desire for God's will to be done.[117] While prayer is a human work, it is a work accomplished through divine accompaniment.[118] Henri Nouwen contends that prayer is a necessity for a disciple of Christ just as breath is necessary for

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[114]Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1988), 33.

[115]Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 136-38.

[116] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1988), 184.

[117]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 406.

[118]David P. Nelson, "The Work of God: Creation and Providence," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 291. Like Erickson's comments above, Nelson addresses prayer within the concept of providence.

life. He writes, "Prayer is not a pious decoration of life but the breath of human existence."[119] Foster argues that prayer is the primary means used by God to transform a believer. He states, "If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God the more we see our need and the more we desire to be conformed to Christ."[120]

In worship, corporate prayer is a unifying factor, but this is particularly true in multiethnic contexts. Franklin Segler and Randall Bradley state, "Prayer is the soul of worship; in fact, the terms *prayer* and *worship* are often used interchangeably since worship and prayer are communion with God."[121] God is the recipient of the prayers of his people. He is the giver and sustainer of life, regardless of the circumstance of the worshipers. He chooses to listen to the words of his people offering forgiveness to repentant sinners. The worshipers' perception of God is revealed through the communication they share in prayer.

Effective public prayers involve authenticity and consideration. Dietrich Bonhoeffer offered most of the public prayers during the worship gatherings at the seminary he established in Germany in 1935. While there was an extemporaneous aspect of his prayers, Eberhard Bethge wrote,

> His [Bonhoeffer's prayers] would begin with detailed thanks for the gift of faith, for the seminary's communal life, for the sun and the sea. Next he would ask for daily and mutual tolerance within the fellowship. . . . He devoted much time and trouble to the preparation of these prayers and their inner structure. . . . He put his will, understanding, and heart into these prayers; yet he also believed that the language of prayer should be modeled and in harmony with that of the Psalms.[122]

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[119]Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 17.

[120]Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.

[121]Franklin M. Segler and Randall Bradley, *Christian Worship: It's Theology and Practice* (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 119.

[122] Eberhard Bethge, *Deitrich Bonhoeffer*, rev. and ed. Victoria J. Barnett, trans. Eric Mosbacher et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 464.

Timothy George calls the church to return to the New Testament pattern of prayer. He writes,

> These early Christians began by extolling the sovereignty of God in creation and salvation history. They remembered the life of God in creation and salvation history. They remembered the life of Jesus. They acknowledged God's eternal purpose in sending Christ into the world and the work of redemption he had accomplished on the cross.[123]

Public prayers should be focused, avoiding the temptation to drift into vague generalities. They should be saturated with the Scriptures, advocating biblical truth to encourage, correct, and admonish those present.[124] Hawn encourages worship leaders to pray for the needs of the world in public prayer. Such action increases the global perspective of the congregation.

At Reach the Nations Church people begin praying as soon as they enter the worship center in anticipation of what God will do through the worship gathering. People who lead public prayers often pray in their native language. The church spends ten to fifteen minutes in prayer during worship, with worshipers praying aloud in their heart language. Reach the Nations Church is located near one of the largest refugee communities in the United States. It is not unusual for these prayer times to include five or more languages.[125]

Preaching

Preaching the Word of God is a central aspect of corporate worship. George states,

> Preachers are heralds, and the message they proclaim is about the great King who has commissioned them to go forth in his name to spread the good news of his love and grace. God-centered preaching is difficult, but it is necessary if God's flock is to grow into spiritual maturity. Much contemporary preaching is all application with little if any foundation. Our people need to hear again about the God of creation and

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[123]George, "The Nature of God," 240.

[124]Segler and Bradley, *Christian Worship*, 121.

[125]Bill Johnson, interview by author, Stone Mountain, GA, November 21, 2013.

218

redemption, the God of holiness and love, the God of grandeur, majesty and omnipotence who, in his supreme sovereignty, did not disdain the virgin's womb and the ruddy cross.[126]

Fentress affirms the necessity of God-centered preaching. He is an expository preacher with little interest in topical preaching. He restricts the use of analogous stories. Instead, he delves quickly and deeply into the Scriptures. Typically he preaches the Word of God for an hour in his multiethnic context, which is two-thirds of a normal worship service.[127]

The proclamation of the gospel message was central to each of the multiethnic churches that participated in this study. Woo states, "The preaching event stands at the center of biblical worship regardless of race. However, the expression of preaching often varies from culture to culture."[128] Some ethnic groups, who emphasize informality in worship, prefer that the preacher exercises the freedom to move around and preach away from the pulpit, breaking down the wall that separates the preacher from the laity. Other ethnicities prefer for the preacher to stand behind the pulpit signifying authority, not only of the preacher but also of the Word of God. For some, standing behind the pulpit projects an image of careful preparation by the preacher, while others may feel the preacher is unprepared and limiting the freedom of the Holy Spirit by his lack of movement. Woo identifies a variety of preaching styles. He states, "There are so many different preaching styles ranging from a monotone reading word-for-word of a manuscript to a totally extemporaneous, rhythmic, and interactive dialogue between an animated preacher and an engaged audience."[129] When Woo served as pastor at Wilcrest, he modified his preaching style in an effort to increase his effectiveness among the various ethnic groups represented in the congregation. He shifted from an exhortation approach to a dialogical methodology to encourage more interaction with the worshipers.

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[126]George, "The Nature of God: Being, Attributes, and Acts," 239.

[127]Ken Fentress, interview by author, Tigerville, SC, August 21, 2013.

[128]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 189.

[129]Ibid., 189-90.

The majority of pastors, 17 out of 26, interviewed for this research stated that they had not modified their preaching style in their multiethnic contexts. Most of these pastors employ some variation of expositional preaching. Fentress was the most direct in his response. When asked if he had modified his preaching style in his multiethnic context, he responded, "None whatsoever. Expository preaching is relevant to any ethnic group."[130] Based on these interviews, expository preaching is effective in many multiethnic contexts and is the preferred preaching style of the majority of these pastors. Davis, on the other hand, spends a significant portion of his sermon preparation time praying and thinking about how to insure that his message communicates effectively to the diverse people of his congregation. This emphasis on effective communication and application of the text impacts the lives of his congregation.[131] Other pastors expressed similar modifications to their preaching styles. Communicating biblical truths in a way that is easily accessible to their congregations dominated their preparation and preaching styles. These modifications included being more time conscious, becoming more topical, accommodations for multi-language services, the use of multiethnic images both verbally and visually, and utilizing basic English to help those who struggle with the language. The Jamaican born pastor at Uptown Church in Chicago stated that he has lived in different cultures and is able to use a variety of accents to assist his communication and emphasize various points and illustrations during his sermons.[132] Of the multiethnic participants who completed the online leadership survey, only 24.4 percent expressed that it was important that the style of preaching employed reflects the style enjoyed by their ethnic group. Forty percent were neutral on this issue while 35.5 percent stated that it was not important. It is clear from the interviews conducted in this research that these

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[130]Ken Fentress, interview by author, Tigerville, SC, August 21, 2013.

[131]Artie Davis, interview by author, Orangeburg, SC, October 3, 2013.

[132]Michael Allen, telephone interview by author, January 21, 2014.

multiethnic pastors unanimously hold to a high view of Scripture, recognizing that the Bible is the authoritative guide for faith and practice. Nevertheless, their preaching styles varied in application of this truth.

