AN EMBRYONIC ECCLESIOLOGY ENABLING CHURCH

PLANTING MOVEMENTS TO FLOURISH

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APPROVAL SHEET

AN EMBRYONIC ECCLESIOLOGY ENABLING CHURCH

PLANTING MOVEMENTS TO FLOURISH

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To Rebecca,

thank you for your love and support,

to Thad, Lydia, Josiah, Naomi, and Evangeline,

I love you all,

and to Gospel City Church,

you are an example of a flourishing church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

I was an enthusiastic rookie missionary. I believed that my theological training and adopted church planting strategies would result in a great deal of success on the mission field. I quickly learned that vision and reality are not the same thing. This dissertation is partially a result of the lessons I learned while attempting to make disciples and plant churches in Southeast Asia.

The lessons learned through my doctoral studies greatly assisted the formation of Gospel City Church in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I hope that this church will flourish where she is planted. Planting this church while reflecting on my studies was a rich experience. The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. The principles and lessons learned from this project allowed us to build on that foundation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, David Hesselgrave wrote about the current theological and
methodological winds shaping the practice of missions at the beginning of the twenty-
first century.[1] He identified one *wind* as Church Planting Movements. A Church Planting
Movement (CPM) was defined first by David Garrison as, "a rapid multiplication of
indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population
segment."[2] Some missiologists claim that the CPM strategy is the most influential
missions strategy in twenty-first century.[3] One even suggests that Garrison's writings are
as impactful to contemporary evangelical missions strategy as Donald McGavran's *The
Bridges of God* was to evangelical missions in 1955.[4]

Hesselgrave exhorted missiologists and missions practitioners to carefully
consider certain questions related to the methods and practices of CPM. Two particular
questions posited by Hesselgrave grab my attention: "Are any important steps in
developing responsible, New Testament churches short-circuited in starting church-
planting movements?" and "What are we to say about the marks of the true church as
given in Acts 2:42-47?"[5] The relationship between CPM methods and ecclesiology are at

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[1] David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 234-36.

[2] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 1999), 21.

[3] Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 72.

[4] Frank Walter Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements in East Asia" (DMiss diss., Biola University, 2013), 49.

[5] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 236.

the core of these concerns.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that an embryonic ecclesiology is a necessary component for biblically faithful church planting methodology. Biblically faithful church planting methodology needs an ecclesiology that will enable new churches to flourish where they are planted. An embryonic ecclesiology affirms that God supplies everything a church needs to flourish when he generates a new church. This ecclesiology emphasizes first who the church is before focusing on what the church does.[6]

A church planting method, imbued with an embryonic ecclesiology informing the tactics, positions a new church to engage in activities flowing from its identity instead of trying to identify itself as a church through its activity. Churches flourish when they are actively seeking to become everything that God designed them to be. Flourishing churches boldly proclaim the gospel, develop spiritually vibrant disciples, transform the surrounding community, and expand the reign of King Jesus through new church generation. A danger within church planting tactics is that church planters become fixated on only one aspect of a flourishing church. When one aspect is emphasized above others, then churches are unable to flourish.

This dissertation shows that church planting methods influenced by CPM philosophies emphasize rapid church multiplication. This emphasis fails to lay a solid foundation of discipleship and dilutes appropriate gospel contextualization. This failure results in churches that are unable to transform the communities within which they are planted. When a rapidly reproducing church is the focus of a church planting methodology, then the methodology becomes little more than an elaborate evangelism strategy. The result is that a church planter becomes an ecclesiological minimalist. The

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[6] Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

church planter loses sight of the beauty and potential of a fully functioning, healthy, flourishing local church.

An embryonic ecclesiology is a biblically robust understanding of the church that serves as a foundation for church planting methodology. It focuses on who the church is first and what the church does second. An embryonic ecclesiology addresses and informs the tactics of church planting in evangelism, discipleship, the gathering of the saints, and leadership development. It differs from an ecclesiology that focuses on irreducible minimums. According to J. D. Payne, "Church planters must seek to understand what is the irreducible ecclesiological minimum, or the basic essence of the church, for the church to be the church among any people."[7] An embryonic ecclesiology does not focus on the minimums of the church, but rather on what the flourishing expression of the new church within a people group or place will be when it reaches full maturity.

A biblically faithful methodology must begin with God. By beginning with God two foundational concepts are affirmed. First is God's primary role in birthing a new church. The second concept is God's providential outfitting of each local church. He births and outfits each and every local body of Christ to accomplish all He desires for his own glory in their specific context. Aspects of church planting ecclesiology related to discipleship, obedience, polity, and leadership flow from one's understanding of these foundations of the church. An embryonic ecclesiology for CPM strategies must be God-centered from the beginning and church-orientated rather than conversion-focused.

CPM methodology lacks a robust ecclesiology. I demonstrate this lack of a carefully considered ecclesiology in this dissertation. This lack of clarity begins in the earliest writings of CPM literature. Even in its current implementations, the

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[7] J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2009), 32.

understanding of church by CPM practitioners is varied. Some practitioners who desire to produce CPMs recognize the lack of ecclesiological vibrancy and attempt to address it in their practices.

I have examined and analyzed the ecclesiological foundations undergirding selected church planting methods influenced by the CPM paradigm. These methods are currently being taught and utilized by IMB personnel in Asia. I sought to answer at least four questions: What are the ecclesiological presuppositions (implicit and explicit) within these selected church planting methods? In what ways do these presuppositions reflect a biblically robust ecclesiology? How does ecclesiology affect the church planting method? Finally, what lessons regarding the relationship between ecclesiology and church planting can be learned for twenty-first century church planters? This analysis will show the symbiotic relationship between ecclesiology and church planting methods. The significance of this relationship calls for a greater emphasis on ecclesiological clarity by church planters.

The church planting models used by field practitioners should be evaluated regularly. Payne reminds missionaries, "Methods are necessary, but not foundational."[8] Most missionaries work diligently to discover and implement strategies and methods for church planting that are faithful and fruitful. The process of evaluation and implementation is ongoing. Ordinarily, the theological foundations of these methods and strategies are not evaluated frequently. However, the theological framework and foundation undergirding church planting models can lead to long-term effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Church planters must ask key questions about the church before trying to develop church planting methods and models. Payne again points out, "Missionaries must be outstanding theologians and outstanding in the practical application of their methods

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[8] J. D. Payne, "Introduction: Methodological Stewardship: Always Evaluating, Always Adjusting," in *Missionary Methods: Research, Reflections, and Realities*, ed. Craig Ott and J. D. Payne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), xv-xvi.

to the field."[9]

Every missionary church planter begins with a personal default ecclesiological template. This template is usually the result of previous church experience. The church planter's concept of church may be based upon programs, buildings, ministries, or events in which they participated and experienced fruitful results. Stuart Murray observes,

> All church planters operate within theological frameworks, but often these are assumed rather than articulated and adopted uncritically rather than as the result of reflection. Theological principles may influence strategy and practice less than unexamined tradition or innovative methodology. Some church planters are openly impatient with what they regard as theoretical considerations, and most literature on church planting contains little theological discussion.[10]

Missionaries must discipline themselves to reformat their default template with an understanding of the church according to the Scriptures.

These ecclesiological presuppositions will be certainly rooted in some tradition. The significant question for this study is how do these presuppositions reflect the biblical teachings on the church? This question does not intend to condemn or to promote one particular model. The question must be asked to press church planters to build their methods upon a robust ecclesiology. If Payne's assertion that one's methodology flows from theology is accurate, then missionary church planters must do the work of developing biblically faithful ecclesiology before developing methods and strategies. Too often church planting methods and strategies assume that the church planter grasps a sufficient ecclesiology, and the real need of the church planter is to know what to do. Unfortunately, one cannot assume a church planter possesses a biblically faithful ecclesiology.

To appreciate the significance of this dissertation one should consider the relationship between ecclesiology and church planting methods. First, a deficient

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[9] Payne, "Introduction," xvi.

[10] Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 39.

ecclesiology will lead to churches that reproduce in unhealthy ways. Murray explains, "An inadequate theological basis will not necessarily hinder short-term growth, or result in widespread heresy among newly planted churches. But it will limit the long-term impact of church planting, and may result in dangerous distortions in the way in which the mission of the church is understood."[11] Embracing an embryonic ecclesiology will drive the formulation of church planting methodologies.

The CPM strategy is the result of reverse engineering the observations of explosive growth. Garrison records that his research,

> Tackles a complex subject, in this case a divinely produced phenomenon that we call Church Planting Movements. It seeks to understand these movements by beginning at the end with an actual Church Planting Movement. Then it reverse engineers the movement, dismantling its component parts, analyzing how it was constructed and how it works. Done properly, reverse engineering can reveal volumes about the Creator's designs, desires, and method of operation."[12]

The methods are formulated by determining what works best and fastest. The methods are pragmatic and are not drawn out of the Scriptures but rather from what is considered best practices. When the methods are not built upon the foundation of Scripture, they are built upon shifting sand. The resulting churches will be less and less healthy.

Second, shallow ecclesiology is one reason CPMs are not sustainable.[13] If a church planter desires to see long-term, sustainable effectiveness of their church-planting endeavor, then he must begin with theological indicatives and build his methods upon these truths. A method that focuses on irreducible ecclesiological minimums runs the risk of reproducing shallow churches. The emphasis is on the minimums of what Scripture requires of a church rather than being a fully developed and flourishing church in the context of where it is planted. The possibility for a new church to flourish is established

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[11] Murray, *Church Planting*, 39.

[12] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 11.

[13] Schnatter, "Sustainability in Church Planting Movements," 14-15.

at its beginning and provides a vision for what the church can be. An embryonic ecclesiology provides not only the foundation of who the church is but also provides the goal of what the church is to become.[14]

Third, church planting methods that focus on rapid reproduction in lieu of a robust ecclesiology are simply elaborate evangelism strategies. The shift of missionary training to focus on planting movements leaves the element of embryonic ecclesiology missing from missionary preparation.[15] The result of this emphasis is broad evangelism, gathering converts together, and training them to do evangelism. Church planters expected the new church plants to reproduce quickly. Anything that would slow down evangelism and reproduction is considered to be an unhealthy practice. John Massey questions the ability to produce strong churches and equip capable leadership through methods emphasizing rapidity.[16]

Fourth, a dichotomy in evaluating church health unwittingly drives a wedge between methods devoted to church multiplication and to church maturation. The lack of emphasis on reproduction in western Christian contexts frustrates international missionaries. Will Brooks observes,

> One of the interesting aspects of the healthy church discussion is that when scholars list their characteristics or 'marks' of a healthy church, they often leave out missions. When the discussion of healthy church takes place among missiologists or in missions settings, however the opposite is true. In these contexts, a healthy church is often defined solely in terms of how well it communicates the gospel to others.[17]

Both of these camps have good points to make and need to be heard. An embryonic

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[14] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 106.

[15] Richard Bruce Carlton, "An Analysis of the Impact of the Non-Residential/Strategy Coordinator's Role in Southern Baptist Missiology" (ThD diss., University of South Africa, 2006), 188-89.

[16] John D. Massey, "Wrinkling Time in the Missionary Task: A Theological Review of Church Planting Movements and Methodology," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 100-137.

[17] Will Brooks, "From Healthy Church to Healthy Church: Why Sending Church and Church Plant Models are Insufficient" (paper presented at the Southeast Regional Evangelical Missiological Society meeting, Wake Forest, NC, April 9, 2016), 1, paper provided by the author to me, pdf.

ecclesiology will provide a new church the opportunity to flourish where she is planted. By flourishing she will be both a healthy body and reproduce other churches.

This dissertation provides an ecclesiological rubric that can be used to evaluate church planting methodologies. The strategy and methods employed for church planting can and should be evaluated through a biblical and theological lens.[18] By evaluating church planting methods the missionary will be able to identify the embryonic ecclesiology in the church and make the necessary adjustments so that she can flourish.

Background

I was first introduced to CPM strategy while pursuing the Master of Divinity at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In Mark Terry's class on international church planting the concepts and precepts of CPM were presented. The idea of rapidly reproducing churches planting churches captured my imagination. The possibility of being a part of a movement like this one was invigorating. I carried this enthusiasm to the mission field.

After I graduated from SBTS in May 2002, my wife and I were sent by Southern Baptists to proclaim the gospel to the Khmer of Cambodia as career missionaries. Before we departed the States, we attended a mandatory seven-week orientation. At this orientation CPM principles and methods continued to be emphasized. Trainers highlighted success stories throughout the orientation. The training equipped us with the belief that we could see a CPM among the people we serve.

Cambodia experienced an incredible movement of God's saving work in the 1990s. Garrison reported that a CPM took place among the Khmer people during that

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[18] Lloyd Walter Grant, "Theological Analysis of Church Planter Profiles" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012). Doug Coleman, "A Theological Analysis of the Insider Movement Paradigm from Four Perspectives: Theology of Religions, Revelation, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011),193-244. Coleman utilizes a combination of biblical data and social science concepts in determining his ecclesiology.

decade.[19] By the time we arrived in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 2002, the explosive and exponential growth of the CPM in the 1990s had slowed dramatically. My hope was to be one of the people whom God would use to reignite a movement of his work amongst this unreached people group.

During my time in Cambodia, the CPM originally reported in Garrison's writings began to be questioned by many inside and outside the IMB. A follow-up research project determined that what happened in Cambodia in the 1990s was not a CPM, but rather a church-planters-movement.[20] The findings of the follow-up study showed that a small group of church planters took the responsibility for planting churches throughout the country. So, the explosive growth was not a result of churches planting churches, but rather church planters planting churches. Researchers could not deny that something happened in the 1990s, but by definition it was not a CPM. This research project left several of the field personnel disillusioned and critical of CPM efforts.

In the early 2000s, despite the CPM being debunked by the previous assessment, continued growth of churches and baptisms among Cambodian Baptists was still reported. IMB personnel serving in Cambodia grew skeptical of the numbers reported by Cambodian pastors and church planters. In 2004 at the request of IMB leadership, a third assessment into CPM claims was initiated. I was involved in this investigation.

This assessment was different from the previous assessments. Instead of outside researchers conducting the assessment, IMB field personnel in Cambodia went to physically observe in person each reported church and interview each pastor and selected members from each church. The results of this research were discouraging. We

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[19] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 58-64.

[20] Jim Slack and Jim Maroney, "Church Planting Movement Assessment of the Cambodian Baptist Convention," report presented to the Khmer team of the IMB, November 27, 2001 (Richmond, VA: Archives IMB, 2001), 20.

discovered that very little of the extensive growth reported in the 1990s remained intact in 2005.

In addition to finding fewer churches and Christians than were being reported, our interviews revealed other disturbing information. Many of the church leaders did not know the gospel. An alarmingly high percentage of the reported churches did not meet regularly. In fact, many of these reported churches never celebrated the Lord's Supper or believer's baptism. We determined that we could not in good conscience report these groups to be churches.

The events in Cambodia soured my view on CPM strategy. I still desired to see God do something amazing; but I was skeptical of the role and practices of the missionary in achieving these results. The more I reflected on the attempts and failures of CPM methods in Cambodia the more cynical I grew towards reports I heard around the world. One major issue of which I was skeptical related to the ecclesiology of the churches being reported. Were they actually churches?

Following a brief stateside assignment in 2006-7 we returned to Southeast Asia. Instead of returning to Cambodia, we shifted our place of service to Malaysia. The churches we encountered in Malaysia were the polar opposite of the churches in Cambodia. These churches were not interested in church planting. Neither did these churches report growth. In addition to the lackadaisical attitude toward evangelism and church planting I discovered what could perhaps be one hindrance towards church planting. Whereas in Cambodia church planters were too quick to deem a group a church, in Malaysia many extra-biblical requirements existed. These requirements discouraged church planting.

Malaysian Baptist churches seemed to express that attempts to start new churches should be initiated by IMB personnel. The new churches that did start and were successfully passed on to local leadership did not reproduce other churches. A precedent was already established. IMB field personnel planted churches, and the local Malaysian

believers would maintain what existed.

During this time our mission agency experienced a reorganization. Our organizing structures changed, and we found ourselves situated within the East Asia Peoples Affinity Group. In this affinity group we received more training regarding CPM. We were introduced to T4T (Training for Trainers) and similar methods. During our time of service in East Asia, I received notice from our field supervisor that our efforts at evangelism and church planting were inadequate. Despite reporting numerous evangelism encounters, though seeing few converts, my team leader was told that if we knew how to be effective evangelists our rate of response would be higher. The emphasis on rapid reproduction, a hallmark of CPM methodology, was being imposed upon our team.[21]

Amidst all these events, we were hearing whispers about reported CPMs dematerializing. I was reminded of my time in Cambodia. A growing dissatisfaction among field personnel regarding the emphasis on CPM strategy and methods was noticeable. Despite the dissatisfaction, I still desired to see God do amazing things by redeeming people for his name by rapidly reproducing churches. I wanted to see God initiate a CPM. My understanding of CPM was changing. I did not want to see a CPM whereby any of us could point to our methods or tactics and take credit. Rather, I wanted to see a movement based on the clear teachings of Scripture that only could be attributable to God.

Definitions

This dissertation utilizes some key terms that are to be understood according to the definitions ascribed to them in this section. Knowing these key words and definitions is important to this study since some diversity exists among missionary practitioners and

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[21] Kyle Faircloth, "Searching for the Indigenous Method," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2012): 396-402. In this article, Faircloth recounts a similar pressure from CPM trainers on his team to implement the strategy.

scholars. The particularly important terms are *church, ecclesiology, Church Planting Movement (CPM), mission/missions, missionary, strategy,* and *methods.* These terms will inform the concepts presented in this dissertation.

Church. In the Scriptures the word ἐκκλησία, "church," occurs 114 times. Out of these occurrences 90 refer to a local church or churches.[22] In the same manner I use the word *church* to refer to a local church or churches. On occasion I may use the term *church* to refer to the universal or invisible church, but the context will make this change of usage obvious. For the purpose of this work, a church is the new covenant people of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ through faith in him alone as their savior, and regenerated by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. A church is a local community of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, covenanted together (through a common confession) to intentionally fulfill the purposes to which God called them. A church submits to the ultimate authority of God and his revealed Word. A church maintains unity and fellowship through the Lord's Supper and church discipline. They assemble regularly under the leadership of qualified godly men (pastors, elders) to worship God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to study the Scriptures, to be equipped for ministry, and to encourage one another to good works.

Ecclesiology. A simple understanding of ecclesiology is the study of the church. I follow Gregg Allison's understanding of ecclesiology in this study: "this doctrine treats the issues of the church's definition, covenantal relationship with God, relationship to Israel and the kingdom of God, characteristics, governance, ordinances, and ministries."[23] A Baptist ecclesiology will be used as the basis of analysis for the church planting methods in this study.[24]

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[22] John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 70.

[23] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers,* 33.

[24] For this study, three Baptists' ecclesiologies in particular, as articulated in the following works, will be helpful. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*; Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*,

Church Planting Movement (CPM). David Garrison is credited with coining

the concept *Church Planting Movement* (*CPM*). In his seminal work, Garrison defines a

CPM as "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps

through a people group or population segment."[25] Garrison deflects the credit for

developing the term *CPM*[26] and notes that it is an adaptation of McGavran's description

of people movements. Various definitions for *CPM* appear in missiological circles, but

they rarely stray far from Garrison's definition.[27] Therefore, this dissertation will use

Garrison's definition of *CPM*.

Mission/missions. Missions is not simply the plural of mission. *Mission* in this

study will convey the concept of the *missio Dei*[28] in regard to all that God is doing to

expand his kingdom. I agree with Moreau's distinction between *mission* and *missions.*

Mission is the broad category of all that a church does for the sake of the kingdom.

Missions relates to "the specific work of the church and agencies in the task of reaching

people for Christ by crossing cultural boundaries."[29] The study of missions is *missiology.*

Church planting is a part of *missions*. Since the focus of this study is church

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3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2013); and John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*. Also informative for the understanding of *church* is the Southern Baptist Convention's definition of church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper as expressed in the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2000), 13-14.

[25] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 21.

[26] David Garrison, "Church Planting Movement FAQS," *Mission Frontiers* (March-April 2011): 9.

[27] One example of a significant difference is between Garrison and David Watson, another notable CPM proponent. Watson requires a minimum of 100 churches planted within two years that is at least three generations deep. If a movement does not meet these criteria, Watson will not deem it a CPM. David Watson, "Church Planting Movement (CPM)–Our Definition," June 15, 2009, http://www.davidlwatson. org/2009/06/15/church-planting-movement-cpm-%E2%80%93-our-definition/.

[28] I assume the understanding of *missio Dei* to be everything that God is doing to communicate the redemption story and gather in a people for his own possession from every ethnic group to his glory. Mission and missions are nested within the *missio Dei. Missio Dei* focuses on the God who initiates mission(s), and mission(s) focuses how on God's people are cooperating with him in his mission. For a survey of the usage of the term *missio Dei,* see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 389-93.

[29] A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Mission: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 17.

planting, little discussion of *mission* will take place; but, it is an important term to define so that the reader does not misunderstand *mission* and *missions* to be synonymous.

Strategy. Hesselgrave puts forth the understanding of strategy this dissertation employs by stating strategy is "used to refer to large-scale planning and directing of operations toward a certain goal."[30] A strategy is a future-orientated plan seeking to achieve actions and results.[31] A strategy is informed by an overarching set of beliefs resulting in actions. These beliefs craft the paradigm and goals of a particular group of persons.

Methods. Methods are nested in strategy. Methods are the tactics used by individuals and teams to accomplish the goals set forth by a particular strategy. Methods are understood to be distinct from strategy. J. D. Payne distinguishes between church planting strategy and church planting methods. He recognizes, "A method is a way of doing something–a plan, a system, an approach. Applied to church planting, it is the system we use to plant churches."[32] Methods and strategy are not synonymous.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited in several ways. To my knowledge, the best collection of CPM assessments exists at the global research department of the IMB. For security reasons, my access to all these assessments is limited. This study is limited to literature and a few interviews. I was not able to join a CPM assessment to observe churches planted within a reported CPM. I was able to conduct a few interviews with key practitioners. For the most part, I was limited to the observations and records others made. The analysis of this research focused on the theological framework of the methods

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[30] David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*, nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 43.

[31] John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 3.

[32] Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 35.

and not the fruit of the methods.

In regard to delimitations, this dissertation is not an in-depth study on all church planting strategies and methodologies. I limited myself to investigate two church planting methodologies influenced by the CPM strategy that are popular with practitioners in IMB in Asia.[33] The two methods I analyze are Training for Trainers (T4T)[34] and The Big One.[35]

T4T was developed and practiced primarily in East Asia before influencing methodologies globally. *The Big One* is a modified version of T4T that was first developed in a predominantly Muslim nation in Southeast Asia. The ecclesiology imbedded within *The Big One* differs from T4T. The practice of church planting within these two methods will reveal the ecclesiology at their core.

The choice of these two CPM methods was for the following reasons. First, IMB missionaries developed them. Second, I have access to the training materials and key leaders of these two methods. Third, I served in both Southeast Asia and East Asia in the IMB. These methods prospered in these regions. So, I also have geographic nearness to these practices.[36]

Currently, many missionaries are practicing CPM methods in their church planting strategies around the world. My intention is not to survey all the methods by all

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[33] This limitation means that only CPM strategy and methodology were examined. Comparing and contrasting the differences between Disciple Making Movements (DMM) and CPM is beyond the scope of this dissertation. DMM employ strategies and tactics that intentionally seek to make disciples and expect churches to naturally spring up, whereas CPM is a intentionally focused on planting churches. For a brief description of the core difference see Ted Esler, "Coming to Terms: Two Church Planting Paradigms" *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 30, no 2 (Summer 2013), 67-73.

[34] Steve Smith with Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship ReRevolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011).

[35] Mike Shipman, *Any 3: Anyone Anywhere Any Time* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2013), 120.

[36] In the interest of full disclosure, I also want to note that I have a personal attachment to the Big One methodology. In the process of doing research for this dissertation, the developer and one of his colleagues invited me to provide feedback and corrections to their training materials.

CPM practitioners, but to focus on these two methods. Since IMB is the Southern Baptist Convention's missions agency, the ecclesiology used in the analysis will derive from Southern Baptist authors. I limited the Baptist ecclesiologies I studied to works published after the year 2000. I do not intend to analyze Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or other forms of ecclesiology.

I attempted to read and evaluate the materials and assessments without bias. This balance can be difficult because of my past experience with a supposed CPM that was discovered to not actually exist.

Methodology

A study of the ecclesiology of church planting methods influenced by the CPM paradigm begins with a biblical study of church. The Scripture's teaching on church is the rule and guide for understanding church in this dissertation. Resulting from this study, I developed an ecclesiological rubric containing several diagnostic questions. This rubric became the tool whereby I evaluated the ecclesiology embedded within the CPM paradigm, *T4T*, and *The Big One*.

After determining what the Bible teaches about the church, an investigation of how CPM proponents understand CPM and the church is necessary. David Garrison is the most widely-known and accepted authority on the CPM missiological paradigm. David Garrison wrote a booklet for IMB in 1999,[37] and five years later he wrote a more comprehensive book by the same title.[38] Reading Garrison's initial works as well as articles he published led to an understanding of what Garrison is describing a CPM and the church to be.

Along with Garrison, other leaders within IMB published books and articles as

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[37] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999).

[38] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004).

well as numerous works on strategy and methodology. These works do not always

address the issue of ecclesiology directly. Despite the limited references to ecclesiology,

their understanding of church is not absent. Their ecclesiology is implicit rather than

explicit.

CPM enjoys support from numerous missionary strategists and practitioners

from numerous missionary organizations, but it also attracts many critics. The critiques of

CPM practices are vast. I gathered articles and publications that both promote and

critique CPM. The voices from both sides of the argument need to be heard. The

proponents are compelled by the urgency to get the gospel to the unreached peoples of

the world. Their critics urge caution citing numerous issues, such as, the necessity of

rapid church planting, the appointment of immature or unqualified leaders, and the lack

of leadership training. The cause of concern for the critics is that the pure gospel be

proclaimed and practiced in biblical communities of faith so that the unengaged and

unreached peoples will experience genuine transformation.

Finally, I interviewed several of the key figures in the development of CPM

influenced methodology. I was able to speak with David Garrison at length. During the

writing of this dissertation, I was unable to connect with Steve Smith due to his battle

with cancer and passing. I did visit and interact with Mike Shipman and a few of his

national partners.

Through a review of the literature of CPM, T4T, and *The Big One*, I was able

to summarize and explain the paradigm and strategy presented in each approach. I

interviewed some key participants related to the practices in order to supplement the

literature. The literature review and interviews allowed for certain conclusions to be

drawn and the imbedded ecclesiology to be discerned. Following these summaries and

conclusions, I evaluated the ecclesiology imbedded within each approach using the

flourishing church rubric designed in chapter 2. The rubric allowed me to determine if the

ecclesiology imbedded within each strategy and method would lead to flourishing

churches.

Conclusion

To accomplish the purposes of this project, this dissertation deals specifically with the biblical presentation of the church. The biblical data on the church included metaphors, descriptions, and practices. The rubric for a faithful biblical church arises from the study of this data. Chapter 3 takes a comprehensive look at the development of the CPM strategy and evaluates the strategy using the flourishing church rubric created in chapter 2. Chapters 4 and 5 present the development and precepts of two church planting methods influenced by the CPM strategy. These chapters conclude with each method evaluated by the flourishing church rubric created in chapter 2. Finally, in the conclusion, I summarize the gleanings from these evaluations, provide insights into biblical faithful practices, and suggest areas for further study.

Church planters need a tool to assist in evaluating their own ecclesiology and the biblical faithfulness of their methods. This dissertation contributes a tool that will enable faithful church planting, equip mature and healthy leaders, and position churches to flourish where they are planted. I hope God is glorified in this project and that Kingdom advancement is assisted.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

Jesus will build his church (Matt 16.18). His church is a people who individually and collectively acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God who is both Lord and Savior. Jesus' church is a particular people, comprised of persons from every tongue, tribe, and nation. They are called into relationship with God through Christ to live out the expectations of the New Covenant established by Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection.

The church is God's instrument to spread the salvific message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples. Since the church serves such an important role in God's salvation plan, church planters must possess a robust ecclesiology. This ecclesiology serves as a guide for church planting efforts. This chapter develops biblical and theological expressions of the church. The chapter will conclude by providing a rubric for evaluating the ecclesiology undergirding church planting methods.

The Church in the Old Testament

The New Testament church and the Old Testament assembly of God's people are not the same. The church is not an entity in the Old Testament. The people of God in the Old Testament are created by God. First, he entered into covenant with Abram. This covenant relationship prepared the way for the covenant he established with Israel. This covenant was established following God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The giving of the law established the parameters, binding obligations and consequences contained within the covenant.

Beginning in the garden of Eden (Gen 3), Scripture tells the story of God and

how he will redeem a people for himself. The story develops, and details emerge regarding the nature and character of God and the people he is pursuing. Clowney affirms, "As the story unfolds, God reveals more and more fully, not only what he will do for his people, but what he will be for them."[1]

God's creation of his own people in the Old Testament points to the church established in the New Testament. Erickson argues the church, "occupies the place in the New Covenant that Israel occupied in the Old. Whereas in the Old Testament the kingdom of God was peopled by national Israel, in the New Testament it is peopled by the church."[2] For this reason, the church and the Old Testament people of God have some similarities. Some continuity between the people of God in both the Old and New Testament exists.[3]

The Old Testament people of God were an established people bound in covenant. The whole assembly sacrificed the Passover lamb, were redeemed by God out of Egypt, heard the Ten Commandments, ushered into covenant with God at Sinai, had their sins expiated by sacrifices, and were made into a holy nation to praise God.[4]

God was present with his people. He bound his presence to the ark of the

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[1] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 1995), 28.

[2] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1053.

[3] Gentry and Wellum affirm this view,

Scripture assumes a genuine continuity between Old Testament and New Testament saints (see Rom. 1:1-2; 11; Phil. 3:3, 7, 9), and language applied to Israel as God's covenant people is also applied to the church. For example, most people agree that when the language of 'assembly' (qahal and ekklesia) is applied to Israel and the church (e.g., Deut. 4:10; Josh. 24:1, 25; Isa. 2:2-4; Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 11:18; Heb. 10:25), or when Old Testament language describing Israel (e.g., Ex. 19:6; Isa. 43:20-21; Hos. 1:6, 9; 2:1) or Old Testament texts that were applied to Israel (e.g., Jer. 31:31-34; Hos. 1:10-11) are now applied to the church (e.g., Rom. 9:24-26; Heb. 8:6-13; 1 Pet 2:9-10), this is strong evidence in favor of the claim that there is only one people of God throughout the ages. (Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 685-86.)

[4] Robert G. Clouse, "Church," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 247.

covenant and instructed Israel to construct a tabernacle within which to place the ark. The ark represented God's presence with his people. Wherever the ark was, God was with it. Although God is causally omnipresent, he was physically present with the ark. God's presence with Israel continued into the period of Solomon's temple. The temple's holy of holies housed the ark and God's presence. Certain characteristics of God's covenant people are duplicated in the New Covenant. God's abiding presence is with the people of both covenants. For example, the people of the Old Covenant look to the day of their sins being forgiven; the New Covenant people look back to the person and event that provides forgiveness from sin.

The Church in the New Testament

The New Testament maintains some continuity with the Old Covenant people of God; but new aspects of the assembly are introduced.[5] In the Scriptures the people of God exist as one entity across time, so both Old Testament believers and New Testament saints are included in this category. The difference between the two is that in the Old Covenant the visible people of God were predominately ethnic Israel and circumcised as a sign of being part of the covenant people. In the New Covenant the church is different from Israel because she is comprised of regenerate believers alone.

Jesus spoke to building his church as a future event (Matt 16.18). The church is grounded in the New Covenant established by Christ through his death, burial, and resurrection. The Bible records the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Luke employed the term *church* twenty-four times in Acts but never once in his gospel.[6] The event in which the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples and the gospel was

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[5] My understanding of the continuity/discontinuity between Israel and the church agrees with the "Progressive Covenantalism" view. For a more detailed explanation of the continuity/discontinuity between the Church and Israel, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 683-703.

[6] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1058.

proclaimed in power is the witness to the birth of the church.

The biblical teachings undergirding the church, its essence, expressions, activities, and characteristics sets the stage for her growth, development, maturity, and method of reproduction. The church grows numerically, develops in its structures and organization, matures in its understanding of the gospel, and is informed in the appropriate manner for reproduction. All of this growth corresponds to the church's submission to Jesus as Lord. When his authoritative word is being taught and practiced accurately, and when the Spirit of God indwells believers, the church is propelled forward in her mission to bring glory to God among all peoples.

The New Testament word for *church* is translated from the Greek term ἐκκλησία. The term ἐκκλησία is a common word in Greek, describing an assembly of gathered persons for a purpose.[7] New Testament writers used the term to refer to both sacred and secular assemblies.[8] The term's usage reveals that the early church recognized she was bound together solely by faith and salvation in Christ. "The term ἐκκλησία indicated the self-consciousness of the early Christians," writes Van Engen, "called together by the proclamation of the gospel for the purpose of belonging to God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit."[9]

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[7] W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303-4.

[8] K. L. Schmidt, "καλέω," in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 3:505:

> In three verses very close to one another (Acts 19:32, 39, 40) ἐκκλησία is used of a gathering of the people, i.e., a secular assembly. Here ἐκκλησία is a secular term in the full sense. If we follow the fundamentally necessary and reasonable principle that the same word should be rendered consistently in the same author, this excludes the use of 'Church.' On the other hand, it also excludes the English 'congregation,' and even the German *Gemeinde* (cf. 'convention') is normally used ecclesiastically unless there is some such preceding adjective as 'political.' This leaves us with very little option but the simple rendering 'assembly' or 'gathering.' On this basis we can then differentiate between secular and ecclesiastical assemblies even though we use the same term.

[9] Charles Van Engen, "Church," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 192. Van Engen lists different ways scholars attempt to define church: (1) a word study of *ekklesia*, (2) crafting a propositional definition, (3) utilizing New Testament metaphors, (4) marks and creeds, (5) affirming sociological and theological views, and finally (6)

References of ἐκκλησία to a local church are more common than to the universal church in the New Testament.[10] These churches are either regional or specific assemblies. The term ἐκκλησία occurs 114 times in the New Testament, and 109 times it is used to refer to a local Christian assembly.[11] One instance is Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20.28).[12]

Every epistle in the New Testament except the letter of James was written to a local church or a person leading a local church.[13] Paul wrote to local churches. The churches receiving the letters were visible in both regional (scattered across a city or region) or specific (one particular, local church) locations.[14] In Paul's epistles, he referred to specific ἐκκλησία by their location. For example, he mentioned the ἐκκλησία that meets in Prisca and Aquila's house (Rom 16.3-5). He distinguished between different churches when he told the Corinthian ἐκκλησία that he taught the same doctrine at every ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 4.17). Whether various churches co-existed in a regional setting or one

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describing its actual expression throughout its global expansion.

[10] In the New Testament, ἐκκλησία describes Christian assemblies both universally and locally. Matthew records Christ using ἐκκλησία in both a universal sense (Matt 16:18) and also in a local application (Matt 18:17). This descriptive term is used by Paul at least twelve times, most notably in Colossians (Col 1:18; 4:16) and Ephesians (Eph 1:22; 5:25). These usages of ἐκκλησία provide the understanding that there is a universal, invisible body of believers that will be gathered together before the throne. This body of believers is the group of worshippers witnessed by John (Rev 7:9-12).

[11] Mark E. Dever, "The Church," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 771.

[12] All Scripture references are quoted from the English Standard Version, 2001.

[13] Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 455.

[14] D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 243. One example of writing to a church regionally would be the epistle to the Romans. Carson, Moo, and Morris observe, "When Paul writes his letter, then, we may be certain that there were both Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome, probably meeting in several house churches rather than in one large gathering." So, Romans would be an example of an epistle written to multiple churches in a particular region and/or city. The two epistles written to the church in Thessalonica are examples of epistles written to a particular church. The pastoral epistles of Timothy and Titus are written to church leaders.

church gathered together, Paul dignified individual church identity and independence.[15]

The book of Revelation also emphasizes the local church. Christ instructed John to record messages for seven churches (Rev 2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14). These messages addressed problems within each church and demonstrated Christ's concern for them.

The frequent usage of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament conveys its significance. The varying usage of the term suggests that any organized community of God's people can be referred to as a church.[16] Theologian K. L. Schmidt reports, "The sum of the individual congregations does not produce the total community or the church. Each community, however, small, represents the total community, the church."[17] Roloff agrees that the idea of levels or distinctions of churches is foreign to the New Testament: "Both the local assembly of Christians and the trans-local community of believers are equally legitimate forms of ἐκκλησία created by God."[18] Schmidt concludes, "Every true early Christian congregation was just as good a representation of the whole body as the primitive congregation at Jerusalem."[19] A congregation of baptized Christians can be accurately described as a church.[20] However, the New Testament has more to say about what the church is and how it operates.

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[15] Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 164.

[16] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 858.

[17] Schmidt, "καλέω," 506.

[18] J. Roloff, "ἐκκλησία," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1: 411.

[19] Schmidt, "καλέω," 534. Schmidt provides the most thorough and comprehensive examination of the term ἐκκλησία I found. For a more exhaustive explanation of the range of usage of ἐκκλησία, see Schmidt, "καλέω," 504-35.

[20] Roloff, "ἐκκλησία," 412. "When he (Paul) speaks of ἐκκλησία, he normally thinks first of the concrete assembly of those who have been baptized at a specific place."

Biblical Metaphors of Church

   The Bible does not provide a propositional definition of church. Rather, the New Testament authors employ metaphors and imagery to explain what the church is and how she operates. These metaphors are literary tools to express the reality of the church. No one metaphor is a complete expression of the church.[21] Each image, Dever argues, "Offers a different perspective and none of which should so dominate our conception of the church that the depth and texture of understanding is lost."[22] All the metaphors together serve as teaching tools to the audience regarding the New Covenant community to which they now belong.

   Each metaphor serves a purpose and instructs believers about aspects of the church's essence. These metaphors and images are intertwined. Why would the New Testament authors employ such a wide array of images? Minear explains,

> It was made possible by a common perception of a reality that embraced all the images. The writer could presuppose an audience which to some degree had experienced a common field of force that freed them from verbalistic slavery to any description of that field. For such an audience each picture could be a channel for thought rather than a receptacle of ideas bearing an assigned weight.[23]

Thus, the use of images and metaphors by the authors inform Christians about the essence, nature, and practice of the church, functioning as the New Covenant people of God.

   Four groupings of these metaphors convey important thoughts about the nature

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   [21] The New Testament provides many more metaphors and images of the church, possibly as many as ninety-six. The tally is disputed, but the significance of examining the metaphors in order to understand the church is not. This paper does not intend to examine each one. For the most comprehensive list of these images and metaphors, see Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). While Minear's work is the most comprehensive regarding the images of the church, I do not find all his explanations and categories to be compelling. John Hammett's assessment is accurate: "He lists ninety-six possible images of the church in the New Testament, but many are not well supported by Scripture; some do not seem to be an image and others do not refer to the church at all. Of these ninety-six, Minear recognizes four as 'master images.' They are 'people of God, new creation, fellowship in faith, and the body of Christ' (259)." John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 31.

   [22] Dever, "The Church," 772-73.

   [23] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 225.

and essence of the church. These groupings center on the church as a physical construction (building), as the bride of Christ, as the family of God, and as the body of Christ.

Building. The New Testament writers often employ the image of a structure. Matthew records Jesus' promise to build his church (Matt 16.18). Recall that *ekklesia* in this case does not refer to a building but rather a people; however, the picture provided does allude to this image of structure construction. Jesus will build *his* church upon the rock.[24] The emphasis here is on the fact that the church belongs to Jesus. He will build it in the future, and it has a solid foundation.

Paul continues the use of this imagery of building on a foundation. He declares that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus being the cornerstone (Eph 2.19-21); but in his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul teaches that Jesus is the foundation of the church (1 Cor 3.9-17). The apostles and prophets are foundational as agents of establishing new churches.[25] Their authoritative teaching serves as the right foundation for believers. The right foundation provides certain inclusion in the New Covenant people of God. As the apostles and prophets establish new churches by teaching and preaching accurately the Word of God, they are laying the appropriate foundation. These two images do not contradict one another. They are both communicating the role of the church planter and the relationship of the church to the one who is sovereignly and providentially building the church, namely Jesus.