The Factor of Time

The length of the worship service can be a challenge for multiethnic churches. George Yancey writes that the average length of worship for predominately black churches is 105 minutes while the average length for predominantly white worship gatherings is seventy minutes.[133] When Rodney Woo became pastor of the Wilcrest Baptist Church in a Houston suburb in 1991, the worship services lasted about seventy-five minutes. As the church transitioned to a multiethnic church, the length of the service increased to ninety minutes.[134] The current pastor at Wilcrest, Jonathan Williams, reported that worship services continue to be eighty to ninety minutes long.[135] The length of the primary worship service for the multiethnic churches used in the study ranged from one to two hours, with seventy-five to ninety minutes as the average. The length of the worship service was unimportant to the pastors interviewed for this research.

Punctuality for worship is also an issue for many multiethnic churches. Brandon Lewis, pastor of a Southern Baptist multiethnic church in West Palm Beach, Florida, illustrated this point as he related a story about a wedding that he conducted for a Haitian couple. The wedding was scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. Brandon arrived at the church about thirty minutes before the scheduled time. It was 4:30 p.m. before anyone else arrived. He knew that punctuality was not valued as much among Haitians as it is among white Americans, but was surprised by how late the wedding started. Lewis stated that due to this punctuality issue, he intentionally holds important issues and

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[133]Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit*, 81

[134]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 190-91.

[135]Jonathan Williams, telephone interview by author, December 19, 2013.

announcements until later in the worship gatherings so that the late arrivers will not miss them.[136] Johnson also referred to this issue of punctuality among his congregations. The Ethiopians in his church place great value on punctuality and are often frustrated by other ethnicities that do not share their concern.[137] Woo notes that punctuality is often an issue for white members in multiethnic congregations. He writes,

> From the perspective of whites, starting a service on time is an expression of respect, while some of our nonwhites perceive that such rigidity is an indicator of quenching the freedom of the Holy Spirit's movement. This continues to be an ongoing source of conflict, with both sides of the argument being expressed in spiritual terms.[138]

In writing about their research on Messiah Fellowship in Los Angeles County, California, sociologists Brad Christerson, Korie L. Edwards, and Michael O. Emerson note that punctuality was an issue for this congregation. Many white members were concerned about the Filipino members' lack of concern for precise punctuality. Some felt this lack of punctuality showed disrespect for God, while others argued that rigidity in regard to time quenched the Spirit. Each side claims that their style is more conducive to encountering God through worship.[139] Woo writes,

> One of our white men expressed the frustration to the laxity of punctuality of many of our nonwhites. One of our Hispanic members responded, "If you show up on time all the time, in their culture that is equated with thinking you are very important and have to be there for things to work. That's not a very Christian trait."[140]

In responding to the statement "The length of the service does not matter to me," 20 percent strongly agreed while 26.7 percent agreed. Of the remaining respondents, 22.2 percent were neutral while 26.7 percent disagreed and 4.4 percent strongly

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[136]Brandon Lewis, FaceTime interview by author, January 16, 2014.

[137]Bill Johnson, interview by the author, Stone Mountain, GA, November 21, 2013.

[138]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 191.

[139]Brad Christerson, Korie L. Edwards, and Michael O. Emerson, *Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations* (New York: New York University, 2005), 26-27.

[140]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 191.

disagreed. Only 4.4 percent agreed with the statement "I wish our worship leaders were more time conscious." Sixty percent expressed disagreement while 28.9 percent were neutral. When asked to respond to the statement "It is important to me that meetings and worship services at my church start on time," however, 75.6 percent agreed while only 6.7 percent disagreed. These responses indicate that the length of the service is usually not an issue; however, starting the service on time is a concern.

Worship Behavior

Worship behavior reflects the aspect of formality and informality in the church. Woo writes that some ethnic groups and denominational traditions express worship outwardly through movement, clapping, dancing, and other rhythmic expressions. Since the center of Christianity has moved from the Western world to the Southern hemisphere, many Christians worship in more active ways. Woo notes that during a mission trip to Africa, he witnessed worshipers dancing as they came forward to present their offering to the Lord. Such acts are natural among some cultures and ethnic groups. For others, worship includes periods of silence and is expressed in sedate and reflective ways. These worshipers engage their minds and focus on worshiping God just as much as those who are more expressive in their worship style, but there is little outward or bodily participation unless it is prompted by the worship leaders. The way in which worship is expressed can be a challenge for multiethnic churches where people from diverse backgrounds seek to offer worship together.[141]

Multiethnic churches provide opportunities for structure and freedom of expression in worship. Those who prefer more formality are encouraged to support and honor those brothers and sisters in Christ who prefer to be more expressive. At the same time, worshipers who prefer to be more expressive must broaden their understanding to allow for times that are more sedate and reflective. The online respondents expressed

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[141]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 191.

unanimous disagreement or neutrality with the statement "I wish our worship services were more structured." Of the responses received, 75.7 percent disagreed with the statement. This indicates that most of these worshipers are comfortable with the styles employed in their churches. In answer to "I wish our worship services allowed more freedom of expression," 18.9 percent agreed while 43.2 percent disagreed. Most of the respondents were pleased with the amount of structure in their worship services, however, there was disagreement in regard to satisfaction with freedom of expression in worship suggesting this is a challenge for Southern Baptist multiethnic churches.

The Language Barrier

Communication presents unique challenges for multiethnic churches, particularly when the ethnic groups of the congregation speak more than one language. Colloquial expressions and the use of humor are often misunderstood when translated into another language.[142] The language issue is most apparent for first generation immigrants. Their understanding of English and their feelings about adapting to the culture of the United States present daunting and sometimes threatening challenges. With forty-five different nationalities worshiping together at Wilcrest Baptist Church, the language issue presents a formidable challenge. The church uses simultaneous translation of their primary worship gathering into Spanish employing transmission to receivers that are available to worshipers who desire to use this technology. Woo states,

> Although Wilcrest uses simultaneous translation of Spanish, there is a strong effort to incorporate other languages into the fabric of the worship services. For example, choruses are often sung in English and then in Spanish. The Scripture is read in both English and the native tongue of the reader.[143]

In addition to Spanish, Wilcrest has incorporated a variety of other languages including French, Indonesian, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Korean, Hindi and Teluga from India,

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[142]Christerson, Edwards, and Emerson, *Against All Odds*, 53.

[143]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 192.

224

Douala dialect from Cameroon, West Africa, Housa from Nigeria, and Fanti from Ghana.[144]

Ellis Prince, pastor of Gallery Church in Baltimore, Maryland, stated that communication is one of the most critical issues facing his church. He said, "You think you clearly stated your point, but it may have been misunderstood, particularly by people for whom English is a not their primary language."[145] Prince went on to say that language barriers have been an issue among his staff. Gallery has more than ten nationalities represented in their primary worship service. Like Wilcrest, Gallery offers the technology for Spanish speaking worshipers to have access to simultaneous translation. Of their three Sunday morning worship services, one is translated into Spanish through an interpreter. The congregation often sings a verse in English then sings the same verse in Spanish.

As churches move toward developing a global perspective of worship, Hawn invites worship planners to incorporate the use of a language other than the primary language employed in worship at every service. Such an activity reminds the congregants that worship is not merely a function of the local church, but that it takes place in the context of the metanarrative of the church for all times, peoples, and places. The use of other languages may be employed through a song, a scripture reading, prayers offered by people who have different primary languages, etc. Hawn states,

> I have often found that the presence of a person reading or singing in their first language, when it is not the community's vernacular, has a profound effect both upon the reader and the hearer, even when the language is not totally understood. To listen to a language that is incomprehensible to us, however, is not the same as not understanding what someone is saying or singing. While we may risk the momentary insecurity of the inscrutable, the great reward is that we may glimpse the ineffable—the overwhelming encounter with the Holy One manifest through Christ's presence in others. We also may become conscious of something more important, especially our changing perspective in the world, and the privilege of extending hospitality.[146]

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[144]Ibid.

[145]Ellis Prince, telephone interview by author, January 16, 2014.

[146]Hawn, "A Little Reverse Missions," 215-16.

Ethnic Inclusivism

While the nature of the gospel is exclusive because Jesus is the only way of salvation, multiethnic churches must be inclusive of all followers of Christ regardless of their ethnicity, culture, age, generation, or socioeconomic status. The heavenly picture of worship around the throne envisions people from every nation, tribe, people, and language worshiping God as they offer praise and thanksgiving for their salvation (Rev 7:9-10).[147] Ethnic inclusivism must be intentional and inherent in the worship planning process. Even though these heavenly worshipers experienced the deliverance of God through tribulation, their song was primarily one of praise. They sang, "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:10). David Aune points out that this innumerable multitude suggests the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his descendants could not be counted and that he would be the father of many nations.[148] Simon Kistemaker writes, "The word *nation* (Greek *ethnos*) means all the peoples that constitute a nation, so the Greek term should be understood as all-inclusive."[149] Kistemaker considers this text to be the fulfillment of Jesus' claim that the gospel would be preached to the whole world prior to his return (Matt 24:14). These saints from every nation, tribe, people, and language offered their praise together in one voice.[150]

Multiethnic churches provide a beautiful picture that is a foretaste of heavenly worship, where people from different ethnicities join together to praise the creator of every people group. While the challenges to multiethnic worship are great, the richness of

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[147]There is a debate among scholars as to whether this crowd that could not be counted were martyred during the tribulation. The text is unclear at this point. For further information about the debate see David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1998), 466. Also see, George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 117-18.

[148]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 466-67.

[149]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 253.

[150]Ibid., 254.

such worship is worth the cost. The pastors interviewed acknowledged the challenges to worship planning in multiethnic contexts. Davis underscored the need for intentionality. At Cornerstone, the worship team strategically plans the music, sermon, and illustrations to appropriately communicate with each ethnic context.[151] Johnson stated, "When you go to Baskin Robbins, you can't choose all thirty-one flavors at the same time. This is also true in seeking to plan an inclusive worship service. While you can't focus on every ethnic group in one service, you can give attention to four or five."[152] In Johnson's setting, the ethnic focus changes every week so they can be inclusive of all groups in their congregation. The worship team and choir are multigenerational and ethnically diverse at Wilcrest. Diversity is included in their worship planning. The songs, prayers, and scripture reading include multiple languages in their services.[153] Language barriers present a challenge. Reaching a variety of generations as a church adds to the diversity of multiethnic churches. Multiple generations from several ethnic groups add to the complexity of planning worship in diverse environments.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

In John 4, Jesus offers a biblical model of worship that points to God as the object of worship. During Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well, she asked Jesus about the appropriate place to worship. Two major topics are covered in Jesus' dialogue with the woman: the living water of eternal life that Jesus is offering and the kind of worship sought by the Father.[154] Both topics are germane to the discussion of worship in SBC multiethnic churches. The woman's motive in entering this theological debate about

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[151]Artie Davis, interview by author, Orangeburg, SC, October 3, 2013.

[152]Bill Johnson, interview by author, Stone Mountain, GA, November 21, 2013.

[153]Jonathan Williams, telephone interview by author, December 19, 2013.

[154]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 148.

worship was to avert Jesus' probing into her life, pointing out her need for a genuine

relationship with God. Throughout Jesus' conversation with the woman, she persistently

tried to evade the issues he raised.[155] By speaking to the woman in public, Jesus had

already transcended ethnic, cultural, and gender barriers. Genuine worship surpasses the

human barriers that naturally divide people. The woman's attempt to move the focus

from her life to a theological debate about the appropriate place to worship pointed to the

contrasting beliefs and practices of the Jews and the Samaritans. The woman focused the

debate on the place of worship because the Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim

while the Jews worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus pointed out that the place of

worship is not the issue, but rather the attitude of the heart. He turned the conversation

from a debate about the place of worship to a dialogue about the nature of worship. Jesus

responded,

> Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on
> this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We
> worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is
> coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit
> and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and
> those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

Woo refers to this passage as a model for worship that signifies that God is the

focus of worship. Worship is an invitation to encounter the King of kings. The primary

focus of worship is on the God of all nations and ethnic groups. God the father desires

true worshipers who offer their worship in spirit and in truth.[156] God does not have a

body that is limited to human flesh. He is spirit and those who worship him must worship

in spirit and in truth. God wants and seeks people who have open hearts to worship him.

Cherry states,

> God the Father seeks us. We don't create worship; we don't manufacture services.
> Rather, we respond to a person. Effective worship is never a result of our efforts.

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[155]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), 254.

[156]Woo, *The Color of Church*, 184.

Worship happens when we learn to say yes in ever-increasing ways to God's invitation to encounter him.[157]

The ethnicities represented in worship are not the issue. God is the focus of worship and worship is the response of those who have received his salvation. Genuine worship is offered out of a proper understanding of who God is.

Conclusion

Worship in Southern Baptist multiethnic churches is a central uniting aspect of these congregations. It is through worship of God by diverse believers that unity is achieved. This unity is not conformity, but rather a uniting of diverse believers through the power of Christ. Music plays an important role in unifying diverse believers. By employing a more diverse and complete range of music in worship, the congregation has the potential to experience the fullness of God's creative diversity in a greater way.[158] Hawn writes, "A cross-cultural liturgical environment provides potential for liminality. Here, the songs and prayers of another's experience, those of the strangers and aliens, can be juxtaposed with those from one's culture of origin, shedding light on both."[159] Worship that is God-centered will be consistent with the mission of the church as revealed in the Scriptures. Through the priority of corporate worship, believers express their love and devotion to God and their obedient response to fulfill the mission of the church by making disciples who are disciple makers. Multiethnic churches need an authoritative unifying factor. The Bible serves this purpose for Southern Baptist multiethnic churches operating as the accepted authority for faith and practice. The Bible is both truthful and reliable, enabling it to serve as the guide for worship planning.

Multiethnic worship is hard work for everyone involved. The temptation of many followers of God to stay in the comfort of familiarity and homogeneity is difficult

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[157]Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 4.

[158]Hawn, "Worship That Transforms," 128.

[159]Ibid., 119.

to resist.[160] Multiethnic churches, however, are a potent witness to the redeeming nature of the gospel and offer an opportunity to experience spiritual transformation and ethnic reconciliation through the power of God.[161]

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[160]Hawn, *One Bread, One Body*, xxiv.

[161]Russell C. Rosser, "A Multiethnic Model of the Church," *Direction* 27, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 189-90.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In a conversation with renowned researcher George Barna after he spoke in chapel at the institution I serve, I had an opportunity to talk with him about my dissertation research. When I told him that I intended to do research on Southern Baptists multiethnic churches, his immediate response was, "That will be a small sample." I did not realize then how true his response would prove to be. While Southern Baptists claim to be the most ethnically diverse denomination, there are woefully few multiethnic churches with less than 80 percent of the majority ethnicity. There were 50,474 congregations in 2013 in the Southern Baptist Convention. Of that number 10,103, or 20 percent, were identified as representing non-Caucasian ethnic groups. While these figures seem to support the denomination's claim to be the most ethnically diverse body in the United States, most of these churches are predominately homogeneous. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) reported only 230 multiethnic churches, or .4 percent of the total.[1] The North American Mission Board graciously shared the names of these 230 churches with me for my research.