Paul and Peter share the imagery of Jesus being the cornerstone. Paul describes

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[24] In this instance, Jesus is referring to Peter as the rock. He is not suggesting a church polity or a structure for church leadership. For an exegetical examination of how to understand this passage and metaphor, see Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, in vol. 22 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 252-54; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 422-24; and R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 620-23.

[25] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 304.

Jesus as the cornerstone of the building in his Ephesian's analogy (Eph 2.19-21). In Peter's speech to the religious authorities recorded by Luke he also indicates that Jesus is the cornerstone (Acts 4.11). Although Peter is not directly discussing the church in this speech, he does indicate that the spreading faith is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, he shares the same emphasis and imagery as Paul in using building language. In his first epistle, Peter reiterates the imagery of building in reference to the church. He emphasizes that Jesus is the cornerstone and calls believers in Christ "spiritual stones" who are being built up into a spiritual house (1 Pet 2.4-7). Believers, living stones, are being built up in Christ to be the living temple.[26] The imagery of the church as a building finds strong support in these passages.

Further, Paul utilizes the image of a building by stating that the church is a pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Tim 3.15). Knight suggests, "building terms, στῦλος (pillar) and ἑδραίωμα (buttress), are used, so that the church is depicted as the place where the living God dwells with his people."[27] The image of structure is also paired with the church being described as a household, those dwelling in God's house. The two images are mixed to support the idea that the church is both visible and real in its existence. Its existence is made manifest by certain affirmations of faith, coupled with an expectation of the members conduct.[28] Paul affirms the church is the visible model for living out the truth of the gospel like a statue set upon a pedestal for all to see. She is visible to all people as Christ's fortified representation.

The author of Hebrews uses the imagery of Christ building a house (Heb 3.3–

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[26] Jobes affirms this idea, stating that Christians "Come to Jesus Christ and are built as living stones into God's grand building project of redemption." Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 145. France agrees: "The new temple is not a building of literal stones but consists of 'living stones.'" France, *Matthew*, 623.

[27] George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 180.

[28] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles,* 179.

6). The church is affirmed as being Christ's house. The term *house* here refers to a household rather than the physical structure of a home.[29] This imagery is compared with God's choice of Moses as a servant in his house; but now Jesus is recognized to be much greater because he is building God's house, the New Covenant people of God. Ellingworth affirms the "mention of a house implies the existence of a builder."[30] A similar affirmation of Jesus being over God's household is found later in Hebrews (Heb 10.21). The analogy of the church as a building permeates the New Testament.

One specific theme in the New Testament related to the church as a building is the idea of the church as God's temple. In the Old Testament, God dwelt with his people in a constructed building, first the mobile tabernacle and later a permanent structure, the temple. He relegated his presence to the room of the holiest of holies and resided between the cherubim on the ark of the covenant. God is omnipresent, but he was present in a special way in the temple. In the New Testament, the church replaces the physical temple structure in Old Testament. The church is the people of God, each member is a temple and the congregated assembly is a temple. Minear suggests,

> The New Testament pictured the temple as a dwelling place of the Spirit. Where God's spirit is, there is the temple. It may also have been this nuance which enabled Paul to speak of the body of each believer as a temple (1 Cor 6:19) without excluding the idea that every congregation is also a temple (ch. 3:16-17) and without excluding the vision of the whole church as a temple (Eph 2:21). The applicability of the image to all three areas derives from the presence of the Holy Spirit.[31]

The image of the Spirit constructing a living temple made of living stones prepares New Covenant people to embrace their fellow living stones and to assemble together. The image of temple speaks to the church's mission, according to Beale: "We, as God's

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[29] Other references to the church as a household of God include 1 Pet 4.17 and Gal 6.10. The idea of a household is affirmed by reference to the manager or steward of house in Titus 1.7 and 1 Cor 4.1-2.

[30] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 205.

[31] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 97.

people, have already begun to be God's end-time temple where his presence is manifested to the world, and we are to extend the boundaries of the new garden-temple until Christ returns, when, finally, they will be expanded worldwide."[32] God is present with each believer as the Holy Spirit indwells each one, but is some way is especially present when the living stones gather as a living temple.

Bride of Christ. The symbol of marriage signifies the special relationship between Christ and his church.[33] Several truths regarding the relationship between the church and her Lord are supported by the imagery of the bride of Christ. Christ's devotion and fidelity are key concepts deriving from the metaphor. The notion of a universal, united church is also nested in this image. Some scholars relegate this image to secondary importance. Grudem treats this image as a subset of the image of family.[34] Minear concedes that the image is "important, valid, and illuminating," yet the image bears no control over the church's understanding of herself.**[35]** Despite the minimization of this image's importance by some, it is instructive and worthy of consideration here. Four New Testament passages consider the relationship between a husband and wife and how Christ's relationship to the church is similar.

Paul employs this imagery in two epistles (2 Cor 11.1-2; Eph 5.22-31). He expresses concern to the Corinthians of their faithfulness to Christ, alluding to the picture of marriage. Paul views himself as their father (1 Cor 4:15). He longs to present the church to Christ as his bride. In the time between the Corinthians' betrothal to Christ (conversion) and their presentation to him (glorification), Paul desires for their loyalty to

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[32] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 395.

[33] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 192.

[34] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 858.

[35] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 56.

be focused on Christ alone.[36] Allison observes, "Christ's design for the church is that she should be a magnificently beautiful and chaste bride (2 Cor. 11:2-3)–perfectly holy, completely pure for him, her husband."[37] Paul's concern is expressed as jealously because, as Harris affirms, "No rivals to her one husband, Christ, would be tolerated."[38]

The picture of the church as bride is further expanded in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5.22-33). Paul conveys that not only is the bridal imagery key in understanding the relationship between the church and Christ, but that from creation marriage was designed to reveal something about the gospel to the world. The image is intermingled with references to body-imagery with Christ as the head. Despite the mingling of metaphors, the comparison between earthly husband and wife relationships and the relationship between the church and Christ is clear and meaningful.[39]

The image conveys that each believer should strive for purity, holiness, and a greater love for Christ, as a bride does for her husband. The passage also affirms the role that Jesus plays in purifying the church and loving her self-sacrificially. This Ephesians usage of the analogy affirms the lordship of Jesus over the church. The church submits in everything to him. One learns that this submission is not a forced submission but rather a submission out of love and reverence because of the love and care that He displays for

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[36] Murray J. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 385.

[37] Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 162.

[38] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 735.

[39] A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 76. Wood comments,

> 'Now' (*alla*) continues the same line of argument rather than reversing it. In other words, Paul is not saying that even though ultimately the relation of Christ to the church is incomparable, nevertheless wives should submit to their husbands . . . . he is pursuing a likeness rather than pointing out a difference: "as . . . so." Here the verb 'submit' stands unambiguously in the text and does not have to be supplied, as in v. 23. The church as the bride of Christ readily acknowledges his authority and seeks to please him in every respect. When marriage is seen in the light of this higher relationship between Christ and his body, the wife finds no difficulty in submitting to her husband, for he too has obligations to her in the Lord (vv. 25-33).

her.[40] The image of the church as bride communicates God's immense love for his people and the responsibility of his people to be spotless and faithful to him.

The church as bride is the object of Christ's love. Christ as husband is the supreme example of how a man should relate to his wife. Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice in order that she may be presented to her husband whole and blameless (Eph 5.27). God is so committed to his people that he willingly sent his Son on a mission of redemption. This image conveys not only the responsibility of the church to be faithful to Christ, but it also highlights the work of Christ in cleansing and purifying the church.

John the apostle also develops this imagery twice in his writings. The first of the two comes on the lips of John the Baptist (John 3.29). John the Baptist describes himself as the bridegroom's friend. Borchert indicates the image is drawn from, "A typical Jewish type of parable, drawn from Jewish marriage customs. At that time, the bridegroom normally selected one or two close friends to escort the bride to the bridegroom's marriage chamber."[41] Carson indicates, "The Evangelist could not have been unaware of the fact that the post-resurrection church would picture Christ as the bridegroom and his church as the bride—the continuation and transformation of the Old Testament theme."[42] This imagery conveys that Jesus is coming to get his bride; his mission involves taking his people to himself. John the Baptist is responsible to point the bride in the direction of the bridegroom. One should be careful not to press the imagery too far regarding the bride because the emphasis of the image is upon Christ, the bridegroom.[43] He uses this imagery to point his disciples to Jesus as the Messiah. This

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[40] Bruce, *Ephesians*, 386.

[41] Borchert, *John*, 191-92.

[42] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 211.

[43] Merrill C. Tenney, *John*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 52. Tenney writes,

Just how far the simile of bride and bridegroom should be pressed is questionable. Should the bride

mention of Christ as the bridegroom who has come to get his bride appears only as a brief allusion to the relationship between Jesus and his people.

John's second depiction of the church as Christ's bride is eschatological. Some argue that perhaps it is the most the highly developed (Rev 21.2, 9, 22.17).[44] Johnson affirms simply, "The church is called the bride (21:2)."[45] As a bride the Messiah will be with his people. The surprise of this development is that John does not elaborate on the marriage analogy as Paul does in Ephesian, but rather he describes the bride as the new city come down from heaven. The metaphor of the church as a bride is developed by utilizing city imagery.

The mixed metaphor is not isolated to this one text only. The Old Testament prophets utilized mixed pictures of bride, nation, temple, city, and body.[46] Since John is borrowing imagery from the prophets, the continuation of these mixed metaphors is understandable. Johnson explains this mixed metaphor: "A bride-city captures something of God's personal relationship to his people (the bride) as well as something of their life in communion with him and one another (a city, with its social connotations). The purity and devotedness of the bride are reflected in her attire."[47] The imagery of the bride and city echo the prophets' descriptions of the Lord cleansing and adorning his people with

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represent Israel, to whom the Messiah came, or the church? The imagery is applied to both (cf. Hos 2:19-20; Eph 5:32), but the focus of this passage is on the bridegroom, not the bride. The emphasis is on the relation of Jesus and John rather than on the relation of Jesus to Israel or to the church. To what extent this explanation of the relation of John the Baptist to Jesus was prompted by later conditions in the church is not stated. Adherents to John's preaching and baptism certainly existed in the middle of the first century and were widespread. Apollos of Alexandria, who ministered at Ephesus, was one of this company. Aquila and Priscilla later instructed him in the ministry of Christ (Acts 18:24-26). When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he found others who held the same belief. Paul himself brought them into a full understanding of the work of Christ (Acts 19:1-7). It is likely that this halfway understanding persisted among John's converts.

[44] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 55.

[45] Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 591.

[46] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 55-56.

[47] Johnson, *Revelation*, 593.

precious stones.[48] This metaphor affirms, according to Beale, "What the reception of the coming salvation and righteousness from God will be like: like a new, intimate marriage relationship in which bride and bridegroom celebrate by donning festive apparel."[49] A few verses later the bride is contrasted with the harlot (Rev 21.9, 17:1). Once again John shifts from the image of a bride to describing a fortified, faithful and flourishing city.[50] At the end of the book, John alludes to the final union of the church and Christ as the church prays "Come" in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. The church's union with Christ is anticipated like a bride yearns to be united in marriage with her groom.[51]

A lesson of the bride of Christ imagery is that she is to prepare herself to meet her bridegroom. Paul appears most concerned with the preparedness of the church. He recognizes a dual path of preparation. Christ makes the church through the word and cross. The church prepares herself through her sanctification. Her sanctification is not her works of righteousness but rather clothing herself with the righteousness provided by Christ.[52] Clowney submits, "The bride must respond to the purpose of Christ's love."[53]

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[48] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 733.

[49] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1044-45.

[50] "The allusion anticipates the marital imagery in Rev 21:2b because of the similar metaphors in Isa 52:1: 'clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.' Isaiah's implicit portrayal of marriage is developed in Isa 61:10, which itself forms the explicit basis for the nuptial picture in Rev 21:2." Beale, *Revelation*, 1044. See also, Johnson, *Revelation*, 595.

[51] "The bride' was used previously only in reference to the church's future, consummated marriage to Christ at his final return (19:7-9; 21:2ff., 9ff.). Application of it here to the present church suggests that what has been prophesied in earlier chapters for God's people at the end has begun already in their midst (as in 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27). The relationship between the 'already' and the 'not yet' is that between a woman's engagement and her marriage ceremony. This is best understood by remembering that in the OT, betrothal was conceived of as an inchoate stage of marriage." Beale, *Revelation*, 1148.

[52] "In particular, the wedding garments in 19:7-8 connote not only righteous acts committed by saints but also their vindicated condition as a result of their faithful acts (or their vindication as a result of God's acts of judgment against their oppressor, which is also a prophetic theme in the Isaiah context)." Beale, *Revelation*, 1045.

[53] Clowney, *The Church*, 88.

The church is to respond to Jesus' holiness with her own holiness that he enables.[54]

This image also points to the universal church. A universal church is united as one in identity—she is the bride of Christ. Erickson concurs, "If the church is the bride of Christ, it must be one body, not many."[55] The bride is adorned with the appropriate wedding outfit supplied by Christ. She eagerly awaits union with Him.

Family of God. Jesus teaches his followers that God is their heavenly Father; therefore, the church is his family. The vocabulary of the church as family is sprinkled throughout the New Testament. The pervasiveness of this terminology can lead one to conclude that this image of family is the most important biblical image for the church.[56]

Church members are referred to as brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers (Matt 12.49-50; 1 Tim 5.1-2; 1 John 3.14-18). God is the heavenly Father, which results in church members being sons and daughters (2 Cor 6.18; Eph 3.14). No one particular reference or image stands out as an obvious example; however, the usage of family language regarding the relationships of those within the church to one another and to God provide ample evidence that family is a constraining description for how one understands church. The truth that the church is a family should cause believers to grow in love and fellowship with each other.[57]

The image of the church as the family of God may be the most practical of the images. Believers are born into God's family by a spiritual birth (John 3.3-8). Paul uses the language of adoption to affirm believers as being a part of God's family who

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[54] "The life of holiness is the life of faith in which the believer, with a deepening knowledge of his own sin and helplessness apart from Christ, increasingly casts himself upon the Lord, and seeks the power of the Spirit and the wisdom and comfort of the Bible to battle against the world, the flesh and the devil." Clowney, *The Church*, 89.

[55] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1139.

[56] Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 35.

[57] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 859.

accordingly can call him Father (Rom 8.15; Gal 4.4-7; Eph 1.5).[58] Paul instructs Timothy to treat the members of the church as if they were members of a large family (1 Tim 5.1-2). God is the heavenly Father to all believers (Matt 6.6, 9). John echoes Paul, teaching that in Christ believers are brother and sister with each other (1 John 3.14-18). The children of God look to the Father with trust, knowing he is the perfect Father and giver of all good gifts (Matt 7.11).

The image of being a household of God speaks to order and accountability within God's family (Gal 6.10; Eph 2.19; 1 Tim 3.15; Heb 3.6; 1 Pet 4.17). Some overlap with this image is seen with that of bride and building.[59] Yet, the emphasis of being a part of God's family is the major thrust of this idea. As a member of God's household, sons and daughters are held to both doctrinal and ethical purity. Paul's instructions to Timothy about choosing leaders ties together the importance of belief and behavior of the Christian (1 Tim 3.15). Not only should Christians behave appropriately, they do so because they are the living display of God's greatness, goodness, and the truth of and the power of the gospel.

Paul identifies this family imagery as providing a type of organizational

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[58] The teaching that the church is full of adopted children must be taught in the context of the author's perspective. Today, in various cultures and countries, adoption can carry negative connotations. Driscoll and Breshears recognize this challenge, saying, "While the language that both men and women are sons of God may seem curious to modern ears, it was a reflection of God's deep love to those who first heard it. Paul was saying that believers are like sons who have full legal standing in the family with all the inherent blessing of that status, as was the case in the ancient culture. Similarly, Christians are blessed to have God as their Father, the church as their family, fellow Christians as their brothers and sisters, God's provision as their sustenance, and God's full inheritance for their eternity." Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 192-93.

[59] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 180. Knight writes,

The translation 'house' for οἶκος might seem preferable to 'household' here since building terms, στῦλος and ἑδραίωμα, are used, so that the church is depicted as the place where the living God dwells with his people (cf. also οἰκέω, used in 1 Cor 3:16 of God's Spirit dwelling in his people, who are his temple; cf. further Eph 2:21, 22). But an absolute distinction between 'house' and 'household' cannot be made for the word and the concept it represents as it is employed both here and elsewhere in the NT. In Eph. 2:19ff., for example, the concept embraces both the building (vv. 20, 21, 22) and the human 'household,' the 'fellow citizens' (v. 19, similarly 1 Pet. 2:4ff.). So even though building terminology is utilized, since the conduct in view relates to the interaction of the members of God's family, modern translations have opted for 'household' *(RSV, NASB, NEB, NIV)*.

framework for the church. Clowney observes, "The task of caring for the church is directly analogous to that of a father in a household. If a man does not govern his own household well, how shall he take care of the church of God (1 Tim 3.15)?"[60] Further, Clowney notes that no human father can replace the heavenly Father, "Yet the care of the church leaders must be fatherly care, for they, like Paul, watch over the family of God. To the guidance and protection of a shepherd, serving the flock under Christ the chief Shepherd (1Pet 5.1-4), every elder must add compassionate, tender, fatherly care for God's family."[61] The organizational framework of the church may at times be much more formal than that of a family; yet, in the New Testament the framework is rooted in the concept of family. The new relationships Christians have with one another suggest that each of these relationships need to now be considered anew with reference to the heavenly Father and the Son of God.[62]

Body of Christ. The image of the body of Christ is vital to understanding the nature and function of the church. This analogy does not serve as a full definition or comprehensive statement of the church's existence. However, it does promote the connectedness of the church and how this connectedness impacts all she does.**[63]**

The image of the church as the body is unique to the writings of Paul.[64] Paul uses two different metaphors for the church as a body. The images are based upon human anatomy. Paul directs the reader to consider the human body as he describes a particular function or activity of the church. One image depicts a local church as a whole body from head to toes (Rom 12.5; 1 Cor 10.17, 12.12-27). The second metaphor recognizes Christ

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[60] Clowney, *The Church*, 224.

[61] Clowney, *The Church*, 224-25.

[62] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 172.

[63] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1047.

[64] Minear, *Images of the Church*, 173.

as the head and the church as the body (Eph 1.22-23, 4.4-5, 5.23, 29-30, Col 1.18, 24, 2.19).

In Romans and 1 Corinthians the body imagery describes a local church. Each local church is a body. The body Paul is addressing is not to be understood as a part of a larger body, but each body is a separate unity. Hammett describes Paul's usage,

> The local church is not regarded here as merely a part of a larger body of Christ, but as *the* body of Christ in that place. This is another support for a proper understanding of the autonomy of the local church. No local church should be isolated, but no local church needs a larger body to complete it or enable it to function. It is the body of Christ, possessing full ecclesial status.[65]

The imagery in these two epistles point to the interconnectedness of the members of the body—the local church is a unity and mutually bound together (Rom 12.5).

This body imagery informs the church's understanding and celebration of the Lord's Supper. This ordinance is to be taken as a body to recognize the united body of Christ in that particular place (1 Cor 10.17). The comparison between the bread representing the body of Christ and the act of the church body breaking the bread together communicates a powerful message that Christ died for the church, a corporate reality rather than a smattering of individuals.

The body imagery also instructs the church in recognizing and utilizing the diverse giftedness in the church for the edification of the church (1 Cor 12.12-31). Members are gifted so that each member bears a responsibility to serve the church according to their giftedness for the maturing and growth of the body. Because each member is gifted and bears responsibility to serve the church, every member fills a significant role in the body. Each local church is dependent upon each member exercising their giftedness in their role for growth and edification. Recognizing that the church is Christ's body should encourage believers to live interdependently.

Paul's usage of body imagery in Ephesians and Colossians does not contradict

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[65] Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 37.

earlier usages, but points to a different understanding of the church, namely Jesus'
authority over and provision for the universal church. Paul achieves this emphasis by
acknowledging Jesus as the authoritative head (κεφαλή) over the church (Eph 5.23).[66]
Paul portrays Jesus as the head, or authority over, the cosmic body called the church (Col
1.15-19).[67] Giles confirms, in both Colossians and Ephesians "the living relationship
between the members is kept in view, while the dependence of the members on Christ for
life and power, as well as his supremacy is reiterated."[68]

The metaphor of the body also negates an emphasis on individuality. The
church body imagery promotes community. All believers across time and space are
connected under the leadership of Jesus Christ. No one earthly person or church
organization holds authority over the church. This imagery holds significant implications
for the polity of the local church, church discipline, and its practice of the ordinances.

The metaphors for church found in the New Testament are a rich source for
understanding her existence. These metaphors speak to her purpose, nature, and essence.
They provide expectations for how she orders herself and puts herself on display to the
world. The New Testament does not limit its teachings on the church to metaphors. The
next section will consider how the church is described in Acts.

Biblical Descriptions of Church

The church is described in many different ways beyond the metaphors and
images of the church found in the New Testament. The church is God's New Covenant

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[66] Michael Lattke, "κεφαλή," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 2:286: "In 5:23 also, where the dominance of the husband over the wife (cf. 1 Cor 11:3, → 3.b) finds its analogy (ὡς) in the relationship of Christ to the Church; κεφαλή is intended to express sovereignty. An association with the idea of the unity of Christ the head and his ecclesiastical body is made by means of the appearance of σῶμα in the immediate context."

[67] James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 95-96.

[68] K. N. Giles, "Church II: Paul," in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 199.

people in Christ who live out the commands of Jesus in a community for the propagation of the gospel to the glory of God. The church is described by how she functions. The church is continually to teach faithfully and rebuke false teachers. Nearly the entire New Testament is written to the church to describe what beliefs she is to embrace and proclaim and further how she is to behave internally and externally. The purpose, nature, and mission of the church is established through these descriptions.

The Acts of the Apostles displays how the early church lived out her purpose, nature, and mission. Luke describes the expansion of the gospel through missionary endeavors.[69] The first half of the book shows how the early church overcame barriers to spread the gospel. The second half sees the spread of the gospel to the edges of the known world. Luke provides readers today with examples of church ministry and mission. The exemplary nature of the stories in Acts provides the reader with clues regarding whether something is permissive, instructive, or prescriptive for churches.

The book of Acts does not stand alone or above the rest of the New Testament when determining church patterns or church planting strategies. However, its narrative approach to the spread of the gospel and the establishment of churches throughout the Mediterranean region aids in understanding the purpose, nature, and mission of the church. In regards to the church's place in Acts, Schnabel rightly summarizes, "The church of Jesus Christ is a missionary community of believers whose witnesses are empowered by the Spirit of God and carry the message of Jesus Christ 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1.8), helping Jews and also Gentiles find the salvation that has been procured by Jesus Christ."[70] So, what does Acts teach us about the church through its descriptions? A survey of Acts provides a litany of characteristics.[71]

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[69] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, in Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 36-38.

[70] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 2:1498.

[71] This section follows Elbert Smith in limiting this survey to the nine groups of believers in

The church is marked by prayer. The text reveals prayer was a vital

characteristic of these early churches. The Holy Spirit came and birthed the church while

the disciples were gathered together praying (Acts 2.1-3). The church was devoted to

prayer (Acts 2.42; 6.4). They prayed for boldness to continue proclaiming the gospel

amidst persecution (Acts 4.24-31). They made decisions after prayer and consecrated the

decisions in prayer (Acts 6.4, 13.1-3). The church prayed over servants and leaders of the

church. (Acts 6.6; 13.3; 14.23). Needs were addressed in prayer (Acts 12.5,12). Times of

gathering were not ended until the group prayed (Acts 20.36; 21.5). The churches were

marked by a devotion to prayer. In prayer the church was born. The leaders determined to

be prayerful. The entire church engaged in meaningful prayer.

The church is identifiable. A church is identified as church in eighteen

instances in Acts (Acts 5.11; 8.1, 3; 11.22, 26; 12.1, 5; 13.1; 14.23, 27; 15.3, 4, 22, 41;

16.5; 18.22; 20.17, 28). These eighteen instances identify at least ten churches.[72] Darrell

Bock conveys, "The term's use here is not yet a technical, theological one."[73] The fact

that the church is identified reveals that Luke understands the church to be a known

entity. Those within the church know who belongs to the church. The elders knew whom

they were responsible to shepherd. The church knew the outsiders they needed to

evangelize.

Acts identified as church in the New Testament. These nine include Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; 8:1), Antioch (Acts 11:26; 13:1), Pisidian Antioch (Acts 14:21-23), Iconium (Acts 14:21-23), Lystra (Acts 14:21-23), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), Philippi (Phil 4:15), Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:1), and Corinth (1 Cor 1:2). E. Elbert Smith, *Church Planting by the Book* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 10-12.

[72] Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; 8:1, 3; 11:22; 12:1, 5; 15:4, 22), Antioch (Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3), Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra (Acts 14:23), churches in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41); Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:5); Caesarea (Acts 18:22), Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28).

[73] Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 227.

The church celebrates the New Covenant by observing the ordinances.

The pattern of the apostles in spreading the Gospel was to baptize believers upon profession of faith. These baptized believers were the disciples who populated the churches that gathered together in identifiable ways. Luke records at least nine different instances of baptism. These records relate to mass baptisms (Acts 2.38, 41; 8.12, 13, 16; 10.47-48; 19.3-5), individual baptisms (Acts 8.36-38; 9.18; 22.16) and household baptisms (Acts 16.15; 16.33; 18.8). The baptisms in Jerusalem, Samaria, Philippi, Corinth, and Ephesus are the initial fruits of gospel proclamation and the beginning of the church in these locations.

Baptism is the celebration of identifying with Christ the New Covenant community. The breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper, is an ongoing celebration of the New Covenant Christ established by his substitutionary death on the cross. The church in Jerusalem included this observance in its infancy (Acts 2.42).[74] The early church's pattern of worship, recorded in Acts 2.42-47, appears to be mimicked in Troas (Acts 20.7-11).[75]

The church is born by the proclamation of the Gospel and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Obeying Christ, the disciples gathered together. Acts 2 recounts the event of the Holy Spirit arriving. The Spirit filled them. They went out boldly proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Peter assured the audience that the promise of

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[74] Schnabel, *Acts*, 179. Schnabel records,

The third characteristic of the Jerusalem church was 'the breaking of bread.' While many scholars suggest the phrase refers to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, i.e., remembering Jesus' last supper with his disciples, and while others argue that this is a reference only to ordinary meals, there is the distinct possibility that it refers to both. The 'breaking of bread' is best understood as a reference to the ordinary meals that the believers regularly shared, during which they remembered Jesus' death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and for the establishment of the new covenant, linked with the command to remember Jesus and his sacrifice during meals (cf. Luke 22:14-22).

Later he observes, "In Acts 2:46-47 Luke clarifies that these meals took place not only in private homes but also in the temple precincts."

[75] Schnabel, *Acts*, 835. The community of believers in Troas came together to break bread following the practice of the church in Jerusalem.

Joel was taking place. He exhorted the audience to repent and be baptized, following which they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Three-thousand people repented and believed. The gospel message was proclaimed, heard, believed, and the believers responded appropriately.

The Holy Spirit filled these people who made up the first church. The Spirit is present at the birth of churches as new life is granted through faith in Christ in response to the proclamation of the gospel. In Acts 8.15-17, the Holy Spirit fills believers in Samaria. In Acts 13.2 and 4 the Holy Spirit is credited as the one who initiates the sending of missionaries "for the work which I have called them." This work is later revealed to be gospel proclamation, church planting, and leadership development. In Antioch Pisidia the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit in the church's infancy (Acts 13.52). In Ephesus, the first believers heard the gospel of Jesus, were baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19.5-6). Further evidence in Acts reveals the Spirit's leadership and active role in the life of the Ephesian church (Acts 20.28). Acts does not provide textual evidence of the Spirit's role in the beginning of the church in Thessalonica. However, Paul's first epistle to the church recounts the Spirit's role (1 Thess 1.5). Smith rightly conveys, "We learn that the new believers received the gospel message as the Word of God and that because of the Holy Spirit's working, the message was powerful and brought full conviction."[76]

The church endures suffering. Churches endured persecutions and sufferings. Christians experienced imprisonment, riot, stoning, beatings, and even death in their efforts to be a witness for the resurrected Christ. The testimony of the book of Acts is that persecution and suffering is normal. Smith concludes, "Instead of being

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[76] Smith, *Church Planting*, 124. Later Smith acknowledges, "It is the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. (see John 16:8). Just as the Jerusalem church began with people who were 'pierced to the heart' (Acts 2:37) upon hearing the gospel, the Thessalonian church began with people who experienced full conviction by the Holy Spirit."

intimidated by the possibility of persecution, the Jerusalem church prayed for boldness, and as a consequence of being filled with the Holy Spirit, they believers continued sharing."[77] New Christian communities could emulate the model established by the church in Jerusalem.

The church acknowledges the authority of God's Word. The apostles carried out the command of Christ by teaching the new church. The followers of Jesus in Jerusalem devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching (Acts 2.42). The apostles taught what they were commanded to teach, the words of Christ. Paul based his teaching on the Scriptures (Acts 17.2). In Berea the Christians examined God's Word (Acts 17.11). The church in Ephesus acknowledged the scriptural authority and submitted to its teachings (Acts 18.28). The apostles authoritatively quoted the Scriptures. Their dependence upon the Word of God provided a model of healthy submission to the Scriptures (Acts 14.14-18; 20.32).

The church exercises stewardship of resources. The Jerusalem church set a precedent of stewardship in its infancy (Acts 2.45). The church gave to those who had need. The Holy Spirit and the church leaders promoted the attitude of selfless giving, and Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives because of their selfish greed and lies. The Jerusalem's church example of generosity would come back to their aid when the church in Antioch took up an offering to give towards their needs (Acts11.27-30). The new churches in Acts would ordinarily send generous monetary gifts to those in need.[78]

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[77] Smith, *Church Planting*, 43.

[78] Smith, *Church Planting*, 135-36. Smith discusses the flow of money in several chapters. He notes that money flowed away from new churches rather than towards them for the support and establishment of new churches.

The church appoints leaders from within. The leaders of the new churches were appointed by those who established the church. The church in Jerusalem appointed servant leaders from among them (Acts 6.3). Paul and Barnabas appointed elders at the end of their missionary journey in the churches they established (Acts 14.23). Commentators agree that Paul appointed elders in Ephesus, even though no specific occurrence is noted by Luke (Acts 20.17).[79] The elders appointed to serve came from within the congregations. Paul expected the elders to shepherd the church and guard their own lives through the faithful teaching the Word of God (Acts 20.28-32).

The church engages in evangelism and missions. Acts tells the story of the spread of the gospel of Jesus from its starting point in Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). Christians proclaim this message in a various locations, situations and circumstances. The result of this proclamation is the establishment of churches that carry on the mission of proclaiming this message, making disciples, and sending out believers to reach new communities for the purpose of the gospel. Acts focuses on the ministries of the apostles. Through their writings to the churches they established, one may conclude that they viewed these churches as continuing their mission, as summarized by Plummer, "We would expect nothing less than such missionary activity from an entity defined by the same self-diffusing gospel as its apostolic founder."[80]

Acts 2 portrays the first believers boldly proclaiming the gospel in public (Acts 2.6-11). The chapter ends with God adding to their number daily (Acts 2.47). In Antioch dispersed believers evangelized Greeks (Acts 11.20-21). The church in Antioch sent out workers into the harvest to proclaim the gospel and establish new communities of faith

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[79] Schnabel, *Acts*, 838. cf. Bock, *Acts*, 626.

[80] Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 138.

(Acts 13.1-4). Therefore, in a real sense, the church in Antioch was partnering with the missions efforts of Paul and Barnabas. The work of those two was also the work of the church in Antioch. Sending workers to the harvest is actively engaging in the task of missions. Paul preached in Philippi (Acts 16.10). In Paul's epistle to the church he notes their participation in evangelism and missions (Phil 4.15). Proclamation is not the only method of evangelization, according to Smith, but also can be achieved by persuasion and reasoning (Acts 19.8), testimony (Acts 2.40), preaching (Acts 8.12, 10.42) and arguing (Acts 9.29).[81]

The spread of the gospel through missions and evangelism in Acts is not limited to the work of the Apostles. The New Testament bears witness that the gospel spread to places that the Apostles did not visit in Acts. The gospel must have spread through the efforts of the churches planted by the apostles.

The church is often established by a team in a new community. Antioch sent the first missionary team to establish new gospel communities (Acts 13.1-4). As "sent ones," Paul and Barnabas engage in apostolic missions.[82] Smith observes, churches sent out believers to "go where the gospel is not; then they evangelize and make disciples, leaving behind New Testament churches."[83] These missionary teams served a purpose for a particular task in particular places. Barnabas and Paul split up after the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15.39). Paul teamed with Silas in Philippi (Acts 15.40-41). Timothy joined the team in Lystra (Acts 16.3). Aquila and Priscilla teamed with Paul in Corinth and went with him to Ephesus (Acts 18.1-3, 18-19). The labor of these teams often led to the establishment of new churches.

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[81] Smith, *Church Planting*, 148.

[82] For a thorough examination of the use of the term *apostle* and apostolic mission, see Donald T. Dent, "The Ongoing Role of Apostles in Missions" (DMiss diss., Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 41-87.

[83] Smith, *Church Planting*, 93.

The church deliberates together to determine the appropriate teaching and application of the Gospel. Although a non-repeated event, this characteristic receives prominent place in Acts. The meeting should be interpreted within the context of Paul and Barnabas' mission to the Gentiles.[84] In Acts 15, the Jerusalem council demonstrates a unified church leadership. Under the authority of God's Word, being led by the Spirit of God and with the council of many leaders, the apostles and elders deliberated the appropriate application of the gospel to the gentiles. Should gentiles be forced to keep all the Old Covenant laws? Are they saved by grace through faith? These leaders maintained unity in the face of challenging teachings and agreed upon an appropriate response. Churches do well to recognize the process in which they arrived at their conclusions.

These descriptions of purpose, nature, and mission of the church serve as a guide to the church. This guide provides the church with certain expectations. When these expectations are pursued, local churches flourish where they are planted.

Expectations for the Church

Based upon the survey of biblical metaphors and Luke's presentation of the church in Acts one may deduce a few characteristics. These deductions relate first and foremost the essence of what the church is. Second, these characteristics point to how a church functions. This biblical study of the church should guide one to apply the lessons to the church's life and practice.[85] The expectations one holds for a church influences methods and strategies for planting new churches.

The expectations of the church can be couched in terminology like purpose,

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[84] Schnabel, *Acts*, 620-21.

[85] This type of study can be deemed a "mere ecclesiology" in which an ecclesiology is identified which binds all churches together. "Mere ecclesiology" is not the focus of this dissertation, but a consideration of its claims is useful. See the appendix for an exploration of "mere ecclesiology."

mission, or nature.[86] The church is God's one creation for the propagation of the good news of Jesus Christ. This spreading of the gospel happens through proclamation, discipleship, and the practice of the ordinances. Since the gospel is at the core of the church, then the gospel is the epicenter from which all appropriate growth and impact stems.

Since the Protestant Reformation, ecclesiologies ordinarily emphasize the functions of a church. For example, Calvin famously declared, "Wherever the Word of God is sincerely preached and listened to and wherever the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, we can be sure the Church of God exists."[87] Calvin emphasized the church functions.[88] Prior to the Reformation, the church was typically affirmed as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."[89] The ontological ecclesiological formula of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church described the expectations of what is true of each and every local church. Whether informed by a functional or ontological ecclesiology, missionaries influence churches by their choice of church planting methods and strategies.

Functional Expectations

Functional expectations focus on the activities of a church.[90] These aspects include polity and church governance, the observance of the sacraments/ordinances, how

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[86] Tim Keller provides a brief but helpful survey of recent publications that use such descriptive language. Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 15-17.

[87] John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 234.

[88] For a good presentation of different types of ecclesiologies, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 50-53.

[89] For a full exploration of these teachings, see Richard D. Phillips, Philip G. Ryken, Mark E. Dever, *The Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004).

[90] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 20-21.

a church worships, where a church worships, is the church growing, and how is it growing. In missionary settings these expectations tend to focus on evangelism and discipleship methods.

The functions of local churches are useful. They can be observed. Oftentimes, they can be measured in some way. These functions provide key diagnostics for evaluating church health and vitality. However, a church may be able to mimic these activities and miss the undergirding power that informs their practice. A church may employ a polity using biblical categories, but the activities and expectations attached to the roles of leadership may go beyond biblical prescription. For example, a church may require a pastor or elder to have a seminary degree. While having a degree may be useful in preparing someone for ministry, one is hard-pressed to find biblical requirements for this expectation.

Scripture provides guidance for leadership and membership. The church recognizes and appoints leaders. The biblical expectations for leaders should be observed and implemented as churches appoint leaders. Either ignoring or adding to the qualifications for leadership can lead to undesirable outcomes.

The church is created and functions with a nature, for a purpose and on mission. The church is born to flourish. Ultimately, a flourishing church is the people of God expanding the kingdom of God on earth through gospel proclamation and disciple-making until the new heavens and new earth are ushered into being. The church is expected to mature and expand. These are helpful and healthy biblical expectations for how a church functions.

Ontological Expectations

The ontological expectations for a church stem from the reality of a New Covenant church. If something is ontologically true, then what should one expect to observe related to that reality? For example, if it is ontologically true that the church is

"one," then how should one expect to observe the oneness, or unity, of the church?

A recent publication describes a helpful ontological ecclesiology.[91] Allison describes seven characteristics of the ontological reality of the church. He lists doxological, logocentric, pneumadynamic, covenantal, confessional, missional, and spatio-temporal/eschatological as the seven realities of the church. These seven characteristics address every facet of the life of a church. Not only do these characteristics relate to the reality of the church but they can also serve as plumb-line for church leaders to gauge the health and vitality of the church. These characteristics by definition exist within every church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge for churches is to not over-emphasize one characteristic or to ignore or neglect any characteristic to the detriment of her life and vitality.

**An Operational Ontological Ecclesiology
for Church Planting**

Recognizing the ontological ecclesiology presented by Allison, church planters would do well to operationalize it.[92] This action will provide guidance in their efforts to establish new churches. By operationalizing this ecclesiology, church planters can provide new churches with a healthy self-understanding and equip the new communities to grow and reproduce appropriately.

An operational ecclesiology that guides church planting will allow the Scriptures to guide the implementation of strategies and tactics. Embedded within a church planting strategy is an ecclesiology. That ecclesiology will be the singular most

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[91] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 103-57.

[92] Between functional and ontological ecclesiologies is a teleological ecclesiology. Operationalizing an ontological ecclesiology is different than the teleological ecclesiology in Allison's explanation. A teleological ecclesiology seeks to explicate the purpose or mission the church was created to accomplish. An operational ontological ecclesiology identifies purpose and mission from the ontological reality of the church. The part of the ecclesiology that is operational is that the ontology determines the churches practice. Another way to write it is that an operation ontological ecclesiology is a functional expectation aimed at the teleological reality determined by its ontology.

significant determiner of the outcomes and goals of the adopted strategy or methods. So, by operationalizing an ontological ecclesiology, the church planter ensures a new church contains all she needs within herself to flourish and thrive in her own setting.

The process of developing strategy or adopting methods for missions often involves more than ecclesiology, but it cannot ignore it.[93] Whether developing a new strategy or seeking to employ a proven strategy, a church planter should evaluate its appropriateness for a given setting. The operational ecclesiology proposed here can as the guide in evaluating the appropriateness of a particular strategy for planting a church in a particular setting.

In the process of planting new churches, new groups often take shape before they recognize themselves as a church. The time between entering a new community and the point when a new church is established is a time for embryonic ecclesiology. The church is not yet birthed, but she is in a gestation period.

Evaluating Embryonic Ecclesiology that Leads to Flourishing Churches

Before a new church plant can be established, two factors are necessary: two the gospel and people who are born again by belief in that gospel message. The gospel serves as the DNA of the church. The embryonic form of a church is the gathering of gospel believers before they identify as a church.[94]

At the moment a new church is planted she is all God designed her to be, but

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[93] For a helpful presentation of strategy development in missions and church planting, see John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

[94] The phrase *embryonic ecclesiology* refers to the teachings and practices that lead a group to become a church. Embryonic ecclesiology is not the same as irreducible ecclesiological minimums. The irreducible ecclesiological minimums can tend to be reductionist and provide the bare minimums for a group of people to be classified a church. Embryonic ecclesiology, rather, identifies the core elements of a church that, when given appropriate attention, will enable a new church plant to flourish where it is planted. The vision of embryonic ecclesiology is not to achieve a certain set of prescribed milestones, but rather to grow and impact the people with whom she makes contact on a regular basis for the sake of the gospel.

she has not yet achieved all her creator's expectations. Churches are expected to grow, mature, and multiply. A flourishing church grows where she is planted. She matures and bears witness to the gospel in the community surrounding her and to the nations. A church that flourishes will ultimately multiply by sending gospel workers to establish new churches in new locations among new communities. The aim of every church planter should be to establish churches that can flourish where they are planted.