There was a high degree of difficulty in making contact with these SBC multiethnic churches for a variety of reasons. The North American Mission Board has intentionally focused on planting new churches and tracking their progress. Pastors who

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[1]Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, November 17, 2014. This unpublished report was compiled by the Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, GA. The North American Mission Board definition of a multiethnic church is a congregation where there is no majority ethnic group. Richie Stanley is Team Leader for the Center for Missional Research at the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

plant churches are bi-vocational in many cases with little or no support staff. Further, the failure rate of new churches is relatively high, although perhaps not nearly as high as perceived by many. Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird state, "Until recently, there was little research that addressed the health and survivability of new churches. Several oft-quoted statistics, such as those indicating an 80 percent failure rate for new church plants, seem to have no basis in actual research."[2] After admitting that it is not easy to determine the actual failure rate of church plants, Stetzer cites research based on data compiled by eleven denominations and networks on more than 2,000 new churches planted from 2000 to 2005 which supports his thesis that the failure rate is far less than 80 percent. Stetzer's study found that the survivability rate of church plants was 68 percent after four years. The data was similar for each denomination used in the study.[3]

Pastors, church planters, church staff, and volunteers have very busy schedules focusing on priorities that are not related to doctoral research. Some of the churches listed as multiethnic by NAMB failed and no longer meet as congregations. Many of the churches did not return phone calls or respond to emails. Richie Stanley, Team Leader for the Center for Missional Research at the NAMB, warned me in regard to the difficulty of making contact with the Southern Baptist multiethnic churches they recognize for reasons stated previously.[4] Several attempts were made to locate these churches through various Internet searches, telephone calls, and emails, often without success. In addition, several of the churches listed by NAMB as multiethnic were actually predominately

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[2]Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, "The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Primary Church Planting Entities," www.christianitytoday.com/assets/10228.pdf (accessed December 13, 2013). The authors lament that undocumented statistics for the failure rate of church plants are widely distributed, perpetuating the myth that church plants fail at a rate as high as 80 percent. Stetzer and Bird and their research team surveyed more than two hundred church-planting churches, over one hundred leaders from forty different denominations, forty-five networks dedicated to church planting, eighty-four house church leaders, twelve nationally known church planting experts and eighty-one seminaries and colleges.

[3]Ed Stetzer, "CP Study Part 1: Study Shows 68 Percent Survivability Rate for Church Plants," http://www.namb.net/namb1cb2col.aspx?id=8590001127 (accessed December 13, 2013).

[4]Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, May 6, 2013.

homogeneous churches. The North American Mission Board is dependent upon self-reported data supplied by churches. The Board then compiles what they receive from the churches that choose to report their statistics.

Multiethnic churches have the potential to move believers beyond the comfort of their safe, homogeneous environment to engage the people groups of the world, thereby fulfilling the Great Commission, but only those who are willing to learn, risk, and follow the Lord's leadership can effectively lead such challenging diversity. Multiethnic churches can equip God's people to be ministers of reconciliation through the transforming power of the gospel and offer healing and genuine fellowship to the people groups of the world.

Issues Raised and Addressed

In the first chapter of this dissertation five sets of questions were proposed to address the overarching question of "Are Southern Baptist multiethnic churches a valuable strategy for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the United States?" These questions were drafted in an effort to evaluate the twenty-six Southern Baptist multiethnic churches that participated in the social research from a missiological perspective. The following responses provide initial answers to the questions and the issues they raise.

First, the Southern Baptist Convention was born under the national cloud of slavery in 1845, the effects of which have lingered throughout the history of the Convention. Southern Baptist leaders like W. A. Criswell supported racial segregation and opposed the Civil Rights Movement.[5] Minority groups, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, have a distrust of whites that have been dominant in the culture of the United States. In addition to historical concerns and distrust, the Church

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[5]As noted previous, Criswell eventually reversed his position and supported the integration of public schools.

233

Growth Movement, including the concept of the homogeneous unit principle, has demonstrated a pervasive influence on the Convention and its church planting strategies, particularly in the last half of the twentieth century. While the SBC has made strides toward increasing diversity within the Convention in recent years, most of this diversity reflects homogenous churches of differing ethnicities.

The Southern Baptist Convention is rooted in the racialized society of the United States. Evidence of ethnic issues in the United States is reflected in low intermarriage rates, ethnically divided communities and housing areas, and social and economic opportunities that favor Anglos.[6] The Southern Baptist Convention has been influenced by the American culture where European whites have been dominate, controlling the legal system, law enforcement agencies, and for the most part the economy. Such issues breed distrust and inequality among ethnic groups. While all of these factors contribute to the homogeneous churches that are so prevalent in the Convention, the increasing diversity of the United States is opening the door of opportunity for greater involvement in multiethnic ministry. Of the multiethnic churches used in this research, seventeen were founded after 1991. Three other pastors reported that their churches became multiethnic after 2000. Sixteen of the churches founded after 1991 were intentionally multiethnic from their inception. The remaining church, Mosaic San Diego, is not intentionally multiethnic. Pastor Derrick Miller made it clear that being multiethnic was not a core value for them. Rather, they exist to make disciples of Christ. Due to the demographics of their area, they are naturally multiethnic and have been from the beginning.[7] All of the pastors who participated in this study stressed the issue of making disciples in obedience to the Great Commission as a core value. At the same time, the churches founded after 1991 include the priority of being intentionally

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[6]Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

[7]Derrick Miller, telephone interview by author, January 14, 2014.

234

multiethnic as well. The number of multiethnic churches in the United States jumped from 7.5 percent of the churches in the nation in 1998 to 13.7 percent in 2010.[8] Because the data on SBC multiethnic churches is sketchy, it is impossible to determine if this trend is true among Southern Baptist churches. Artie Davis, pastor of Cornerstone Church in Orangeburg, South Carolina, argued that it is easier to plant an intentional multiethnic church than it is to move a homogeneous congregation to embrace ethnic diversity.[9] Yet 35 percent of the churches used in the social research have transitioned from a homogeneous church to a multiethnic congregation. The majority of the churches used in the social research were established after 1991 as intentional multiethnic churches.

Second, the question as to whether or not Southern Baptist multiethnic churches exemplify the biblical mission of the church warrants a positive response. All ethnicities are equally created in the image of the creator. God confirmed the scope of the mission of his people through his promise to Abram that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:3). Christ crossed the ethnic barriers of his day between the Jews and the Gentiles most clearly through his encounter with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well and the parable of the Good Samaritan. He commissioned his followers to make disciples of all people groups through evangelism and discipleship (Matt 28:18-20). The response of the Samaritans to the gospel, the multiethnic and multinational leadership at the church at Antioch, and the diversity at the church at Ephesus all point to the multiplicity of the early church. Paul clearly states that Christ came to break down the wall of ethnic hostility between the Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22). Southern Baptist multiethnic churches clearly exemplify the biblical mission of the church overcoming the barriers that divide ethnicities and building a ministry of reconciliation that not only

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[8]Scott Thumma, "Religious Diversity Increasing in US Congregations," http://www. huffingtonpost.com/scott-thumma-phd/racial-diversity-increasing-in-us-congregations_b_2944470. html?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pulsenews (accessed May 6, 2013).