Flourishing Churches

The biblical expectation for churches is that they flourish. The question remains, how can someone planting a new church ensure that from its embryonic form the new church will flourish? The ultimate answer is that God sovereignly ordains these things, but from a human perspective what must one do? Is the solution in effort, or ingenuity, or patterns, or strategy? Maybe, it should be a combination of all these.

Churches flourish when they are actively seeking to become everything God designed them to be. When a church over-emphasizes one characteristic of a church and neglects another the church becomes imbalanced, unhealthy and potentially disordered.[95] This over-emphasis stunts development and inhibits a church from impacting the community within which she was established; thus, the church does not flourish. As a church flourishes, lives are changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

Churches flourish in many ways. No one objective way to measure a flourishing church is presupposed because each church will flourish where it is planted according to its context. The embryonic ecclesiology that bloomed into the establishment

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[95] Will Brooks, "Hermeneutics for Healthy Churches," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (January 2017): https://emqonline.com/node/3605:

> So then, what makes a healthy church? Missiologists who consider such a question are often plagued with tunnel vision. Rightly loving and laboring to see the advance of the church into new areas, they define church health solely in terms of the church's ability to start new churches. Self-propagation, then, becomes the defining metric of church health. In reality, many other components should be included in a discussion of church health, and to be fair, most of those components are not easily quantifiable.

of a new church continues to guide the development of the church and its transformation of believers and communities.[96] Flourishing churches glorify God in their practice. They multiply disciples and other churches. Will Brooks points out, "The goal of the Great Commission is not merely the existence of a church, but the existence of a healthy, vibrant, and growing church."[97]

A veteran church planter once shared an appropriate illustration for this setting.[98] When one pours concrete, the pourer ought to expect that in some areas the concrete will be strong and at other areas the concrete will be weak. The strengths and weaknesses can be the result of the concrete mixture, the location of the pouring, or any number of variables. The wise concrete pourer will know in advance where and the weaknesses will be as he pours and proactively prepare to strengthen these weaknesses.

In church planting, one must exercise similar wisdom. The tactics, strategies, and methods employed will lead to a certain type of church. This church will have strengths and weaknesses. The wise church planter will be able to foresee the weaknesses and appropriately prepare to bolster those areas of weakness. The reason for this bolstering is to see the church fulfill everything that God designed her to be and flourish where she is planted. The wisdom needed and ability to reflect on the strategies and methods employed can be aided by a rubric.

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[96] Transformation can be a decisive issue. Life changes lead to transformation in the community. This transformation happens as Christ-followers live out the gospel daily in their lives. This obedience to the gospel is witnessed in both the mundane and the spiritual. Transformation is not always an entirely positive experience for the believer or the church. A flourishing church may experience persecution and suffering because they are obedient to Christ; transformation is experienced when believers embrace the suffering as God-glorifying and purifying.

[97] Brooks, "Hermeneutics for Healthy Churches."

[98] Personal conversation with Jim Slack at the International Learning Center in Richmond, VA, September 14, 2006.

**A Rubric to Evaluate Embryonic
Ecclesiology**

A church planter gains this wisdom and insight by appropriately evaluating the

ecclesiological foundations infused in the church planting strategy being employed. By

answering the following diagnostic questions, one may gain an understanding of where

the church to be planted will exhibit strength and weakness.

Most of these questions are subjective in nature rather than objective. These

questions are best answered by the team planting a church. Each category is not isolated

in nature. These characteristics are intertwined in the existence and life of the church.

God glorifying. The essence of the church is to glorify God. The church is

gathered and established by God. Allison acknowledges,

> Because it has been established as a temple in which the fullness of Christ the Lord
> dwells through the Holy Spirit, the church is to be oriented toward the glory of God.
> Its members, then, are 'like living stones [who] are being built up as a spiritual
> house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through
> Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 2:5); specifically, they are to 'continually offer up a sacrifice of
> praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name' (Heb. 13:15– 16).
> The proclamation of the excellencies of the God who has been merciful to it is the
> doxological raison-d'être of the church (1 Pet. 2:9– 10).[99]

The singular expectation to glorify God is a sufficient reason for her existence. Therefore,

pleasing and honoring God must be her first priority.

One must grapple with the reality that the church exists to glorify God. Pratt

wisely surmises, "A healthy obsession with the glory of God safeguards his people from

the idolatry of thinking they are primary, and it also purifies their methodology because if

the end is his glory, then the means must glorify him as well."[100] In evaluating a strategy

employed to start a new church one must ask how the new church will understand their

primary orientation. Perhaps the church is taught and understands that her primary task is

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[99] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers,* 107.

[100] Zane Pratt, David M. Sills, and Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville:
B&H, 2014), 74.

to glorify God, but then the question of how to glorify God must be answered. Some

helpful questions may include the following:

1. In response to the teaching of God's Word, how does the church express its God-glorifying orientation?
2. How does the church proactively magnify God's glory?
3. Are the areas that bring God glory the areas that God prescribes?
4. Does the church declare God's glory? How do they accomplish that task?
5. How does the worship of the church reflect and magnify God's Glory?
6. How does the proclamation of God's Word glorify God?
7. How does the discipleship of the church glorify God?
8. How is God making his glory manifest among the gathered church?
9. Is God's glory on display through unity, submission, clarity and purposeful relationships?
10. How is idolatry avoided? [101]
11. In what ways does the church distract from God's glory?
12. In what ways can the church more appropriately magnify God's glory?
13. Does the church glorify God in its interpretation of Scripture?
14. How do the various ministries and activities of the church glorify God?
15. Does the strategy acknowledge the roles the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit play in establishing new churches?

Word-centered. To be centered on the Word means that the both the incarnate

Word and the written and revealed Word are given central, prominent roles in the life and

ministry of the church. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He should be the focal

point of the church. Believers in the gospel's message receive the application Jesus' life,

death, and resurrection to their own lives. Therefore, Jesus is the authority and the source

of existence of the church. A church planting team would do well to question the role of

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[101] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 108. Allison writes,

Accordingly, the church is to be orthodoxological, or oriented to the proper (Gk. ortho) glory (Gk. doxa) of God. Implied in this imperative is the possibility for the church to engage in false glory giving, or idolatry. Certainly this is the reality of fallen human beings enmeshed in sin (Rom. 1:18-25). Tragically, this was the plight of the people of Israel, as rehearsed throughout the Old Testament and recalled by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10: 1-22. This recounting of Israel's woes is to warn the church (1 Cor. 10: 6, 11), which too may fall into false glory giving and thus must "flee from idolatry" (v. 14), specifically in regard to the Lord's Supper: Christians cannot continue to engage in both pagan temple worship and the worship of the one true God (vv. 20-21). The church is "the church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15), not of false gods and idols. Appropriately, the apostle John, after emphasizing that Jesus Christ "is the true God and eternal life," concludes with this imperative: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:20-21).

Jesus in the church. The following questions are useful for determining the word-centeredness of a church planting strategy:

1. Jesus is head of the church; how is his headship manifest?
2. How does the church submit to Jesus in tangible ways?
3. How do the ministries of the church display that Jesus is at the core of the church's existence?
4. What distracts from the supreme and central role of Jesus in the church?
5. Does the teaching of the church magnify the person and work of Jesus Christ explicitly?
6. Is the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ taught appropriately?
7. Is Christ's role in the trinity taught appropriately?
8. Do the church members submit to authority in a way that displays Christ's Lordship?
9. How does the church acknowledge Jesus' role as the cosmic king?
10. Does the church acknowledge the victorious nature of Christ over all principalities, powers, and spirits?

Not only is the incarnate Word, Jesus, central and authoritative to the life of the church, the written and revealed Word of God receives a prominent place in the life of the church. The Scriptures are God's authoritative Word to the church. In the Scriptures, the church is given access to all it needs to know in order to live a life pleasing and acceptable to the Lord (Rom 12.1-2). These same Scriptures are sufficient to provide the church with the training, equipping, rebuking, and correcting she needs in grow and organize herself. A church planting team should examine its strategy and methods for the how the Scriptures are used and what role they play in the formation and teaching of the church. The following questions provide even further evaluative guidance related to the role Scripture in the church planting tactics:

1. Do the church members submit to the Bible's authority over the church?
2. How does the church model an appropriate hermeneutic of Scripture in all of its teaching?
3. Is church leadership given appropriate time to study and prepare messages.
4. Does the teaching and discipleship of the church teach that Christ is revealed in all of Scripture?
5. In what ways does the church demonstrate being centered on the Scriptures?
6. Does the church teach from the Scriptures?
7. Does the church's ministry of correction, rebuking, restoring, and equipping flow from the appropriate teaching of Scripture?

8. Is the nature, authority, and purpose of Scripture appropriately taught?
9. How does the church safeguard from using the Scriptures as merely a book of proof-texts?
10. How does the church acknowledge the sufficiency of the Scriptures for teaching, training, living, and all spiritual life?
11. How might the church diminish the role and authority of the Scriptures?
12. What role does the gospel play in the church?
13. Is proclamation of the gospel a regular part of the gathered church?
14. How is the gospel communicated in order to inform the church of its existence and purpose on a regular basis?
15. How is false teaching recognized and dealt with?
16. How does the church deal with rebukes from the Scriptures?
17. What rivals the Bible for authority in the life and practice of the church?

Holy Spirit empowered. The church can only exist by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The church is propelled into action by the Spirit. She is created, gathered, gifted, sanctified, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.[102] The church is a community of the Spirit. The Spirit unifies and guides the church under the authority of the Scriptures. He seeks to lead the church to glorify God, interpret and teach the Scriptures accurately and faithfully and to exalt Jesus as King of kings and Lord of Lords. Because the Spirit is the one who gifts, empowers, and guides the church, then God is the one who receives the credit at any and all perceived successes. The church planting team will aid the church being planted by examining the reality and role of the Spirit in establishing new churches. These following questions will aid in this assessment:

1. In what ways is the Holy Spirit acknowledged in the life and worship of the church?
2. The Spirit draws people to Christ not to himself, is this truth made clear in the worship and practice of the church?
3. The Spirit convicts people of sin, righteousness, and future judgement; how does the church acknowledge the Spirit to perform this ministry?
4. The Spirit gives gifts to believers, how are spiritual gifts recognized and utilized in the church?
5. How is the bold witness to the Gospel that the Spirit empowers on display among the church members?
6. How is conviction of sin acknowledged within the congregation?
7. How is the unity of the Spirit manifest?

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[102] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 117.

8. What disputes and challenges to unity exist? How are they addressed?
9. What misunderstandings of the Spirits role and ministry are rebuked and corrected?
10. How is dependence on the Spirit taught, modeled, and demonstrated in the life and ministry of the church?
11. What evidence of Spirit-led sanctification is on display in the church?
12. How is the fruit of the Spirit manifest in the church?

Identifiable community. A church that is identifiable is a minimal requirement for the existence of a church. Yet, how a church identifies itself is crucial. How and when a group of believers self-identify as a church must be evaluated.

Christians must first and foremost identify with Jesus Christ who is their Lord and Savior. In addition, they must identify with the members of their local church community. The early church identified with one another through formal and informal gatherings, submitting to one another in love and service, celebrating the ordinances together, exercising discipline upon members who no longer conform to the expectations of the holy living prescribed in Scripture, and electing elders and deacons as a church body. Throughout history churches first identify as a body of believers through covenanting together.

The members of a local assembly should be believers. Unbelievers are not part of the body of Christ. The Scriptures place no expectations for holy living on an unbeliever. The church body is to build up one another in faith and godliness. So, the membership of a local church must be identifiable so that each member knows to whom they are accountable.

The New Testament conveys that churches are to observe two ordinances.[103] Christ instituted the two ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper so that churches, as a whole body, could celebrate their faith in the gospel and salvation it brings. These celebrations symbolically depict the gospel. The ordinances are

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[103] The term *ordinance* is chosen instead of *sacrament* to acknowledge that these acts were ordained by Christ for the church to observe and are acts that convey grace to the recipient of the act. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 259.

entrusted to the church so the church can designate whomever she chooses to administer the acts. [104]

Believer's baptism by immersion is the initiatory rite churches enact to affirm a believer's profession of faith in Christ.[105] Baptism is an identifiable characteristic for the local church. The church which authorizes baptism is making a proclamation about the nature of the gospel, the faith of the corporate body, and the individual being baptized. The individual being baptized also makes a public profession of faith in submitting to this symbolic act. This act is a celebration of the gospel and its application to the individual and the community. Baptism is a sign of God's covenant with the church through Christ.

The second ordinance is the Lord's Supper. The church is to frequently partake the Lord's Supper as a memorial meal. This meal visibly depicts the substitutionary death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins of his followers. Questions regarding the frequency and who may participate abound. In limiting participation to those who are baptized believers a church is affirming that the participants are a part of the identifiable community. The meal is a celebration of the New Covenant sealed in Christ's shed blood. The significance of the meal is revealed in that it is to be observed by the body, not an individual. Therefore, exclusion from the Lord's Supper is the final tool of excommunication in the church discipline process.

Church discipline is only possible when an identifiable community exists. In

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[104] Since the church is the administrator for baptism, the church is free to appoint a person to perform the baptism. For the sake of order and prudence, many churches designate a pastor or elder to perform this ordinance. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 260-61.

[105] Baptism is best understood when considering its components: the mode of baptism, the candidate for baptism, and the meaning of baptism. The mode of baptism in Scripture is immersion. The candidate for baptism is a believer. Therefore, baptism by immersion is conducted for one upon his profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Thus, one can call it believer's baptism by immersion. The meaning of baptism is symbolic. The ritual of baptism displays the inward, spiritual change that a Christian experienced by repenting of sin and trusting in Christ alone for salvation. The recognition that these ordinances are given to the church, coupled with the principle of the priesthood of all believers, leads to the conclusion that the church, not a single person vested with authority or responsibility, administers baptism for the believer.

an identifiable community, church members willingly submit to one another. In this act of submission, members are actively seeking mutual accountability to live lives that magnify the glory of God through faithful Christian living and witness. The principles for the parameters of church discipline are laid out in two key texts (Matt 18.15-20, 1 Cor 5.1-13). The ultimate practice in disciplining a church member who is unrepentant is that they would be barred from taking part in the observance of the ordinance that signifies the community's covenant relationship to God and one another. Forbidding someone to partake in the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to treat that individual as an unbeliever.

Another aspect of an identifiable community is the selection of church leadership. The identifiable community is able to elect from within its ranks those who are qualified to lead. The undisputed leader of the church is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the body (Eph 4.15, 5.23; Col 1.18, 2.19). He is the chief shepherd. Under his leadership, Christians are gifted and equipped to serve in leadership roles within the church. The office of elder is the singular office of church leadership. The office of deacon is an office of service to the church body. Under the lordship of Christ, churches are governed by the identifiable community. This congregation holds the responsibility to recognize and appoint these gifted and qualified men to serve in the offices of elder and qualified members to serve in the office of deacon or deaconess.[106]

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[106] The New Testament says a great deal about the qualifications and service of the elder. Elders are expected to be men of the highest Christian character. First, they are to be men. The qualification of gender for the role of elder is tied to the order of creation in 1 Tim 2:8-3:7. In the New Testament, the office of elder is the only place we see distinction of gender in relation to serving the church. Both men and women are equally valuable and full of dignity, but the office of elder is reserved for men.

Second, elders are to exhibit exemplary Christian character. The character qualifications are listed in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1. The basic gist of these qualifications is that the elder serves as a trustworthy example to the church in how to conduct oneself in the home and in the world.

Beyond gender and moral qualifications is the expectation of a skill set. The skills identified as being necessary for an overseer are teaching and household management. One should note that gifting is not the expectation, but rather the ability. Some elders exhibit an aptitude to teach while not being gifted to teach. Others are able to manage their household without having a gift of administration. These skills are necessary for an elder to serve well.

Finally, churches would do well to appoint multiple elders. Having only one elder/pastor in a church is definitely not a sin, but the overwhelming evidence in the New Testament is that of a plurality of leaders.

The identifiable community will also be able to pursue the "one-another's" of Scripture with a defined group of people. Pursuing the "one-another's" is difficult when one does not know who "another" would be. Another important aspect is the issue of stewardship of gifts and resources. The community can work together to be godly stewards of the gifts and resources God gives to them. The following questions will enable a church planting team to assess the expected outcome of their adopted strategy and tactics:

1. How will the believers identify as a church?
2. Will the church adopt a written covenant?
3. How will the church identify members?
4. How will the church admit new members?
5. How will the church practice the ordinances?
6. Who will baptize candidates?
7. When will candidates be baptized?
8. Who is invited to participate in the Lord's Supper?
9. How will the Lord's Supper be fenced?
10. Is the teaching on the meaning and practice of Baptism and the Lord's Supper consistent with the Scriptures?
11. How often will the Lord's Supper be observed?
12. How will the church choose its leaders?
13. How many leaders will the church officially recognize?
14. What is expected of church leadership?
15. What process will the church follow in implementing discipline?
16. How will the church make decisions?

Professing truth. The gathered identifiable church professes faith in Christ regularly through the proper celebration of the ordinances. The church also expresses faith in core biblical tenets in other ways.

Individuals profess faith in Christ. This faith is a prerequisite for baptism and church membership. Allison indicates,

> A confession of the saving lordship of Jesus Christ is incumbent on all Christ-followers who join themselves to a church. Such a confession of personal commitment to Christ is associated with hearing the gospel, repentance from sin, faith in Christ, being forgiven of sins, reception of the Holy Spirit, and baptism as a

public testimony of this confession.[107]

The assembly of those professing faith in Christ should share a common understanding of the message and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rehearsing these truths on a regular basis builds up and purifies the church.

In addition to the core truths of the gospel, the church submits to the authority of God's Word. The church will ordinarily hold a common understanding and commitment to the affirmations of eternal word of God. These truths are often professed within the church gathering through its singing, prayers, and sanctioned teaching. The church professes truth when it adopts this sort of confession. The church is served well when a set of beliefs is ratified and acknowledged as the central truths agreed up on by the congregation. This practice will aid in the maturity and growth of the church so that she is clear and precise in her faith and witness to the world.

Church planters should evaluate their strategy to determine how the church will profess truths both individually and corporately. The following questions can aid in the evaluation:

1. What role will personal profession of faith play in the life of the church?
2. How does one profess their personal faith in Christ to the gathered church?
3. What truths of Scripture are most significant for the forming and maturing of the church in your context?
4. How will the church identify her core beliefs?
5. How elaborate will the church's core beliefs be?
6. How will the church's core beliefs be taught, professed, disseminated, and evaluated?
7. How will the music of the church be evaluated for the truths it affirms and denies?
8. Are the truths of the faith taught in a way that relates to the life of the believers?
9. How will church members know what the church professes to believe?
10. What tenets need to be taught clearly and concisely in relation to the church's cultural context?
11. In what way does the church's profession of faith unite her with the global and historic church?

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[107] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 134.

Kingdom expansion. The only gospel writer to mention the church is Matthew (Matt 16.18, 18.17). He ends his gospel with the Great Commission. The imperative in this passage is to make disciples of all ethnic groups. Making disciples implies baptism and teaching in this context. So, Jesus intends to expand his kingdom by sending his followers to disciple all peoples without distinction.[108] Hence, the church's core task in this world is one of kingdom expansion through discipleship.

Jesus was sent by the Father and Jesus sends his followers in the same way he was sent (John 20.21-23). Earlier in this chapter a brief survey of Acts demonstrated that the church acted upon being sent. The church took on the characteristic of being "sent" into their community and the church sent ones specially gifted and called to expand the kingdom. As ones being sent into a world needing the gospel of Jesus, the church engages in evangelism and discipleship.

The church intentionally seeks to expand the kingdom. When the church is centered on Jesus, this type of mission-living is a natural overflow in the life of the church. When establishing new churches, church planters should evaluate the evangelism and discipleship plan. The following questions will help assess how the strategies and tactics used will enable the church to flourish and see the kingdom expanded.

1. How does the church live out her sent-ness?
2. How is the church taught to evangelize?
3. How is evangelism modeled for the church?
4. Who is expected to evangelize?
5. How is discipleship modeled for the church?
6. What activities and teachings are necessary for making disciples in your context?
7. What needs in the community provide opportunities for the church to cultivate relationships and plant gospel seeds?
8. What are the plans for continued reproduction of believers and churches?
9. How is evangelism and disciple-making evaluated by the church?

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[108] David Bosch argues that in Matthew, the commission to make disciples is synonymous with church planting. David J. Bosch, "The Scope of Mission," *The International Review of Mission* 73, no. 289 (January 1984): 24-25.

10. How will the church recognize and send specially gifted and called members to take the gospel to new communities?

Real presence.[109] The church is a covenanted body of born-again believers of Jesus. They gather together in real spaces. They gather often for encouragement and teaching. As a new church is being planted in a new community, especially in settings where no other Christian witness is near, several issues arise about the reality of the church. Issues of where and when the church meet are important to consider. What is most appropriate for the context the church is being planted. Many of these issues are related to indigenous church principles.[110]

The characteristic of real presence speaks of the church being a particular people in a particular place for a particular purpose. As a church is planted in a new location, the reality of future church plants springing forth from her must be considered. So, the issue of reproducibility must be addressed. The following questions will aid church planters in evaluating strategies related to the realness of the church being planted.

1. Does the church look like the community she is planted in (demographically)?
2. Do the church leaders come from the community or are they considered outsiders by the community?
3. Does the local church make her own decisions, or does she defer to outsiders?
4. Is the church able to sustain her meeting space and ministries with the resources generated from her own members or is she dependent on outside sourcing?
5. In what ways does the church seek to be a blessing to her members? To her community?
6. How does the church cultivate her presence in her community?
7. Does the church embrace the responsibility to care for her own members and surrounding community?
8. Does the church meet in a dedicated building or in someone's home? Which is most appropriate?
9. When does the church gather? How often?
10. Does the church do anything that confuses the purpose for its gathering?

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[109] Real presence is different from identifiable community. Identifiable community speaks to the covenantal nature of the church. The church is made up of regenerate members. Real presence speaks to the reality of the identifiable community in time, space, and cultural context.

[110] For a summary of indigenous churches, see John Mark Terry, "Indigenous Churches," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 483.

11. How does the church pursue holiness together?
12. How is fellowship promoted during the gathering of the church?
13. Does the décor of the church aid in drawing attention to God or distract from genuine worship?
14. How is technology used? Does it replace and/or enhance the regular physical gathering of the church and her ministries?
15. Do any security issues need to be addressed for the church to meet?
16. Are there things the church does that are easily reproducible in nearby communities? What isn't easily reproducible?

Conclusion

This chapter began by examining how the Bible taught the concept of church. Important metaphors in the New Testament for church were highlighted and probed. Then, the chapter explored eleven characteristics of the church in Acts. The biblical expectations for the church followed the biblical data. In that section functional and ontological expectations for the church were distinguished. The ontological expectations led to a proposed operational ecclesiology. A rubric of subjective questions to evaluate the strategies and methods of church planting flowed from the proposed operational ecclesiology. subjective questions forming. In the following chapters, this rubric will be utilized to evaluate a church planting paradigm and two methods informed by the paradigm.

CHAPTER 3

DAVID GARRISON, CPM, AND ECCLESIOLOGY

A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is most commonly understood to be "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment."[1] This paradigm for missions is very alluring for practitioners who desire to see unreached peoples engaged with the gospel and led to faith in Jesus Christ. Church planting is central in this paradigm.

The International Mission Board shifted missiological paradigms under the leadership of Keith Parks, paving the way for a new vision to be cast for church planting at the end of the twentieth century.[2] This vision claimed to enable the IMB to complete the task of evangelization of all the peoples of the world.[3] During the last decade of the twentieth century, IMB leadership reported Church Planting Movements (CPM) emerging within previously resistant people groups around the world. In 1998, as a result of these reports, the leadership of the International Mission Board adopted a new vision statement, "We will facilitate the lost coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ by beginning

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[1] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 1999), 21. Other iterations of the CPM definition have been published at different times and in different places, but this definition is the one most commonly understood to represent the phenomena. This definition is revised from the one provided in an earlier booklet. Garrison's previous booklet defines CPM as "a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment." James Slack explains the change in definition: "Initial CPMs that emerged among insulated and isolated unreached people groups did exhibit 'exponential' growth rates, but every one of the assessed CPMs did fit the math term 'multiplication', while not all measured up to the term 'exponential'." Jim Slack, "Church Planting Movements: Rationale, Research and Realities of their Existence," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 6 (Spring 2007): 32.

[2] For a summary of events and peoples shaping the Foreign Mission Board's missiology in the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century, see R. Bruce Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator: Changing the Course of Southern Baptist Missions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

[3] David Garrison, "Church Planting Movements: The Next Wave?" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 118. Garrison credits David Barrett's influence on Keith Parks for this vision.

and nurturing church-planting movements among all people."[4]

David Garrison is the name most associated with the CPM paradigm. His name is attached to the paradigm because of the books he published that promoted the phenomena to the missiological world. He is not alone in formulating the CPM paradigm. Many practitioners were involved in gathering and assessing the data. Many missionary church planters collaborated in the creation of this paradigm, Garrison is the name most associated with the formulation, teaching, and promotion of the CPM missiology.

One may assume ecclesiology is central to CPM missiology because a core tenant of the phenomena is that churches are planting churches. Since churches are planting churches, one should be able to grasp what a church is within this paradigm. Finding clear teachings regarding an ecclesiology within CPM missiology is challenging. Two conclusions drawn from the research process point to the reason for this apparent lack of ecclesiological focus. First, CPM missiology is more concerned with decreasing lostness than it is with the planting and health of new churches. Second, CPM missiology is more focused on movement than on church.

This chapter will explore how CPM missiology was discovered, developed, and implemented into strategy and methods. The ecclesiology of CPM missiology will be explained. Finally, CPM ecclesiology will be evaluated using the rubric proposed in the previous chapter.

Unveiling CPM Principles

Keith Parks was president of the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) from 1980 to 1992. He provided two significant guidelines to the missionary strategy of the agency. First, Parks urged FMB missionaries to reach hidden peoples. These peoples lived in restricted access countries.[5] This thrust to

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[4] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999), 7.

[5] A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A*

reach previously unreached peoples laid the groundwork for non-residential missionaries.[6]

Second, Parks reminded FMB missionaries to employ an ecclesio-centric missiology. In other words, he challenged the missionaries to remain focused on evangelism that results in churches.[7] As the mission sending agency of the SBC, the missionaries were not sent only to engage in evangelism and discipleship ministries, but to plant churches. Garrison affirms that church planting was one of the main pillars of the non-residential missionaries' task.[8]

The birth of CPM missiology is tied directly to the emphasis of church planting and to the work of non-residential missionaries in the 1990s.[9] These non-residential missionaries discovered ways to deliver the gospel message to peoples in restricted areas. Garrison reports, "CPMs were primarily occurring among these same least reached peoples."[10] The incredible positive response to the gospel among these peoples surprised the missionaries. Reports of churches being planted in unprecedented

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Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 12-13. A restricted access country is a place "in which traditional missionary work is illegal or banned. Missionaries who want to work in such countries must be creative in the means they utilize for entry and residence."

[6] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 35. V. David Garrison, "A New Model for Missions," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 9, no. 2 (April 1992): 69. Garrison defines a nonresidential missionary as,

> a full-time, professional missionary assigned to one of the world's least evangelized peoples with the primary goal of evangelism that results in churches. This assignment entails (1) developing an understanding of the people through research, survey work, ethnographic interviews, language study, and may include short-term residence to reach this goal; (2) developing a working knowledge of and relationship with worldwide Christian ministry and evangelism resources; (3) identifying ways that Christian resources can be focused on the evangelization of the assigned people; (4) advocating and implementing strategic ministries which will achieve the goal of evangelism and church planting among the assigned people.

[7] David Garrison, interview by author, Colorado Springs/Kuala Lumpur, March 20, 2018.

[8] Garrison, interview.

[9] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 175.

[10] Frank Walter Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements in East Asia" (DMiss diss., Biola University, 2013), 52. Schattner quotes Garrison.

numbers began to emerge. Carlton adds, "As indigenous churches took root, they began reproducing and multiplying rapidly."[11] The missionaries targeting unreached people groups in difficult to access places saw more response to their efforts than they anticipated.

The missionaries responded to these surprising results by gathering in two forums to report, reflect, and study the results of their efforts. Garrison recalls that these practitioners gathered, "To reflect on their shared experiences and then process them in a form that invited critique and analysis."[12] These two forums, hosted by IMB in 1998, met first in Rockville, Virginia, and then later in Singapore.

The purpose of these meeting was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of explosive church reproduction now known as Church Planting Movements.[13] The term CPM was defined to describe the phenomenon they were witnessing. Missionary strategists identified the principles of CPM through a reverse engineering process. Attendees developed a definition for CPM and identified characteristics common to all the movements as a result of these meetings. David Garrison unveiled the CPM principles to the missiological world in 2000 with the publication of a short booklet, *Church Planting Movements*.[14] In 2004 it was expanded into a full-length book. It was published and distributed under the title *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*.[15]

The reports of CPMs did not include any quality checks on the churches being planted. According to Garrison, a general understanding of church was shared among the

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[11] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 176.

[12] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999), 5.

[13] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 18.

[14] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999).

[15] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004).

workers, but ecclesiology was not a hot topic among those gathered for the meeting.

Garrison conveys, "We knew what we were calling a church and pretty much churches

define themselves as a church. They did the Lord's Supper and took baptism and they had

various structures. Whether there were multiple leaders or a single pastor or whether or

not they had deacons or elders, those issues weren't big issues in the 1990s."[16] The

missionaries reporting the results felt no reason to question the authenticity of the

churches being planting.

Formulation of CPM Principles

In 1996, IMB leaders coined the term *Church Planting Movements* to describe

a phenomena of rapid church multiplication. Missionaries engaged in these church

planting efforts and who witnessed this incredible growth gathered at two forums in

1998. Garrison recalls,

> In August 1998, nearly a dozen Strategy Coordinators and mission researchers who had experienced Church Planting Movements gathered for discussions near Richmond, Virginia. Before the year was over, a second group of Church Planting Movement practitioners met in Singapore. The purpose of both meetings was the same: *to understand Church Planting Movements* [emphasis mine]. Together, the participants crafted a working definition of a Church Planting Movement and then began listing the characteristics that were present in each of the movements they had seen.[17]

These practitioners shared their experiences and results. The practitioners collated their

findings. These findings led to a formulation of a CPM definition, the deduction of

universals characteristics in every CPM, and characteristics found in most of the CPMs.

The first published definition of CPM resulted from these meetings. Garrison

describes, "A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is a rapid and exponential increase of

indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population

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[16] Garrison, interview.

[17] Garrison, "Church Planting Movements: The Next Wave?," 120.

segment."[18] A few years later he updated the definition, "A Church Planting Movement is a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment."[19] Garrison identifies five key components to his definition.

First, a CPM reproduces rapidly. He proposes rapid reproduction to mean outstripping the population growth rate as the movement reaches the entire people group.[20]

A second component is multiplication. Multiplication is implied to be miraculous, as it is compared to Jesus multiplying loaves and fishes.[21] Multiplication is part of the vision of reaching an entire people group.

The third component is indigeneity.[22] The churches planted in a CPM are planted by insiders. An outsider may start the first church, but the insiders receive the baton and carry on the work. Some CPM missiologists point to fourth generation churches to be key in identifying the indigeneity of a movement.[23] The element of self-

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[18] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999), 7.

[19] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 22.

[20] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 22.

[21] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 22.

[22] The concept of indigenous churches originated with Henry Venn (1796-1873) of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Venn and Anderson advocated for the establishment of mission churches which would be national instead of being guided, led, and owned by foreign missionary societies. They advocated for "three-self" churches (self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing). John L. Nevius, missionary to China, built upon Venn and Anderson. "The Nevius Plan" for church planting was a five-part plan which focused on the principles of indigeneity. See John Mark Terry, "Indigenous Churches," in the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 483-485, and John L. Nevius, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (Hancock, NH: Monadnock Press, 2003), 70-81. Roland Allen also championed indigenous church planting. See John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions*, *A Biblical Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 106. Payne and Terry provide a synopsis of the indigenous mission strategy. They include Roland Allen as a key player saying, "He affirmed the three 'selfs,' but he stressed 'self-propagating' above all the others."

[23] Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 86.

If the multiplication takes place successfully, by the fourth generation the missionaries will have released the local leaders to continue the multiplication. They can advise, as needed, through

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propagating emphasized in indigenous churches is also a key concept of CPM missiology.

Next, churches plant churches. The churches in a CPM take the responsibility to reproduce and do not look to outside missionaries or professionally trained church planters to carry on the task of evangelism and church planting. Carlton comments, "This, more than any other aspect, defines a church planting movement. Churches within these movements typically fulfill their missionary nature."[24]

Finally, CPMs occur within ethnic or linguistic boundaries. As a people group becomes saturated with churches, the gospel compels believers to carry the message of Christ to new people groups.[25] Garrison acknowledges CPMs begin within a specific ethnic or linguistic group, but "they rarely stop there."[26] Gordy asserts, "If a CPM fails to cross cultural and linguistic barriers, it will inevitably stall and die. A movement must continue moving in order to be a movement."[27]

These components are the building blocks in the CPM definition. The reports and discussions from the practitioners in these forums led to more than a definition. The participants identified elements common in every CPM and elements found in most CPMs. These lists were first published in 1999. The ten universal elements include:[28]

1. Prayer
2. Abundant gospel sowing

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coaching visits. When reproduction has taken place over three generations without the outside agency or its resources, then the DNA is set and reproduction is built into it. Furthermore, since the reproduction comes from leaders and systems that are home grown, the fourth generation can be considered truly indigenous.

[24] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 178.

[25] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 179. Carlton notes, "Garrison is not advocating for the homogeneous principle as expounded by McGavran, but rather is describing what seemingly is a natural process within a movement."

[26] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 23.

[27] J. Gordy, "A System Dynamics Perspective on the Sustainability of Church Planting Movements in North India" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 22.

[28] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999), 33-36.

3. Intentional church planting
4. Scriptural authority
5. Local leadership
6. Lay leadership
7. Cell or house churches
8. Churches planting churches
9. Rapid reproduction
10. Healthy churches

The 2004 book altered the list slightly.[29]

1. Extraordinary prayer
2. Abundant evangelism
3. Intentional Planting of Reproducing Churches
4. The Authority of God's Word
5. Local Leadership
6. Lay Leadership
7. House Churches
8. Churches Planting Churches
9. Rapid Reproduction
10. Healthy Churches

Carlton reports that initially the list only included nine characteristics.[30] The tenth characteristic of "Healthy Churches" was added before the first publication. The addition of "Healthy Churches," Carlton indicates, "was in response to those who questioned the legitimacy of the churches emerging in these movements."[31] This addition points to a recognition that these CPM churches should be tethered to a type of ecclesiology.

Garrison also submits ten characteristics shared by most CPMs. Three of the ten characteristics are directly related to the formation and governance of the churches. These three first appeared as "evangelism has communal implications," "on-the-job training for church leadership" and "rapid incorporation of new converts into the life and ministry of church."[32] In the later publication, Garrison adjusted the terminology to read as "family-based conversion patterns," "on-the-job leadership training" and "immediate

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[29] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 172.

[30] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 180.

[31] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 188.

[32] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (1999), 37-40.

enlistment of new believers."[33]

CPM Training and Methods

Initially, CPM identified phenomena experienced by missionaries around the world. Shortly after CPM was identified, the results of these findings became the basis for many trainings and methods. The question that led to the CPM discovery was "What led to this movement?" The findings were then categorized and proof-texted. Then, the findings were constructed to train church planters on how to achieve CPMs in their own work. Now, the goal of the missionary task was to facilitate CPMs.

Support and criticism for the CPM paradigm followed the promotion of the missiology through publications and trainings.[34] Despite Garrison's claims that CPM is a description of a phenomena and not a missions strategy, most of the missiological world sees CPM as prescribing both a strategy and methods for missions.[35] Some missiologists and practitioners support the endeavor.[36] Others offer warnings against the embrace of CPM principles.[37]

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[33] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 227-234.

[34] For a brief survey of the early debate surrounding CPM missiology, see Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 4-11.

[35] Schattner views CPM as ideology and methodology. Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 283. Carlton agrees, "While Garrison claims that church-planting movements are not a mechanical process achieved through prefabricated techniques, the implication in these statements is clear: these ten universal characteristics describe fully how God is at work through these church-planting movements, and the way to align one's life and ministry with God is through the application of these characteristics. To do otherwise is to be misaligned with the way God is working." Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 190.

[36] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements." Don Dent, "Getting From Here to There: The Journey from Sending Churches to Church Planting Movements," *Global Missiology* 1, no. 7 (October 2009), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/ article/viewFile/18/50. Don Dent, "Decisive Discipleship: Why Rapid Discipleship is Preferable and How it is Possible," *Global Missiology* 1, no. 13 (October 2015), http://ojs. globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1818/4028. Curtis Sergeant, "Planting Rapidly Reproducing Churches," *Global Missiology* 1, no. 7 (October 2009), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/20/54.

[37] John D. Massey, "Wrinkling Time in the Missionary Task: A Theological Review of Church Planting Movements and Methodology," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 100-137. Jackson Wu, "There Are No Church Planting Movements in the Bible: Why Biblical Exegesis and Missiological Methods Cannot Be Separated," *Global Missiology* 1, no. 12 (October 2014), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1711/3794. Jackson Wu, "The Influence of Culture On the Evolution of Mission Methods: Using 'Church Planting Movements' As A Case Study,"

Bruce Carlton was a part of the early groups identifying CPM. He also served with Garrison in South Asia. Carlton trained many IMB missionaries and national in CPM principles and paradigms. Carlton admits the challenge of separating the CPM principles from the prescribed methods:

> Both the avoidance of specific actions that could hinder a movement and the advocacy of specific actions that could foster a movement have strong prescriptive overtones. There is obvious tension between offering these prescriptive ideas and practical tools while, at the same time, warning against the danger of approaching the task with prefabricated methodologies.[38]

So, what began as an effort to describe a phenomenon turned towards informing future missions training, methods, and strategies.

CPM Ecclesiology

Inherent within the CPM paradigm for missions is church. Churches are planting churches. If churches are not planting churches, then what is being described is not a CPM. So, what do CPM strategists, trainers, and practitioners claim to be churches? Garrison believes that a church identifies itself, "What some may call a church, others might classify as simply a gathering, home fellowship or 'new work.'"[39] He continues,

> I allowed significant latitude in church identification by accepting self-designation. In other words, if those involved in the movement see themselves as a community of believers or church, I am unwilling to contradict them. This is not to say all churches are of equal quality. Churches can be more or less healthy.
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> At its core, a church is a community of believers seeking to obediently follow Jesus Christ. From God's perspective, church is a continuation of what Jesus began 2,000

Global Missiology 1, no. 12 (October 2014), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1712/3797. Kenneth Hayward, "God and a Godward Worldview for the IMB: Concerns About CPM Theory," *Global Missiology* 1, no. 14 (January 2016), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view /1861.

[38] Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 191. In a footnote confessional, Carlton adds, "Like Garrison, Sergeant and the Smiths, I, too, warned against the dangers of thinking that one could manufacture a CPM while, at the same time, advocating for specific prescriptive actions. In reality, I structured the entire training around these characteristics and obstacles. In reviewing the training materials, I now understand more clearly the delicate line between prescribing specific actions that might stimulate a movement and prefabricated techniques and methods designed to manufacture one."

[39] David Garrison, "10 Church Planting Movement FAQS," *Mission Frontiers* 33, no. 2 (March-April 2011): 9.

years ago.[40]

Greater clarity on the characteristics of CPM churches can be gleaned first by investigating what is explicit and implicit within the definition of CPM.[41] Then, one may glean certain ecclesiological affirmations from the elements shared in all CPMs[42] and hindrances to CPMs.[43] Finally, a careful examination of Garrison's personal description of a CPM church will aid in understanding CPM ecclesiology.

Explicit and Implicit Ecclesiology
Within CPM's Definition

Within the CPM paradigm some ecclesiological characteristics are explicit, while others are implied by its proponents. These characteristics are embedded within its definition. Garrison defines a CPM as, "A rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment."[44] This definition contains five key components. Four of these components deal directly with church characteristics.

Explicit ecclesiological characteristics. Explicit within this definition are several ecclesiological characteristics. First, churches plant churches. This statement can refer to the church's mission. Second, churches are indigenous. These churches are led by local believers and not controlled by outsiders. A cultural outsider may begin the initial churches, but soon the churches the take responsibility for planting and leading churches themselves. Third, a CPM church is limited to its language group or population segment; it is homogenous. In other words, a CPM church is focused on reproducing within ethnic

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[40] Garrison, "10 Church Planting Movement FAQS," 9.

[41] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 21.

[42] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 172.

[43] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 239-40.

[44] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 21.

and linguistic boundaries and is not concerned (at least in initial stages) to cross cultural boundaries. Last, these churches reproduce rapidly. Garrison indicates, "We do know that there is something of an inverse relationship between how structured the church is and how reproducible it is."[45] CPM churches structure themselves to be able to reproduce rapidly.

Garrison clarifies the importance of churches in CPM missiology. He clearly distinguishes CPM from other missiological paradigms by zeroing in on the church being the key distinctive. He states that unlike other missiological paradigms, evangelism leads to churches, "Where discipleship, worship, and spiritual development continue."[46] These churches are smaller rather than bigger. House churches are recognized as core to the CPM paradigm.

At the end of his book, Garrison answers some frequently asked questions.[47] The first question is: What is a CPM church? He identifies some elements common to all CPM churches. They all observe baptism and the Lord's Supper, meet regularly, exhibit the five purposes of a church, are organized, and exhibit the ten universal elements of every CPM church. CPM churches vary in the implementation of their leadership structure, and the sizes of the churches differ. Garrison is clear to state that the key characteristic of a CPM church is her, "Passionate commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of his Great Commission."[48] This characteristic is truly the best description of the core expectation of a CPM church.

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[45] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 155. Schattner quotes Garrison.

[46] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 23.

[47] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 259.

[48] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 261.

Implicit ecclesiological characteristics. A few ecclesiological characteristics are implied as Garrison fleshes out the definition of CPM. The authority in these churches becomes the methods observed and then prescribed. Verbal ascent is given to the Scriptures as authoritative, but what really informs the churches within CPM are the methods that are observed and proven to lead to a rapid multiplication of churches. Practitioners are urged to adopt these practices in order to form rapidly reproducing churches that bear the explicit characteristics noted above.[49]

Obedience is another implied characteristic of a CPM church. These churches submit to and implement the methods that work and produce new churches. Also implied is that rapid reproduction is the goal to be strived for in obedient church planting.[50] This implication suggests that healthy churches rapidly reproduce and that churches which do not reproduce rapidly are unhealthy. In other words, obedient, healthy churches reproduce rapidly. So, a CPM church is obedient and healthy, because it utilizes the strategies and methods first observed then prescribed leading to rapid multiplication.

Ecclesiological Characteristics within the Ten Universals of Every CPM

Garrison identifies ten characteristics observed in every CPM. Many of these characteristics relate directly to church. They also overlap with one another. These characteristics can be understood within the four categories of reproduction, God's Word, leadership, and structure. These characteristics are essential to the CPM ecclesiology.

Reproduction. Imbedded within the ecclesiology of CPM churches is the expectation and reality of reproduction. This reproduction is facilitated first and foremost by abundant evangelism. This type of evangelism is intentional and paves the way for the

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[49] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 27-28.

[50] For a full critique of this issue of rapid reproduction see Massey, "Wrinkling Time," 100-137.

gathering of new believers into new churches. These new churches will then mimic the abundant evangelism modeled for them. In this way, the new church engages in intentional church planting. Being a church that reproduces is inherent within her DNA. The last quality of reproduction is related to speed. These churches reproduce rapidly.[51]

The role of God's Word. The Scriptures are acknowledged as authoritative. Garrison points to the authority of the Bible and the lordship of Jesus Christ as the parallel rails that keep CPM churches on course.[52] The encouragement for church planters is to always point the young churches to discover how God, rather than human wisdom, addresses their questions.

CPM missiology does not give a clear picture of the hermeneutical principles taught to new believers. How one interprets the Scriptures will significantly impact whether or not a church remains orthodox in its teaching and practice.[53]

Leadership. The leaders of CPM churches are local.[54] While an outside missionary presence may begin the first church, soon the leadership is turned over to local leadership. As new churches are planted, and the generational map of churches expand, the influence of outsiders in church leadership diminishes.

Another characteristic of CPM church leadership is that most leaders are laity.

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[51] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 21-22. Garrison addresses the question of speed: "'How rapid is rapid?' you may ask. Perhaps the best answer is, 'Faster than you think possible.' Though the rate varies from place to place, Church Planting Movements always outstrip the population growth rate as they race toward reaching the entire people group."

[52] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 182.

[53] For a discussion of the intersection of missiology and hermeneutics, see William Patrick Brooks, "Critiquing Ethno-hermeneutics Theories: A Call for an Author-Oriented Approach to Cross-Cultural Biblical Interpretation" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 235. Brooks concludes, "It is not enough for evangelicals to simply affirm the inerrancy, inspiration, and authority of the Scriptures. If their hermeneutical methods subvert the authority of the Scriptures by proposing interpretations that contradict the clear meaning of the original authors, affirming biblical authority is of little use. Biblical authority is meaningless unless interpreters utilize approaches that uphold that authority. The only approaches that do so are those that see the original author as the determiner of meaning."

[54] The insistence on indigenous leadership echoes the missiology of men like Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, Roland Allen, and John Nevius. See footnote 22 of chapter 3.

Six reasons for the multiplicity of lay leadership are given.[55] The reasons can be summarized as practical, biblical-theological, pragmatic, and financial.

Finally, the CPM paradigm allows for a single leader model for small churches (20-30 people) but prefers to have multiple leaders being equipped at all times. While one church may have one recognized leader, the continual training of leaders is ongoing. Thus, new leaders are being raised up for each church. A CPM church commonly will have multiple local lay leaders. This pipeline aids the rapid reproduction of the churches.

Structure. The house church is a major feature of CPM church structure. Small house churches provide benefits. First, a house church requires minimal finances. So, new churches are not saddled with the expense of maintaining a building or paying a trained pastor. This aspect of structure overlaps with the rapid reproduction as well as the leadership development elements of CPM ecclesiology.

Second, house churches exercise hospitality which fosters an environment for healthy churches. Since house churches are typically small, members are not able to remain anonymous. In the church real accountability takes place. The leader can also more easily shepherd a small house church than a larger congregation.

Healthy house churches in CPMs are based upon five purposes.[56] These five purposes are evangelism, worship, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry. These purposes provide vibrancy and structure to CPM church life. The ultimate aim of this barometer of health is to glorify God.

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[55] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 189-91.

[56] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 103-7.

Ecclesiological Characteristics Identified
within the Hindrances to CPM

Garrison identifies seven deadly sins that prevent a CPM from taking place.[57] The obstacles identify issues related to tactics and expectations. Three issues related to CPM ecclesiology are described within these "sins." The CPM ecclesiology comes into sharper focus when Garrison identifies what prevents a CPM church from reproducing. Three issues addressed here are a lean ecclesiology, lean leadership requirements, and indigenous churches.

Lean ecclesiology. The second deadly sin for a CPM is attempting to improve the Bible. CPM missiology promotes a lean ecclesiology. The paradigm accuses bloated ecclesiologies of attempting to improve the biblical requirements for church. Garrison states,

> The Bible has clear guidelines for defining a church and its leadership. When we try to improve on these we don't create a better church; we create a church that is less than what God intended. Church Planting movements are often derailed by well intentioned, yet inflated, definitions for a church or overwhelming requirements for church leadership.[58]

The concern for Garrison and CPM practitioners is that church becomes too complex to reproduce quickly. A belief that Scripture teaches CPM methodology and experience of observing extra-biblical requirements for constituting a church guide the conversation to this point. The biblical requirements for church are not purported to be lean for the purpose of rapid reproduction. However, her leanness does enable the church to reproduce more quickly than one would expect. If the church is saddled with more expectations than necessitated by the Bible, then she will be unhealthy and unable to achieve her purpose for existing.

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[57] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 239.

[58] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 242.

Lean leadership requirements. As seen in Garrison's quote above, lean leadership requirements go hand in hand with a lean ecclesiology. In a positive sense, Garrison is calling for opening church leadership to people who have not been trained at a theological institution. He identifies that godly character is the greatest requirement for leadership in the church.[59] He cites the example of Jesus' disciples. However, he does not offer a solution to how disciples can spend three years of intensive training at Jesus' feet. Nor does he address Paul's qualification for a church leader to possess an aptitude to teach.

Indigenous churches. Three issues are addressed related to the indigeneity of the church. These issues convey an appropriate contextualization of the gospel, an appropriate use of finances, and local ownership of the Great Commission.

First, if a people already have a negative perception of Christianity because of Christians they know, then reproduction will be impeded. CPM practitioners believe that putting forth a contextualized gospel witnesses is important so that Christians are not viewed as "out there" but seen as being a part of the local communities in which the new churches are planted.

Second, the financial resources supporting the movement need to be generated from the new churches. Church planting that is dependent upon outside funding will impede its ability to reproduce. Also, CPM missiology teaches that the resources are in the harvest. Resources refer to both people and finances.

Third, when the local churches own the Great Commission, they seek to fulfill it more faithfully. They recognize and serve the Lord Jesus rather than someone providing finances that is outside their community. So, the indigeneity of the churches builds into Great Commission faithfulness, gospel urgency, and appropriate financial and

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[59] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 242-43.

resource stewardship.

Ecclesiological Characteristics Identified
in Garrison's Other Works

Garrison is a prolific author. Several books and articles on the topic of CPM or missiology are attributed to him. One can glean more insight into Garrison's ecclesiology through his published works and training materials, and other projects to which he has contributed. Garrison participated as an interviewee in a research project about the sustainability of CPMs. Garrison identified ecclesiology as the number one most important issue to address in the sustainability of CPMs.[60] Three other key works reveal Garrison's core ecclesiological beliefs.

Church Planting Movement FAQS. Self-designation appears to be the baseline for a CPM church to be a church. As Garrison states, "If those involved in the movement see themselves as a community of believers or church, I am unwilling to contradict them." [61] Garrison summarizes his understanding for what constitutes a church in essence and practice. He asserts, "At its core, a church is a community of believers seeking to obediently follow Jesus Christ."[62] Garrison laments that some CPMs fizzled due to poor ecclesiological formations. The emphasis in this article is about what the church does rather than who she is.

Handy Guide.[63] Garrison's most developed ecclesiology appears in his training for CPM healthy churches. In this training Garrison reiterates that the church is,

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[60] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 156.

[61] Garrison, "10 Church Planting Movement FAQS," 9.

[62] Garrison, "10 Church Planting Movement FAQS," 9.

[63] David Garrison, "A Handy Guide to Healthy Churches, Part 1" ChurchPlantingMovements.com, October 5, 2010, http://churchplantingmovements.com/index.php /vert5parts/vertbigpicture/116-a-handy-guide-to-healthy-churches-part-one. David Garrison, "A Handy Guide to Healthy Churches, Part 2" ChurchPlantingMovements.com, October 7, 2010, http://churchplantingmovements.com/index.php/vert5parts/ vertbigpicture/117-a-handy-guide-to-healthy-

"At its core, a community of baptized believers seeking to continue the life, teaching, and ministry of Jesus Christ. Viewed from God's perspective, the church is the continuation on earth of what his Son began 2,000 years ago."[64] The essence and the function of the church cannot be separated. The essence of the church is about the church's affections and actions.

In this training material Garrison expresses concern for churches to reproduce rapidly and to grow qualitatively in doctrine and maturity. He also provides instruction on the importance of the church being indigenous. He affirms that churches should be "Self-governing, self-supporting, self-reproducing, self-correcting and self-feeding churches."[65] His goal was to see churches planted that were highly reproducible without sacrificing the importance of the organization structure of the church. To this end, Garrison developed a mnemonic device based on the human hand to equip church planters and leaders in responsible church planting.

Garrison used the human hand as the visual aid. The aspects of this training are related to ecclesiological foundations. These churches should demonstrate participation, obedience to Christ, have unpaid leaders, be small, and meet in homes. These churches should exhibit the five purposes of a healthy church: worship, fellowship, evangelism, discipleship, and ministry. He identifies the four-self's of an indigenous church to be most important: self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating, and self-feeding/correcting.

Garrison identifies three offices in the church: pastor/elder/overseer, deacon, and treasurer.[66] The pastor/elder/overseer is responsible for the spiritual oversight of the

churches-part-2. The link to an accompanying PowerPoint presentation is available on both these websites.

[64] Garrison, "A Handy Guide to Healthy Churches, Part 1."

[65] Garrison, "Handy Guide, Part 2." For a succinct description of indigenous church, see Terry, "Indigenous Churches," 483-85.

[66] Garrison, interview. I questioned him on the use of the term *office* and why he identifies three offices rather than the more traditional two. He stated, "The New Testament doesn't talk about

church. He suggests that each of the five purposes of the church should have a deacon attached to it. The third office of treasurer is unique to Garrisons training.[67] He argues that the office of treasurer is crucial for the health and stability of the church.

The church is under two authorities. One authority is the Holy Bible. The second authority is God. Garrison writes in his notes that the Holy Spirit is the second authority. He guides the believer to interpret the Scriptures but writes on the PowerPoint slide that Jesus Christ is the second authority. His notes state that these two authorities are parallel with one another.

Finally, Garrison insists that the one essence of the church is God's glory. He describes the church's efforts to glorify God as conveying the character of Christ. CPM church members are taught to desire to glorify Christ and convey his character in each and every situation they find themselves in because in Christ alone can one find his identity.

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officers in the church at all. So, a better term for it is probably three servant leaders, which is what I used down in the text." He later expressed that he should change the terminology from officers to servant leaders for future trainings.

[67] Garrison, "Handy Guide, Part 2." Garrison explains,

> The third office is that of treasurer. Every church in the world that functions well has a well functioning treasurer. Conversely, most dysfunctional churches can trace their dysfunction to a poorly administered treasury. Either the members of the church do not trust the management of its finances and so refuse to tithe, or equally bad, the members do tithe only to find that the financial affairs of the church are poorly administered leading to questions of misappropriation of funds. No church can afford to overlook the role of treasurer if it is to function as more than a group of individuals each doing their own thing.

> But what is the biblical basis of treasurer? You may smile as you recall that Jesus did, in fact, have a treasurer (John 13:29), because that treasurer was Judas who would later betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 27:3). It is quite possible that the early church too, repulsed by the memory of Judas' betrayal, decided that they did not need to replace the role of treasurer in the early church. The result was seen in the church's first scandal, a financial misappropriation by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10) resulting in their death. By contrast, Jesus, who faced every kind of adversary and accusation during his three-year ministry, was never once accused of financial impropriety. Why? Because he had a treasurer. We cannot improve on the example of Christ! To their credit, the early church appears to have learned its lesson; the Ananias and Sapphira episode in Acts 5 sets the stage for the selection of seven deacons in Acts chapter 6.

Consistent with the New Testament. Garrison supports the assertions that CPM practices are consistent with the teachings of the New Testament.[68] He reiterates that CPM churches, "Are all aimed at the core of what a church is intended to be: a community committed to obediently following Christ, and by so doing, extending and expanding the life, ministry, teaching, and mission of Christ Himself."[69] He acknowledges that biblical support for CPM practices developed after missionaries observed explosive church planting.

The biblical support for CPM churches and practices are proof-texts. This particular article does not offer much new information or insights. He does provide a slight modification on the element of house churches. He updates the terminology for CPM churches to be "Home Cell Churches."[70] He does not offer explanation in this article about why he updates the term.[71]

Summary

The CPM missiology identifies certain elements as ecclesiology essentials. These essentials are both explicitly taught and implied in its methodology. The ecclesiological essentials include elements related to reproduction, indigeneity, authority, leadership. and structure.

The emphasis on reproduction is repeated because reproduction is essential to a CPM church. If a church is not reproducing, then it cannot be a CPM church. The element of reproduction overlaps with the elements of indigeneity and structure. In terms

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[68] David Garrison, "Church Planting Movements Are Consistent with the Teachings and Practices of the New Testament: A Response to Jackson Wu," in *Global Missiology* 1, no. 12 (October 2014): 1-8.

[69] Garrison, "Consistent," 2.

[70] Garrison, "Consistent," 6.

[71] Garrison, interview. Garrison recognizes that a house church may not be the best requirement for rapidly reproducing churches because some house churches grow rather than reproduce. He switched to the terminology of *cell church* to emphasize reproduction.

of indigeneity, the church should reproduce on its own, not from the coercion of outsiders but from within its own life and ministry. In terms of structure, the church should not seek to organize herself beyond the scope of being easily reproducible.

The indigeneity of the local church is another crucial element of CPM ecclesiology. This element refers to the church being sustainable in her own context. She is responsible for herself in all her vitality. This element overlaps with leadership in that the leaders are locals and outsiders.

The authority of a CPM church is two-fold. One is the Bible, and the other is the Lord Jesus Christ. The leadership of the church is not authoritative in itself; but, rather, it derives any ability to lead from the Scriptures. The leadership is expected to be local and non-professional. Leadership that requires some formal training will slow down the church's ability to reproduce; so, leadership requirements focus on character over aptitude to teach. Leadership is recognized in three offices of pastor/elder/overseer, deacon, and treasurer.

The CPM ecclesiology is structured around the five purposes of the church: worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry. The church is made up of baptized believers. This group self-identifies as a church and seeks to carry on the life and teachings of Jesus in their context. The church intentionally remains small so that she can reproduce more quickly. The church intentionally remains in homes in order to keep the church small and create an intimate environment of the life and vibrancy of the church.

These core elements make up the ecclesiology of CPM missiology. Whether these elements can lead churches to flourish where they are planted must be determined. This determination will be the result of evaluating the CPM ecclesiology via the rubric for flourishing churches.

CPM Ecclesiology through the Flourishing Church
Rubric

CPM missiology leads to a multiplication of new churches being planted by its own metrics. The question of whether these new churches are enabled and equipped to flourish is less clear. The potential of CPM methods and practices to prepare new churches to flourish can be discerned. They are discerned by evaluating their ecclesiology, using the rubric proposed in chapter two.

God-Glorifying

The rubric identifies that the essence of the church is to glorify God. Garrison also identifies the glory of God as the church's one essence. Garrison and the rubric differ on the description of what this characteristic means for the essence of the church.

The rubric presents fifteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered.

The glory of God is an end vision for CPM ecclesiology rather than the starting point. Garrison describes the church's orientation to the glory of God as one of identity in the person of Christ. By identifying itself as the body of Christ, the church then can "Convey the character of Christ."[72] Further Garrison questions a church's health if she does not, "Reflect the Spirit, the life, the teachings, and the work of Christ."[73]

Garrison's explanation about the church's essence of conveying Christ's character is laudable. The new church is reminded to continue the mission of Christ. Church multiplication and discipleship is understood to be primarily what glorifies God. Yet, by ascribing the glory of God to the goal of the church rather than the basis of the

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[72] Garrison, "Handy Guide, Part 2."

[73] Garrison, "Handy Guide, Part 2."

church, a few subtle issues surface. One is that the act of church planting can put tremendous pressure on a church planter. Whereas, beginning with the truth that God is glorious and will glorify Himself in the establishment of new churches, the church planter is empowered and emboldened in the task. His glory is on display in all creation (Ps 19.1-6) and his invisible attributes are evident to all peoples (Rom 1.18-23). Church planters are not responsible for making God more glorious or multiplying his glory. Because the church is orientated to the glory of God, then God's glory will be magnified through their appropriate response to him.

The issue of a CPM church expressing its God-glorifying orientation is addressed above. Further, Garrison indicates that the glory of God is magnified through the multiplication of disciples and churches. Issues of idolatry are not addressed within the CPM paradigm.

The CPM methods acknowledge the Triune God but do not clearly delineate what roles each person of the God-head fills. The impression from the material is that the church planter is responsible for establishing new churches. In CPM missiology, God ordains the ways of church planting he will bless; church planters are required to discover "The ways God has chosen to implement these movements."[74] The way a church planter is to discover God's ways is by observing what is working, rather than exegeting the methods from Scripture.

CPM ecclesiology attempts to orientate churches to glorify God on their own terms. The proof-texting of the missiology does not provide the ecclesiology a consistently solid basis. Acknowledging the essence of a church as singularly to glorify God is good. However, a new church would be better equipped to flourish if she is orientated to God's glory rather than seeking God's glory as her end-vision.

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[74] Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (2004), 255.

Word-Centered

CPM ecclesiology acknowledges two parallel authorities: Jesus and the Scriptures. The flourishing church rubric also acknowledges that a church is centered on both Jesus and the Word of God. The rubric presents twenty-seven questions that help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Ten of these questions relate to the headship of Jesus over the church. Seventeen questions address the Bible's authority in the life, teaching, and practice of the church. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the CPM missiological paradigm.

Garrison's definition of church includes the affirmation that the church is the continuation of the life, teaching, and ministry of Jesus. As Lord, Jesus sets the template of how the church is to function. In this way a CPM church follows the leadership of Jesus. Jesus is acknowledged as Lord and Savior. The only thing that may distract from the role of Jesus in the church is the emphasis on rapid reproduction.

CPM missiology affirms orthodox Christological teachings. An emphasis on Jesus' works, teachings, and ministry seem to be emphasized over the work of atonement on the cross and the empty tomb. This emphasis on Jesus as model over Jesus as atoning sacrifice for sins and risen savior can lead to church life that emphasizes works to emulate Christ over worship of the risen and victorious Christ.

CPM ecclesiology acknowledges the Scriptures as authoritative. The importance of submitting to the Bible's authority is clear. The challenge in this affirmation is that no clear teaching on biblical interpretation is reported. Garrison emphasizes participative Bible studies as the gathered church. These Bible studies employ a version of a reader-response hermeneutic.[75] While the church is being saturated

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[75] Garrison, interview. Garrison does not think that a trained pastor is necessary for a church to understand the Bible. He acknowledges that it is good to have one if it is possible, but he also expresses misgivings about it, suggesting that if the single leader goes off base in his interpretation, then the whole

with the Word of God, no clear authoritative teaching of the Word of God was taking place in the gathered church. The practice of the participative Bible study is expected to lead to the members of the church feeding and correcting themselves from the Word of God. This method expects inherent checks and balances to faithful teaching. It also builds more community and intimacy within the body than with a single teacher model. In this way, heresy and immorality are rebuked; doctrine is established; appropriate church practices are informed; and mutual accountability is ensured.

Garrison describes most of the real, in-depth teaching taking place from a master-teacher who would teach church leaders. These leaders would then take what they learned back to their churches. In this way, the teaching would ripple throughout a network of churches. Equipping and appointing teachers for a church is viewed as a Pauline ideal but is not obligatory for local churches.[76]

In the CPM paradigm, the only rival to biblical authority in the life and practice of the church is experience. Followers are instructed to find out what methods God is blessing and duplicate those efforts regardless of context. A more biblically faithful approach would be to develop practices from careful exegesis of Scripture.[77]

Holy Spirit Empowered

The Holy Spirit empowers the church to be all that she is created to be. The rubric presents twelve questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM

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church is led astray. He prefers a hermeneutical community over theologically and/or seminary-trained teachers.

[76] Garrison, interview. Garrison asserts that the New Testament does not have systematic ecclesiology and that Paul's teachings on leadership in the church were ideals to "help us get where we want to go."

[77] Hoyt Lovelace, "Is Church Planting Movement Methodology Viable? An Examination of Selected Controversies Associated with the CPM Strategy," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 6 (Spring 2007), 51-55.

missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the CPM missiological paradigm.

Overall, the acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit's role in planting and establishing new church is lacking. CPM missiology affirms that the Holy Spirit draws the lost to faith in Jesus. Also affirmed is that the Holy Spirit equips believers for leadership and ministry. The Scriptures are affirmed as inspired by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the Holy Spirit guides believers in their interpretation of the Scriptures.

Missing from the embryonic ecclesiology of the CPM paradigm is a clear acknowledgment of the role of the Spirit as the third person of the God-head. Also missing is teaching on how the Spirit equips the church for service.

Perhaps the teaching on role of the Spirit in the church and in the life of the believer is developed as a CPM church develops and mature. Very little in terms of foundational teachings on the Holy Spirit is presented in the embryonic stage of a new church.

Identifiable Community

A church is an identifiable community. The rubric presents sixteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the CPM missiological paradigm.

Self-identification is the singular most important mark of a church for Garrison.[78] Identifying with Jesus as the model for the life of the church is clear within CPM missiology.

CPM churches are recognized to be made up of baptized believers. Believers

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[78] Garrison, "10 Church Planting Movement FAQS," 9.

are baptized, ordinarily, by someone who led the new believer to faith. Baptism ordinarily happens close to the time of someone's profession of faith. The Lord's Supper is not an addressed as a core component to the gathering of the church. Correction and discipline within the body is expected to happen as the church participates in Bible study together.

No prescription is given for recognizing or appointing leaders. Leaders should meet Christian character qualifications. The proposed structures indicate a congregational polity whereby church members make the church's decisions. The theological basis for this polity is the priesthood of the believer. The emphasis attempts to prevent a divide between church leadership and church members. Every member is a believer and is not dependent upon another to relate to Christ.

The offices recognized by Garrison are three-fold: pastors/elders/overseers, deacons, and treasurer. The inclusion of treasurer is problematic.[79] The reason for its inclusion is a recognition that many churches that fail have poor financial management or outright duplicity. The inclusion appears to be reactionary to experience. Garrison attempts to build a case for the office in his training. The biblical case he creates is weak and employs some hermeneutical gymnastics. This problem could be averted by including a treasurer as a deacon, since each deacon is assigned oversight of a particular church purpose.

Professing Truth

The rubric presents eleven questions related to the characteristic of professing truth as body of believers. These questions help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are

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[79] Garrison, interview.

not clearly answered within the CPM missiological paradigm.

CPM paradigm churches profess the truths discovered in their participative Bible studies. No prescribed statement of faith or set of doctrines is passed down to the churches. In some CPM experiences, a master teacher/trainer will gather leaders to teach truths that can be passed along to each of the local bodies.

The clear teachings affirmed through the methodology is the necessity of faith in Jesus for salvation. Profession of faith through baptism is also affirmed. The authority of Scripture is taught early on in personal discipleship and in corporate gatherings as a key truth.

The New Testament seems to play a greater role in the life and practice of the church. The truths emphasized from the New Testament teachings relate more to the doing of the church/Christian rather than the cognitive truths. This leads to an emphasis on obedient doing over appropriate belief. Obedience is a key component of the Great Commission; however, the paradigm could better enable churches to flourish is the indicatives of the new Testament received as much emphasis as the imperatives.

Kingdom Expansion

CPM missiology is strongest in its recognition of the expansion of Christ's kingdom through the church. The rubric presents ten questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the CPM missiological paradigm.

CPM missiology keeps the focus of church reproduction front and center. New believers are discipled and taught to evangelize from the beginning of their walk with Christ. One early CPM practitioner provides a glimpse of this emphasis:

> The process of establishing a pattern of dual accountability and involving each disciple in leadership begins with immediately guiding new converts to evangelize

their own friends and family. As soon as someone decides to repent and follow Jesus, I like to tell them, "It is a great blessing to bring others into a relationship with Jesus. It is a greater blessing to start a new spiritual community. It is the greatest blessing to equip others to start new spiritual communities. Right now I want to help you have blessing, greater blessing, and the greatest blessing."[80]

In this way, church planters cast the vision for even more believers to become church planters.

Garrison states that church reproduction in the CPM paradigm occurs more rapidly than one's comfort level. This rapid reproduction draws criticism.[81] Does the rapid rate that churches reproduce necessarily mean that church health or maturity is sacrificed? The rapidity of church multiplication is perhaps the biggest point of contention among critics. CPM proponents are motivated to reach the lost with the gospel and cannot bear the thought of unreached peoples never hearing the gospel. So, they evangelize and plant churches urgently.

Rather than taking time to recognize and send church planters, these CPM churches live with a recognition that all their members are capable starting a new church in a location. The urgency of evangelism and passion of the church planters employing CPM missiology is admirable.

Real Presence

CPM missiology emphasizes the indigeneity of the local church. In this way local churches possess a contextualized existence where they are planted. The rubric presents sixteen questions which help diagnose the strength of real presence within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within CPM missiology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the CPM missiological paradigm.

CPM house churches are filled and led by indigenous believers. These

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[80] Sergeant, "Planting Rapidly Reproducing Churches," 3.

[81] See Massey, "Wrinkling Time," 100-137.

churches make their own decisions locally. Rarely do they defer to outsiders to make decisions for them. Their leaders are indigenous. These leaders are also ordinarily laity. The theological basis for this mark of leadership is the priesthood of the believer. The emphasis attempts to prevent a divide between church leadership and church members. Every member is a believer and is not dependent upon another to relate to Christ.

CPM missiology recognizes house churches to be the norm. Since these churches meet in homes, then the trappings of a dedicated church building are not a concern. The basis for this principle in CPM missiology is that presence of the house church in a community takes on a familial or communal role rather than an institutional presence. In locations where institutions are valued above communities, house churches may not be the best the strategy for church planting. Issues of sustainability and outside sourcing are nearly eliminated by keeping a house church only model.

CPM churches do meet regularly, but they do not prescribe any particular day for meeting. The recognition of the five purposes of the church inform the gathering of the body. Emphasizing the five purposes of the church may provide a simple structure of the gathering. Each component of the CPM church's gathering is led by the principle of reproducibility. Whether it is the day of the week, the time of day, or what they do when gathered, the concern for reproducibility is forefront.

Conclusion

The CPM paradigm is perhaps the greatest influence upon missiology in this century. The passion and urgency of its proponents are laudable. The emphasis on church planting is a good emphasis.

David Garrison is most associated with this paradigm. His writings and teachings on the subject provide the greater evangelical world some insight into what is happening in some parts of the globe as some unreached people groups are responding the gospel in ways once believed impossible.

The CPM paradigm is not perfect. The emphasis on rapid reproduction enables new believers and churches to advance the spread of the gospel, but this emphasis can detract from the development and maturity of the new churches. The paradigm can also be improved with a more robust hermeneutic. The CPM paradigm found its biblical basis after the results had been observed. The proof-texting of CPM principles opens itself up to critique. Church planting methods that are birthed by careful exegesis would be an improvement. Just because something works does not mean that it is preferable.

CHAPTER 4

ECCLESIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CHURCH
PLANTING METHODS: T4T

The church planting method called T4T (Training for Trainers) was developed

by a missionary named Ying Kai.[1] He cultivated the strategy, following a training in

Singapore in the fall of 2000. This strategy training taught CPM. The facilitator of the

training challenged all the trainees to prepare a three-year plan for the rapid spread of the

gospel among their target people. Kai credits this training and challenge to be the impetus

for creation of T4T.

Ying Kai put his plan into practice when he returned to his field of service in

East Asia. He began seeing incredible response to the gospel. Those who responded to

the gospel obediently followed the commands of the lessons they received. Ying Kai's

strategy planned for an end-vision of planting two hundred churches. He completed this

goal in three months, utilizing T4T.[2] By the end of 2011, T4T ministries reported an

average of 2,200–2,500 new churches planted per month representing 25,000–30,000

new believers per month.[3]

Kai's missionary colleague, Steve Smith, popularized the T4T method

throughout East Asia. T4T principles and practices gained widespread notoriety with

missionary scholars and practitioners through Smith's publications and trainings. Smith

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[1] Ying Kai and Grace Kai, *Ying and Grace Kai's Training for Trainers: The Movement that Changed the World* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2018), 4-6.

[2] Steve Smith with Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship ReRevolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011), 20.

[3] Frank Walter Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements in East Asia" (DMiss diss., Biola University, 2013), 85.

claims, "T4T is a ministry process to help you position yourself to see the Spirit of God ignite a CPM. T4T is a process; CPM is a result. "[4] The explosive growth of churches attributed to T4T methodology led to the adoption of this method by many practitioners globally.[5]

Introduction of the T4T Church Planting Method

The CPM missiological paradigm was the key influence in the creation of the T4T method.[6] Smith declares that T4T is a best practice to achieve a CPM. He asserts, "T4T can enable and sustain (by the Spirit's power) healthy church planting movements because built into the methodology is a discipleship process that develops believers in their personal and communal growth and equips them to repeat the process with other individuals they reach."[7] He defines T4T as, "An all-inclusive process of training believers over the course of 12-18 months to witness to the lost and train new believers to form reproducing discipleship communities generation by generation."[8] The T4T process is streamlined for maximum productivity.

The Development of T4T

Kai entered a new missionary assignment in the fall of 2000. He was trained to develop a strategy that would enable him to reach an urban population greater than twenty million people in three years or less. Smith recalls, "At the end of the training

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[4] Steve Smith, "The Basic CPM Plan and T4T," T4Tonline.org, accessed January 18, 2016, http://t4tonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/1-The-Basic-CPM-Plan-and-T4T.pdf.

[5] Kai and Kai retells numerous testimonies scattered throughout his book of people implementing T4T globally. Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*.

[6] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 63.

[7] Stephen Robert Smith, "An evaluation of Training for Trainers (T4T) as an aid for developing sustained church planting movements (CPMs)" (ThD diss., University of South Africa, 2014), 4.

[8] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 36.

each participant develops a CPM plan."[9] This strategy was the result of Kai's CPM plan.

One guiding principle in the development of T4T was a sense of urgency. He desired to obey the Great Commission completely. This obedience included going to the lost, evangelizing all people, and training them in a repeatable discipleship process.[10] This urgency led Kai to train believers to evangelize and then disciple their new converts "In a reproducible pattern that cascades out for generations."[11] Kai's sense of urgency motivated him to simplify his approach to evangelism and discipleship.

This simplicity of approach was not for Kai himself, but rather for those he would train. Kai does not view T4T as a method, but rather as "A process that grows into a lifestyle."[12] He wanted an approach to fulfilling the Great Commission task among his target people that they could easily reproduce and was not dependent upon him.

In Kai's cultivation of the T4T process he initially chose to use certain terms. T4T does not ordinarily utilize terms such as *leader*, *discipleship*, or *church member*. Christians typically assign certain preconceived expectations to these terms. Kai chose to use non-traditional terms so that he could teach what he believed to be biblically accurate concepts without having to redefine terms people already knew.

Instead of talking about a leader or disciple-maker, Kai introduced the term, *trainer*. Smith believes the use of the new term is helpful in achieving the goals of T4T. He proposes, "There are so many preconceptions and misunderstandings associated with the English word 'disciple' that hinder our understanding of the biblical mandate."[13] The use of the term *trainer* indicates, according to Smith that the "follower of Jesus should be

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[9] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 19.

[10] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 35.

[11] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 35.

[12] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 71.

[13] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 42.

like his Master and emulate Him in all respects."[14] Since Jesus expected his disciples to pass on all that they learned from him, trainers in T4T are expected to give training to others rather than horde the lessons they receive. Trainers trained trainers. The term *trainer* described what a faithful follow of Christ should be doing. In this way the term revealed certain expectations of those attending the trainings.

Kai emphasized that T4T was a process. Smith and Kai suggest that methods often focus on content as well as tactics. The T4T materials claim that T4T is not a methodology but rather a process. The T4T process centers on three parts of the training meeting and seven components, which are to be repeated during each meeting. The reasoning for resisting the label of method is unclear.

Kai understands T4T to serve a parachurch role. He proposes,

> T4T never exists apart from the church. It exists to strengthen the church, expand its witness, and establish new and healthy churches among every people group, tribe, and tongue. In the same way, existing churches and theological seminaries can contribute to the deepening and strengthening of growing T4T movements.[15]

This view of T4T's role in discipleship formation explains why T4T is utilized in many different types of church settings.

The Tactics of T4T

The CPM paradigm laid the foundation for the creation of the T4T process. Kai and Smith agree that T4T is a process and not a method. Smith endorses T4T as an "all-in-one CPM process."[16] He claims T4T enables believers to shift from evangelism to discipleship to church formation to leadership development seamlessly. This progression from evangelism to leadership development can be repeated from generation to generation. Prior to T4T, CPM practitioners did not have an all-in-one tool; rather, they

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[14] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 43.

[15] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 151-52.

[16] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 91.

had to piecemeal different methods together to achieve their desired results. Often, these methods did not complement one another, which slowed the reproducibility rate.

The T4T Process. The T4T practitioner's mantra could be, "Trust the process." Kai and Smith repeatedly enforce the idea that the process of T4T is the most important factor in achieving success.[17] This process does not endorse a grow then multiply mentality, but rather a launch and repeat emphasis.[18]

T4T meetings follow a three-part pattern. The first part looks back on the previous lesson and the trainee's performance. This part achieves its purpose by utilizing "praise and worship, pastoral care, accountability and vision casting."[19]

The second part is time to look up, to focus on God. At this point a new lesson is taught. In the first stages of the training group the trainer teaches the lesson. After the initial lessons, the trainees engage in a participatory Bible study. This Bible study equips the trainees to feed themselves from the Scriptures.

Finally, the third part focuses on looking forward. Since each trainee is expected to lead his own training group, the trainees take turns practicing leading the lesson they just received. Then they set goals for their evangelism and for their training group they lead. Afterwards they pray and are dismissed.

Smith proposes four of the seven activities in the process to be crucial to rapid reproduction. These four are accountability, vision casting, practice, and goal setting. His emphasis defies traditional practice of emphasizing pastoral care, worship, and Bible study. The emphasis of the first four lead to Smith concluding that if a trainer is pressed for time then spend time focusing on the four crucial aspects and eliminate the other

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[17] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 71. Cf. Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 38.

[18] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 155.

[19] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 71.

three.[20]

Kai's vison for the T4T process is to equip believers to be disciple-making disciples. He provides seven essentials for developing this type of disciple: the foundation, the worker, the harvest, the target, the development, the method, and the time.[21] The disciple's foundation includes sharing God's Word,[22] complete obedience to God, constant prayer, daily following Jesus, and giving thanks in all things. The worker refers to believers immediately engaging in the work of the gospel, training others to become leaders, and raising up persons of peace.[23] The harvest is all those near the believer who have not heard the gospel and all Christians around the believer who need to be trained to enter the harvest. The target is to preach the gospel to all peoples in all places so that everyone may hear the gospel. The essential aspect of development refers to the expectation that every believer should cultivate their own training groups and sow the gospel abundantly so that rapid reproduction is ensured. The essential aspect of the method guides the trainer to implement a church-multiplication strategy by teaching in small group settings, training and practice with trainees until they all are capable of immediately starting their own training group. Finally, the essential aspect of time communicates the urgency of this task; training must be done now, do not wait.

Kai identifies the key to success and sustainability for T4T movements to be

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[20] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 144-51.

[21] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 74-76.

[22] Kai points disciples to the church meetings. This gathering is where disciples are to share God's Word and build up the body of Christ. Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 74.

[23] The usage of "person of peace" here seems to be a different usage than most CPM missiology. Perhaps Kai means identifying persons of peace rather than cultivating. The term *raising* is confusing. Garrison defines a person of peace in this manner, "that individual already chosen by God to receive the gospel message." David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 211-12. Similarly, Elbert Smith defines a person of peace as, "someone who had been prepared for the gospel and would be receptive to it." E. Elbert Smith, *Church Planting by the Book* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 73.

tied to the methods.[24] The method is simply "to train every believer to immediately to evangelize and for them to personally train those they lead to Christ" to evangelize others also.[25]

One large question hangs over the study of T4T for this dissertation. Is T4T a church planting method? The strategy (or process as they prefer to call it) mainly focuses on evangelism and discipleship. Initial evaluations of T4T church planting efforts were dismissed by outside observers. The church planting emphasis of T4T appears to be added and developed after critique and reflection.[26] Despite the addition of a church planting focus, the major emphasis of T4T is on the process of discipleship.

Evangelism. The T4T process begins with a lesson that provides assurance of salvation for the trainee.[27] T4T views the world through a binary lens; people are either saved or lost. The lost need to be evangelized. The first lesson of T4T can be evangelistic if the trainee is lost. If the trainee is saved, then the first lesson provides assurance of salvation. Evangelism is immediately encouraged following the first lesson.[28] The times of accountability, vision casting, and setting goals during the training time are all directly related to the tasks of evangelism and discipleship.

Trainers instruct their trainees to engage in evangelism even if they do not yet believe the gospel.[29] This sort of instruction assumes that the trainee will either soon believe the message or drop out altogether. Since the purpose of T4T is to train believers,

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[24] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 99.