[9]Artie Davis, interview by author, Orangeburg, SC, October 3, 2013.

impacts the body of Christ but also the culture. As demonstrated by the social research for this dissertation, multiethnic churches can be true to the mission of the church and at the same time bridge the ethnic divide in the United States.

Third, many Southern Baptist churches were ethnically diverse at the founding of the Convention. For the most part, these were biracial churches that practiced an unequal ecclesiology during the period of slavery in the United States. Nevertheless, slaves often experienced a greater egalitarianism and freedom in the church than they did in society as a whole.[10] The slaves enjoyed temporary fellowship and equality through the community offered at these local churches.[11] Further evidence is presented by the continuation of multiethnic fellowships even after the abolition of slavery, the Union victory, and the surrender of the Confederacy. Albert Hart points out that while most of the ethnic congregations quickly dissipated after the war because most Anglos were unwilling to offer full equality to the freedmen, some blacks continued to be involved in Caucasian-led SBC churches even as late as 1910.[12]

Southern Baptists demonstrated strong opposition to integration and were vocal antagonists of the Civil Rights Movement. While the Convention was slow to accept Civil Rights legislation and the integration of public schools, there were voices that called for moral conviction in regard to equality. In 1952, Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham called on all Baptist colleges to welcome academically qualified students regardless of their ethnicity.[13]

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[10]Larry M. James, "Biracial Fellowships in Antebellum Baptist Churches," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*: *Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1988), 37.

[11]John B. Boles, "Introduction," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1988), 12.

[12]Albert Bushnell Hart, *The Southern South* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), 167. Also see Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line* (New York: Doubleday, 1908), 35.

[13]*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1952* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention), 58.

The Christian Life Commission successfully led actions at Convention meetings that steered the SBC to a greater sense of social responsibility.[14] Such Convention actions paved the way for improved ethnic relationships. In 1993, the Convention passed a resolution on ethnic reconciliation, calling on all Southern Baptists to increase their efforts to develop friendships with all racial and ethnic groups and to work together to advance the gospel.[15] In 1995, messengers at the SBC meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, adopted the "Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention." This resolution affirmed the biblical truth that all ethnicities have a common ancestor in Adam. The resolution confessed the part Southern Baptists' played in strained relationships with other ethnic groups, particularly with African Americans, due to historic ties to slavery and resistance to the Civil Rights Movement. Through the adoption of this measure, Southern Baptist messengers repented of the past sins of racism, asking for forgiveness.[16] In 2012, Southern Baptists unanimously elected Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, as the first black president of the Convention. Each of these actions contributed to expanded ethnic involvement in the SBC.

Fourth, Donald McGavran based the development of the homogeneous unit principle on his observation that most people "like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."[17] While McGavran along with Peter Wagner and others attempted to provide biblical support for their application of the principle, there is a tension between the biblical mandate to make disciples of all people groups and the

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[14]John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1972), 194.

[15]"Resolution on Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation," http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/ amResolution.asp?ID=898 (accessed June 30, 2013).

[16]"Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention," June 1995, http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amresolution.asp?id=899 (accessed June 13, 2013).

[17]Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 163.

237

concept of the homogeneous unit principle. Historically, people are most likely to respond to the gospel when they hear the message in their primary language. This axiom contributes to evangelism, but falls short of the ethnic inclusiveness of the first century churches at Antioch and Ephesus. Further, the homogeneous unit principle should not dominate the discipleship methods and the make up of local congregations.

Fred Mangeni, the Kenyan born pastor of Jubilee International Fellowship in Wake Forest, North Carolina, acknowledged that the principle has worked from a pragmatic perspective in the past, admitting that it is easier and faster to grow a homogeneous church than it is to grow a multiethnic congregation. Nevertheless, he does not believe that homogeneous churches are the way of the future.[18] In regard to the homogeneous unit principle, Ken Fentress stated, "I believe it was true for the twentieth century, but not the twenty-first century. With globalization and the growing demographic diversity of the United States, the homogeneous unit principle is becoming increasingly irrelevant."[19] Samuel Kioko stated, "Christians must reach beyond their culture if they are to fulfill the Great Commission."[20] Arnold Goto, pastor of Hawaii Kai Baptist Church, stated that he had never thought of his church as multiethnic before receiving the snowball email survey used in this research. Hawaii Kai was organized in 1967 and has been multiethnic since 1968 according to Pastor Goto. The homogeneous unit principle as it relates to ethnicity is irrelevant in his context because of the ethnic diversity of the area. The church and surrounding area have many ethnically mixed marriages. Pastor Goto stated that every member of his family was in a mixed marriage.[21]

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[18]Fred Mangeni, telephone interview by author, December 9, 2013.

[19]Ken Fentress, interview by author, Tigerville, SC, August 21, 2013.

[20]Samuel Kioko, interview by the author, Greenville, SC, December 18, 2013.

[21]Arnold Goto, telephone interview by author, January 9, 2014. During the course of the interview, it was discovered that Hawaii Kai did not meet the baptismal ratio required for inclusion in the social research. However, Pastor Goto's statements related to the plural ethnicities in the diverse culture of his congregation are insightful, especially as the diversity of the nation as a whole continues to grow.

Of the respondents to the online leadership survey, 37.8 percent agreed with the statement "It is easiest for a person to receive Christ without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers." On the other hand, 43.2 percent disagreed with the statement. The homogeneous unit principle should not be understood as prescriptive. The growing diversity of the United States and the growing number of multiethnic families through marriage and adoption make the principle more irrelevant.

Fifth, worship along with the related issue of worship leadership is critical for multiethnic churches. Music is an important aspect of worship because of its power to unite a diverse congregation offering praise to God with one voice. The issues of styles, traditions, and language provide challenges for worship planning. Worship leaders desire to move congregants from focusing on personal stylistic preferences and traditions to focusing on God, the object of worship. It is important for the worship leadership team to reflect the diversity of the congregation. By employing several languages in worship through prayer, music, scripture reading, and translation, various ethnicities feel more included and accepted by the church. Intentional multiethnic inclusion in worship leadership is crucial to the task of leading a multiethnic congregation.

Sixth, the overarching question as to whether or not Southern Baptist multiethnic churches provide a valuable strategy for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the United States warrants a positive response. With the rise of multiethnic families through adoption and intermarriage, the growing integration and ethnic interaction of the culture of the United States, the multiplication of multiethnic congregations, and projections that the United States will be a nation of minorities with no ethnic majority by 2043, the fields of the nation are ripe for multiethnic church expansion. Multiethnic churches that breakdown the walls of separation that have divided ethnicities and exemplify the mission of the church through a passion for souls and the desire to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples present a valuable strategy for Southern Baptists to fulfill their mission.