[25] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 100.

[26] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 155. Schattner describes how Kai's early churches were dismissed by scholars after they had observed the church gatherings. This dismissal led Smith to collaborate with Garrison on rethinking the value of ecclesiology within T4T training.

[27] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 15.

[28] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 67.

[29] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 73.

investment of time to address someone's questions or concerns about the gospel is not pursued. Theoretically, one could continually obey the commands of doing evangelism and training trainers without ever believing the gospel.

The method of evangelism taught to the trainees varies by context.[30] Every believer is equipped to immediately evangelize and then to personally train the people they lead to Christ to evangelize as well. This method of evangelism perpetuates a rapid succession of evangelism and basic discipleship. One could view these training groups as small evangelistic communities. This view is valid because the emphasis of the T4T process is to start new groups repeatedly and rapidly.

Discipleship. One must be mindful that T4T identifies its process as the key for discipleship over its content. The T4T process is predicated on teaching people to obey the command of Jesus, especially related to multiplication of believers and groups. The process is presented as unchangeable while the content is strongly suggested. The designers of the training allow for practitioners to adjust the content for the context, but the process should remain.

The power of the Holy Spirit is emphasized for trainers. Working through the Holy Spirit's power is essential for T4T success.[31] A distinction is made between being touched by the Spirit (spiritual regeneration) and ability to serve (baptism of the Spirit).[32]

Training is a synonym for discipleship in the T4T process.[33] The conviction of the T4T developers is that a disciple should be a trainer, one who trains others to train

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[30] Steve Smith, "Gospel Presentations Used in T4T Packages," T4Tonline.org, accessed January 18, 2016, http://t4tonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/3d-Gospel-Presentations-Used-in-T4T-Packages.pdf. In this article, Smith suggests two evangelistic tools for an Asian context. These two tools are "The Creation to Christ Story" and "Any 3." In some contexts, new believers are equipped to share the gospel utilizing their personal testimony.

[31] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 35.

[32] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 41-42.

[33] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 92.

others (2 Tim 2.2). Kai declares,

> We should not just bring people to believe in the Lord, become a church member, a Christian, etc., but we must train them to become a trainer (a true disciple) who can train others. We have to train everyone to become a trainer (Training For Trainers). We are convinced that every Christian, even a person who has just decided to believe in Christ, who cannot yet train others, is but a nominal Christian. It is not until one can train others that they can grow into a true disciple.[34]

The process of T4T suggests that basic training involves six lessons. Each lesson requires the trainee to set goals and go train others before moving onto the next lesson. These six lessons are followed by ongoing Bible studies that sustain the group.

The suggested six lessons for the T4T process include evangelism/assurance of salvation, prayer, personal devotions, doctrine of God, church formation, and God's will.[35] An emphasis on prayer permeates all the meetings.[36] The trainer is expected to cultivate a life of prayer individually and corporately.

Following the six initial lessons, a simple participatory Bible study is proposed for all trainers. The method calls for the group to read a short passage and then ask what the passage says, what does it teach to obey, and finally what from this passage should we share with others?[37] This format of Bible study is endorsed to sustain the life of the church.

The T4T discipleship process puts a premium on multiplication. Trainees are not encouraged to bring new people into existing groups. Rather they are to form new groups. In this way the trainee becomes the trainer.[38]

A repeated mantra taken from James 1:22, be a doer rather than a hearer only,

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[34] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 9.

[35] David Garrison and Richard Beckham, "T4T Online Trainer's Manual," T4Tonline.org, accessed January 18, 2016, http://t4tonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/T4TOnline-Trainers-Manual.pdf.

[36] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 50-55.

[37] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 68.

[38] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 74.

permeates the trainings and published materials. The T4T process emphasizes obedience-based discipleship.[39] "Obedience is the mark of true discipleship. Obedient disciples are not those who give verbal assent only, but actually obey what the Father commands,"[40] Smith and Kai agree, "T4T is built on an obedience-based discipleship model." Discipleship based in obedience is key in T4T.

The desired obedience from trainers to trainees in T4T is most clearly associated with evangelism and training group formation. In the T4T process, training emphasizes what one does over character or biblical knowledge. This emphasis on obedience can lead to active Christians who do not know the teachings of Scripture or aspire to mature Christian behavior. Wu warns that obedience "needs to be defined more holistically, not as is typical in methods that *functionally* reduce obedience to evangelism."[41] In this way, obedience expressed through believing correctly about God, aligning one's values with those given in Scripture, or adjusting one's desires appropriately are minimized, because those are related to the will. These acts of obedience cannot always be measured by outward action.

Church formation. The T4T process of church formation adjusts and adapts, based upon context, reflection, and even criticism. In the past, Garrison dismissed T4T churches, referring to them as trainer working groups.[42] He questioned the groups' attempt to fully function as a church. Smith's response was to acknowledge that some of

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[39] For a full critique on obedience-based discipleship within T4T, see Zane Pratt, "Obedience-Based Discipleship," in *Global Missiology* 4, no. 12 (July 2015): 1-10, http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/1811/4017.

[40] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 71.

[41] Jackson Wu, "Authority in a Collectivist Church: Identifying Critical Concerns for a Chinese Ecclesiology," in *Global Missiology* 1, no. 9 (October 2011): 29, http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/679/1688.

[42] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 156.

the T4T churches were unhealthy, but still churches nonetheless.[43]

Smith resolved to see healthy churches developed via the T4T process. The ecclesiological deficiencies in the method's early development did not prevent Garrison from boasting no method "has better earned the title of 'CPM Best Practice' than the remarkable T4T" movement.[44]

The fourth or fifth lesson in the T4T process focuses on church formation.[45] Kai writes,

> Christians should not only lead others to Christ; they must train others to form groups of disciples as they organize their won training groups. These training groups are emerging house churches, groups of people called together by the Lord to worship God and enjoy fellowship together with him. A house church, like at training group, is not limited by the number of people participating.[46]

The emphasis of the church gathering is expressed as following the patterns Jesus provided. These patterns are, "Worship, fellowship, training, evangelism, and the power of the Holy Spirit."[47] Kai adds to this pattern, "The church must observe the Lord's Supper, baptism, and offerings."[48] These lessons focus on the activity of the church.

The lesson should intentionally lead the training group to identify as a church.[49] If the lead trainer wants to facilitate a CPM, then this lesson is a necessity. Smith conveys, "The essential point is to help the new believers become a part of the Body of Christ in a reproducible form that fits into their community."[50] These churches

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[43] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 157.

[44] David Garrison, "Foreword," in Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 15.

[45] Since the trainer is given freedom to appropriately contextualize the lessons, the church formation lesson is ordinarily taught in the fourth or fifth meeting.

[46] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 60.

[47] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 66.

[48] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 66.

[49] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 249.

[50] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 250.

must be biblical and culturally reproducible. Practitioners are challenged to evaluate their model of church. First, they must verify if their church model is consistent with biblical teaching. Second, they must decipher whether or not an "average young believer" could plant and organize the church.

Smith identifies four helpful ideas for moving from a group to a church.[51] First, one must have a clear definition of the basic essentials of a church. Second, the training group should model church life, utilizing the separate thirds in the T4T process. By modeling for a group what church life looks like, the group can easily and naturally progress into church. Third, the trainer must specifically teach about the church and her ordinances. Finally, the trainer should introduce church health mapping.[52]

Church health mapping is done by using an illustrative tool. This tool helps to illustrate what a group is and is not doing when they meet together. This tool helps the group members identify if they are a church. The assessment tool introduced by Smith is very useful.[53] This tool provides a quick diagnosis of the activity of the young church. The church can evaluate whether are they are being faithful to biblical patterns as well as identify areas that may need more teaching and training.

The church mapping tool uses icons to correlate to key ecclesiological marks.[54] The tool allows for the church to report how many people attend on a regular basis. Also, it assesses how many of the attendees are believers and how many of the believers are baptized. If the church is covenanted together, then one can draw a solid line circle. If the group is not yet covenanted together, then a dotted line circle is drawn. The icons

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[51] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 251-57.

[52] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 255.

[53] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 255-57.

[54] Originally, the church mapping tool used words instead of images. The words were replaced by icons so that non-literate people could utilize the tool easily. Steve Smith, "The Bare Essentials of Helping Groups Become Churches: Four Helps in Church Planting Movements," in *Mission Frontiers* 34, no. 5 (September/October 2012): 25-26, http://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/34-5-the-bare-essentials.pdf.

representing the Bible, the Lord's Supper, fellowship, giving, prayer, worship, evangelism, and leadership can either be drawn inside or outside the circle, depending on the church's practice.

The key for sustaining these groups is identified as "A long term, simple Bible study method."[55] In this method, the leader does not teach; rather, he facilitates the Bible study for the small group. Two types of participatory Bible studies are offered.

The first type of participatory Bible study is guided by three questions.[56] The first question is what does the Bible say? The second question is how should one obey what the Bible says? The third question is with whom should I share this lesson? The group is expected to believe that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide the group in their understanding and application of the biblical lessons.

The second type of participatory Bible study is guided by four questions. These questions include, what is the Bible teaching in this passage?[57] Second, what sinful belief, action, or attitude is God rebuking in this passage? Third, what new beliefs, actions, or attitudes does this passage require believers to embrace? Finally, what must one apply to their life from the passage? These four questions provide the structure for new lesson portion of the group meeting after the initial T4T lessons are completed.

The goal of the T4T process related to church formation is primarily group reproduction. Part of the vision cast by the T4T trainers is for churches to multiply to four generations.[58] The biblical support for this goal is derived from 2 Timothy 2:2. Practitioners point to four generations of believers and churches in this passage. Paul represents the first generation, Timothy is the second generation, faithful men is the third

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[55] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 67.

[56] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers,* 196.

[57] Garrison, "T4T Online Trainer's Manual," 146.

[58] Smith, "The Basic CPM Plan and T4T," 9.

generation, and the fourth generation is identified as others.

The process of reproduction is facilitated by the trainees obeying the teachings they receive each week. In theory, the trainees become trainers of other trainees. Therefore, T4T trainers can be actively committed to the life and ministry of multiple churches. These groups are led by the founding trainer, who continues to emphasize the multiplication of trainers and groups.

Leadership Development. In the T4T process, leaders are trainers, and trainers are leaders. All believers should be trained and expected to train others. Kai suggests, "At the most basic level, to shepherd a church is to cultivate believers, training them to become disciples."[59] He continues, "The main purpose of everything we do is to move everyone towards becoming trainers, with rapid propagation down from one generation to another."[60] Leaders train disciples who will lead and train other disciples. Leadership is always equated with training in the T4T process.

Implicit in the method's name is the training of trainers; therefore, this tactic is not promoted as leadership training.[61] However, the practitioners recognize that they are training those who will lead new groups.

Leaders are not appointed in the T4T process. Rather, leaders choose themselves.[62] One becomes a leader when he starts his own T4T group.

The developers of T4T acknowledge the attention given to the qualifications of church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.[63] This attention focuses on the status

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[59] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 74.

[60] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 75.

[61] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 21.

[62] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 260.

[63] Steve Smith and Steve Addison, "The Bible on Church Planting Movements," *Mission Frontiers* 33, no. 2 (March-April 2011): 1-5, https://www.cmaresources.org/files/qualified-to-lead-steve-smith.pdf.

of the church and the aspiration or appointment of leaders. The attention to these biblical arguments does not seem to be congruent with the claim that T4T groups are led by the one who intentionally starts them.

Leading the small groups and emerging churches requires leading participatory Bible studies.[64] Leaders are discouraged from doing the work of exegesis and preaching from the Bible. This type of teaching is discouraged because it may cause believers to be dependent upon the leaders.[65] Since the goal of T4T is reproduction of groups rather than the growth, development, and maturity of groups, dependency upon a teacher or teaching method that is not easily reproducible is discouraged.

If one views leadership as a pyramid, then the leader at the top of the pyramid assumes the most responsibility for the ongoing multiplication of the groups. The leaders of the groups further down the pyramid need to be supported, counseled, helped, and encouraged. If the top leaders do not assist the leaders down the chain, Kai asserts, "The small groups may experience problems, possibly to the point of disbanding."[66] This type of leadership development resembles an episcopal church polity.

Leadership should multiply as churches multiply.[67] Smith bases two leadership lessons for the development process upon Jesus' example.[68] First, Smith gives assignments to disciples, observes who is faithful, and then increases their responsibly. Second, he looks for faithful men rather than skillful men. He believes it is easier to teach skills than faithfulness.

Since T4T focuses on establishing new churches and repeating the process

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[64] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 67.

[65] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 67.

[66] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 102.

[67] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 259.

[68] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 263.

rapidly, the qualifications provided in Titus 1:5-9 for church leaders are preferred. As

mentioned before, T4T leaders are not appointed as Titus was instructed to do. Smith

instructs, "You must develop biblical expectations for leaders *appropriate to their stage

of responsibility and development*."[69] Church leaders are not expected to fulfil the

qualifications that are unique to 1 Timothy 3.1-7. The reason provided is the church in

Crete is new, and the church in Ephesus is mature. Smith observes four key differences

between the two lists supplied by Paul.[70] First, these differences include appointing

(Crete) against aspiring (Ephesus). Second, the list for Cretan leaders does not include

not being a new convert. Third, the differences point to those who are growing in Christ

(Crete) versus those who are mature in Christ (Ephesus). Finally, Smith draws a

distinction between the Cretan qualification of holding fast the Word and the Ephesian of

an aptitude to teach.

The distinction between the development of the churches in Ephesus and Crete

are recognized as well as the differing qualifications for leaders. Merkle agrees,

> The church in Crete was much younger, making nearly all the potential candidates
> for eldership 'recent converts.' In this case, if new believers were not appointed as
> elders, there would be no elders. Consequently, this qualification is not absolute but
> depends somewhat on the situational context of the congregation involved.[71]

Hammett does not indicate the distinction in contexts. He observes, "These differences

imply that Paul was not trying in either list to be exhaustive, but giving a representative

list of character traits an elder should embody. Nonetheless, while the lists are not

intended to be exhaustive, they are fairly comprehensive."[72] The issue of context is

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[69] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 266.

[70] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 268-73.

[71] Benjamin L. Merkle, "Biblical Eldership in the Context of Church Planting," *Global Missiology* 1, no. 9 (October 2009): 15, http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/1/2. For a more developed argument of the differences, see Benjamin L. Merkle, "Hierarchy in the Church? Instruction from the Pastoral Epistles Concerning Elders and Overseers," in *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 2, no. 1 (2004): 45-62, http://www.baptistcenter.net/Documents/Journals/2004_spring/04%20Hierarchy%20in%20the%20Church.pdf.

[72] John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*

important, but it should not be authoritative in appointing leaders. What should be authoritative is the Scriptures clear call to appoint men who exemplify Christian character and behavior with an ability to lead the church in understanding the teachings of Scripture.

Leadership development is expressed as training the saved and casting vision for them to become more like Christ and to be used by God for his purposes.[73] Casting vision is repeated throughout the literature. Smith suggests casting vision to be of even greater significance than evangelism and church planting in achieving CPM status.

The Ecclesiology of T4T

Groups formed by T4T can become a house church, but that expectation is not a requirement. Sometimes these groups become autonomous churches, and other times these groups are part of a larger church. The validity of T4T's ecclesiological assertions and practices are questioned by some.[74]

Explicit Teachings on Ecclesiology

The majority of the ecclesiology affirmations in the T4T process is contained within the one lesson of church formation. The lesson does not go in depth on ecclesiological expectations. Church formation and then reproduction is the expectation.

Lean ecclesiology. T4T endorses simple church formats similar to the CPM expectations for the church. These simple churches enable the new church to faithfully

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(Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 167.

[73] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 189.

[74] For critiques of T4T ecclesiology, see Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 155-57. Cf John Henry Serworwora, "The Ecclesiology of Training for Trainers: The Issue of Method and 1 Timothy 3:6," *Great Commission Research Journal* 6, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 91-114. Cf. George A. Terry, "A Missiology of Excluded Middles: An Analysis of the T4T Scheme for Evangelism and Discipleship," *Themelios* 42, no. 2 (August 2017): 335-52. Cf. Adam Coker, "A Strange Sort of Orthodoxy: An Analysis of the T4T and CPM Approach to Missions," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 59, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 77-87.

follow Christ. The trainer's definition of church needs to be simple. Church life based upon this definition should be modeled in the group.

These simple churches are encouraged to utilize venues for meeting that are easy to find and not costly. Smith describes T4T churches as being, "Acts 2 type churches that display the basic covenant and characteristics of that Acts 2 community whether they meet in homes or in dedicated buildings. Usually I am implying house churches or church-like small groups of a larger worshipping community."[75] T4T does not develop much of an ecclesiology beyond that of the basic functions of church described in Acts 2

Smith develops his definition of church from Acts 2:36-47. His definition contains three emphases. First, the church is a covenant community. Second, these churches abide in Christ through eight characteristics: worship, fellowship, giving, prayer, studying and obeying the Scriptures, taking the Lord's Supper, evangelizing, and ministering to people's needs. Finally, the church appoints caring leaders.

Church membership. T4T affirms that every Christian should be a member of a spiritual family.[76] However, Kai draws a distinction between disciple and church member.[77] T4T does not want to produce mere church members. The view of simply being a church member in T4T is negative.

Despite this negative view of being a church member, members should turn their focus toward their church. The church family should become the center of community for the believing members.[78]

In T4T, churches are not defined by the size of their membership.[79] Smith

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[75] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 20.

[76] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 185.

[77] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 8-9.

[78] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 126.

[79] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 101.

argues that two or three gathered together are sufficient for starting a church but should not remain at that size; they should grow in members. Since T4T is concerned with the rapid reproduction of churches, then the size of the church is never a focal point of the teachings on church.

Jesus is the head of the church. The head of the church is acknowledged as Jesus. The patterns of training, gathering, and evangelizing he instituted serve as a model for the groups to emulate. Since Jesus is the head of the church, then the church is his body. Since each church is his body, then churches should naturally network together to fulfill the mission of training trainers. Churches are right to network together to further the expansion of the gospel through collaboration.

Church functions. The church is taught to fulfill five functions. The five functions of the church are worship, fellowship, teaching, ministry, and the power of the Holy Spirit.[80] In addition to the functions of the church, the church is also obligated to observe three other practices. The obligations of the church include baptism, taking the Lord's Supper, and giving offerings.[81] When a group commits to become a church together and adds these three practices to their meetings, they are a church. The ecclesiology of T4T is heavily functional. The group meeting together is guiding to determine if they are a church based upon what they do. The assumption is that they are doing certain things because of an underlying belief; but those beliefs are not clear.

Baptism and church are not necessarily linked in the training materials for literate trainees. The section on baptism in the church formation lesson claims that baptism is "righteousness we need to fulfill."[82] You can have church with no baptized

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[80] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 185-86.

[81] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 186-88. The obligation of offerings receives the most space in the "church" lesson.

[82] Steve Smith, "Church Formation Resources," T4Tonline.org, accessed January 18, 2018,

members if the group identifies as a church. However, the teaching of T4T affirms that every believer should be baptized. The trainer should teach the group about baptism. The lesson on church formation for non-literate trainees is much clearer regarding the correlation between church membership and baptism.[83]

Smith does emphasize the role of the Lord's Supper in the life of the church. He writes, "Regular observance of the Lord's Supper keeps a church focused on the centrality of the faith: the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus and the redemption that comes only through Him. It has a wonderfully purifying effect on the church when observed regularly in a biblically-appropriate manner."[84] Smith was impacted by a testimony of a church in China that endured persecution while being cut-off from the rest of the world. The church was not mature but remained devoted to Christ as they partook in the Lord's Supper regularly.

Church leadership. In order for a T4T church to achieve their goals, traditional paradigms of pastoral leadership must be discarded.[85] Trainers replace the role of elder/overseer/pastor. Leaders are not chosen; rather, they identify themselves as they lead others to faith and train them to train others.

The office and title of deacon is acknowledged in biblical times, but this role in a T4T church is diminished. In a T4T church, the trainer is exhorted to be trained to carry out church administrative needs so that healthy churches are developed.[86]

Leadership is always about training trainers. Through generational reproduction a trainer is responsible for caring for and equipping the trainers under his

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http://t4tonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/3c-Church-Formation-Resources.pdf.

[83] Smith, "Church Formation Resources," 6.

[84] Smith, "Church Formation Resources," 1.

[85] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 147.

[86] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 151.

tutelage. The head trainer will provide care for his trainee and new trainings to develop leadership skills.

Implicit Teachings on Ecclesiology

The T4T teachings on church are more explicit than implicit. Still, a few ideas about the church are implied in the training process.

Training. Training is elevated to be the essential purpose of the church. Two issues result from the T4T training process that promote ecclesiological implications. First, discipleship is equated with training. The T4T training emphasizes its process over content. So, process is communicated to be more important that the content. Following the training process leads to reproduction. Since reproduction is the goal of T4T, then the church appears to be an avenue for conducting training.

Second, in T4T, ordinarily, church leadership is about training but not necessarily about shepherding. The point of leadership is to provide the most simplistic tools that can be mastered and reproduced quickly so that the movement can continue. The emphasis is always on the movement of the gospel to unbelievers and equipping the new believers for the work of T4T.

Reproduction. The elevated importance of training is for the purpose of reproduction. Disciples, groups, and churches are expected to reproduce, utilizing the T4T process.

The church exists to reproduce herself. These churches resemble small evangelistic communities. The characteristics of the church provided in the T4T literature point to what happens in a church gathering. Outside of that gathering, the expectation appears to be that the church members would be evangelizing and training others.

Trainers should be members of multiple churches. Group members are expected to become trainers. So, it follows to reason that each member can be a member

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of multiple churches or groups. The trainer returns on a regular basis to receive training and then takes the new lessons to the groups or churches he is responsible for leading.

Indigeneity. The T4T training process is to train trainers who will train other trainers. In this way, groups are enabled to reproduce rapidly. Rapid reproduction of trainers is the implicit goal of the process.

The indigenous nature of these groups is encouraged because it leads to the most rapid results. Practitioners report that T4T groups operating with local partnerships rather than being led by outsiders are more effective. Smith notes that these national believers were 90 percent more effective in performing baptisms and church planting.[87] The value of indigenous churches is tied to the results they produce.

Health. Since T4T emphasizes reproduction, one may wonder how healthy the churches are. The assumption of T4T practitioners appears to be that reproducing T4T groups are necessarily healthy since the emphasis is on reproduction and not on health.[88]. These groups reproduce because they are healthy; they obey what they know the Scriptures require them to obey.

In the T4T process, an unhealthy church is a church deficient in obedience. Smith acknowledges, even if a group is unhealthy, it is still a church.[89] The church can be trained through the T4T process to become healthier. Sticking to the T4T process ensures that churches will develop and mature. Practitioners admit that this maturation process will eventually require specialized training in church management.[90]

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[87] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 189-90.

[88] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 186.

[89] Schattner, "Sustainability within Church Planting Movements," 157.

[90] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 150.

Summary

Churches established utilizing the T4T process and suggested lesson plans are simple churches. They are designed to reproduce rapidly and remain committed to the urgent task of training believers to engage in the most important tasks of evangelism and basic discipleship. The simplicity of the ecclesiology imbedded with the T4T process allows for a church to be agile as she grows; but also, may hinder her maturity. The members of T4T for churches will not doubt be trained to do some things the Bible commands well; but the question of knowing and being faithful to all that is delivered to the saints is reasonable to ask.

Examining T4T Ecclesiology through the Flourishing Church Rubric

T4T practitioners claim that the T4T process leads to a multiplication of new churches being planted by its own metrics. Whether these new churches are enabled and equipped to flourish is not so clear. The potential of T4T practices to prepare new churches to flourish can be discerned. They are discerned by evaluating T4T ecclesiology, using the rubric proposed in chapter two.[91]

God-Glorifying

The rubric identifies that the essence of the church is to glorify God. Fifteen questions are presented which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

The foundational conviction of T4T is the belief, "We are doing the will of the

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[91] The ecclesiology being evaluated is limited to the ecclesiology presented within T4T published documents and training materials cited above. The ecclesiological components noted throughout this section are taken from the aforementioned materials. The resulting churches are not evaluated.

Father."[92] So, in response to the teaching of God's Word, practitioners ground their practice in doing God's will. Tying God's will with God's glory must be done apart from the T4T training documents because the two are tied together within the T4T process.

The basic T4T training lessons contain one lesson about God.[93] This lesson emphasizes God is the new believer's spiritual Father. Recent lesson adaptations include a section on the triune nature of God. Thus, the relationship between the Christian and God is rooted in the relationship between the triune godhead. This lesson also teaches that God loves, provides, protects, and disciplines (trains) the believer.[94]

Rather than point to God's glory in salvation, this lesson communicates that God is focused upon the believer. This lesson miscommunicates a key factor regarding the glory of God as central to the essence of the church. This miscommunication places the created being at the center of the biblical story of redemption rather than God. This subtle shift of focus in the early discipleship lessons can lead to problems as the newly established churches develop and mature.

T4T churches believe they are declaring God's glory because they highly value evangelism. If equating God's glory with the gospel is accurate, then T4T churches do in fact declare God's glory. However, the possibility exists within T4T ecclesiology that God's glory is reduced to only the gospel message. The simple gospel message can and should be expounded upon to convey the extent of God's glory.

This first part of the rubric assumes that a church planting method will at least acknowledge glorifying God as a component of church life. T4T does not. Many questions supplied by the rubric cannot be answered based upon the published materials related to T4T. Some conclusions can be drawn.

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[92] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 83.

[93] Garrison, "T4T Online Trainer's Manual," 17-18.

[94] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 189-91.

First, worship does not intend to reflect or magnify God's glory. Worship is simply part of a process that should be imitated and duplicated. Worship is affirmed as one aspect of the church. To worship God is to obey God. Worship is reduced to an act of obedience.

Next, God's word is not proclaimed by an authoritative teacher. So, the proclamation of God's word cannot glorify God. The Scriptures are studied in the lesson part of the T4T process. The group utilizes a participatory Bible study method. T4T affirms the authority of God's word but does not encourage it to be studied or taught beyond what can be gleaned in this study method.

A T4T practitioner may acknowledge that God's glory is manifest among the gathered church through mutual submission and unity. The trainees are unified by submitting to the training process. The expectations for their relationships are to train other Christians in the T4T process.

Idolatry is avoided as the church becomes aware of idolatry through the participatory Bible study. The only way for idolatry to be exposed is for someone to acknowledge the Scripture's teaching against it and commit to obey it. A harsh critic may suggest that obedience or multiplication is erected as an idol within the T4T process.

Obedience and rapid reproduction could possible distract from God's glory. The T4T process puts people at the center of the strategy. In this way one may assume they are glorifying God because they were instructed to perform in such a way.

Finally, T4T does acknowledge the Trinity. Some of the unique roles each of the persons of the Godhead play in establishing the church are scattered throughout the literature. The Father loves his children, provides for them, protects, and disciplines them. The Son sets the example of discipleship for the church to follow. The Son is also the one who provides forgiveness of sin through his death on a cross. Much more attention is given to role and activities of the Spirit. The role and activities of the Spirit will be discussed further in the "Holy Spirit Empowered" section.

T4T practitioners may protest that they do glorify God in their actions and methods. Regardless of their protests, no clear expectations are communicated within the T4T process that God's glory is the basis or goal. One is right to question how a new church established using these means will know and understand her primary orientation to be God's glory.

Word-Centered

The rubric presents twenty-seven questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Ten of these questions relate to the headship of Jesus over the church. Seventeen questions address the role of the Bible's authority in the life, teaching, and practice of the church. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

T4T ecclesiology acknowledges Jesus is head of the church. His headship is manifest through an implementation of his pattern of discipleship. His sacrificial death on the cross and subsequent resurrection from the dead form the core of the gospel message T4T churches spread.

T4T churches submit to Jesus by focusing on the harvest. Much emphasis is given to Jesus' teaching regarding harvests. These teachings are believed to lead individual believers to engage in evangelism and establishing new groups through the T4T process.

The ministries of the church display Jesus as the core of the church's existence. The gospel is the first lesson taught. Believers receive assurance of their salvation in that lesson. Unbelievers are challenged to repent and believe in Jesus. At the end of that lesson, believers are taught to share the gospel with unbelievers.

The T4T process distracts from the supreme and central role of Jesus in the church. Besides the gospel story, Jesus is typically only referenced as someone who

should be obeyed. Trainers evaluate their performance as trainers based upon obedience to Christ. The grace and mercy of Jesus on behalf of the church is missing. Human performance replaces the acts of Jesus in the life of the church. Another example is in worship, believers "encounter their Father through the Spirit (John 4.23-24)."[95] No acknowledgement of a believer's union with Christ is mentioned. In these ways the person and work of Jesus is not explicitly or appropriately magnified.

The teaching ministry of the church is diminished, so evaluating the teachings regarding the nature of Christ is nearly impossible. Since churches sustain themselves through participatory Bible studies rather than a mature believer who is equipped to teach, then it is difficult to imagine that Christology is taught appropriately. However, one early lesson does discuss the trinity and each member of Godhead's role. The lesson is for new believers and is not a robust teaching. The lesson does the lay the foundation for understanding the triune relationship and Jesus' place in it.

The church summarily acknowledges Jesus as lord and king through the ministry of evangelism and obeying his commands. Little else in the T4T process is designed to or prescribes the church to relate to or celebrate Jesus in any other way. T4T does encourage practitioners to adapt to the contexts within which they serve. For this reason, one may hope that Jesus is exalted in the teachings and lessons developed in addition to the T4T process.

The church must also acknowledge the written and revealed Word of God. T4T affirms this truth in its teaching, but sometimes appears to contradict it in practice. The Word of God is viewed as the foundation and authoritative. Special emphasis is given to the passages of the New Testament that emphasize the ministry of evangelism. One finds several concerning patterns regarding the expectations of the T4T church as it relates to the Word of God.

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[95] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 129.

Several concerns about the hermeneutics utilized by T4T exist.[96] One example is equating T4T's success with Acts 19. Smith performs eisegesis when he states, "The vast majority of people who came to faith - thousands and thousands - were won to faith through the witness of fairly young Christians excited about their newfound faith."[97] The Scripture does not describe how the believers in Ephesus discipled others, nor does it specify numbers. The only active disciple-maker described is Paul. Smith's assessment is conjecture which is forged to cast vision for T4T trainers. The exercise in faulty interpretation sets an example for future trainers to follow. The teachings on the kingdom parables of Jesus are also tenuous. The major emphasis in the interpretation of those passages focuses on evangelism and obedience-based discipleship. Rather than doing the hard work of exegesis, interpretations are drawn that easily serve the stated desire of theT4T process.

In addition to the questionable hermeneutics, T4T supports its lessons and foundational principles with proof-texting. George Terry claims, "T4T's approach to the Scriptures at key points is characterized by proof texting and that it depends on a series of false dichotomies that regularly exclude the middle area that conveys the biblical balance."[98] Sometimes, proof-texting is necessary to show how the Scriptures address a particular topic throughout its entirety. T4T relies on this practice to serve its own purposes without digging into the prooftexts appropriately in their own context.

T4T rejects discipleship that is knowledge-based. T4T affirms study of scripture that leads to tangible acts of obedience. The knowledge of scripture by a disciple is not enforced in the T4T process. Terry observes rightly and critiques, "The devaluation of Bible knowledge, Bible study, and Bible teaching in T4T is subtle, but

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[96] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 26.

[97] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 33.

[98] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 336.

apparent."[99] He continues, "The content of Scripture is not valued except that which can be directly obeyed. Although Smith makes a couple of passing statements affirming biblical content, they are effectively buried by the avalanche of disparaging statements elsewhere."[100] In this way, T4T encourages a "zeal without knowledge" which Paul warns against (Rom 10.2).

T4T does acknowledge Jesus as the head of the church and that Scripture is authoritative. The disconcerting issue with these two affirmations is that the T4T process is unwilling to flesh these affirmations out. The primary goal of rapid reproduction of groups may limit the ability of T4T church to flourish, for their members to know God and enjoy Him.

Holy Spirit-Empowered

The rubric presents twelve questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

Kai affirms early in the process that dependence upon the Holy Spirit is necessary for any success using the T4T process.[101] This dependence on the Holy Spirit is the foundation for calling T4T practitioners to engage in holy living and prayer.

Smith shares the conviction that the crucial principal undergirding the T4T process is the working of the Holy Spirit. Smith labels the Holy Spirit as an attacker and teacher. Smith writes, "The Holy Spirit is out there all around your neighborhood, city or people group *attacking* lost people."[102] By attacking, Smith means convicting people of

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[99] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 348.

[100] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 348.

[101] Kai and Kai, *Training for Trainers*, 35.

[102] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 74.

their sin, stirring up a desire for righteousness, and warning them of eternal death and judgment.

Smith believes that the Spirit is the ultimate teacher for the Christian (John 14.26; 1 John 2.27). He laments traditional discipleship strategies which depend on a human teacher. He assumes that since the Holy Spirit is present with all believers, then disciples can mature more rapidly and be enabled to make new disciples quicker.[103]

T4T affirms that the Holy Spirit must enable and sustain a CPM by his power in this process. In CPMs the critical factor is that new local believers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are starting new churches that repeat the process until the whole people group is saturated with the gospel.[104] In this way, the Spirit's ministry is understood to draw people to Christ.

Practitioners are directed to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. This cooperation is understood to take place as one obeys God. Smith reports, "Ying Kai would not say that T4T works. He would say that the Holy Spirit works and that every practitioner needs a way to work in faith in cooperation with the Spirit."[105] The terminology of cooperation can be misleading. One does not cooperate with God in His works. God works. God may choose to work through his servants. God's servants are creatures and thus cannot cooperate with their creator, rather they are able to submit to their creator's will.

One area lacking in the emphasis of the role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the church in T4T is spiritual gifting. The Holy Spirit gifts every believer so that the believer is able to serve and build up the church.

The T4T process actually diminishes the gifting of the Spirit when it diminishes the role of gifted teachers. Terry warns that T4T, "Overlooks the biblical balance

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[103] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 77.

[104] Smith, "An Evaluation of T4T," 1.

[105] Smith, "An Evaluation of T4T," 194.

in Scripture of God calling and gifting godly teachers to make disciples (Eph 4.11; 1 Cor 12.28), the importance of the role of teaching throughout all of Scripture, and the indispensable role of teaching in the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt 28.18–20)."[106] The Spirit's role of teacher is so emphasized in T4T that Christians are actually discouraged from teaching. The T4T process is so focused on reproducing new groups that no attention or affirmation is given to the giftings that build up and serve the church. In fact, T4T implies that gifting is of no importance since any and all believers can begin new groups. Pratt warns against diminishing the role of teaching for new Christians, "There is no such thing as burdening young Christians with heavy Bible doctrine. To regard the great theological themes of the Bible as unnecessary for new believers is to disregard what the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, thought essential for the new believers of the early church."[107] To discard the role of gifted teachers or the teaching of deep theological truths to new Christians is to fail to set up these believers to flourish as a new church.

Identifiable Community

The rubric presents sixteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

Typically, T4T contains five or six foundational lessons. The fourth or fifth lesson is proposed to lead to the group identifying as a church. This lesson coupled with the church mapping tool provides a launching point to establish church from embryonic forms.[108] The church mapping tool introduced to help the church form can also be used to

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[106] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 350.

[107] Pratt, "Obedience-Based Discipleship," 7.

[108] Smith, "An Evaluation of T4T," 207.

evaluate the church's growth and maturity.[109]

This tool is useful in evaluating the outward activities of the church but does not necessarily address spiritual growth or maturity. This tool reinforces performance and simplicity. Since performance is promoted, then only what the church is doing is evaluated. One example would be Bible study. The church may be reading the Bible together and someone may even be teaching a lesson, but no concern is given towards the correct teaching. T4T assumes that the Spirit will correct the church as long as the Scriptures are open, read, and taught. This assumption is naïve and can lead to the proliferation of false doctrines permeating a church.

Smith reports that the church is led to embrace and acknowledge a church covenant, practice church characteristics, and appoint caring leaders.[110] The members of the group are encouraged to covenant together. The covenant may or may not be formally written. The characteristics or practices of the church include worship, fellowship, prayer, obedience to the Word, evangelism, ministry, offerings, and the Lord's Supper. Leaders are to be appointed following the example of Titus 1:5-9 exclusively. Since T4T is concerned only with church formation and not necessarily healthy church development, then these expectations are not surprising.

In many places, Smith and Kai seem to be saying different things and even contradict their own claims. One issue where this is evident is baptism. Neither Smith nor Kai believes baptism should be delayed.[111] However, T4T does not clearly explain how baptism relates to church membership. T4T does affirm the definition of church includes baptized believers. However, the T4T process seems to be ambiguous regarding the relationship between the church and baptism. In T4T, baptism appears to be an individual

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[109] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 255-57.

[110] Smith, "An Evaluation of T4T," 206.

[111] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 237-47.

profession of faith distinct from the church's role in affirming the believer's profession. The church mapping tool suggests that a church may be covenanted together with several members who are not baptized, and neither does the church celebrate the Lord's Supper.

In the T4T process, leadership qualifications are identified for appointing leaders. However, numerous times throughout the literature the idea is conveyed that leaders choose themselves.[112] When leaders are recognized or appointed, they are usually appointed by an outside trainer. Serwowora is concerned that this type of leadership appointment betrays Baptist church polity.[113] The practice of leadership appointment in this way does not allow the church to exercise the God-given wisdom to obey the Scriptures and choose their own leaders.

 The development of leaders is dependent upon the pyramid scheme of church multiplication imbedded with the T4T process. The trainers who sit at the top the of scheme are responsible for developing the leaders who emerge and prove themselves through obedience and result. The terminology for leaders is always trainers. Serwowora points out that the Kai and Smith contradict themselves in choosing this new terminology.[114] The term *trainer* is chosen to counteract the pride in the leaders' hearts who are new converts. This practice ignores the instructions of Paul to Timothy to not appoint new converts to leadership because of the temptation of pride. Regardless of the title, pride is a real temptation that Satan can and will use to disrupt the church.

From covenanting together to choosing leaders, the T4T process establishes messy churches. The literature suggests that they desire to establish healthy churches, but the process and lack of clarity often lead to less than healthy churches. The church mapping tool is useful for evaluating church formation and health, but the terms and

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[112] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 260.

[113] Serworwora, "Ecclesiology of Training for Trainers," 97.

[114] Serworwora, "Ecclesiology of Training for Trainers," 97.

expectations need to be more clearly defined for a church to flourish where she is planted.

Professing Truth

The rubric presents eleven questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

T4T churches are taught that Jesus is the head of the church and that the Bible is authoritative for the life of the Christian. The Holy Spirit is present with each believer. Profession of personal faith and obedience to Scripture is observable through baptism and taking the Lord's Supper. These appear to be the core truths grounding the T4T churches.

T4T churches are focused outwardly toward multiplication. Therefore, taking time to develop their core beliefs is not encouraged. Since no teacher is recognized besides the Holy Spirit, then when the church gathers for Bible study, anyone gathered together can affirm biblical truth. How to deal with erroneous teaching is not discussed. The presumption is that the believers who are full of the Holy Spirit will correct the faulty teaching.

T4T emphasizes doing the word and not simply hearing it. So, professing faith and truth verbally is diminished, and outward obedient acts are celebrated. One of the greatest faults in T4T is that it diminishes the role of hearing and believing truth. This diminishment opens the door for false teaching to come in and corrupt young churches. Comparing T4T's lack of emphasis on teaching sound doctrine and the apostle Paul's imperative on it, Terry comments,

> Given the extant threat of all kinds of false teaching, it was unthinkable for the apostle to simply entrust believers to the care of the Spirit. Paul's preferred antidote was making sure their disciples knew "the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim 1:13) and were thoroughly trained in "the words of faith and of doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6). According to Scripture, knowing the content passed down from Christ through his apostles is an essential part of growing up in him and, when conveyed through the lives of godly teachers, it is an indispensable element of the biblical model of discipleship. T4T's depreciation of teaching content is foreign to Scripture.[115]

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[115] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 351.

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Obeying Scripture is an important issue to address in the discipleship process but teaching sound doctrine establishes and matures a church upon the word of God. This practice should not be diminished.

This lack of teaching sound doctrine limits a church's ability to flourish. The clear teaching of sound doctrine will equip church members to grow in faith, endure suffering, and be more Christ-like in all their interactions. This aspect of the T4T church planting process is weakest.