The ratio of average worship attendance to baptisms was impressive among the churches studied. The churches that participated in this study have a combined baptism ratio of 10:1. Thirteen of the churches reported a ratio of 12:1 or better. The average attendance at the primary worship service at these churches ranged from 40 to 1,300. Of all the congregations in the United States, 13.7 percent are multiethnic.[22] Rodney Woo reported that only 6 percent of evangelical churches in the United States are multiethnic.[23] The Southern Baptist Convention, however, appears to lag behind the national average. If 6 percent of Southern Baptist churches were multiethnic, there would be about 3,000 such congregations. The North American Mission Board, however, reported only 230 multiethnic congregations.[24] It is impossible to determine the exact number of SBC multiethnic churches, but it appears they are small in number. As the country increases in diversity as projected by the United States Census Bureau, the need for multiethnic churches will increase.[25]

Areas for Further Study

Little research has focused specifically on Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. Perhaps this is due primarily to the small number of such churches and the way Southern Baptists gather data from their churches. There is, however, a growing amount of research on multiethnic congregations as a whole. Sociologists have led the way in researching multiethnic congregations. It would be profitable for more theologians to pursue this area of examination.

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[22]Scott Thumma, "Religious Diversity Increasing in US Congregations," http://www. huffingtonpost.com/scott-thumma-phd/racial-diversity-increasing-in-us-congregations_b_2944470. html?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pulsenews (accessed May 6, 2013).

[23]Rodney M. Woo, *The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 13.

[24]Richie Stanley, e-mail to the author, May 6, 2013. Annual Church Profile, 2011 (Nashville: LifeWay Christian Resources). NAMB considers a church to be multiethnic if it has no majority ethnicity.

[25]See U.S. Census Bureau, "An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury," http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/ archives/ population/cb08-123.html (accessed January 12, 2012).

One area that needs further scrutiny is the development of multiethnic leaders in multiethnic congregations. Many of the pastors interviewed recognized the need for leadership that reflects the diversity of the congregation. However, they were quick to admit the difficulty in securing and maintaining diverse leadership. Exploration in this area would be a positive addition to the data available. The development of a multiethnic leadership development model would offer assistance to multiethnic churches and pastors.

Another area of research that needs more attention is the growing proliferation of multiethnic families through both marriage and adoption along with the related issue of multiethnic children. Multiethnic families desire ethnic diversity that welcomes diverse families into the congregation. Eighty percent of the respondents to the leadership survey agreed with the statement "The growing number of multiethnic families (through marriage and adoption) increases the need for multiethnic churches." The number of multiethnic families in the United States is on the rise. As the diversity of the United States increases and the number of multiethnic families grow, multiethnic churches provide an open door to reach these families.

The issues of music, style, and language as it relates to worship also needs further investigation. Multiethnic worship gatherings draw diverse believers to focus on God rather than themselves. If worship functions as the glue that unites diverse followers of Christ as has been proposed in this dissertation, these issues warrant further examination.

It would also be beneficial to work with willing state conventions to identify multiethnic SBC churches in their regions. Southern Baptist leaders need to examine the diverse nature of the churches of the first century, particularly in the metropolitan areas where Paul planted churches during his missionary journeys. They need to be challenged to consider the importance of multiethnic churches in light of the growing pluralism and

diversity of the culture of the United States. They also need to develop a cooperative plan of action to share data that they collect on these churches for research purposes.

Final Thoughts

Leading a multiethnic congregation is an arduous task. The goal of Southern Baptist multiethnic churches is to fulfill the mission of the church by being followers of Christ who make disciples of all people groups. The multiethnic pastors who participated in the social research for this dissertation expressed that it is more difficult to serve and lead a multiethnic congregation due to the greater diversity of perspectives, needs, experiences, and expectations. Nevertheless, they were in unanimous agreement that their churches should reflect the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood, if the congregation is faithful to obey the Great Commission.

Donald McGavran often cited the Great Commission as the biblical foundation behind his missiological strategies. His desire to see as many people come to Christ as quickly as possible is commendable. The concept of the homogeneous unit principle has spurred much research with sincere believers both supporting and criticizing it. Those who may consider this dissertation as an attack on the character or scholarship of McGavran or other proponents of his church growth strategies would be in error. Rather, this dissertation has been written out of a heart to advance the cause of Christ by making disciples who are willing to cross ethnic barriers for the sake of the gospel and present a powerful united witness to the world of the transforming power of the gospel through the development of viable multiethnic churches.

The diversity of ethnicities joining together to worship God in united voices offers a glimpse of worship around the throne in heaven where a vast crowd of believers from every nation, tribe, people, and language raise their voices together in worship before the Lamb of God (Rev 7:9-10). Christians must reach out to the nations and tribes of the world not only through missions, but also through the diversity of their own

242

neighborhoods. Many of the churches of the first century were ethnically diverse.[26] These churches were comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers, crossing an ethnic barrier with a history of hostility between the two groups. God's redeeming work through the gospel of Christ broke down the wall of separation and made the two groups into one (Eph 2:11-22). The focus of viable multiethnic churches must be on the gospel and not ethnic reconciliation. Reaching people for Christ and making disciples who make disciples is the ultimate goal for the glory of God. The gospel, however, not only redeems, but also reconciles people, first to God and then to each other. The power of the gospel is the best hope for breaking down the walls of separation that divide ethnic groups. God has given his church the ministry of reconciliation. Believers are to call unbelievers to repent and believe the gospel. As people respond from various ethnicities, gospel-centered multiethnic churches demonstrate the reconciling nature of God's work through Christ by joining together to worship in unity while exercising the diversity that reveals a greater understanding of the fullness of God.

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[26]Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission* (New York: Oxford University, 2007), 35-37.

APPENDIX 1

SNOWBALL SAMPLING SURVEY

Greetings,

I am conducting research on Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. Unfortunately, very little data exists on these churches. Therefore, I am trying to identify as many such churches as possible. Would you mind taking five minutes to respond to the questions below and return it to me by email? This would be a great help to me and my research on this growing, important element of Southern Baptist life.

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate Southern Baptist multiethnic churches in light of the biblical mission of the church. This survey is being conducted by Stephen G. Crouse as a part of his dissertation research at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this sampling instrument you will provide valuable information to help identify Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. The information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this instrument, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name of Church:
City and State:

1. Does your church body have no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnic group?
2. If so, please identify the estimated percentage of ethnic divisions in your church from the list below:

   American Indian/Alaska Native?

   Asian?

   Black/African American?

   Hispanic/Latino?

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander?

White?

Other? (Please specify) _____

3. What year was your church founded?
4. What year did your church become multiethnic (no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnicity)?
5. What is the current weekly average corporate worship attendance at your church?
6. Is your church committed to multiethnic ministry? (The reason for this question is that some churches that are currently multiethnic are actually transitioning from one majority ethnic group to another and likely will not remain multiethnic).
7. How many resident members does your church have?
8. How many baptisms have you had in your church during the last year?
9. Would you characterize your church as urban, suburban, or rural?
10. Please list contact information for any other Southern Baptist churches of which you are aware that may be multiethnic (no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnic group)?

Thank you for your assistance.

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Where Christ Makes the Difference

APPENDIX 2

MULTIETHNIC CHURCH LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate Southern Baptist multiethnic churches in light of the biblical mission of the church. This survey is being conducted by Stephen G. Crouse as a part of his dissertation research at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this survey you will provide valuable information about your involvement and experiences in Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. The information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this leadership survey. For the purposes of this survey, a multiethnic church is defined as a church that is made up of no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnic group. If you do not serve a church which meets this definition, then please do not participate in this survey.

Church Name: _____
City:_____ State:_____
How many years have you attended the church? _____   How many additional years have you attended other multiethnic churches? _____
List the leadership positions you have held

_____.
What are your current leadership responsibilities?

1. What drew you to become a part of a multiethnic church? (Check all that apply).

    64.4%   Diversity of people

    46.7%   Diversity of worship

    53.3%   Friendliness of the church people

    22.2%   Programs that meet the needs of you and your family

2. How would you characterize your ethnicity?

   13.3% African American/Black

   4.4%   Asian American/Asian

   62.2% European American/White

   15.6% Hispanic/Latino

   0%   Native American/Indian

   8.9%   Other? (Please Specify) <u>Did not specify</u>

3. A multiethnic church is consistent with the mission of the church to reach the world for Christ, making disciples of all people groups.

   1-Strongly Agree 80%
   2-Agree 17.8%
   3-Neutral 2.2%
   4-Disagree 0.0%
   5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

4. I consider the Bible to be authoritative for all matters of faith and practice.

   1-Strongly Agree 88.9%
   2-Agree 11.1%
   3-Neutral 0.0%
   4-Disagree 0.0%
   5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

5. The primary goal of a multiethnic church is the advancement of the gospel of Christ.

   1-Strongly Agree 75.6%
   2-Agree 24.4%
   3-Neutral 0.0%
   4-Disagree 0.0%
   5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

6. I feel that God has called me to serve him through a multiethnic church.

   1-Strongly Agree 64.4%
   2-Agree 26.7%
   3-Neutral 8.9%
   4-Disagree 0.0%

5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

7. It is easiest for a person to receive Christ without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.

   1-Strongly Agree 13.3%
   2-Agree 24.4%
   3-Neutral 26.7%
   4-Disagree 20.0%
   5-Strongly Disagree 15.6%

8. My church's commitment to multiethnic ministry is important to me.

   1-Strongly Agree 60.0%
   2-Agree 31.1%
   3-Neutral 8.9%
   4-Disagree
   5-Strongly Disagree

9. Ethnic reconciliation should be the primary goal of a multiethnic church.

   1-Strongly Agree 15.6%
   2-Agree 22.2%
   3-Neutral 31.1%
   4-Disagree 20.0%
   5-Strongly Disagree 11.1%

10. My church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention is important to me.

    1-Strongly Agree 22.2%
    2-Agree 22.2%
    3-Neutral 40.0%
    4-Disagree 11.1%
    5-Strongly Disagree 4.4%

11. If the ethnic diversity of the United States increases, multiethnic churches will become more prevalent.

    1-Strongly Agree 35.6%
    2-Agree 40.0%
    3-Neutral 17.8%
    4-Disagree 6.7%
    5-Strongly Disagree 0%

12. Due to the language barrier, first generation immigrants find it difficult to feel at home in a multiethnic church.

1-Strongly Agree 2.2%
2-Agree 48.9%
3-Neutral 26.7%
4-Disagree 20.0%
5-Strongly Disagree 2.2%

13. The growing number of multiethnic families (through marriage and adoption) increases the need for multiethnic churches.

1-Strongly Agree 28.9%
2-Agree 51.1%
3-Neutral 17.8%
4-Disagree 2.2%
5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

14. Meeting the diversity of needs among ethnic groups presents a major challenge for those who plan worship for multiethnic churches.

1-Strongly Agree 8.9%
2-Agree 48.9%
3-Neutral 15.6%
4-Disagree 24.4%
5-Strongly Disagree 2.2%

15. I enjoy the music used in worship at my church.

1-Strongly Agree 46.7%
2-Agree 46.7%
3-Neutral 6.7%
4-Disagree 0.0%
5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

16. As long as God's Word is faithfully proclaimed at my church, the preaching style does not matter to me.

1-Strongly Agree 17.8%
2-Agree 35.6%
3-Neutral 20.0%
4-Disagree 24.4%
5-Strongly Disagree 2.2%

17. I enjoy hearing the stories (testimonies) of how God is working in the lives of other church members in worship.

1-Strongly Agree 64.4%

2-Agree 35.6%
3-Neutral 0.0%
4-Disagree 0.0%
5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

18. It is important to me that the styles of music used in worship reflect the styles enjoyed by my ethnic group.

   1-Strongly Agree 15.6%
   2-Agree 24.4%
   3-Neutral 31.1%
   4-Disagree 26.7%
   5-Strongly Disagree 2.2%

19. It is important to me that the style of preaching employed in worship reflect the style enjoyed by my ethnic group.

   1-Strongly Agree 2.2%
   2-Agree 22.2%
   3-Neutral 40.0%
   4-Disagree 33.3%
   5-Strongly Disagree 2.2%

20. I wish the music used in worship was more upbeat.

   1-Strongly Agree 4.4%
   2-Agree 8.9%
   3-Neutral 55.6%
   4-Disagree 22.2%
   5-Strongly Disagree 8.9%

21. I enjoy the variety of worship styles used at my church.

   1-Strongly Agree 37.8%
   2-Agree 53.3%
   3-Neutral 6.7%
   4-Disagree 2.2%
   5-Strongly Disagree 0.0

22. I wish our worship services were more structured.

   1-Strongly Agree 0.0%
   2-Agree 2.2%
   3-Neutral 28.9%
   4-Disagree 60.0
   5-Strongly Disagree 8.9%

23. I wish our worship services allowed for more freedom of expression.

    1-Strongly Agree 4.4%
    2-Agree 17.8%
    3-Neutral 37.8%
    4-Disagree 33.3%
    5-Strongly Disagree 6.7%

24. I am satisfied with the style(s) of worship at my church.

    1-Strongly Agree 33.3%
    2-Agree 44.4%
    3-Neutral 17.8%
    4-Disagree 4.4%
    5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

25. Worship services in my church adequately address the ethnic diversity of our church family.

    1-Strongly Agree 24.4%
    2-Agree 44.4%
    3-Neutral 22.2%
    4-Disagree 6.7%
    5-Strongly Disagree 2.2%

26. My church tends to cater to the needs of the majority ethnic group at the expense of the minorities.

    1-Strongly Agree 2.2%
    2-Agree 6.7%
    3-Neutral 24.4%
    4-Disagree 46.7
    5-Strongly Disagree 20.0

27. The length of the worship service does not matter to me.

    1-Strongly Agree 20.0%
    2-Agree 26.7%
    3-Neutral 22.2%
    4-Disagree 26.7%
    5-Strongly Disagree 4.4%

28. It is important to me that meetings and worship services at my church start on time.

1-Strongly Agree 26.7%
2-Agree 48.9%
3-Neutral 17.8%
4-Disagree 6.7%
5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

29. I wish our worship leaders were more time conscious.

1-Strongly Agree 2.2%
2-Agree 2.2%
3-Neutral 35.6%
4-Disagree 51.1%
5-Strongly Disagree 8.9%

30. It is important to me that the leaders in my church are ethnically diverse.

1-Strongly Agree 33.3%
2-Agree 26.7%
3-Neutral 28.9%
4-Disagree 11.1%
5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

31. It is important to me that the church staff is ethnically diverse.

1-Strongly Agree 33.3%
2-Agree 28.9%
3-Neutral 28.9%
4-Disagree 8.9%
5-Strongly Disagree 0.0%

32. Ethnicity is a major consideration at my church in selecting leaders.

1-Strongly Agree 4.4%
2-Agree 13.3%
3-Neutral 33.3%
4-Disagree 35.6%
5-Strongly Disagree 13.3%

APPENDIX 3

PASTORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate Southern Baptist multiethnic churches in light of the biblical mission of the church. This interview is being conducted by Stephen G. Crouse as a part of his dissertation research at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this interview you will provide valuable information about your involvement and experiences in Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

For the purposes of this research, a multiethnic church is defined as a church that is made up of no more than 80 percent of the majority ethnic group. If you do not serve a church that meets this definition, then please do not participate in this interview.