Kingdom Expansion

The rubric presents ten questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

T4T churches exist to multiply and spread the gospel. If these churches are characterized by one aspect, evangelism would be it. T4T suggests that its process rejects all the wrong ways the church is pursuing discipleship and recovers the original revolution of the gospel through discipleship patterns established by Jesus, Paul, and the early church. Since T4T recovers the original plan, then the practitioners believe it will lead to inevitable growth multiplication.

T4T does not prescribe one particular evangelism method, but rather recognizes the need to cultivate appropriate methods for a given context. Particular methods are mentioned in the book for illustrative purposes.

T4T does make the bold claim that it is an all-encompassing evangelism, discipleship, church plating, leadership development process. Smith asserts, "T4T is an all-in-one process that God uses to move a person from lostness to maturing disciple who

can start a new group (or church) and train them to do the same."[116] The goal of this method being all encompassing is to facilitate CPMs more rapidly.

Despite the strong emphasis on evangelism, multiplying disciples and churches, T4T does have some problems in the realm of kingdom expansion. For example, trainees are expected to evangelize regardless of their beliefs. The first lesson in the T4T process is evangelism. Either unbelievers are evangelized, or believers receive assurance of salvation through the lesson. Then the lesson teaches the trainee how to do evangelism. The participant is simply expected to put this training into practice. Whereas many methods teach and train disciples to do the work of evangelism over time, the trainee in this case is expected to simply obey the command to evangelize. Everyone in the group is expected to evangelize.

The T4T approach to evangelism does have some problems. One identified problem is utilizing the gospel as the filter. The desire for speed and rapid reproduction promotes the idea that one should not spend time with unbelievers to help them progress towards faith. Rather, T4T pushes participants to evangelize indiscriminately in order to find the ones that the Holy Spirit is attacking and are ready to receive the gospel. Terry points out the problem with this principle: "Although it cannot be denied that the gospel functions as a filter for receptive people, the claim begs the question of contextualization, since not every presentation of the gospel will filter for every context."[117] Sometimes people may not respond to the gospel in faith for reasons other than simply rejecting the gospel. Sometimes the evangelist may be unclear, or obstacles are created for the hearer due to the context.[118] Going forward in evangelism without doing self-reflection on one's

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[116] Smith, "An Evaluation of T4T," 94.

[117] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 344.

[118] Coker, "A Strange Sort of Orthodoxy," 80. Coker adds, "Assembly-line approaches to evangelism are problematic in that they typically do not take into account the spiritual process happening in a person's heart as he or she is confronted with the gospel by the Spirit."

gospel presentation, taking context into consideration, and recognizing other factors at play can eventually inoculate someone from every receiving the gospel.

T4T practitioners and churches would do well to re-evaluate their approach to evangelism. As Terry points out, "It is possible to be intentional and active in sharing, but to do it in a more relational and culturally conversant manner. Rejecting a passive and lethargic witnessing scheme does not automatically infer an indiscriminate and aggressive one."[119] If T4T really roots its process in Acts, then practitioners should wrestle with the lack of rapid response in certain places in Paul's journeys and Paul's decision to remain in that place for a while to cultivate a hearing among unbelievers. Paul took time to communicate the gospel in a clear and contextualized manner. Terry ultimately warns, "Although T4T affirms finding cultural bridges, it devalues the influence of context in communication. The result is an excessively narrow view of evangelism, which constrains the church's ability to translate the message across cultures and especially among more resistant peoples."[120] T4T practitioners should do the hard work of evaluating their evangelism methods and prescribed expectations of rapid response and multiplication.

Even beyond evangelism, every member of the embryonic church is expected to disciple others. The T4T process is the model the trainees are expected to follow. In this way, at the end of each lesson, the trainees practice what they will do. So, the process is modeled and practiced together. The process contains five or six core lessons.

Smith provides a list of what is adaptable and what is not adaptable. The things that are adaptable can be reduced to things that are reproducible. The list contains mobilization, engaging the lost, evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and leadership development. The content is not important as long as the method can be reproduced. He

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[119] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 342.

[120] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 347.

conveys that the process should contain six to ten discipleship lessons.[121]

The parts of the process that are not adaptable to the context, according to Smith include that the process be rooted in Scripture, contextualized, and reproducible. Reproducibility is an important piece of the T4T process. The content is not nearly as important to the process as whether or not it is reproducible. In fact, Smith even teaches that when a trainer is pressed for time he should eliminate pastoral care, worship, and biblical teaching from the training session and focus on accountability, vision casting, practice, and goal setting.[122]

The elevation of the process over the content is problematic. The push for rapid reproduction devalues the work of character building in the discipleship process. Coker notes that neglecting character traits leads to numerous problems:

> This kind of discipleship leads to legalism and is man-centered rather than Christ-centered. Genuine spiritual maturity is more about character than performance. Even if doing the right things were key, what are those things? The T4T approach makes it seem like witnessing and starting new groups are the main commands of the New Testament. This simply is not true.[123]

By focusing on the process over content trainers neglect necessary spiritual formation that individual Christians to growth in maturity. This negation also robs churches of healthy and mature members and leaders.

The mantra of the T4T practitioner could be "trust the process." The process contains the built-in mechanism of obedience that should propel trainees to reproduce disciples and churches. The trainers evaluate the evangelism, disciple-making, and

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[121] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 286-91.

[122] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 148-51

[123] Coker, "A Strange Sort of Orthodoxy," 84. Further in his critique of T4T, Coker addresses the missing element of character formation:

> The exhortation from James (quoted at the end of each chapter of T4T) to be a "doer of the word," is a general exhortation to righteous living rather than a specific encouragement towards evangelism, group-formation, and training. The specific behaviors that James mentions include helping the poor, taming our tongue, avoiding pride, persevering amidst suffering, and various exhortations about how we believers should treat one another. These behaviors are barely mentioned in T4T.

church planting by obedience and generations. Are the people being trained doing the work of evangelism? Are the trainees starting new trainer groups? Are they leading these groups to form churches? Finally, how many generations groups and/or churches exist. The goal is to get to four generations. T4T practitioners believe that four generations is the key for a CPM to sustain itself. They also believe that the four generations concept is rooted in 2 Timothy 2.2. Coker points out the absurdity of this claim:

> Paul's concept of multiplication in this text was not about reproducing the model, but about preaching the Word. What he intended for Timothy, Titus, and others to pass along was his teaching. He promised to send Timothy to Corinth to "remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." (1 Cor 4:17). The content of this teaching was not group multiplication. Paul's content was the gospel: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and exhortations to righteous living and right relationships. Paul's approach was multifaceted but it was not about how to start groups or witness more.[124]

T4T switches out the content of the gospel as the most important aspect for the process.

T4T teaches that every Christian should evangelize and disciple. T4T also requires simple reproducible methods so that every Christian can engage in the work and plant churches. For these reasons, T4T churches do not specially recognize, evaluate, affirm, or send out specially gifted and called members to plant new churches. Everyone is expected to do it.

While one may admire the attempt to make methods simple and reproducible; the practice of T4T appears to subvert the New Testament teaching and practice of recognizing and sending gifted church planters. The T4T practice also disregards the recognition that the Spirit gifts members of the church differently in order for her to be built up in maturity and to expand in growth. The T4T expectation seems to pigeonhole Christians as being equally gifted, skilled, and capable.

T4T can be applauded for its grand vision of proclaiming the gospel far and wide. The vision and expectation of all believers to engage in evangelism and

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[124] Coker, "A Strange Sort of Orthodoxy," 81.

discipleship is also good. The expectation that everyone can and should plant churches begins to reveal problems with the grandiose vision of T4T. T4T never expects churches to flourish, rather it expects a church to form and then to form new ones. Long-term health, maturity and flourishing is beyond its vision.

Real Presence

The rubric presents sixteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within T4T teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within the T4T paradigm.

T4T values indigeneity. While the first training group may be led by outsider, the first group will be the next trainers. The process is immediately put in the hands of indigenous peoples. In this way, the churches formed through the T4T process will look like the community they are planted in. The formation of new churches typically follows household relationships and those with whom one already has a relationship. For this reason, new streams of T4T churches need to be started for each different ethnic group as well as varying sub-cultures and demographics.

The church typically makes their own decisions, though no clear teaching in this regard exists within the process. Churches are free to choose where to meet and when to gather. However, they are encouraged to meet in places that require little money and are easily reproducible. In this way, churches are able support their own work.

The T4T process allows for time for pastoral care during meetings. The church cares for its neighbors by evangelizing and starting new T4T training groups. The eternal salvation of people is of primary concern.

Reproducibility is key to the T4T process. The process is something that is considered unchangeable, but the methods and content are adaptable for the context in which the groups exist. Smith warns against simply replicating a T4T method and points

practitioners to the process.[125] Remember that the process is the key to T4T.

One is justified in wondering how the reality of contextually appropriate methods are arrived at since the emphasis lies within T4T being rapidly reproducible.[126] Do practitioners continue to tweak the content and methods so that it becomes contextually appropriate? Or, do they do the hard work of learning and understanding the context before engaging in the T4T process?

The church gathers for training. Is this the reason for churches in the New Testament gather? A simple look at Acts 2:42-47 begs the question of this T4T foundational principle. The church in Jerusalem met and demonstrated their devotion. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and the prayers.[127] T4T practitioners point to the apostles' teaching as the training component. However, the gist of Luke's report is that the meeting was precipitated by a devotion to God and to one another. A T4T group meets because the lost need to hear about Jesus. The New Testament church gathered because of a God who saved them through Jesus deserved their worship and devotion.

T4T groups meet in real time and space. These groups are contextualized for their cultural surroundings. The groups are formulated by the T4T process to be easily reproducible. This element of church planting sets the stage for a church to flourish.

Conclusion

T4T claims to be a process rather than a method. Ideally, the process leads to churches being planted. The ambition of T4T practitioners is laudable. The emphasis on rapid reproduction robs the churches of the health and vitality they need to flourish. The

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[125] Smith and Kai, *T4T*, 38.

[126] Terry, "Missiology of Excluded Middles," 342.

[127] I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 88.

rejection of a robust teaching ministry and not recognizing the diverse giftings of the Spirit are big problems.

Overall, T4T would serve much better as a basic discipleship process within an existing church than as a church planting strategy. T4T does contain valuable insights for the planting of flourishing churches. Certain aspects of the process can be borrowed and tweaked to aid in church planting. However, T4T should not be viewed as an all-encompassing strategy if one desires to plant flourishing churches. It simply falls short of that goal.

CHAPTER 5

ECCLESIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CHURCH
PLANTING METHODS: *THE BIG ONE*

In May 2007, Mike Shipman reported a breakthrough in his engagement with a large Muslim people group.[1] Shipman and his national partner, Zack* (name changed for security purposes), developed an evangelism tool now known as *Any 3*.[2] This tool emphasized sharing the gospel with anyone they met, anywhere they met them, and at any time. From the cultivation of the evangelism method, a greater overall method of church planting took shape. This church planting method is called *The Big One* because of a graphic used to explain the process.[3]

Beginning in 2005, a large Muslim people group in Southeast Asia was engaged with the gospel, utilizing *Any 3* and *The Big One*. The first ten years of engagement resulted in explosive growth. Conservative estimates of the response to the gospel claim 30,000 professions of faith. From those professions of faith, a minimum of 12,500 believers followed the Lord in baptism. Around 4,000 new groups formed, and nearly 60 percent developed into churches.[4] Most of the explosive growth of believers and churches happened in the second half of the years being reported.

Recently, Shipman shifted the terminology from *The Big One* to *Plan A*.[5] The

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[1] Mike Shipman, "What's Missing In Our Great 'Come-Mission?' The Role of Reproducing Evangelism, Disciple-Making and Church Planting for Ordinary Believers," *Mission Frontiers* 34, no. 4 (July/August 2012): 12, https://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/34-4-what-is-missing-in-our-great-come-mission.pdf.

[2] Mike Shipman, *Any 3: Anyone Anywhere Any Time* (Monument, CO: WIGTake, 2013), 15.

[3] Shipman, *Any 3*, 130-31.

[4] Unpublished case study on *Any 3* and *The Big One*, conducted 2014-2018, a copy of which was given to me by researchers.

[5] Mike Shipman, *Plan A: Abide in Christ, Disciple the World!* Preview edition (Mount Vernon,

principles bolstering the church planting strategy remain the same, only the name changed. For the purposes of this chapter, *The Big One* refers to the entirety of the church planting paradigm cultivated by Shipman and others. *Any 3* refers specifically to the evangelism method developed by Shipman and his national partner.

Many missionaries in Southeast Asia are trained to use *Any 3* and *The Big One* church planting method.[6] Shipman and other missionary colleagues act as trainers and coaches to missionaries implementing these practices in their own context. These missionaries report varying levels of success in establishing new groups in their context.

Introduction of *The Big One* Church Planting Method

The passion of Shipman and his national partner to see an unreached people group evangelized is the impetus for the development of *Any 3*. The collaboration of Shipman, his national partners, and other missionary colleagues led to the development of *The Big One*. *Any 3* is an evangelism method that follows a five-step process.[7] Those reached through *Any 3* evangelism are guided into *The Big One* plan for follow-up discipleship.[8] This discipleship plan follows five steps that can take two years to complete. The initial discipleship plan teaches new believers to abide in Christ.

The Development of *The Big One*

Shipman shifted his ministry focus in 2005. He explains that he previously worked in traditional church ministry. Beginning in 2005 he began to pursue a

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WA: Mission Network, 2019), 111. This book is planned for publication in 2019.

[6] The training team for Southeast Asia provided me with all their training materials. These materials are unpublished. The materials were originally written in a local language in Southeast Asia and then translated into English. I also attended several trainings within Southeast Asia and heard reports from missionaries related to the implementation of *Any 3* and *The Big One*.

[7] Mike Shipman, "Any 3: Leading Muslims to Christ Now!" *Mission Frontiers* 36, no. 5 (July/August 2013): 18, https://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/35-6-any-3.pdf.

[8] Shipman, *Any 3*, 119.

generational church movement. Shipman was influenced by CPM missiology. He was also aware of T4T and the reports of rapid growth elsewhere in Asia. These missiological paradigms influenced some early decisions in *Any 3* and *The Big One*.[9]

The Big One process for church planting ordinarily follows a similar pattern for each new first-generation church.[10] Typically, an apostolic[11] worker or team shares the gospel using *Any 3* with one or two people. Those who are open to hear more are visited at home. In their home, they study the Old Testament sacrifice stories. Upon profession of faith, the new believers are baptized immediately. Baptism is explained to the new believer using Romans 6 and telling the story of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8.26-39). The next step is to train the new believer to obey the Great Commission, to repent from animistic practices, to break from sexual immorality, and to abide in Christ through prayer, Bible study, and obedience. Follow-up begins immediately after baptism. Sometimes it is intensive, covering a full two days. The church planting team guides the new believer to share the gospel and gather a group of new believers. The church planters lead and facilitate twenty lessons and model corporate worship with the new group. These meetings lead to a new church being established.

The Big One is distinct from CPM missiology and the T4T process despite being influenced by their paradigm. Five concepts prove helpful to understand the trajectory of *The Big One*'s missiology. These concepts include the cultural context, the intentional use of certain terminology, the priesthood of the believer, the development and recognition of church leadership, and an attempt to base the methods on biblical exegesis.

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[9] Shipman, *Plan A*, 118. Shipman says, "applying an adapted version of the 3/3 process of T4T has enabled us to establish a reproducing pattern of discipleship."

[10] Mike Shipman and others, interview by author, April 27, 2017.

[11] Shipman uses the term *apostolic* to refer to people sent by churches to proclaim the gospel and establish new churches in contexts and communities where no current gospel witness exists. Shipman, *Plan A*, 132.

Context. One key component to the development of *Any 3* and *The Big One* is the cultural context. These methods developed in a Southeast Asia country that is home to many different ethnicities, cultures, and religions. Nearly 80 percent of the country is Muslim. This form of Islam is not pure. Garrison observes, "Its religious and ethnic identity is much more complex than its government census figures imply."[12] The complexity is a result of multiple different ethnic, religious, and linguistic influences. He adds, "Even devout Muslims in the country, though, acknowledge the lingering persistence of those earlier layers -- Animism, Hinduism and Buddhism -- still seeping into the now dominant Muslim layer and flavoring"[13] the worldview of the entire population.

A case study of the people group that Shipman was engaging reports that this particular group is an unreached people group[14] of eight and a half million people. The people group is predominantly lower class. The majority of the people are farmers and fishermen. This people group follows a folk Islam even though a stream of radical Islam also influences the group.

The country does have an established Christian church, dating back to Catholic missions nearly five hundred years ago. Protestant churches are sprinkled around the county. Shipman's unreached people group was aware of the protestant church and they held misinformed opinions about Christianity and Christians. The gospel made no significant impact upon this people group despite the proximity of Christians near to this Muslim people group.

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[12] David Garrison, *A Wind in the House of Islam: How God is drawing Muslims around the world to faith in Jesus Christ* (Monument, CO: WIGTake, 2014), 52.

[13] Garrison, *Wind in the House*, 53.

[14] An unreached people group is an ethnic group that currently has no real access to the gospel. "They are 'hidden' not in the sense that they are invisible, but in the sense that there is no way, given current conditions, that they can hear the gospel in their own language in a way that makes sense to them." A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 13.

The context of the people group assists one to understand some of the key emphases in *The Big One*. First, the emphasis on sacrifice stories seeks to establish rapport with a Muslim audience. Second, an emphasis on the priesthood of the believer informs a new believer of the roles and responsibilities of every Christian. This teaching counteracts a passive faith that views religious work is conducted by religious professionals. Religious professionals are typically the ones doing religious works in both the practice of Islam and Christianity with which this people group is familiar. The emphasis of meeting in homes is understandable for the purpose of security. These emphases among other decisions provide an opportunity to see the multiplication of new church plants.

Generational church movement. In Shipman's writings he crafts the term *generational church movement*.[15] He uses this term to replace the term CPM.[16] Shipman is concerned with evangelism and the multiplication of disciples. He is also supportive of leadership development that enables and sustains movements of churches. However, by changing the terminology, he does distance *The Big One* from CPM missiology.

The term *generational church movement* is not clearly defined. The emphasis within *The Big One* in on generational multiplication. A summarization of the articles, books, and trainings conducted by *The Big One* practitioners supports the concept of new churches being established. From the initial church planting team, a first-generation church is established. The believers in that church are equipped to plant another church that is equipped to plant another church also. Shipman reports that some leaders within

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[15] Shipman, *Plan A*, 11.

[16] In his 2012 article, Shipman uses the term CPM frequently and identifies his work as being a CPM (Shipman, "What's Missing?," 12-14.). In the upcoming publication of his *Plan A* book, he wipes CPM from the pages. What is important to note is that "What's Missing?" proposes a nearly identical missiology to *Plan A*, but the phrase *CPM* is omitted almost entirely from *Plan A*. The only times CPM is referenced is once in the "acknowledgement section" and in two footnotes. The term "movement" is only mentioned thirteen times in the entire book.

143

the movement of his target people can trace generational growth to the tenth generation.[17] The simplest form of understanding this concept is churches planting churches.

Shipman distances himself from CPM missiology in three key ways. First, Shipman rejects the necessity of rapid multiplication.[18] He acknowledges that rapid multiplication is something for which one should pray and desire. He also, however, rightly affirms that church formation and leadership development require large investments of time.

Second, Shipman wants *The Big One* to be "A method that will at least make it more likely to reach those who aren't like us."[19] In this way, *The Big One* does not zero in on homogenous ethnic missions but opens the possibility to establish churches across ethnic, linguistic, and geographic boundaries.

Third, Shipman distances his approach to leadership in churches from the CPM approach of T4T. He does not endorse the idea of new converts as ever being suitably qualified for church leadership.[20] In *The Big One*, leaders emerge from the church and are selected by the church. The church planter may serve as leader of the church temporarily, while training the church to recognize and appoint church leaders. The leader of the church is not chosen by default because he is the one who planted the group. Leadership recognition and development are important components of *The Big One* strategy.

Priesthood of the believer. Shipman seeks to operationalize the teaching of the priesthood of the believer in *The Big One*. The surrounding religious context

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[17] Mike Shipman, "Fostering Multigenerational Movements By Equipping Believer-Priests," *Mission Frontiers* 36, no. 2 (March/April 2014): 22, https://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/36-2-Fostering-Multigenerational-Movements.pdf/.

[18] Shipman, *Plan A*, 53.

[19] Shipman, *Plan A*, 19

[20] Shipman, *Plan A*, 98. Shipman does acknowledge that the term "new" can vary in meaning depending on circumstances.

recognizes religious professionals are the ones who perform religious teachings, duties, and acts. Recovering this truth of the priesthood of the believer can correct the wrong assumption that religious activity for Christians is reserved for clergy. Implementing this teaching in the lives of the new believers is a key to the success of a generational movement for *The Big One*.[21]

The discipleship process of *The Big One* views a disciple as a partner-priest instead of a student.[22] Every disciple is treated as a priest who receives the authority and presence of Christ to engage in the Great Commission.[23] The two realities of Christ's authority and presence, Shipman teaches, provides the believer with all they need to engage in the Great Commission task.[24] They do not need to seek approval from any hierarchal leadership structure to obey all of Christ's commands. The reality of the priesthood of the believer impacts the spiritual vitality of a believer's life. Believer priests are able to pray confidently, evangelize the lost, lead out in baptism and the Lord's Supper, equip other believers, expand the Body of Christ, grow in sanctification, and teach God's Word.[25]

The contextualized emphasis on the priesthood of the believer is brilliant. *The Big One* equips disciples to recognize their new identity in Christ. It also enables them to

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[21] John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 45-46. Hammett summarizes the importance of this teaching for the life and leadership of the local church.

> The New Testament calls those who lead the church elders, bishops, or pastors, but never priests. But by the end of the second century another term for elder, presbyter, was contracted to priest and applied to clergy. Throughout the Middle Ages, the priesthood and priestly functions were increasingly limited to clergy. Martin Luther is justly identified with the recovery of the priesthood of all believers, but it has been especially important in Baptist ecclesiology, where it has formed part of the basis for congregational government. Since all believers are priests, and only believers should be members of the church, Baptists have argued that all these believer-priest church members are able and responsible to help the church find God's direction for its life.

[22] Shipman, "Fostering Multigenerational Movements," 22.

[23] Shipman, "Fostering Multigenerational Movements," 23.

[24] Shipman, *Plan A*, 25-31.

[25] Shipman, *Plan A*, 79-86.

perform the duties expected of obedient followers of Jesus. The emphasis on priesthood

aligns with New Testament theologians who generally agree that believers are priests

who offer spiritual sacrifices.[26] These sacrifices relate to proclamation and behavior. This

component of *The Big One* is helpful and helps new churches to flourish.

Leadership. *The Big One* looks to both 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 for

leadership qualifications.[27] New churches established through *The Big One* methodology

are not necessarily led by the person who plants the church. Rather, the person or team

responsible for planting the church trains the church about leadership. A crucial part of

this training is equipping the new church to know the biblical qualifications for a church

pastor/elder/overseer, and how to identify the people qualified within their own

congregation who meet these expectations. In this way, leaders are church members

before they are church overseers. Leadership is not a category of church membership that

is hierarchical over the church but rather emanates from within it.

Exegetical missteps. *The Big One* supports its structure and vision from

Scripture. From the evangelism method known as *Any 3* to the ongoing leadership

development component, Scripture is appealed to and applied. One must appreciate the

desire to see the methods birthed from Scripture. However, some concerns regarding the

conclusions of the exegesis and then the applications of those conclusions to the methods

must be addressed.

The first concern with *Any 3*'s hermeneutic is the use of sacrifice stories in the

Old Testament. The use of sacrifice stories is to build upon the rapport established with

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[26] Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "The Priesthood of Believers: Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Royal Priesthood," in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches,* ed. Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 228. Yarnell's chapter on the priesthood of the believer is an excellent treatment of the history of the doctrine and its implications for contemporary Christians.

[27] Shipman, *Plan A*, 89.

Muslims in order to get to the gospel. During the initial evangelistic opportunity one is to explain the first and last sacrifice story in the Bible.[28] The first sacrifice story refers to the event when God covers Adan and Eve's nakedness in the garden of Eden, following their sinful rebellion before being expelled from the garden (Gen 3.21). The last sacrifice is Jesus on the cross.

Scholars warn against treating the garments of skin (Gen 3.21) in this manner.[29] Kidner explains, "It is unduly subtle, and a distraction, to foresee the atonement here: God is meeting immediate rather than ultimate needs, for both are his concern."[30] The problem with *Any 3*'s approach is that the first sacrifice the evangelist is instructed to appeal to is never acknowledged as a sacrifice in Scripture. The example is just one example of interpretive eisegesis in the entirety of *The Big One* method.

Another example of *The Big One* practicing eisegesis is found in its foundational teaching about abiding in Christ. First, Shipman claims, "The Upper Room Discourse of John 13-17 serves as a preparation manual for Christ's original disciples, and for modern disciples who desire to see the Great Commission fulfilled."[31] The strategy teaches that abiding is key to the believer seeing fruit in their Great Commission efforts. The scriptural teaching that believers must abide in Christ to see fruit is clear in the text (John 15.1-8). What is not clear in *The Big One* is what one is to understand that

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[28] Shipman, *Any 3*, 48-50.

[29] Old Testament scholars point to the garments of skin provided by God as meeting an immediate need but not providing any eternal significance. Rather than indicating forgiveness, the skins are actually a reminder of their sin rather than an expiation of it. See, John H. Salihamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 201; Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 207; and Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996), 255. I am indebted to Kyle Essary for helping me to see this problem. He acknowledges that this interpretation does not arise from the text itself but may be implied behind the text. The problem with the hermeneutical framework used by Any 3 is that it reads sacrifice into a text that is never referred to in that way anywhere in the Bible. Essary also explains that the interpretation of Genesis 3:21 alluding to a sacrifice does not appear in church history until the 17th century.

[30] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1967), 77.

[31] Shipman, *Plan A*, 58.

fruit to be.[32] The problem permeates recent church planting literature.[33] The reason for

such trainings and books is to promote, instruct, and equip believers for the task of

church planting. Often fruitfulness is couched in an expectation of numerical results. *The*

Big One warns that abiding in Christ is not "directly proportionate to numerical results,"[34]

however, it does not dissuade that numerical results are a fruit. *The Big One* training

could help clear up any confusion by emphasizing, as Carson does, "This fruit is nothing

less than the outcome of persevering dependence on the vine, driven by faith, embracing

all of the believer's life and the product of his witness."[35] *The Big One*'s effort to promote

the theme of abiding could unintentionally allow one to read into Scripture what the

original authors did not intend to communicate nor the audience understood.

　　　　While *The Big One* claims the Upper Room Discourse serves as a manual for

believers to be prepared for the Great Commission, Acts is described as shaping the

mission strategy. Shipman asserts,

> *Plan A* relies on Acts as an inspired account of how the Great Commission was
> implemented after the promised Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. Acts demonstrates
> the post-Pentecost mission strategy, and the epistles of the New Testament describe
> it further. The historical event of Acts can't be replicated, however, the distinctives
> of the discipleship pattern of Acts should shape and correct our modern mission
> strategies.[36]

Relying on Acts as a type of instructional manual for the implementation of the Great

Commission is problematic. The purpose of Acts is to describe how the gospel of Jesus

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[32] Shipman, *Plan A*, 59.

[33] See David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2004); E. Elbert Smith, *Church Planting by the Book* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015); Steve Smith with Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship ReRevolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011); and Nathan and Kari Shank, *Four Fields of Kingdom Growth: Starting and Releasing Healthy Churches* (Northeast India, 2014): www.movements.net, https://www.movements.net/blog/2014/10/07/new-edition-of-the-four-fields-manual.html.

[34] Shipman, *Plan A*, 59.

[35] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 517.

[36] Shipman, *Plan A*, 10.

spread throughout all known world at the time. It is not an instruction manual of methods.

Schnabel affirms, "Acts is a narrative about recent historical events in the movement of

followers of Jesus and about major leaders of the Christian movement."[37] Acts does

convey the content of the gospel proclaimed by the early church leaders and the methods

they utilized.[38] However, Acts does not claim to be an exhaustive registry of sanctioned

methods or strategies for missions and church planting. Certainly, insights for

missiological methods can be deduced from the text of Acts, but these methods must be

balanced with the entire New Testament. The attempts by *The Big One* to base its

strategy upon the Acts is reductionistic and overstates what Luke actually intended to

teach from his writing. Since Acts does not claim to be an instructional manual, it should

not serve a role for which it was not intended.

Missiologically, the conclusions and principles of church planting in *The Big*

One appear to be solid and positive. Regardless of the conclusions and methods, the

exegetical method used to draw these conclusions is difficult to endorse. The

hermeneutics modeled for those reached with these methods provide a poor exegetical

example. So, while the missiological conclusions are acceptable, one may rightly express

concern at the long-term effects of the exegesis displayed in the formulation and methods

of *The Big One*.

The Tactics of *The Big One*

The typical progression of *The Big One*'s method follows traditional

approaches. Practitioners appeal to patterns established in Acts as the basis for *The Big*

One's approach. Four key categories in the approach to church planting are utilized.

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[37] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 38.

[38] Robert Garrett, "The Gospels and Acts: Jesus the Missionary and His Missionary Followers," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, eds. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 63-82.

Ordinarily, a gospel worker or team will enter into a new community to begin doing evangelism. When people begin to respond to the gospel by professing faith in Christ, a clear discipleship process begins. This discipleship process quickly leads to a church being formed. Discipleship continues in the context of the local church. Out of this process, leaders are recognized. These leaders are then equipped to more effectively shepherd and guide the established churches to grow in spiritual health and multiply disciples and churches.

Evangelism. *Any 3* is the evangelism method supporting *The Big One* paradigm. Practitioners teach, "We need an evangelism plan that includes not only us sharing but also is simple enough for new believers to multiple."[39] Shipman developed *Any 3* to be that simple tool.

Shipman endorses *Any 3* as being simple, natural, and adaptable.[40] *Any 3* uses a five-step process. The five-step process guides the evangelist to get connected to the one with whom he is attempting to share the gospel. Next, the method transitions to God. The third step in the process discusses the lostness. Fourth is explanation of the gospel, utilizing the first and last sacrifice story. The last part is to get a response from the one being evangelized.

Any 3 warns evangelists from succumbing to practices and attitudes that will disable effective witness. One remedy to these potential pitfalls is to lead with the gospel. In this way, the gospel acts as a filter. Shipman reports, "Once we began filtering with the gospel, we were amazed at how many times those we considered closed to the gospel message were ready to receive Christ and become disciples."[41] This positive reception

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[39] Mark Stevens, "Evangelism: Sharing the Gospel in Abundant Amounts," (notes from church planter training, Southeast Asia, March 3, 2012), 1.

[40] Shipman, *Any 3*, 18.

[41] Shipman, *Plan A*, 35.

does not imply that these people professed Jesus as Lord and Savior the first time they heard the gospel, but they did indicate they wanted to hear more. *Any 3* offers five additional sacrifice stories (Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Passover, and the Law), which can be utilized in follow-up visits.[42] During these visits, the evangelist follows the stories with six probing questions. These questions help assess someone's understanding of the story and their ability to tell the story to someone else. From the beginning of the evangelism process, the evangelist is training someone to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship. The goal of the discipleship process is to see healthy reproducing churches formed. These types of churches are filled with disciples who obey all of Christ's commands. Obeying Christ's commands begins with obeying the command of the Great Commission (Matt 28.18-20).

Upon profession of faith, the new believer is taught about baptism and is baptized.[43] Shipman teaches that the urgency of baptism follows a pattern established in Acts: "After profession of faith, Everyone is Immersed by the One who won or witnessed their profession, with Urgency."[44] Following baptism, new believers are taught to obey all of Christ's commands.

In order to obey all of Christ's commands, a believer must receive new knowledge and be equipped with new skills.[45] This body of knowledge and set of skills enables obedience. Fulfilling the Great Commission requires that new converts are taught to obey the Great Commission. Often, this transfer of knowledge and skills is modeled more than taught. In this way, disciples receive training in spiritual disciplines, character

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[42] Shipman, *Any 3*, 121.

[43] Shipman, *Any 3*, 122.

[44] Shipman, *Plan A*, 44.

[45] Shipman, *Plan A*, 51.

development, and basic skills.[46] Shipman advises to not delay any teaching that a new believer needs in their context.

The process of equipping healthy disciples that leads to healthy churches and leaders takes time. Shipman relates stories of besetting sins in new converts lives that slow down the rapid multiplication of believers and churches.[47] Shipman conveys, "The ultimate goal is complete discipleship, both quantitatively and qualitatively."[48] Despite a desire to see rapid multiplication, Shipman values training in discipleship that enables both multiplication and deep spiritual growth.[49]

In an early stage of the discipleship process, the disciple-maker focuses on the Christian's new family. In this stage the topics covered are Christ's headship over the church and the functions of the church. Shipman reports, "At this point the disciples covenant together to become a church."[50] In this way, discipleship and church are demonstrated to necessarily go together and not be viewed as separate categories of the Christian experience.

Church formation. *The Big One* church planting strategy was developed in an attempt to reach an unreached people group. For this reason, Shipman instructs practitioners to make the new believers a church rather than finding a church for them to join.[51] *The Big One* acknowledges the birth of a new church when, "Groups of baptized believers identify themselves as the local body of Christ and commit to regularly meet to

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[46] Shipman, *Plan A*, 52.

[47] Shipman and others, interview.

[48] Shipman, *Plan A*, 54.

[49] Shipman, *Plan A*, 53.

[50] Shipman, *Any 3*, 128.

[51] Shipman, *Plan A*, 93.

obey all the commands of Scripture."[52] The discipleship process that leads to the formation of new churches now continues in the context of a local church.

These churches consist of members. Church members are baptized believers. Shipman rightly notes, "Church membership is non-negotiable for Christians."[53] These members are committed to one another via covenant and the desire to live as believer-priests. They each have the authority to obey the Great Commission individually and corporately.

Churches formed by *The Big One* are informed by a "52 Oikos Church" principle.[54] This principle focuses on the five church functions of studying the Scriptures, worship, fellowship, ministry, and evangelism. They church observes the two church ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. These churches meet weekly, thus fifty-two meetings a year.

The "52 Oikos Church" principle points churches towards meeting in homes. These churches ordinarily meet in homes. For security reasons, a church may choose to meet in a different home each week. Regardless of the location where they meet, the meeting time remains constant.

The concept of priesthood of all believers impacts the formation of the local churches. As priests, each church member is endowed with spiritual authority to obey all of Christ's commands. In this way, no hierarchal authority structure exists within the church. Each member-priest is equally authorized to participate in the Great Commission. This authorization does not necessarily mean that every member-priest will engage in every act they are authorized to lead. This concept of a *flat priesthood*[55] is key to

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[52] Shipman, *Plan A*, 93.

[53] Shipman, *Plan A*, 94.

[54] Shipman, *Plan A*, 96.

[55] Shipman, *Plan A*, 80. A flat priesthood emphasizes the equality of all believers in participation in religious activities. This concept counteracts a hierarchical approach of priesthood in which the upper level religious leaders are the only ones authorized to engage in religious activities. Shipman

understanding the roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of leadership in churches formed through *The Big One* method.

   Appointment of leadership. Leadership appointment and development follow the core idea of all believers being priests. Leaders are recognized, affirmed, and appointed by local churches as they prove to be qualified for church leadership, based on biblical qualifications. In this way, leaders are church members first. The basis of any further leadership development builds upon the foundation laid in the previous discipleship process.

   Identifying leaders in *The Big One* churches includes both character qualifications and skill aptitude. New believers are disqualified from leadership, though the idea of *new* will vary depending on the context. Over time, the church will recognize those within their congregation who have exemplary Christian character and demonstrate a gifting to teach the Bible. These men are set apart for further training so that they can teach and shepherd the church.

   The Big One follows the acronym ABIDE to structure its disciple and leadership formation process.[56] All disciples are equipped to abide in Christ, to be bold in evangelism, to instill multiplication in evangelism and discipleship, to develop churches, and finally to equip leaders. The final stage of equipping leaders focuses on a set of

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describes the importance of a *flat priesthood*:

> The Great Commission is also short-circuited if new believers don't take up their priestly duties. This can happen because of disobedience, but it often happens because the authority and responsibility of every believer's priesthood is never understood. Contrary to popular opinion, recognizing one's priesthood doesn't elevate status or inflate self-esteem. The primary purpose of being a priest is to do the Christ's priestly works. Priests fulfill necessary roles that serve God's purposes. Any other benefit of being a priest is secondary. Priests serve at Christ's disposal.

He contrasts flat priesthood with a hierarchical priesthood to demonstrate that every believer is empowered and authorized to participate in and obey the Great Commission.

  [56] Shipman, *Any 3*, 131.

lessons called Foundations and Deeper Roots.[57]

The Foundation courses are divided into four categories. The categories are the Christian lifestyle, the Bible, essential Christian doctrine, and the church. The Christian lifestyle focuses on spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts, spiritual victory, evangelism, and abiding in Christ. The Bible component contains an overview of both the Old and New Testaments, followed by an introduction to biblical interpretation. Then, a systematic study of Acts follows. The category of Christian doctrine includes lessons on God, the priesthood of the believer, an overview of other major doctrines, sanctification, and false teachings. The *Foundations* courses that focus on the church include becoming a church, an advanced church lesson, worship, the character of a leader, and the tasks of a leader. These *Foundations* courses ordinarily take two years to complete.

Following these courses are a set of courses entitled *Deeper Roots*. These courses include fifteen topics. These topics correspond to books or sections of the New Testament. The synoptic gospels have four lessons, and Paul's epistles have six lessons. The remaining five lessons look at the remainder of the New Testament.

A key principle for *The Big One* leadership training is to get to locals leading the training as quickly as possible. This goal is achieved by engaging in leadership development both locally and informally using simple and reproducible materials. Shipman points out, "If leadership training is done primarily by outsiders—particularly outsiders with advanced education—local leadership development will bottleneck, resulting in a shortage of new leaders, and discipleship may suffer."[58] As churches multiply and networks develop, local believers can and will take on the responsibility to equip the churches. Over time these churches will establish their own institutions and

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[57]Mike Shipman and Mark Stevens, "Big One Training Manual," (training manual, Southeast Asia, 2014), 31.

[58] Shipman, *Plan A*, 115.

recognize senior trainers and equippers.

The Ecclesiology of *The Big One*

The Big One ecclesiology is straightforward. Shipman and his colleagues developed this church planting method in conjunction with the churches they desired to see planted. This strategy defines a local church clearly and expands the explanations when necessary. Developing healthy churches filled with healthy disciples is a clear goal for *The Big One*. The built-in training and discipleship components lead these churches to grow in maturity and in numbers. Not only do these churches grow, but they also reproduce. The ongoing leadership development component assists the churches to display a maturing and healthy church in its context.

Explicit Teachings on Ecclesiology

Shipman affirms that a church is birthed when a group believes the gospel, is baptized, takes the Lord's Supper together, and intentionally seeks to obey the Scripture together.[59] He adds, usually the church is doing things a church should be doing before identifying as a church.

Rightly, *The Big One* affirms that churches exist before leadership does. Filling the churches leadership offices comes later in the maturing process. Leadership offices being filled are not necessary for a church to exist. A new church in *The Big One* methodology will eventually fill the office of pastor/elder/overseer. This approach does not force leadership on the church and allows the aspect of self-governing to occur in a natural way.

From the beginning of the discipleship process, the groups meet on a consistent basis. These meetings set the expectation that the church will meet consistently. In these groups, community is cultivated, and the spiritual family is emphasized so that when the

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[59] Shipman and others, interview.

156

group identifies as a church, not much will change from a week to week operation.

New believers are baptized immediately in *The Big One* church planting method. Baptism is done by immersion in water.[60] Baptism is affirmed as an identification with Christ and with Christ's people, the church.[61] The person who leads someone to faith is expected to be the one to baptize the new believer. This ordinance is an initiation into the body of Christ and a prerequisite for participating in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

While the Lord's Supper is affirmed as a church ordinance in *The Big One*, believers are guided to celebrate this memorial meal together before being taught about church.[62] The idea supporting this practice is that the church planter guides them in this process, and everyone who participates is a known believer. By partaking of the memorial meal, believers are identifying with Christ in his death and with one another. So, later, when the group identifies as a church, this practice of regularly celebrating the Lord's Supper together is already established.

Churches formed by *The Big One* missions paradigm are led to covenant together. This covenant is not necessarily a written document. Rather, by covenanting together, the members of a church are committing to live intentionally and faithfully to the teaching of Christ together. Since the church covenant can be a simple verbal agreement between members, other formal means of identifying a church are not necessary.

The covenant members of these churches are equipped as believer-priests. No human hierarchy exists in these churches. Everyone is granted authority to fulfill and obey the commands of Scripture. Certainly, not every member/priest will engage in every

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[60] The mode of baptism is non-negotiable for Shipman. Shipman, *Plan A*, 43.

[61] Shipman, *Plan A*, 47.

[62] Shipman, *Any 3*, 128. See also, Shipman, *Plan A*, 141-43.

activity for which they are granted authority. However, the knowledge that everyone is granted to right and privilege to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission is a key component of *The Big One* methodology.

Jesus is the head of the church. Since these churches are mostly established in a context of Muslim communities, the churches seek to be very clear on their allegiance to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus leads these churches through the authority of the Scripture.

Elders shepherd the church. These leaders are recognized and appointed by the church from within. Therefore, church leaders are members of the church before they are leaders of the church. As elders the mutually accountability of membership still applies. Elders may be expected to guide and teach the Bible when the church gathered, but in this teaching is to be facilitated through a participatory Bible study rather than a traditional sermon.

The church gatherings are informed by the number 52. This number speaks to the five functions, two ordinances, and the number of weekly gatherings the church observes. The functions of discipleship/teaching, worship, fellowship, ministry, and evangelism are key components of *The Big One* church. The two ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper are necessary components. The weekly gathering of the church demonstrates the commitment the members have to the Lord and to one another.

Implicit Teachings on Ecclesiology

The Big One churches are ordinarily established in areas where Christianity is a significant minority. Not only are the new believers ordinarily converting from a Muslim background, the new believers are also usually less educated and work as farmers or other non-professional jobs. For this reason, these churches embrace less formal means of gatherings.

Formal structures are jettisoned in favor of more familial, organic types of structures. While a covenant is endorsed, no written covenant is necessary. Also, no type of documentation is regarded as important. In fact, any such documentation is rejected. Since constitutions and by-laws are never mentioned in Scripture, the practitioners believe, the churches have no need for them. The only reason given where these documents maybe necessary is when a church owns property. This rejection is short-sighted as these documents, while not necessary, could help the church to maintain certain guidelines in her development.

The Big One's bias against tradition and formality calls for ordinary, common gatherings just like close friends visiting together. These gatherings are supposed to naturally include the five functions of the church and incorporate baptism and the Lord's Supper as well. In rejecting other types of church traditions, *The Big One* churches establish their own traditions. By rejecting more formal methods these churches can potentially create an attitude of superiority and pride.

One particular rejection of more formal gatherings is the method of biblical proclamation. The training material forbids teaching the Bible in traditional ways.[63] What is meant by presenting the Bible in a traditional way is "Teaching by teachers to students, preaching by preachers to congregations, or lectures given by teachers to students." The training materials argue that this type of Bible teaching, "Does not fulfill the functions of the church because followers sit quietly rather than actively participate." The desire for active participation is admirable. However, passively receiving the teaching of the Word is explicitly commanded by Paul (1 Tim 2.11-12, 1 Cor 14.34-35). One must deal with biblical texts to outright deny a more traditional form of teaching the Scriptures.

These churches are also more likely to face persecution. For this reason,

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[63] Mike Shipman, "Church Continued (Part II): Church Gathering," The Big One Foundations (training materials presented at various trainings, Southeast Asia, June 14, 2013), 2.

churches are encouraged to meet in different homes over the course of time. The nomadic

nature of these meetings makes non-formal gatherings more necessary.

The unique form of *The Big One* churches allows for a tight knit network of

churches. These churches can cooperate together for the purpose of leadership training,

celebrations, and encouragement. Intentionally, these churches do not mix with churches

from other methodological backgrounds. This isolation allows for these churches to

flourish within their setting, but the isolation can contribute to a sense of pride.

Summary

The ecclesiological foundations of *The Big One* church planting strategy are

solid. They emphasize biblical essentials for church. At the same time, the strategy

instills an element of multiplication. The practitioners emphasize certain truths for the

church to express in its daily life. These truths include that all believers are priests, and

everyone can obey the Great Commission. The participation in the Great Commission is

the fuel driving *The Big One* churches.

Examining *The Big One* Ecclesiology through the Flourishing Church Rubric

The Big One teachings and methods lead to a multiplication of new churches

being planted by its own metrics. Whether these new churches are enabled and equipped

to flourish is not so clear. The potential of *The Big One* methods and practices to prepare

new churches to flourish can be discerned. They are discerned by evaluating *The Big One*

ecclesiology using the rubric proposed in chapter two.[64]

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[64] The ecclesiology being evaluated is limited to the ecclesiology presented within *The Big One* published documents and training materials cited above. The ecclesiological components noted throughout this section are taken from the aforementioned materials. The resulting churches are not evaluated.

God-Glorifying

The rubric identifies that the essence of the church is to glorify God. The rubric presents fifteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

Shipman states that the expanded vision passed on to new groups is, "To glorify God by proclaiming the gospel and planting churches in every village." [65] The first lesson of the church planter's training affirms, "God's purpose and the reason why we were created is so that the knowledge of the glory of God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."[66] God's glory is presented as the driving factor of *The Big One* strategy to plant multiplying churches.

The church expresses her God-glorifying orientation by participating in the Great Commission. As new believers and churches are established, God's glory is manifest in the lives of the believers. Leaders are challenged to evaluate their current ministry practices. The challenge is to determine if their motivation is God's glory or something else. God is glorified in these churches as they worship Him, proclaim His kingdom, persuade the lost to repent from sins and trust Christ alone, and seek to equip mature disciples to continue this process.

The religious background of most people in these churches is Islam. They believe that God is one (Deut 6.4); they properly display God's nature and character as a triune God by affirming that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons of the godhead. This affirmation among the church clearly expresses who God is and is a significant departure from their previous belief system. When training leaders, *The Big*

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[65] Shipman and others, interview.

[66] Mike Shipman, "Greater Works (Big 1) Training Manual" (training manual, Southeast Asia, May 17, 2011), 2.

161

One begins its training with the doctrine of God. The priority of this teaching establishes early in the curriculum that knowing God, explaining his true nature and character according to Scripture is of primary importance.

Even though the religious background of most people in these churches is Islam, this form of Islam is a folk Islam. The worship of spirits in animistic styles is common practice. At the time of baptism, new believers are counseled to reject any and all false Gods and the practice of animistic rituals. Physical objects associated with these practices are destroyed as part of the baptism. In this way, idolatry is avoided. If someone slips back into a practice of idolatry, the church takes disciplinary action.

God displays his glory through the local churches in the changed lives and unity. The believers take responsibility for one another, hold one another accountable, pray together, and even discipline non-repentant members when necessary. The church can display God's glory in an even greater way by networking with like-minded churches outside its own network. In this way, the diverse makeup of believer-priests will be on display for the churches to see and acknowledge.

Word-Centered

The rubric presents twenty-seven questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Ten of these questions relate to the headship of Jesus over the church. Seventeen questions address the role of the Bible's authority in the life, teaching, and practice of the church. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

To abide in Jesus is a key teaching for *The Big One* church planting strategy. Jesus is the source of life for the believer and the church. As head of church, Jesus is both the authority and the source of its existence. The church planters prioritize clear teaching

about Jesus' nature, character, and works. This priority is a necessity because of the false claims in Islam about Jesus. Jesus is affirmed as fully god and fully man. The lies about the origin of Jesus and the meaning of Son of God are refuted.

A Christocentric confession of faith is taught to all believers in *The Big One* churches. The churches regularly confess together Christ as Lord and his salvific work. They make this confession by reciting "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," (Phil 2.11) and "Jesus wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Tim 2.4-6). They also sing and write hymns and praise songs that confess the lordship of Jesus.

The regular observance of the Lord's Supper is one way that Jesus is kept at the center of the church's life. His completed work and his future return are confessed through this practice. Scripture is recited together highlighting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

As church members are pointed to Christ on a continual basis, the church does a good job acknowledging Jesus is at the core of the church's existence. The human tendency to perform habits without considering the meaning is about the only thing working against the efforts of the leaders.

Christ's divine and human nature are taught throughout several lessons in the leadership equipping training. Christ's role in the Trinity is also taught accurately. Only a few of the lessons are dedicated to these topics. Since Jesus is central to the existence of the church, these truths are reinforced in other lessons as well.

At the time of baptism, believers acknowledge that Jesus overcame all principalities, powers, and spirits. Whether burning books or icons, or removing special items of clothing associated with spirits, believers acknowledge that Jesus is Lord over all. The church is reminded of Jesus' victory as this act is repeated when new believers are baptized.

The written word of God, the Bible, is acknowledged as authoritative. Arthur*

(name changed for security purposes) says that biblical authority in the church is displayed though character change in the life of the believer as they submit to the Bible.[67] Reading, memorizing, and studying Scripture together plays a significant role in the corporate gathering of the church.

The principle of abiding in Christ, stated earlier, requires one to study, submit, and obey God's Word. The expectation for a believer is to study the Bible and adjust one's life to the teaching of that particular passage. Abiding in God's Word includes listening to it, studying it, meditating upon it, memorizing it, doing it, and teaching it.[68]

The churches are not encouraged to have one person teach or preach the Scriptures. In this way, they expect everyone to be actively studying the Scriptures together. The danger with this type of Bible study is that no one is responsible for devoting themselves with the deep study of the Word of God in order to feed the sheep of God's flock. The role of the pastor/elder/overseer is to shepherd the church of God primarily through the appropriate teaching of the Word of God. Rinne states, "God rules his people by his Word, so the leaders of God's people have always been entrusted with communicating God's Word."[69] Designating a church leader to be responsible for the accurate teaching of the Word of God would enable the long-term flourishing of the church.

The hermeneutic modeled for these churches is problematic, as mentioned earlier. If the church continues to exercise the hermeneutical principles modeled, then the church will continually read into passages things that they want to believe and practice. The principles of biblical interpretation taught to church leaders follow the common pattern of observation, interpretation, and application. *The Big One* adds another aspect

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[67] Shipman and others, interview.

[68] Shipman, *Plan A*, 113.

[69] Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 46.

which is share this story with someone else.[70] Later in the training materials, further principles for interpreting a text are introduced. These principles focus on interpreting a passage based on context and genre.[71]

Believers and churches are instructed to evaluate all teachings they receive against the clear teaching of Scripture. They are instructed to reject any teaching that clearly does not come from the Bible. If the person who is teaching falsely is an outsider, they are not welcomed to back to teach.

Holy Spirit-Empowered

The rubric presents twelve questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

The Big One recognizes that the Holy Spirit was sent following Christ's ascension. The Spirit indwells Christians and provides them with boldness to evangelize similarly to how He did in the book of Acts. The Spirit's presence enables Christ followers to do the greater works that Christ said they would do (John 14.12).[72] The Spirit propels the churches forward as they seek to engage in Great Commission faithfulness.

Living by the Spirit is equated with abiding in Christ. Christ is present with his people through the presence of the Spirit indwelling believers. Living in the Spirit is also understood to be synonymous with being led by the Spirit. The major emphasis on the Holy Spirit is related to the enabling of believers to live faithfully in their Christian

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[70] Mark Stevens, "Studying the Bible, Part 1" The Big One: Foundations Training (training manual, Southeast Asia, June 18, 2013), 1-3.

[71] Mike Shipman, "Studying the Bible, Part 2," The Big One: Foundations Training (training manual, Southeast Asia, September 15, 2015), 1-5.

[72] Shipman, *Plan A*, 2.

service.[73]

Besides enabling believers to faithfully engage in Great Commission ministry, the Spirit is also recognized to convict people of sin and draw them to faith in Christ (John 16.8-11). The Spirit will never lead someone to a different gospel message than the one delivered through the Scriptures. The Spirit is actively working in the ministry of evangelism by drawing the evangelist toward the one He is preparing to hear the gospel (Acts 8.26-40).

Christians should be confident of the Spirit's work in evangelism and in discipleship. The Spirit oversees the maturation of individual believers as well as the congregation.[74] He teaches and guides believers to know all truth (John 14.26, 16.13) and equips some to be faithful teachers also (2 Tim 2.2). The Spirit also sanctifies believers.

The Spirit gifts believers to build up the church. Some are gifted to equip others. These gifted servants often fill particular roles of ministry (Eph 4.12). *The Big One* prioritizes the gifts of teaching and proclaiming the Scripture for the establishing and maturing of the new churches.[75]

Arthur* attributes several miraculous events to the Spirit's work. He reports that miracles are not uncommon among the churches in *The Big One* network. He shared that several sick people experienced physical healing. He told one story of a man bitten by a poisonous snake being healed. These healings provided opportunities for believers to share the gospel and to confirm their witness.

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[73] Shipman, *Plan A*, 31. Shipman asserts,

The filling of the Spirit is functional. The purpose of the Spirit's filling is effective service. The Holy Spirit helps Christians when they are doing the works of Christ. This isn't all the Spirit does for the Christian, but it's a significant part. Without the Spirit's help, we can't succeed. Practically, it's the filling of the Spirit that enables believers to excel in ministry far beyond their own ability. We're not sufficient in ourselves to become ministers of the gospel, but God makes us sufficient (2 Cor. 3:4-6).

[74] Shipman, *Plan A*, 93-94.

[75] Shipman, *Plan A*, 106.

The acknowledgement of the Spirit's role in establishing the church is clear in *The Big One*. Beginning with believers who are empowered to proclaim the gospel to indwelling new believers as they profess faith Christ the Spirit is understood to be active. He continues to guide the church in maturity and health as He gifts the believers and leads them in all righteousness. This dependence upon the Spirit's work in the life of the church allows these churches to flourish.

Identifiable Community

The rubric presents sixteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

The group of new believers self-identifies as a church following a lesson about the Body of Christ. The lesson follows other discipleship lessons that equip the believers to be healthy disciples. The lesson on the church guides the group to see that they are already functioning as a church. The next step, according to the lesson, is for the group to covenant together in order to intentionally be the church. By covenanting together these churches agree to function as a local church, fulfill the Great Commission, and study and obey all of the commands of the Bible.[76] The covenant is not necessarily a written document as much as it is a verbal agreement among the members to intentionally function as a church.

The church is a small community, usually the first ones in the area, so everyone in the church knows who is in the church. Each member of the church is a baptized believer. Alice* (Arthur's wife, name changed for security reasons) notes that church members are all priests, so they do not differentiate between tasks in the church.

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[76] Shipman, *Plan A*, 3.

Every priest member is accountable to one another. The terminology is not necessarily codified, but every member is trained to understand and function as a priest who is authorized to participate and obey the commands of the Great Commission.

Since every believer is authorized to obey the Great Commission, no one person or office is designated to perform church functions like baptism. Ordinarily, the person who leads someone to Christ is the same person who performs the baptism. In the same way, anyone can lead and officiate the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The church ordinarily meets in a family's home. For security reasons, the churches are not encouraged to purchase property or maintain a dedicated church building. In this way, the church finds her identity in Christ first and then in their gathering second. The temptation to identify a place as church is nullified.

Church discipline is not uncommon. Arthur says that one must exercise gentleness in confronting someone.[77] He says typically one must approach someone personally and confront them in private about a sin issue. Great care is taken in order to not cause them to lose face.[78] One example of church discipline being practiced is when a former gangster punched someone for making fun of Jesus. After this encounter, he was taught to love others biblically. He said he could not love the mockers in the way the Bible expected him. The church put him on discipline and barred him from taking the Lord's Supper.

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[77] Shipman, interview.

[78] Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 111-12. Hiebert briefly describes the importance of saving face in group-oriented communities like the ones in which these churches are being established:

> Wrongdoers are punished, but in the end they must be restored to everyday life in the community. If they are not allowed to have some sense of human dignity, they carry resentments that destroy relationships and keep matters from being settled. Consequently, after a person has made restitution, there is often a ritual of reconciliation to put the past behind and reincorporate the person into the group. The greatest punishment in these societies is to be banned and shunned. A person who does not submit to the group's decision is ostracized. He continues to live in the village, but everyone treats him as nonexistent. This is a far greater punishment than being put in jail.

The churches regularly celebrate the Lord's Supper. They are encouraged to take part as a church in the ordinance often, but no demand is placed on the churches. *The Big One* teaches that the Lord's Supper is a time of remembrance, remembering Jesus sacrificial death. During this time church members are encouraged to take on a somber attitude and reflect upon Jesus finished work on the cross and to confess their own sins. Also, the practice of the ordinance is a time to proclaim the death, burial, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus through a visible act. The churches in the movement wrote a song to be sang at the time of the Lord's Supper. The churches guard participation in the ordinance in a strict manner. Only baptized believers in good standing with the church are invited to participate. The elements used for bread and wine are up to the local church's discretion. Typically, any type of bread is generally accepted as well as just about any reddish colored liquid. Wine is not used because of the cultural and religious surroundings.

The church recognizes elders and deacons. The church looks to the biblical qualifications of these offices for guidance in determining who should fill these roles. The church is governed by her members and shepherded by elders.

The Big One guides groups of new believers to grow and mature into healthy churches, focused on engaging in the Great Commission. Despite the threat of persecution, the churches are enabled to flourish as they abide in Christ and encourage one another in faithfulness.

Professing Truth

The rubric presents eleven questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

Initially, a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

results in baptism. This new believer, via profession of faith and baptism, is incorporated into a body of believers who corporately profess the same faith. This profession of faith is also seen in the life of the church through the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Since the context of much of *The Big One*'s work is predominantly Islamic, the churches focus their attention on the person and nature of Jesus Christ. The truth about his nature and his accomplished works clearly set the believers apart from the community from which they are called out. The early discipleship and further leadership training equips the churches to know basic Christology. The churches receive a strong statement of Christological affirmation. This statement is mostly taken directly from Scripture and focuses on Christology (see above in Word Centered). Talented musicians are also writing worship songs to teach these truths, so the affirmations stick better in the believers' memories.

The core beliefs of the church are typically memorized and recited. A written statement of faith is not common. As mentioned already, some music is specifically designed to propagate the core beliefs of the church.

The church studies the Scripture together in a participatory method. As they discover new teachings, the leaders investigate them in their leadership trainings. As necessary the church may add a clarifying statement to their worship gathering. The churches are typically not aware of historic confessions of faith. So, while their beliefs would fall squarely within historical Baptist affirmations, the churches would not necessarily recognize these prior confessions.

Kingdom Expansion

The rubric presents ten questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

The Big One instructs and equips the new churches to participate in the Great Commission. Not only is each believer able to engage in evangelism, but each believer is also authorized to baptize and teach new believers. In this way, *The Big One* churches exercise the priesthood of every believer to obey the Great Commission and all the commands of Scripture together.

The *Any 3* evangelistic method is directly related to *The Big One* church planting method. This method of evangelism gets to the gospel using by Old Testament sacrifice stories. Earlier in this chapter this method was discussed in more detail. Part of the evangelism method is to have each person who hears the gospel to repeat the story back to the evangelist. Then, the evangelist asks the hearer to whom they can tell the story. In the very beginning of the evangelism process, potential believers are being equipped to share stories from Scripture, leading to the gospel. Since the method focuses on stories rather than an evangelistic outline, believers are able to share the gospel in a more natural way.

Since *The Big One* emphasizes each believer as priest, then each priest is authorized to evangelize. In this way, each believer takes responsibility to share. Also, they are not required or obligated by someone to engage in evangelism, but rather they are encouraged to partake in the privilege. Practitioners acknowledge that not every member engages regularly in evangelism, but that each believer knows that is part of their role as priests.

Discipleship first occurs in a group setting. The initial discipleship lessons prepare that group to soon identify as a church. Their identity as a church is built upon the foundation of their identity in Christ.

The continued reproduction of disciples and churches is built upon the teaching of the believer priest. First, each believer is authorized by Christ to engage in the Great Commission. Since discipleship happens in a group setting, each believer is able to replicate the evangelism and discipleship pattern that is modeled for them. Part of the

discipleship pattern borrowed from T4T is that disciples are encouraged to set goals and report back on how their outreach and discipleship efforts progressed each week.

The churches do not necessarily send out specially gifted or called members to take the gospel to new communities. The reason for not sending these people out is that they already recognize that each believer is authorized to engage in this type of work. Some people in the church are recognized as being particularly gifted in evangelism, discipleship, or teaching. These believers are set apart to receive further training and to train others to obey the Great Commission.

The kingdom expansion component is healthy. It is built upon the concept of the believer-priest being authorized to obey the commands of the Great Commission. Believers and churches celebrate the obedience to these commands. As the believers seek to multiply churches in every village, they are seeing Christ's kingdom grow.

Real Presence

The rubric presents sixteen questions which help diagnose the strength of this element within a church planting strategy. Some of these questions are answered clearly within *The Big One* teaching and methodology. Some questions require some careful consideration. Some questions are not clearly answered within *The Big One* paradigm.

These churches are an authentic reflection of the communities in which they are planted. The initial apostolic team may be from outside the community. Early in the life of the new church leadership is passed on to the emerging leaders of the new church. Thus, leadership is indigenous. The church governs herself.

At the birth of the church, the members covenant together to meet on a weekly basis. These meetings take place at the same time each week. The venue of the meeting may change week to week. No particular day for the meeting is uniform across the network. The church decides which day is best for their church to meet.

Meetings usually last ninety minutes. The order of service typically follows a

similar format. It begins with prayer and a confession of faith followed by singing songs. Then they have a time of accountability for living by faith and engaging in evangelism. A time of focused prayer follows the accountability. During this prayer time intercession is made for one another, and they pray for those who heard the gospel the previous week. Next, the church reviews the previous week's lesson, and then they study the new Bible lesson together. The Bible study portion is guided by six questions. Then, they take an offering, recite a memory verse together, and set goals for obedience. Their goals include evangelism, obedience to the lesson they just studied together, and sharing the lesson with others. The corporate worship gathering concludes by the church singing together.

The size of the congregation depends on the location. For security reasons, often, the church is no more than ten adults. The church usually meets in a home. However, they may not meet in the same home on a regular basis. They typically will rotate homes. The place is fluid, but the time of the church gathering is consistent.

The church must balance its viability in the community. The believers do make themselves known by evangelism and sharing lessons. Also, at appropriate times and as they are able, the church may try to assist neighbors in need.

The church in *The Big One* network of churches share similar patterns of worship. Since one church plants another church, the pattern of gathering is passed on from congregation to congregation. Each church is autonomous as can make changes to the order of worship and the pattern of their gathering if they desired. Most all the churches maintain the similar pattern so that it remains easily reproducible.

Conclusion

The Big One church planting method was influenced early in its development by CPM strategies. The early success of T4T also provided some learning points for the creators of *The Big One*. As *The Big One* led to new churches being planted, the missionaries and national leaders involved made subtle changes in their methodology.

These changes intentionally sought to create opportunities for not only planting churches that could easily reproduce, but also ensuring that the churches that were planted were healthy. *The Big One* church planting method is comprehensive in its approach to multiplication and health. The method is in no way perfect, but it does modify its approach as needed to ensure that the new churches may flourish where they are planted.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation presented the conviction that one must have a biblically faithful ecclesiology before proceeding to address how churches function. Ecclesiology and missiology are two disciplines that necessarily overlap.[1] One's ecclesiology will impact the practice of missions. One's missiology will have implications for the functions, practices, and organization of new churches.

A biblically faithful ecclesiology is a necessary component of church planting strategies. This ecclesiology enables new churches to flourish where they are planted. A flourishing church actively seeks to be everything that God designed her to be. These churches proclaim the gospel, develop spiritually vibrant disciples, and impact their communities, as the reign of King Jesus spreads. The ecclesiology undergirding these flourishing churches focuses on who the church is prior to focusing on what the church does.

The CPM paradigm is one of the most influential in modern missiological practice. This dissertation points out at that CPM and T4T may have honorable goals and motivations, but they fail to lay out a biblically responsible ecclesiology. The motivations and goals that guide many CPM and T4T practitioners can be joined to biblically faithful ecclesiology. *The Big One* church planting method demonstrates that reality.

Planting churches based upon a faithful biblical ecclesiology means that one must be begin with God. All motivations and goals must begin with God's own

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[1] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 24-26.

175

motivation, his own glory (Isa 42.8). Following that foundational truth, churches must submit to the headship of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He bought the church with his own blood and guides her through his written and revealed Word, the Bible. God is present with his church by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The church's identity is completely rooted in her God. This identity informs how the members of the church relate to one another and the surrounding world. The church intentionally identifies herself as church when the members covenant together to be the people of God in a particular place. This church professes truth as revealed in the Bible together. This church also endeavors to proclaim the gospel among the lost of this world in the effort to expand God's Kingdom. Finally, these churches maintain a real tangible presence in their communities.

Church planting models should be evaluated regularly.[2] Church planters should continually seek to refine their tools in order that God is glorified, and churches are equipped to fully engage in God's mission. This dissertation provides a rubric that leads church planters to evaluate the ecclesiology of their efforts. This rubric is helpful in evaluating if a church established in a particular context will be enabled to flourish by the methods used.

This dissertation evaluated one missiological paradigm, CPM, using the rubric proposed in chapter two. Two church planting methods, T4T and *The Big One*, were also evaluated using the proposed rubric. From these evaluations, one is able to discern what aspects of the strategies and methods are useful in the efforts to establish new churches. One is also able to discern where the strategies and methods may not enable new churches to flourish.

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[2] J. D. Payne, "Introduction: Methodological Stewardship: Always Evaluating, Always Adjusting," in *Missionary Methods: Research, Reflections, and Realities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), xv-xvi.

Lessons Learned

One may reasonably claim a few lessons were learned from this dissertation. Some lessons were directly tied to the research and evaluations. Other lessons arose through the process of writing and research.

The most important lesson learned and reinforced through this entire research project is that ecclesiology matters. One's understanding of who the church is will significantly impact how one goes about the task of church planting. So, before engaging in church planting efforts, one should be clear who the church is and what God expects for her and from her. Based upon this understanding, one should develop strategies and methods. The strategies and methods of church planting should be evaluated and adjusted regularly. While the biblical principles and expectations of church never change, the context within which churches are planted does change. The change of context means that churches need to be the visible people of God for that particular location.

A second important lesson is also gleaned from this study. This lesson is that one's motivation matters. Is someone motivated by lostness, or urgency, or the glory of God? While all these motivations may be valid and have biblical roots, which one should be primary? In the practice of church planting, one may reasonably conclude that the issue of motivation affects everything that follows.

If urgency or lostness drives the strategy, then one may be tempted to achieve minimal expectations for a church. Once these expectations are met, then one moves on to the next community so that the gospel spreads faster, as if the human agent is the sole agent responsible for the furtherance of the gospel among the nations. But if God's glory is the driving motivation, then one will be careful to conform both the message and the methods to God's revealed patterns through Scripture.[3]

Another lesson learned from this study is that biblical authority matters. All the

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[3] Zane Pratt, David M. Sills, and Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 74.

strategies and methods studied affirm this axiom to be true. However, the way in which one submits to the authority of the Bible matters immensely. One aspect of the Bible's authority is its clear teaching of doctrine and practice. The Bible is not a book that intends to be used to prove a particular point through proof-texting. The grand narrative of Scripture and responsible exegesis leads Christians to employ practices that are in keeping with the God's expectations for his people. The methods that church planters employ and the trainings they teach reveal something about how they view the authority of the Bible. If one claims to submit to biblical authority in church planting, but then employs methods that are not endorsed by Scripture, a confusing message is sent to the new churches. Further still, if the methods demand more or less than the Bible does for the establishment of a new church, a confusing message is communicated to the new churches. Practitioners must do the careful and hard work of biblical exegesis so that their practices match the biblical teachings.

A fourth lesson is the necessity of methodological refinement. Results should not determine the method. While the adage of beginning with the end in mind is helpful, it should not dictate the methods, especially in eternal matters. All other research is secondary in nature and helps inform the process, but it should not be treated as authoritative. The sole authority in church planting efforts should be the Bible alone. Certainly, if a particular methodology is not yielding spiritual fruit or the multiplication of disciples, one should evaluate the practice. However, just because a particular method is producing fruit does not mean that it is biblically faithful. In this study, *The Big One* demonstrates this refinement best. Over the course of missionaries utilizing this particular method, tactics and principles were adapted to better reflect the biblical teachings and the cultural expression of the church.

A final lesson drawn from the research is related to the topic of pacing. The Apostle Paul provided wise counsel when he reminded the Corinthians that God is responsible for growth (1 Cor 3.5-9). While it is true that people cannot respond to the

gospel appropriately if they never hear the gospel (Rom 10.14-15); it is not necessarily true that more people will believe the gospel if more people hear the gospel. A tension exists in Scripture that must remain balanced in the practice of church planting. An attempt to speed up the reproduction of churches will in the long run do more damage to the expansion of Christ's kingdom than being faithful to do what the Scripture clearly teaches believers and churches to do.

God must be allowed to determine the speed of church reproduction. Implementing methods to increase the rapidity of church planting is not something that Scripture demands. Certainly, one should not intentionally slow down what God is doing, but wisdom exists in laying a firm foundation for churches so that they will flourish where they are planted.

One last thought related to the lessons learned through the research is that the enemy seeks to divide Christians over the practices of church planting. Whether one is an ardent supporter of CPM or a critic of the paradigm, each one holds a strong view. Some of the training leads people to feel like they are sinful if they do not see a CPM emerge from their efforts.[4] Some training also seems to imply that this is the best biblical way for church planting, and every other approach is inferior. Critics and supporters can sometimes be uncharitable with one another. This reality is not surprising; but when understood within the context of global missions, both sides should seek to help one another rather than attack.

Suggestions for Future Study

After studying this material for a few years, several topics worthy of further research are apparent. These topics are either directly related to the formation of church

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[4] For example, the T4T training pins the success of seeing rapidly reproducing church planting on the person implementing the method. (see PowerPoint training material, T4T-TRT Overview - February 2010; slide 27).

planting strategies and methods or a particular aspect within the efforts.

First, a helpful study of the hermeneutics of church planting strategies would be useful. The methods studied here fall short of being exemplary in their hermeneutical practices. Is this poor practice of hermeneutics consistent within all church planting methods? Is there a particular method or practitioner that can be identified as being hermeneutically exemplary? What potential problems does a poor hermeneutic cause?[5] Perhaps, one could propose what an appropriate hermeneutic used in church planting would look like.[6]

A study of the relationship between church membership and the priesthood of all believers could yield useful fruit. The way *The Big One* teaches and utilizes the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers appears to be a healthy way to empower church members to engage in ministry. I would be interested to see if other church planting strategies emphasize this motif and what the results are. Also, could an emphasis of this teaching and practice help to revitalize established churches that are stagnant in growth?

A third topic for further research relates to people groups. As the gospel spreads globally and unreached peoples are engaged with the gospel, fewer people groups find themselves isolated from Christian churches. How does the presence of Christianity in near-culture peoples impact the receptivity of unreached people groups? Growing out of the suggestion one could examine how the isolation of a people group from established churches either helps or hurts the spread of the gospel, effective discipleship, and the establishment of flourishing churches.

One last topic for further research is the role of the Lord's Supper in church

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[5] One example would be to examine what implications The Big One's presentation of the Old Testament sacrifices have on the growth, development, and teaching of the churches planted.

[6] Someone who chooses to study this topic further could build upon the research of William Patrick Brooks, "Critiquing Ethnohermeneutics Theories: A Call for an Author-Oriented Approach to Cross-Cultural Biblical Interpretation" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

planting. In the course of writing this dissertation, I was part of a church planting team. Our team planted a church in a large, diverse city in Southeast Asia. I have also taught in seminaries and Bible schools throughout the region. One topic that generates a surprising amount of discussion is the Lord's Supper. Discussions revolve around questions about who should partake in the ordinance, how often the ordinance should be observed, who can serve it, what is the meaning behind it, amidst others. The participation in the celebration of the Lord's Supper touches all human senses. The meaning in the celebration signifies an established church gathered together. Might it be that a church planter only needs the Bible, believer's baptism, and the Lord's Supper to establish a new church? Both T4T and *The Big One* point to the observance of the Lord's Supper in the formation of the church. I would like to see someone expound upon this thought in further research for the benefit of future church planting.

Final Charge

I want to end this dissertation with a challenge to all church planters. I challenge you to do the hard work of studying the Bible in regard to the church. The church is the bride of Christ. Jesus gave his life for her. As practitioners, we can give our minds to studying who she is and what God intends for her to be in her fullness. Allow God's purposes drive your vision of church planting. Seek to be the church before doing church. Devote yourself to enabling churches to flourish where they are planted to the glory of God.

APPENDIX

A MERE ECCLESIOLOGY

Christians gather in local churches. The experience of a local church's gathering is unique to each individual church. Yet, Christians visit churches around the world and find elements of consistency. The adage that global Christianity contains more commonalities than differences helps to explain how Christians from different backgrounds find a comradery with a local church in which they are not members. This comradery evidences the oneness of the universal body of Christ. "There is one body and one Spirit," Paul affirms, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," (Eph 4:4-6). This unity of the body is evident in the life of individual local churches.

One may question how Protestant churches maintain their similarities, since throughout history these churches split over doctrinal and governance issues. In fact, the very existence of Protestant churches is a testimony to the split with the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. Churches which emerged from these splits did not seek to create something new. Rather, they sought to restore or recover the New Testament belief and practice. The affirmation of *sola scriptura, sola fide*, and *sola gratia* continues to serve as a guide of practice and belief for Protestant churches. Calvin encapsulates this affirmation, "Wherever the Word of God is sincerely preached and listened to and wherever the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, we can be sure the Church of God exists because of his promise that 'where two or three come

together in my name, there am I with them' (Matt. 18:20)."[1] So, Protestant churches today can affirm a certain unity, but the diversity of churches also points to a vast amount of differences and disagreements.

Ordinarily, the differences between Protestant churches arise from disagreements about the meaning and practice of behaviors prescribed by the New Testament. Fundamentally, the differences revolve around the sacraments and church governance. Protestants seeking to display the intrinsic unity of the body of Christ have attempted to bring clarity to these differences and narrow the divisions. These attempts can be deemed a mere ecclesiology.[2]

This appendix will interact with three attempts at developing a mere ecclesiology. These attempts seek to accomplish the task of bridging the Protestant divisions. A mere ecclesiology is especially useful for church planters. A mere ecclesiology is a description of the church which can provide guidance in the establishment of new churches among unreached peoples and places. The major components of a mere ecclesiology consist of theological foundations of the church, the people who make up the church, the activities and practices of the church, and the formalized structure of the church.

World Council of Churches

First, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches

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[1] John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion,* ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 234.

[2] "Mere ecclesiology is a theological construct that serves a specific purpose of highlighting the essential nature of the church, its core ministries, its principal leadership framework, and more. These central attributes, functions, and structures represent the common ground shared by most churches throughout history." Gregg R. Allison, "The Prospects for a 'Mere Ecclesiology,'" pre-published article, April 30, 2019.

devoted fifty years to study, write, and publish *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in 1982.[3] This document was an ecumenical attempt, "to realize the goal of visible church unity."[4] The commission believed that the visible disunity of churches could be overcome by affirming basic agreements of doctrine related to sacraments of baptism, the eucharist, and the practice of church ministry. The time devoted to the study, according to the commission, bore fruit of unity in Christ and "the rediscovery of the richness of our common inheritance in the Gospel."[5] Beyond this awareness of unity, one may rightly ask what this paper actually accomplished.

The paper affirmed baptism, the eucharist, and ministry to be distinctive markers of Christian churches. The commission was able to affirm that these three categories of Christian belief and practice exist. They could even agree to some elementary tenants related the differing churches' belief and practice. However, agreement on the exact meaning of the practices and the beliefs undergirding them remained elusive.

Theological Foundations

The theological truth emphasized in this document is the unity of the body of Christ. The document affirms that the local church is the visible display of the body of Christ. The major concern is not about unity within a particular local church, but rather the unity between local churches. The unity between local churches that the WCC is seeking to promote is directly related, "to their mission in and for the renewal of human

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[3] World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (paper adopted by Faith and Order at its plenary commission meeting, Lima, Peru, January 15, 1982). https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text. Henceforth referred to as BEM.

[4] *BEM*, Preface, v.

[5] *BEM*, Preface, vii.

community as they seek to promote justice, peace and reconciliation."[6] The BEM asserts that the pursuit of unity between local churches will provide direction for these churches. The pursuit of this unity, according the BEM, will lead to a greater emphasis on social justice initiatives.

A common confession is affirmed to be rooted in Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness. However, the experience of this promised unity must precede the articulation of the faith. The goal of this experiential unity should lead the churches, "to declare together that they are living in communion with one another in continuity with the apostles and the teaching of the universal Church."[7] The authors of the BEM are pleased with the amount of unity they achieved in this document, but also believe they must go further.

While one may rejoice at the attempt to seek the unity of the church, which is an ontological truth of the church, the conclusions of the document are not necessarily revelatory. The document does indeed identify the biblical root of unity in the church as well as the biblical root of baptism and eucharist.

The Church's People

The people who make up the church are publicly identifiable. They are first identified by baptism.[8] Then, they are identified as participants in the observance of the Eucharist.[9] The administration of these two sacraments initiates Christians into the church and nurtures these Christians as a body of Christ.

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[6] *BEM*, Preface, vi.

[7] *BEM*, Preface, vii.

[8] *BEM*, Baptism.II.D.6.

[9] *BEM*, Baptism IV.B.c and Eucharist.II.E.24.

Church Activities and Practices

According to BEM, baptism is a universal practice within Christian churches. The paper affirms certain common understandings of the meaning of baptism. These common understandings are rooted in the New Testament. Some of these common beliefs include that baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus; it unites the recipient of baptism with Christ and his church; it is participation in Christ's death and resurrection, a new birth, and a cleansing of sin. The document affirms that baptism is with water and by the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sacrament to be administered once in a Christian's life. Through baptism one is incorporated into the Body of Christ.

The call for baptismal unity is a clear nod to ecumenism. According to BEM, "When baptismal unity is realized in one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the healing and reconciling love of God. Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship."[10] The danger of not visibly displaying Christian unity in baptism is viewed as a broken and compromised witness of the Church.

Beyond identifying the biblical root of baptism, the document identifies the differences between traditions. Church divisions regarding baptism are acknowledged in the paper. For example, BEM describes the practice of both paedo-baptism and credobaptism. The BEM indicates that the biblical data supports believer's baptism but does not negate infant baptism. No suggestions are presented that may guide the churches forward in overcoming these differences.

The BEM affirms baptism is the initiatory act of the church for Christians, and the eucharist is the ongoing sacrament for those in the body of Christ. The eucharist was instituted by Jesus Christ on the night he was betrayed. The elements of the eucharist are

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[10] *BEM*, 2.

186

bread and wine.[11]

   The various theological teachings regarding the eucharist are acknowledged in the text. The issue of unity of the churches is the key issue in addressing these theological differences. The BEM is careful to not endorse one particular view. Rather, it calls on all churches to respect the practice and piety of one another in relation to the view of the eucharist. In various ways this theme of respect is reiterated throughout the section on the eucharist. The BEM does not offer a preferred theological stance as a way forward.

   The BEM does identify the division over the meaning associated with the eucharist to be problematic to the church's witness to the world. The BEM laments, "Insofar as Christians cannot unite in full fellowship around the same table to eat the same loaf and drink from the same cup, their missionary witness is weakened at both the individual and the corporate levels."[12] The BEM affirms each of the major views of the eucharist to have spiritual vitality, it stops short of offering real solutions.

   Baptism and the eucharist are vital to the formation and continuing practice of local churches. The BEM calls for unity and suggests churches to consider how these differences may be overcome. Despite the call for unity, the end result is that real differences still exist.

The Church's Formalized Structure

   The BEM describes the formation of the church. The framework of the basic structure is trinitarian. God calls out a people in Jesus Christ united by the Holy Spirit. The role of Christ as a penal substitute is not substantially highlighted in this framework. The church's dependence upon the power and animating work of the Holy Spirit is

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[11] The use of contextualized elements within the Eucharist need further study according to the document. *BEM*, Eucharist.III.28.28.

[12] *BEM*, Eucharist.II.E.26.

evident. The emphasis is upon the formation of the universal church.

This final section of the BEM focuses on the ministry. Ordination is the issue that takes up the bulk of this section, which is the largest of the document. This section presents numerous problems.

One problem is that BEM does not sufficiently root ordination, nor the role of the ordained minister, in the New Testament. Compared with the biblical rootedness of baptism and the eucharist, the document is lacking biblical support. The calling of the Apostles and their specific ministry is linked with the continuation of a set apart group of ministers.[13] The biblical support for the view of ordination is simply insufficient to justify adherence to the doctrine and practice.