Background

1. How would you characterize your ethnicity?
2. Describe your educational background.
3. Share your spiritual heritage and pilgrimage.
4. Explain your call from God to serve as a pastor.
5. When did you become a Southern Baptist and why are you affiliated with the Convention?
6. What was your first exposure to a multiethnic church?

Ministry Setting

7. How long have you served your current church?
8. Have you served a multiethnic church prior to serving at your current church?
9. When was the church you serve founded?
10. How long has the church been multiethnic (less than 80 percent of the majority ethnicity)?
11. Why is your church multiethnic?
12. Other than the leadership of the Lord, what drew you to become a multiethnic pastor?
13. How many people regularly attend your primary worship service?
14. How many resident members does your church have?
15. How many people were baptized at your church in the last year?
16. Share how your church is involved in evangelism.

17. Describe how your church develops disciples of Christ.
18. What is the ethnic breakdown of your primary worship service?
19. What is the ethnic breakdown of your student ministry (6-12 grades)?
20. How do you view multiethnic churches in relation to the mission of the church in the world?
21. Do you feel that multiethnic churches will become more prevalent in the United States? Why/why not?
22. How do you respond to the Homogeneous Unit Principle (People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers)?
23. What do you consider to be the three most critical issues facing Southern Baptist multiethnic churches in the United States?
24. How would you describe the leadership in your church setting? Are your leaders as ethnically diverse as your congregants? Should this be an issue? Why or why not?
25. Describe a typical worship experience in your church setting. How is the diversity of the worshipers reflected in the service?
26. What challenges are unique to planning worship in a multiethnic setting?
27. How would you describe your preaching style?
28. In what ways, if any, have you modified your preaching style in seeking to reach a multiethnic congregation?
29. How would you describe the style(s) of music employed in worship at your church?
30. How long are your typical worship services? Does your congregation have differing opinions about how long a worship service should be? What are their concerns?

APPENDIX 4

PARTICIPATING SBC MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES

1. Armitage Baptist Church, Chicago, IL—Pastor Steve Laughlin[1]

2. Cornerstone Church, Bamberg, SC—Pastor Michael Reid[2]

3. Cornerstone Church, Orangeburg, SC—Pastor Artie Davis

4. First Baptist Church, Lake Park, FL—Pastor John Thompson

5. First Baptist Church, Weston, FL—Pastor Joe Guynes[3]

6. Gallery Church, Baltimore, MD—Pastor Ellis Prince

7. Gateway Church West, Cleveland, OH—Pastor Dan Ghramm

8. Graffiti Church, New York, NY—Pastor Taylor Field

9. Higher Expectations Church, Humble, TX—Pastor Bryant Lee

10. *Iglesia Bautista del Sur El Calvario*, Turlock, CA—Pastor Victor Pulido

11. *Iglesia Bautista Reformado*, LeHigh Acres, FL—Pastor Dan Urbina

12. Jubilee International Fellowship, Wake Forest, NC—Pastor Fred Mangeni

13. Kaleidoscope Church, Spartanburg, SC—Pastor Derrick Smith

14. Liberty Baptist Church, Columbus, GA—Pastor David Lix

15. Montrose Baptist Church, Rockville, MD—Pastor Ken Fentress

16. Mosaic San Diego, San Diego, CA—Pastor Derrick Miller

17. New Beginnings Church—Ogden, MD—Pastor Joseph Choi

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[1]Steve Laughlin is Spiritual Formation Pastor at Armitage Baptist Church. He has been a part of the pastoral leadership team at Armitage since 2001.

[2]Michael Reid is the Campus Pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Bamberg, SC.

[3]Joe Guynes is the Executive Pastor at First Baptist Church, Weston, FL. During the period of the social research for this dissertation, First Baptist Church was searching for a senior pastor.

18. Reach the Nations Church, Stone Mountain, GA—Pastor Bill Johnson

19. Renovation Church, West Palm Beach, FL—Pastor Brandon Lewis

20. Shining Star Fellowship, Abilene, TX—Pastor Richard Darden

21. Sonpoint Baptist Fellowship, Greenville, SC—Pastor Samuel Kioko

22. Sunrise Baptist Church, Lawrenceville, GA—Pastor David Poe

23. Under Over Fellowship, Conroe, TX—Pastor Jerry Vineyard

24. Uptown Church, Chicago, IL—Pastor Michael Allen

25. Valley View Baptist Church, El Paso, TX—Pastor Ronald Fox

26. Wilcrest Baptist Church, Houston, TX—Pastor Jonathan Williams

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ABSTRACT

A MISSIOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF SOUTHERN
BAPTIST MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES
IN THE UNITED STATES

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The thesis of this dissertation is that Southern Baptist multiethnic churches exemplify the mission of the church as revealed in the Scriptures and offer a valuable strategy for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the United States. Chapter 1 introduces the ethnic segregation of Southern Baptist Churches and begins to establish a missiological foundation for ethnic inclusiveness. A discussion of the research problem including the background of the dissertation follows. The broader question of the missiological need for multiethnic congregations in the current milieu of American society is addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the definitions of key terms, limitations and delimitations, and the research methodology employed.

Chapter 2 explores the mission of the church and the extent to which it applies to all peoples. The ethnic inclusiveness of the ministry of Jesus and the ethnic diversity of the New Testament churches address the need for multiethnic Southern Baptist churches. The chapter ends with a discussion of Paul's charge that Christ broke down the dividing wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles and the implications for Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations.

The focus of chapter 3 is a historical examination of Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. While many ethnicities are included in Southern Baptist life, attention is limited to African Americans and Hispanics in this historical survey.

Southern Baptist churches had many African slaves among their members when the Convention was founded. The western expansion of Southern Baptists and the United States' acquisition of the Southwest territories following the Mexican American War led the young Convention to initiate mission work with Hispanics. The unequal treatment that these ethnic groups received from Anglos has lingering effects on contemporary Southern Baptist multiethnic churches. Southern Baptist attitudes about integration and the Civil Rights Movement also influenced ethnic relationships. Immigration policies and socioeconomic factors that favor the majority ethnicity create obstacles for multiethnic congregations. Contemporary Southern Baptists actions to improve ethnic relationships are examined.

An in-depth study of Donald McGavran's homogeneous unit principle and its impact on contemporary Southern Baptist multiethnic congregations is offered in chapter 4. This principle is scrutinized from a biblical and missiological perspective. The implications related to cross-cultural evangelism in light of the biblical witness conclude the chapter.

Chapter 5 segues into a critical look at worship in the twenty-six Southern Baptist multiethnic churches used for the social research. The chapter begins by defining worship as an integral part of the mission of the church. The need for an authoritative standard as a reference point in navigating the challenges of leading a multiethnic congregation to worship God is examined including data obtained through the social research. Aspects of corporate worship and their impact on multiethnic churches are explored based on the social research data. The chapter concludes by addressing ethnic inclusivism in Southern Baptist multiethnic churches and exploring the biblical notion of worshiping God in spirit and truth.

Chapter 6 offers a summation of issued raised and addressed in the dissertation. Southern Baptist multiethnic churches offer a valuable strategy for reaching

the increasingly diverse population of the United States. Areas for further study are suggested.

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