A second problem is the issue of qualification. The qualification given by the BEM is that of giftedness. Based upon a person's giftedness, one may qualify for ordination. Character qualifications as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 are not referenced. The individual being ordained should poses a personal awareness of a call from the Lord for ministry as well as the recognition of this calling by the church. While the church is responsible for affirming the call into ministry of an ordination candidate, the ordination body will be different depending upon the church's polity.

BEM does recognize that differing church polities – episcopal, presbyterial and congregational – will inevitably mean a different practice of ordination. Not only does it mean that the authority to ordain rests within different groups in the church, but also recognizes that ordination qualifications will be different among the different churches. BEM lists the issue of ordaining women to the ministry as one example of such a

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[13] *BEM*, Ministry.II.11. In addition to linking ordination of ministers to the calling of the Apostles, the BEM cautions that "The churches, therefore, need to avoid attributing their particular forms of the ordained ministry directly to the will and institution of Jesus Christ" (Ministry.II.11.Commentary 11). This caution also serves to rebuke the teaching about ordained ministry in churches of the Roman Catholic tradition.

difference.[14] BEM does not offer a way forward to resolve this division regarding ordination.

A third problem is the issue of *need*. The BEM states that church *needs* an ordained ministry in order to fulfill its mission.[15] While the New Testament definitely indicates that the roles of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon are essential to the maturity and well-being of the church, the church is not dependent upon these servants to accomplish her mission. She is dependent upon the Scriptures for direction and the Spirit for unity, giftedness, and boldness. She is not dependent upon any human – expect Jesus Christ – to fulfill her mission.

Christ is the chief-priest of the New Covenant. In his role of priest, he is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). The New Testament describes believers as priests and the church collectively as a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9). The BEM links ordained ministry with priesthood.[16] This linkage is problematic since the New Testament does not endorse a hierarchical structure related to priesthood, rather all believers are affirmed as priests.[17] Developing a hierarchical structure will damage a church's ability to fully engage in the Great Commission.

The BEM does not provide sufficient suggestions to bridge the divide between churches with regard to ordination. The best effort at a solution is for churches to respect and honor the polity and ordination of other churches. One implication of this suggestion

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[14] *BEM*, Ministy.II.D.18.

[15] *BEM*, Ministry.II.A.8.

[16] *BEM*, Minstry.II.C.17.

[17] For a helpful Baptist view on the priesthood of the believer see, Jonathan Leeman, "A Baptist View of the Royal Priesthood of All Believers" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no 1 (Spring 2019), 113-35. For a contrast of the view and practice of priesthood between Roman Catholics and Protestants see Gregg R. Allison and Rachel Ciano, "Roman Catholic Theology and Practice of the Priesthood Contrasted with Protestant Theology and Practice of the Priesthood" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no 1 (Spring 2019), 137-155.

is for churches to relax strong convictions about how churches should be governed and how ordination should be practiced.

Final Assessment

The BEM recognizes certain biblical foundations of churches such as baptism and the eucharist. The call for unity is not aided by a robust biblical and theological pathway forward toward unity. Certain portions of BEM may be helpful in understanding and clarifying differences between different churches, but it does not provide a useful mere ecclesiology.

A Reforming Catholic Confession

In September 2017, just before the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, *A Reforming Catholic Confession* was released.[18] This confession attempted to showcase a mere Protestantism. This attempt at a mere Protestantism intended to show that Protestants can and do agree on issues of theological substance.[19] Co-chairman of the drafting committee, Kevin Vanhoozer, claimed,

> We're trying to show that the Reformation didn't give birth to simply a plethora of conflicting opinions. Some people think that the Protestant church is an experiment that has failed dramatically. It split the church. That's not the way we're viewing it. We're trying to show, on the eve of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, that Protestants from different churches, different denominations, different local churches can come together and agree about the substance of the faith—the faith delivered once for all to the saints and recovered, we think, at the Reformation.[20]

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[18] A Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: A 'Mere Protestant' Statement of Faith to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation," accessed September 30, 2019, https://reformingcatholicconfession.com.

[19] A Reforming Catholic Confession, "Explanation: A Historical & Theological Perspective Why We Say What We Say," 13, accessed September 30, 2019, https://reformingcatholicconfession.com/explanation/.

[20] Thom Blair, "Kevin Vanhoozer Announces A Reforming Catholic Confession," theLAB: The Logos Academic Blog, September 12, 2017, accessed October 21, 2019, https://academic.logos.com/kevin-vanhoozer-announces-a-reforming-catholic-confession/.

The confession is not seeking a lowest common denominator Protestant belief but rather the greatest common factors of faith uniting Protestants. The result of the effort is a confession that seeks to build and call for unity among the diverse group of Protestant churches around the core beliefs of Protestant Christianity.[21]

Two of the twelve articles of the confession deal specifically with the church. Some of these articles have significant implications for how one is to understand the church. The article "The Church" states,

> That the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is God's new society, the first fruit of the new creation, the whole company of the redeemed through the ages, of which Christ is Lord and head. The truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the church's firm foundation (Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:11). The local church is both embassy and parable of the kingdom of heaven, an earthly place where his will is done and he is now present, existing visibly everywhere two or three gather in his name to proclaim and spread the gospel in word and works of love, and by obeying the Lord's command to baptize disciples (Matt. 28:19) and celebrate the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19).[22]

The remaining ten articles provide a theological framework with which the articles related to church should be understood.

Theological Foundations

Since this document is a confession, all the theological affirmations prior to the statement on the church serve to provide a theological foundation. The statement follows this order of affirmations: triune God, Holy Scripture, human beings, fallenness, Jesus

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[21] Dale M Coulter, "On Mere Protestantism," FirstThings.com, September 12, 2017, accessed October 21, 2019 , https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/09/on-mere-protestantism. Coulter served as a member of the drafting committee. He reported that the confession has four aims: (1) "It underscores a fundamental unity of Protestantism and ground that unity in a positive statement of catholic Christianity." (2) "The statement reaffirms the important work of the Reformation as a necessary event in the life of the church catholic." (3) "The statement briefly addresses various arguments that gesture toward Protestantism (whether intended or not) as unleashing the forces that now comprise secularism." (4) "The statement acknowledges the many divisions within Protestantism and calls for a return to its catholic roots."

[22] Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: The Church."

Christ, the atoning work of Christ, the gospel, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Each of these affirmations inform the affirmation of the church.

The confession reaffirms the traditional assertion that the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.[23] This affirmation echoes the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed accepted in 381. The oneness or unity of the body of Christ is a clear New Testament teaching (John 10:16, Acts 4:32, Gal 3: 27-28, Eph 4:4-6). The church is holy because it is set-apart to God (1 Pet 1:14-16). Christ makes the church holy (Eph 5:25-27). The catholicity of the church speaks to its universal nature. Dever explains, "The church is universal then in that it stretches across space and time. Universality alone among these four attributes is not actually found in the New Testament. Rather this description developed from later reflection upon the true church."[24] The apostolicity of the church relates to the foundational and faithful teachings of the Apostles in the formation of the church (Acts 2:42). The gospel message that serves as the bedrock of the church was first proclaimed by the Apostle Peter and continues to be passed down generation to generation. The apostolic teaching remains consistent. Their authoritative teaching is rooted in the Scripture and continues today as it is faithfully proclaimed and taught.

In the statement, the church is recognized to be the first fruit of the new creation, of which, Christ is the firstborn of a renewed and restored creation. As the first fruit of the new creation, Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of the church. The church is redeemed by Christ alone.

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[23] For a helpful exploration of these four marks see Richard D. Phillips, Philip G. Ryken, and Mark E. Dever, *The Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004).

[24] Mark E. Dever, "The Church" in *A Theology for the Church*, ed Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 777. Dever continues, "While every true church is part of this universal church and is an entire church itself, no local church can be said to constitute the entire universal church." Even further, he states, "The church, in both its local and universal manifestations, belongs to Christ and Christ alone."

The Church's People

Sinners redeemed by Jesus Christ are the congregants of the church. The confession affirms: "The whole company of the redeemed through the ages" to be the those who populate the church.[25] The statement is not clear whether the affirmation is of both the universal and local church.

The confession looks to unite Protestants who hold to differing views of the continuity between the old and new covenants. The affirmation mentioned above satisfies Protestants who hold onto a view of continuity between the covenants. The section on the gospel provides clarity about who makes up the church: "Christ died in the place of sinners, absorbing the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23), so that those who entrust themselves to him also die with him to the power, penalty, and (eventually) practice of sin. Christ was raised the firstborn of a renewed and restored creation, so that those whom the Spirit unites to him in faith are raised up and created a new humanity in him (Eph. 2:15)."[26]

To find an affirmation that satisfies those who see more discontinuity between the covenants, one must look to the affirmations on the Holy Spirit. This section affirms, "The Spirit indwells those whom he makes alive with Christ, through faith incorporates them into the body of Christ, and conforms them to the image of Christ so that they may glorify him as they grow in knowledge, wisdom, and love into mature sainthood, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13)."[27] In this affirmation, the members of the church are distinct in that the Spirit indwells them and incorporated them explicitly into the body of Christ. While the article on the church does not state that the church is comprised of regenerate believers, the article on the Holy Spirit does affirm that

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[25] Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: The Church."

[26] Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: The Gospel."

[27] Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit."

the people incorporated into the body of Christ are regenerate.

The article on the church also affirms that believers gathering in his name to do his will and proclaim the gospel, constitutes a church. The article provides an irreducible minimum of two or three people gathering together. In this way, the article affirms that the church is made up of members. Local churches do not exist only when two or three Christians gather, rather they exist when these Christians gather for a purpose. The purpose of gathering is the proclamation of the gospel, evangelization, and obeying Jesus command to baptize believers and celebrate the Lord's Supper.

The confession addresses the spiritual realities that Protestants can affirm. It avoids issues that divide Protestants; for example, no clear affirmation on who is a candidate for baptism is noted. So, while Protestants can agree on the historical affirmations of the universal church, the local church is where divisions are most observable. For this reason, not much is affirmed about the local church except that she is to gather in order to proclaim and spread the gospel.

Church Activities and Practices

When local churches gather to proclaim and spread the gospel, the article states that this activity is accomplished through both word and works. In addition, obedience to Christ's command to baptize and celebrate the Lord's Supper is part of this proclamation and spread of the gospel. Through these affirmations, the article actually states a lot about local churches, while ignoring the issues that divide Protestants.

First, the statement affirms that local churches are a gathering of believers. This affirmation is important. The Scripture directs Christians not to neglect meeting together (Heb 10:25). This directive is to counter the habit of those who did not gather together. Christians gathering is a fundamental practice of the church. Technological advancements make it possible for communities to neglect physically meeting together in

the same place. Churches should seek to affirm this statement and its practices as a fundamental reality of the church.

While the mission of the church is not stated specifically, one can discern that the proclamation of the gospel is the primary activity of the church. The proclamation of the gospel is for both believers and for unbelievers. The gospel must be proclaimed for it to spread. Works of love accompany the proclamation of the gospel. These works of love serve to authenticate the gospel message.

Following the statement regarding the church, the confession then elaborates on the church activities of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The article states,

> That these two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which some among us call "sacraments," are bound to the Word by the Spirit as visible words proclaiming the promise of the gospel, and thus become places where recipients encounter the Word again. Baptism and the Lord's Supper communicate life in Christ to the faithful, confirming them in their assurance that Christ, the gift of God for the people of God, is indeed "for us and our salvation" and nurturing them in their faith. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are physical focal points for key Reformation insights: the gifts of God (sola gratia) and the faith that grasps their promise (sola fide). They are tangible expressions of the gospel insofar as they vividly depict our dying, rising, and incorporation into Jesus' body ("one bread … one body" – 1 Cor. 10:16-17), truly presenting Christ and the reconciliation he achieved on the cross. Baptism and the Lord's Supper strengthen the faithful by visibly recalling, proclaiming, and sealing the gracious promise of forgiveness of sins and communion with God and one another through the peace-making blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 1:20).[28]

This statement, according to the framers of the document, displays a Protestant, interdenominational unity regarding the essentials of Christian faith and practice.[29]

Protestants all agree that baptism is a core practice of the faith. Baptism is affirmed to be a visible illustration of the gospel. Baptism depicts the believer's "dying, rising, and incorporation in Jesus' body."[30] This depiction presents the reconciliation

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[28] Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: Baptism and Lord's Supper."

[29] Reforming Catholic Confession, "Explanation," 15.

[30] Reforming Catholic Confession, "A Reforming Catholic Confession: Baptism and Lord's

between God and man that Christ achieved on the cross. In celebrating baptism, the church is confronted with her own sinfulness and the sacrifice Christ made to redeem them. Baptism is not an individual activity but rather performed in the context of the local church. Beyond those agreements, Protestants find it difficult to agree on much more about baptism. The Protestant divisions over baptism typically include one or more of the following: candidate, mode, meaning, and administrator.

Similarly, Protestants agree that the Lord's Supper is a core practice of the church. Agreement generally exists on the elements used: bread and wine (or grape juice) where it is available. However, disagreement exists about the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper among Protestants. Vanhoozer said that the construction of the affirmation related to the Lord's Supper was difficult to reach agreement upon. He recalls,

> People of different churches are involved, and like the Reformers, we found ourselves, five hundred years later, struggling with one of the same issues, an issue that the Reformers never quite managed to get over. And that was the theology of the Lord's Supper. There was a deep irony, because the Lord's Supper, also called Communion, is about a place where communion is supposed to happen, and yet it was the place in the Reformation where communion wasn't happening. There were even anathemas of other positions sometimes on this question. So, we worked very hard and listened carefully, but this was the article that gave us the most problem.[31]

While Protestants typically do not embrace the view of the eucharist espoused by the Roman Catholic Church (transubstantiation), a variety of views do exist. The range of these views vary from consubstantiation to spiritual presence to a ceremonial or memorial symbol. The confession does not address these issues.

The Church's Formalized Structure

The only discernible affirmation related to the formalized structure of the

Supper."

[31] Blair, "Vanhoozer."

statement is that Jesus is the head of the church. No clear affirmations regarding church membership can be found. Nor is there any discussion regarding church discipline. No other affirmation is made about the formal structure of the church.

One may anticipate that a mere Protestant confession would provide more with regard to local church structure. Even if the vast array of contributors to the document could not agree on the roles and offices in a mere ecclesiology, is it not possible to agree upon at least the biblical qualifications for pastors/elders/overseers and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9)? Why isn't this part of the confession? While it is true in Acts that churches ordinarily were formed and functioning before a formal leadership was appointed, the appointments did happen. Whether a Protestant favors an episcopalian, presbyterian, or congregational model of church polity, the recognition that gifted leaders are given to the church for equipping the saints for ministry seems to be possible for all Protestants.[32] At this point, one may rightly conclude "A Reforming Catholic Confession" does not achieve all it possibly can.

Final Assessment

A Reforming Catholic Confession serves the greater Protestant community with a statement that clarifies and declares the truths that Protestant hold in common. The document is not an exhaustive treatment of the faith of all Protestants but it provides a foundation on which Protestants can build dialogue with their likeminded brothers and

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[32] For example, Allison, "The Prospects for a 'Mere Ecclesiology.'" Consider his following attempt that goes further than the confession under consideration,

> The church is a gathering of Christians (in many cases, along with their families) for the purpose of worshiping the triune God by proclaiming and living his Word and celebrating two ritual acts of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Having graciously heard and embraced the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, these Christians have been justified by faith in accordance with Scripture, which is the church's authority for its new covenant relationship with God. The church of which they are a part matures and multiplies through the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit working through both its leaders and members.

sisters regarding the things that do separate them. The area that separates most Protestants is ecclesiology. For this reason, the common affirmations in this confession are shallow. The work does acknowledge the basics of who the church is and what she does. However, as mentioned above, I believes more could be identified to affirm. One example would be the ministries of the church beyond simply stating service. Another example would be on the role of leaders in the church. Another document needs to be considered to develop these matters more fully.

People of the Promise[33]

The third of the resources under consideration is written from a magisterial Protestant perspective. Their view of magisterial Protestantism includes traditional Protestants in America such as Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians.[34] The book is a compilation of articles proposing a reformed mere Protestant ecclesiology. The book asserts, "There are, and have been, only a handful of internally-consistent options for ecclesiology, and magisterial Protestantism is, not to put too fine a point on it, the best of them."[35] This book's interaction with ecclesiology is the most comprehensive of the resources considered thus far. Following an introduction to ecclesiology the various articles deal with Protestant ecclesiology in Scripture, in history, and its implementation today.

Christ is the center of Protestant ecclesiology.[36] Everything addressed in a

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[33] Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, eds., *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), Kindle.

[34] Bradley Belschner, "The Protestant Doctrine of the Church and its Rivals," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 24, Kindle.

[35] Bradford Littlejohn, "Preface," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), location 189, Kindle.

[36] Belschner, "Doctrine of the Church," 38.

Protestant ecclesiology flows from Christ and faith in him. Identity with Christ is the most significant identity marker of a church, not its polity or its leaders. The basic principles of Protestant ecclesiology, according to Littlejohn are built upon exegesis, the central claims of the Reformation, "and a dogmatic description of what, according to the internal logic of Protestantism's claims, must be its true doctrine of the church."[37] The conclusion of these authors is that church is the people of God, not an institution or hierarchical structure, first and foremost, but as the title suggests, "People of the Promise."[38] It is a people defined by the God who called them out of darkness into light and life in Christ Jesus.

Theological Foundations

The theological foundations of the Protestant Reformation provide the foundations for a protestant ecclesiology. The four marks of the church are explicated within the framework of these protestant realities. The life of the church happens in the timeframe of an inaugurated eschatology.[39] In addition, the work of God in creating a new covenant people is informed by the New Testament term *ekklesia* employed for the church.

Magisterial Protestantism is a direct result of the Protestant Reformation. The key teachings that led to the reformation are what lay the foundation of this *mere ecclesiology*. Minich instructs, "The Reformation did not create a different church. It was and is a purifying movement within the one church, the one family of God, which cannot

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[37] Littlejohn, "Preface," loc 159.

[38] Belschner, "Doctrine of the Church," 37.

[39] Russel D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 868. Moore conveys, "The 'already' of the kingdom then has everything to do with the church. The church is where Jesus rules *now* (Eph. 1:22-23)."

(even in its visibility) be conflated with any single earthly institution."[40] Therefore, the

three key teachings of the reformation, *sola scriptura, sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, guide

formulation of the protestant ecclesiology.

Building upon these foundations, the four markers of one, holy, catholic, and

apostolic are affirmed by Protestant ecclesiology. Fulford demonstrates how faith relates

to these markers. According to Fulford, faith in Jesus is bedrock teaching in developing a

protestant ecclesiology:

> In short, believers are in Christ by their faith, just as much as they are justified by it.
> And insofar as they are in Christ, as they are His body, then they are ipso facto
> members of the church, for the apostle also regards the body of Christ and the
> church as coterminous (Eph. 1:22-23, emphasis added): "And He put all things in
> subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which
> is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." This church or body is also,
> as such, one (2:15), holy (1:1; 2:19), built on the apostles or apostolic (2:20), and
> catholic in the sense that it is not confined to one place or people group (2:17-18).[41]

These four markers are also on display through an inaugurated eschatology:

> The unity of the church is both an already (Eph. 4:4) and a not yet (Eph. 4:13). The
> holiness of the church is both an already (Eph. 1:1-5) and a not yet (Eph. 5:26). The
> Catholicity of the church is both an already (Eph. 4:4) and a not yet (Rev. 5—
> including the whole earth!). Even the apostolicity of the church is ultimately its
> grounding in a word, the calling of which it still pursues and seeks to attain (Eph.
> 4:11-13).[42]

The doctrines that laid the foundation for the reformation and these four marks of the

church are crucial to the life of the church. The church exists and wrestles to become all

that she is created to be in the already-not-yet reality of present history.

The church of Jesus Christ is a reality of the new covenant. The New

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[40] Joseph Minich, "The Church Question in a Disoriented Age," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 11, Kindle.

[41] Andrew Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology as Good Theory," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 137, Kindle.

[42] Joseph Minich, "Conclusion," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 180, Kindle.

Testament authors use the term *ekklesia* to identify the church. While the term was commonly used for all sorts of gatherings, its use to describe a New Testament church is significant. Hutchinson explains, "It is both curious and significant that when the writers of the New Testament sought a term for the assembly of believers in the resurrection of Jesus, they fixed not upon synagogue but instead on ekklesia."[43] An ecclesiological view that emphasizes the continuity between covenants understands the choice of terms to be significant. Hutchinson continues, "One might suggest, then, that the reason for their preference for one term over the other had a good deal to do with the particular resonances of that term, that is, with the idea that the assembly of God's people is the result of God's prior action; it is only convened as God himself 'calls out' a people by his Word."[44] This significance of the use of the term *ekklesia* is emphasized in this ecclesiology because it is built upon historical events, the way in which God works in time and space.[45]

The Church's People

God's primary work in the present time is to call out his people in Jesus Christ and build his church. The people of Jesus' church are identified by their faith in him and are marked by obedience to his proclaimed Word. Minich writes,

> *The church, at its most basic, is just the people of the promise.* This is all that is absolutely necessary for there to be 'the church.' Other things might be normative, but this is the 'essential form' the most basic thing. The church is the community of those who have been claimed by God's promise who have said 'yes' to the gospel

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[43] E.J. Hutchinson, "Excursus: What is the 'Church'? Etymology and Concept in Classical Antiquity, the LXX, and the New Testament," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 62, Kindle.

[44] Hutchinson, "Excursus: Church," 62.

[45] Alastair Roberts, "Pentecost as Ecclesiology," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 66, Kindle.

message.[46]

The church then is comprised of gospel people. People who have heard, believed, and professed faith in Jesus.

The visible sign that someone is a gospel person, or a member of the body of Christ, his church is baptism. Roberts agrees, "Baptism is the ordinary means of our reception into the Church."[47] Roberts' statement is generally agreed upon by Protestants. However, Roberts' makes a distinction that many Protestants may not make when he writes that baptism, "Is not the basis or cause of our membership, nor so necessarily tied to it that we could not be members of the visible Church apart from it."[48] While it is true that all believers are part of the universal, invisible church, many Protestant churches practice a form a membership that does not recognize members who are not baptized.

Reformation ecclesiology builds on the notion that the church is the people of God in Jesus Christ. Luther's ecclesiology wrestles with the idea of what the church is. Littlejohn notes that ecclesiology in the vein of Luther is more concerned with where the church is to be found rather than what the church is.[49] Finding the church means more than finding a group of people gathered together. These people are engaged in activities that designate their gathering a spiritual body known as the church. These activities include the sacraments and the proclamation of the Word of God. Littlejohn notes these distinctions,

> The Church, thus, is in itself invisible, but it becomes visible when that which gives
> it life, the Word, is preached, heard, acknowledged, and obeyed in the world. We

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[46] Minich, "The Church Question," 9.

[47] Roberts, "Pentecost," 79.

[48] Roberts, "Pentecost," 79.

[49] Bradford Littlejohn, "*Simul Justus et Peccator*: The Genius and Tensions of Reformation Ecclesiology," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 84, Kindle.

may, however—indeed must for practical purposes—speak of the regular organized assembly of professing believers who worship in word and sacrament as the 'visible church.'[50]

This ecclesiology affirms not only that the church is made visible by the gathering of gospel believers, but also necessitates that these believers are functioning in a manner that is consistent with New Testament expectations. Hutchinson agrees with Littlejohn's assessment by surmising the church, "is nothing more—and, much more significantly, nothing less—than the people constituted by God's summoning before the throne of Jesus Christ through his Word and Spirit, and their humble response to that call in repentance and faith."[51]

The reality of the gathered, visible church in time and space is a shared experience of Christians. When churches gather together, the Word is proclaimed, and the sacraments are rightly administered, then Christian maturity and obedience follows. The proclamation of the Word encourages and instructs believers. Believers will want to obey God's commands. This desire is a mark of a Christian. Fulford observes, "Given that humble faith naturally produces obedience to God, those who have faith will in general also seek to be baptized, and thus baptism will be a mark that picks out Christians from among the human race."[52] Once again the connection between believers and baptism is made. Faith in Christ is birthed from the proclamation of the Word of God which leads to obedience. Fulford continues, "As obedience to a command of the Lord, and as either an appeal or a pledge to God, the ritual assumes the presence of faith on the part of the recipient."[53] The people of Jesus' church are people who believe by faith the

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[50] Littlejohn, "*Simul Justus et Peccator*," 85.

[51] Hutchinson, "Excursus: Church," 65.

[52] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 143.

[53] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 144.

teaching of the gospel and gather to hear the Word of God proclaimed and observe the

practice of the sacraments.[54]

Church Activities and Practices

        The *People of the Promise*'s presentation of Protestant ecclesiology is built

upon the basic tenants of the Reformation. This view incorporates a functional

understanding of church with her nature. The functions of the church are primarily

preaching the Word and appropriately practicing the sacraments. During the time of the

Reformation, these markers of the church intended to identify where a true church could

be located rather than speaking to the church's essence as one, holy, catholic, and

apostolic

        The church was birthed on Pentecost at the proclamation of the gospel and the

work of the Holy Spirit. Roberts asserts, "Pentecost displays the truth at the heart of

Reformed ecclesiology: the Church is a body formed by the power of the Word and

manifested in the preaching of that Word."[55] The authority of Christ over his church is

manifest in the preaching and teaching of his Word. The proclamation of the Word

brought the church to life and formed it. The early church gathered for the Apostle's

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    [54] Beyond the scope of this paper is an argument one of the author's makes about the consumer approach to church many Christians practice. One could argue that the observation is relevant to church discipline, but I think it fits better under the consideration of who the people of God are and what motivates them. Perhaps, the people who church-hop are giving evidence that they are not gospel people, or perhaps, their behavior is an indictment upon the local church. Jordan Ballor writes,

> The social realities of church attendance and membership today largely mean that if there is something we dislike or find uncomfortable about a particular congregation, then we simply move along until we find one that meets our desires. The greatest obstacle to church discipline and Christian discipleship today, then, is the lack of self-discipline and commitment to a church community by churchgoers themselves. This is, in fundamental ways, a deeply countercultural diagnosis."

Jordan Ballor, "Excursus: Church Discipline as a Way of Love," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 127, Kindle.

    [55] Roberts, "Pentecost," 79.

teaching (Acts 2:42).

As mentioned earlier, the invisible church becomes visible when the Word of God is preached, heard, received in faith, and obeyed. The church is tasked with guarding the pure teaching of the gospel in the world. This devotion to the teaching of God's Word is core to this *mere ecclesiology*. The proclamation of the Word of God is not just a simple observance. The correct teaching of the word of God equips believers for the work of ministry.

In Acts, baptism always follows when someone hears the gospel, repents, and believes. Baptism as being the identity marker of New Covenant believers was addressed earlier. In the New Testament, all Christians were baptized. Roberts highlights baptism as the appropriate response of initial saving faith to the hearing of the gospel message.[56] Ordinarily, these baptisms took place within the context of a visible church. Acts records that believers were being added daily to the church, these additions came through baptism.

Roberts questions how one should understand the role and meaning of baptism for the church today, especially in light of how different churches maintain different practices:

> How then should we understand baptism, which seems to be naturally connected with the ministry and membership of the institutional church? Within Acts there is an intimate connection between faith, reception of the Spirit, belonging to the Church, and baptism, something apparent in places such as Acts 2:38. Baptism, then, does not seem to be at the root of what is required for inclusion in Christ. Must we then evacuate it of any meaning, reducing it to an empty sign?[57]

If we follow the BEM, then perhaps one would be tempted to vacate all but the most rudimentary meanings of baptism. The challenge of affirming the practice and meaning

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[56] Roberts, "Pentecost," 76.

[57] Roberts, "Pentecost," 79.

of baptism is not without difficulty but is a useful tool for discipleship. Without addressing the mode, Roberts affirms that baptism is a visible sign that points to numerous spiritual realities. These realities look in two directions.[58] First, baptism signifies the individual's faith, union with Christ, and the sealing of the Spirit. Second, baptism is a corporate event in which the church affirms the faith of the new believer, demonstrates hospitality to the new member, and submits in obedience to Christ's command.

When considering a magisterial, reformed ecclesiology, one would expect to encounter an argument for pedobaptism. The issue of infant baptism is only mentioned once. Should infants be baptized? Only Fulford addresses the question. He affirms that the practice is consistent with the ecclesiology presented but offers no rationale for it.[59] He does offer clear teaching that adult believers should be baptized. The avoidance of infant baptism is interesting. How should a mere ecclesiology move forward in addressing the practice and theology of infant baptism? One can read between the lines and find that the New Testament offers clear teaching on believer's baptism, but infant baptism is foreign to the text.

The practice of the Lord's Supper is also a sacrament that is a celebrated by a church. It is so common to the practice of the church that at the time of the reformation, you could assume a church existed when it was practiced.[60] Fulford observes, "The Supper is a case of obedience to a command, an oath of allegiance, a memorial or remembrance, and a proclamation."[61] While baptism is the celebration of those who enter

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[58] Roberts, "Pentecost," 78-80.

[59] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 151.

[60] Littlejohn, "*Simul Justus et Peccator*," 86.

[61] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 145.

the covenant community, the Lord's Supper is the ongoing ratification of the new covenant. Fulford recognizes this covenantal aspect of the sacrament: "The judgment that follows upon those who take the Supper unworthily also reveals it to be a covenant ratifying meal (1 Cor. 11:25-31), as covenants include oaths, and oaths call down curses on those who break them."[62] The church celebrates the Lord's Supper in obedience and in this celebration signifies that Jesus is her Lord.

Both baptism and the Lord's Supper point to the institutional expectation of the church.[63] Since the church is made up of believers, then a process must exist for recognizing and welcoming new members. This process is institutional. The observance of the Lord's Supper requires the members to gather in a planned event. The planning and execution of this gathering is the result of the church being an institution. The church as an institution proclaims the Word of God, baptizes new believers, and celebrates the new covenant on a regular basis.

Finally, the church gathers in order that her members may be sent out on mission. Meador concludes, "The institutional church once again becomes apostolic in the original sense of the term—being 'sent out.' The church does not simply gather Christians into its bosom and shelter them from the storm nor does it somehow elevate those who belong to it toward a higher order of existence. The church largely exists to send people out into the world."[64] The church's observance of the sacraments and her devotion to the teaching of the God's Word results in a missional church. In fact, the Scriptures and sacraments inform and shape this missional church. Meador continues,

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[62] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 145.

[63] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 149.

[64] Jake Meador, "Protestant Ecclesiology Among Contemporary Political Theologies," *People of the Promise: A Mere Protestant Ecclesiology*, ed. Joseph Minich and Bradford Littlejohn, (Leesburg, VA: The Davenant Trust, 2017), 170, Kindle.

"The magisterial Protestant approach sees a missional church integrated into the basic structure of a society, equipping people to love and serve their neighbors. This focus on outreach and the common good, as well as the proper placement of the institutional church relative to civil society."[65] The church functions to equip the believers and engage society with the gospel.

The Church's Formalized Structure

The gathered church is an institution by God's design. The church is first visibly formed by the gathering of believers, the churches choose leaders, and the church exercises discipline on its members. The *People of the Promise* portrays the church in these formalized, institutional understandings. Calls for a less institutional, more organic, church are heard today. Nevertheless, the church cannot shake the structure of an institution. This institution boasts Jesus as the foundation and cornerstone. The Apostles built upon this foundation. The believers are spiritual bricks being stacked upon one another.

The priesthood of all believers is a necessary doctrine in formulating a mere Protestant ecclesiology. In fact, the universal priesthood of all believers is at the core of the Protestant Reformation.[66] These priests are able to access God through Christ and no other mediator. They also have the privilege and duty to instruct one another and to represent God to the world who does not know him.[67] The roles and responsibilities of

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[65] Meador, ""Protestant Ecclesiology Among Contemporary Political Theologies," 175.

[66] Belschner, "Doctrine of the Church," 34.

[67] Belschner, "Doctrine of the Church," 17. Belschner states, "Evangelicalism, on the other hand, affirms the universal priesthood of all believers. Christ is the only true mediator between God and man, and consequently we should not believe our church leaders are imbued with any magical power by virtue of their status; rather, their role is to promote good order in the human society that we call the visible church community."

serving as priests fueled the Reformation. Now, following Luther's ecclesiology,
Littlejohn asserts, "Indeed, so far from the clergy constituting the church, the church
constitutes the clergy."[68] The church is not and should not be identified by the clergy, but
rather by the congregants who are priests.[69]

The members of local churches do have leaders. These leaders are ordained
ministers who engage in teaching the Word of God and leading in the sacraments. They
are distinct from a system that attaches sacerdotalism to the office of church leader.
Fulford explains that this office of church leadership emerges from wisdom as much as
design:

> Yet, for a number of reasons, love for the common good of the body in a local
> context will also lead to creation of church offices. First, it is a commonly accepted
> observation that a group of individuals can achieve greater profit if the group
> engages in some degree of division of labor and specialization. This is true even
> when some of the labor involved is in instruction and care of souls. Prudence alone
> would thus highly suggest the creation of church offices, staffed by people who
> have more experience and skill in these practices necessary for the common and
> personal good. Second, because the church grows and lives in history, there is
> inevitably always a variation in levels of maturity between believers in any given
> location. Once again, prudence would suggest making the more mature responsible
> for the edification of the less mature. Third, scripture tells us that Christ regularly
> gives gifts to his body in the form of people with gifts for the building up of the
> body (Eph. 4:11), and it encourages members of churches to submit to their leaders
> (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:15-16; Heb. 13:17).[70]

Churches comprised of believer-priests are able to govern themselves as they choose
leaders for their congregation. This oversight is both prudent and biblical.

Self-governance is one of the components of the missiological three-self

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[68] Littlejohn, "*Simul Justus et Peccator*," 84.

[69] An observation on contemporary Christian celebrity culture needs to be made. Too often,
churches are identified as being a specific pastor's church. People choose which church to go to based upon
the pulpit ministry of a specific church. While I would not argue against the importance of the pulpit, the
lead teacher/pastor of a congregation, and the content of the sermons, Christians need to reembrace the
truth of the priesthood of all believers. Churches that give in to the celebrity culture are leaning back
towards an unhealthy ecclesiology.

[70] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 149-50.

formula.[71] Self-governance is a good and right goal for churches to express. It is built upon the Reformation. Littlejohn notes, "There is nothing intrinsically wrong with a disestablished, self-governing church; such was the church before Constantine and such are all our churches in America today. However, problems do arise when such a church organizes itself within a broader society and church which considers itself genuinely Christian."[72] His warning demonstrates how in a Christian society differing churches can display disunity rather than the unity for which Jesus prays (John 17:20-22). What about areas of the globe where the church is non-existent, and the civil authorities make no provision for Christian churches? Churches and their leaders should seek ways to build unity. This collection of essays does not address how churches in frontier missionary environments may flourish.

One aspect of the church's structure is church discipline. The members of a church are responsible for holding one another accountable. Ballor comments, "The Reformed tradition in particular, along with various Anabaptist and Radical Reformation movements, became closely identified with a disciplinarist vision for church organization. Although John Calvin (1509-1564) is typically credited with defining church discipline as a 'mark of the church.'"[73] Discipline as a mark of a true church was explicitly stated in the Belgic Confession (1561).[74] Ballor notes that the emphasis on church discipline is "intended to help believers discern and recognize the true church." [75]

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[71] See John Mark Terry, "Indigenous Churches," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 483-485.

[72] Littlejohn, "*Simul Justus et Peccator*," 99.

[73] Ballor, "Church Discipline," 125.

[74] Guido de Brès, "The Belgic Confession," *Christian Reformed Church*, Articles 28, 29, 32, accessed November 10, 2019, https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/BelgicConfession.pdf

[75] Ballor, "Church Discipline," 126.

Since discipline helps to identify and describe the church, one need not reject discipline as a mark of the church in reformed ecclesiology. Fulford notes,

> We need not reject the third mark, if we continue with our understanding of the marks of the church as descriptive and not constitutive of the church, following always or for the most part from saving faith, but not being coordinate independent instruments of salvation, nor necessarily present in every moment of a saved soul's life.[76]

Discipline is a part of the life of the church. Discipline, when done according to Scripture (Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5:1-13), serves to purify, and to be redemptive and restorative. Discipline only works within a church that is structured.

Final Assessment

Protestant ecclesiology is constructed with the idea of individuals being saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.[77] The Scriptures are the sole authority over the church and the formation of the doctrine of the church. Fulford summarizes that God, through the Scriptures, calls for Christ followers "to periodically meet together, to regularly speak the word, baptize, celebrate the Lord's Supper, to discipline the flock, and to appoint wise leaders, he directs the church to create persisting institutions. At the same time, when Scripture requires Christians to scatter to do their temporal work and earn a living (1 Thess. 4:11), it requires an organic church, united by faith while separated by space and activity."[78] Therefore, a reformed mere ecclesiology affirms a visible, institutional church in which the people of God's promises are gathered in Christ. This treatment of a reformed mere Protestant ecclesiology is helpful in that it deals with many issues related to fleshing out ecclesiology.

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[76] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 146.

[77] Littlejohn, "*Simul Justus et Peccator*," 100.

[78] Fulford, "Protestant Ecclesiology," 150.

Conclusion

Many attempts to develop an ecclesiology that appeals to and satisfies differing Protestants are worthy of study and discussion. Three notable contributions were evaluated above.[79] A few things can be summarized from these attempts at a mere ecclesiology. First, a visible gathered church comprised of members who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary. Second, these gathered churches celebrate Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper. The meaning and forms of these practices may vary from tradition to tradition, but these practices are common among Protestants. Third, a formal structure of a local church does exist, whereby the structure allows for and even necessitates the calling of leaders. These leaders may be placed in their respective roles in a variety of different ways, but Protestant churches have leaders.

The result of these commonalities means that globally Protestants share certain beliefs and practices that unite them more than separate them. However, the beliefs about these practices that form the church do often separate Protestants in real and meaningful ways. Church leaders and church planters would be served well to know these commonalties and differences. Knowing these things will enable them to teach more faithfully and build bridges between churches in different Protestant streams.

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[79] Two attempts that are worth discussion but beyond the scope of this appendix need to be noted. First, John Webster, "On Evangelical Ecclesiology," *Ecclesiology* 1, no. 1 (January 2004): 9-35, accessed October 27, 2019, https://www.corwin.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/4800_ECC_sample_copy.pdf. Webster focuses on the relationship of the church to the divine perfection and the way in which the church manifests her invisible attributes to the visible world. Second, Simon Chan, "Toward an Asian Evangelical Ecclesiology," *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives,* eds. Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 139-156. Chan takes an ontological approach towards developing a uniquely Asian evangelical ecclesiology. His approach is not without controversy as he suggests that ancestral veneration could have a place in the rituals of the gathered church.

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ABSTRACT

AN EMBRYONIC ECCLESIOLOGY ENABLING CHURCH
PLANTING MOVEMENTS TO FLOURISH

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This dissertation proposes an ecclesiological rubric for evaluating church planting strategies and methods. The result of these evaluations will be establishing churches that flourish where they are planted. A flourishing church grows and matures to become everything God intends for a church to be rather than settling for minimal expectations for maturity and health.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis that an embryonic ecclesiology is a necessary component for biblically faithful church planting methodologies. The thesis identifies the issue of ecclesiology on the mission field. Those who are planting churches should be experts on knowing what the church is.

Chapter 2 provides a biblical ecclesiology leading to a rubric for evaluating ecclesiology implicit within church planting strategies. The rubric guides church planting teams to evaluate strategies and methods upon biblical principles for the ontological reality of the church.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the CPM paradigm and its influence upon current church planting practices. David Garrison is most often associated with CPM paradigms due to his writings. His paradigm and methods will be evaluated using the rubric for evaluating embryonic ecclesiology proposed in chapter 2.

Chapter 4 presents an overview of the church planting method called T4T. T4T is a church planting method influenced by the paradigm and principles of CPM. This

method will be introduced and described. The description will include a presentation of its development and specific tactics. Finally, T4T is evaluated by the ecclesiological rubric proposed in chapter 2.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the church planting method called *The Big One*. This method is influenced by the paradigms and principles of CPM. The description will include a presentation of its development and specific tactics. Finally, the method is evaluated by the ecclesiological rubric proposed in chapter 2.

Chapter 6 summarizes the lessons learned from this study. Both the strengths and weaknesses of CPM influenced methods are presented. Needed corrections to CPM approaches enabling church plants to flourish are presented. Finally, the proposals for utilizing the rubric developed in chapter 2 is provided.

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